

A Dozen Tried & True Ways to Stop Conflict in its Tracks!

When you find yourself caught in a verbal exchange that does not 'feel' right, then you may be dealing with bullying-- intimidation, bulldozing, sarcasm, pushiness, exploitation, manipulation, etc. You may, also, simply be dealing with someone who is upset over a misunderstanding and unable to communicate clearly in the moment.

What can you do to deal with the situation in the most positive and constructive way? How do you stand up for yourself without being overly aggressive or resorting to language that escalates the conflict? How do you avoid feeling like a victim? Below are a dozen tried & true ways to stop conflict in its tracks and keep your power!

1. Stop, Breathe, Think, and Act
 - a. Stop & pay attention to your body signals — don't ignore the discomfort, adrenaline rush, etc.
 - b. Breathe deeply from your belly. Cross your arms and legs and touch your tongue to your pallet as you breathe to engage your brain and limbic system.
 - c. Think: "I CAN handle this!" (Positive self-talk)
 - d. Consciously act! (As opposed to Re-Act.)
2. Use comebacks that don't escalate Conflict
 - a. Thank you for letting me know how you feel.
 - b. I hear you
 - c. I can see this upsets you.
 - d. I'm sorry you were hurt. That was not my intent.
 - e. Agree with some of the statement but not all. (e.g. "You have a chip on your shoulder because you are short." Agree, "Yes, I am short.")
 - f. You have an interesting perspective. I'll have to give that some thought.
3. Separate yourself from the situation.
 - a. I will talk to you when you are calm. (Call "Time", & leave)
 - b. I will talk to you when I am calm. (Call "Time", & leave)
4. Ask a question; s/he who asks the question has the power.
 - a. Why does that bother you? How so? Why do you ask? What makes you say that?
 - b. I know you wouldn't have said that unless you had a good reason. Could you tell me what it was?
5. Be conscious of your body language and the words you choose: Keep Your Power.
6. Be careful about tone of voice. Lower your voice. A soft, confident voice can be very powerful.
7. Avoid "should", "ought", and "you" statements.
8. Use 'I' statements:
 - a. When you...
 - b. I feel...
 - c. Next time would you ...



9. Let the other person save face so that they can change their minds. Give them a gracious way out.
10. Stick to the issues. When our 'buttons get pushed' we often lose sight of our goal. Keep the goal in mind.
11. Empathize. Yes, empathize. This is difficult to do and can be very effective at the same time.
12. Make a plan to handle the situation positively in the future.
 - a. What will you say? How will you say it? Assess whether it will reduce or escalate conflict.
 - b. When you have an assertive response that does not escalate conflict, practice it with a trusted partner.
 - c. Visualize & practice the dialogue in your minds eye. Visualize success.
 - d. When that person pushes your buttons the next time, you'll be prepared!

About the Author



Susan Fitzell is a nationally recognized speaker and author of several educational resource books. She has over two decades of experience with differentiated instruction, teaching youth with special needs, students with behavioral and anger management issues, and students who experience bullying. Susan's company, AIMHI Educational Programs, focuses on building caring school communities.
<http://aimhieducational.com/>