

3 Key Strategies to Peaceful Conflict Resolution

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“Peace is not absence of conflict, it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means.”

This famous quote by Ronald Reagan, a former US president, highlights the importance of being able to amicably resolve conflicts that will inevitably arise in our daily lives. Although conflicts can seem overwhelming, it's always beneficial to reach a peaceful resolution in which both you and the other side can agree and collaborate to satisfy both sides' needs. According to the Harvard Law School, conflict resolution can be defined as “the informal or formal process that two or more parties use to find a peaceful solution to their dispute” (Shonk). The most successful ways to resolve conflicts are effective communication, attentive listening, and using “I” statements.

First of all, one of the most productive ways to resolve conflicts is effective communication. “Effective communication can help to identify the root cause of the conflict, clarify misunderstandings, and find a mutually acceptable solution” (Faster Capital). This shows that effective communication is productive when resolving conflicts because it attacks the conflict from all sides. Effective communication allows both speakers to get to the root of the issue and work through it together. This further shows that clear communication helps resolve conflicts because if you try to solve a problem from the effect that it has caused, it will be significantly harder to fix the problem. Even if you glide over a problem and “fix it”, the cause is always there if you don't address it immediately. One way to look at this approach is thinking of a weed. When one is weeding a garden, it's critical that the weed is pulled out all the way to the root, or it will quickly grow back. If you only clip off the tops of the weeds until they aren't

visible anymore, they are still going to grow back. Similarly, only addressing the effect of the problem is a short-term solution, and won't actually solve the conflict. It's essential to work out an issue from the core, as it allows one to backtrack and look at what went wrong right from the beginning. Therefore, one key part of resolving conflicts is effective communication.

Secondly, active listening is a key part in peacefully resolving conflicts. "Active listening encourages us to see issues from different viewpoints, [and] recognise other people's feelings" (In Professional Development). This shows that active listening is crucial to successfully resolve conflicts, as it can aid one with many skills needed to solve a conflict with both sides of the issue in mind. Seeing problems from different angles can open one's mind to new ideas of possible solutions that may not have occurred to them before. In addition, active listening plays a key role in allowing someone to experience others' emotions and understand what they may be feeling. This would be useful when sorting out conflicts, as if both sides only cared about and knew their own perspective, a peaceful compromise would be impossible to achieve. It's essential that both sides see not only their opinion, but can visualize, and even relate to, the opposite opinion. Active listening helps one do that by allowing someone to not only hear, but comprehend and understand the others' viewpoints. In summary, active listening is vital to working out conflicts.

Finally, using "I" statements are essential to resolving conflicts effectively. "Using an "I" message can help you state your concerns, feelings, and needs in a manner that is easier for the listener to hear and understand" (Boston University). This proves that "I" statements are useful when resolving conflicts because it allows one to express their concerns without attacking the other side. "I" statements are when someone states their own feelings and their own perspectives without saying anything about the opposing side. This type of conflict resolution is extremely effective, as it is assertive instead of aggressive. Aggressive communication usually looks like

one side attacking and putting down the other side, pointing out faults and even insulting them. When one uses aggressive communication in a conflict, the conflict is likely to escalate beyond either sides' reach. At this point, tensions are usually high, and there is no longer the prospect of a peaceful resolution to the conflict. This is also known as an argument. However, a full-blown argument is unproductive and accomplishes nothing between the two sides. It brings no one closer to a peaceful resolution, and instead pushes them further away. This can be prevented through assertive "I" statements. Contrary to aggressive statements, assertive communication is when someone firmly but politely states their opinion and advocates for themselves. They do this by standing up for themselves, and only worrying about their own sides. While this may seem counterproductive to the previous point, they actually go hand-in-hand. In order to understand the other perspective, one must first have a solid, concrete idea of their own objectives. In addition, it's also very difficult to relate to the other side when you are actively trying to put them down and convincing yourself that they are wrong. To summarize, one important aspect of civilly resolving conflicts is using "I" messages.

All in all, the most beneficial ways to reach peaceful compromises in conflicts are efficient communication, engaged listening, and the use of "I" messages. These useful strategies are applicable in any situation. If everyone were to just try one of these tips every once in a while, our world would be a considerably better place to live. With conflicts inevitably waiting just around the corner, it's essential that everyone is equipped with the correct tools to be able to quickly and efficiently work through a conflict in any environment, whether it be at home, work, or school. The next time you have a disagreement with a friend or a misunderstanding with a coworker, consider stepping back for a second and using one of these strategies. Instead of snapping back in anger, communicate calmly and state your side of the conflict. Instead of

pointing out everything that the other person did wrong, state what you want them to do instead and how you feel about what they're doing right now.

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