

# BUILDING CONFIDENCE IN ADDRESSING CONFLICT



## A SELF-PRACTICE GUIDE

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA HUMAN RESOURCES

This guide can help you build confidence in handling workplace conflicts through self-reflection and practical exercises.

To get the most out of this guide:

1. **Set aside dedicated time** so you can focus without interruptions.
2. **Be honest and open** acknowledging your true feelings and reactions.
3. **Apply what you learn** in a real-life situation.
4. **Get help if you need it.** Iowa has variety of resources available to support you.



# STEP 1: UNDERSTANDING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CONFLICT

Conflict is a natural part of the workplace, yet many people feel uneasy dealing with it. Understanding your personal reactions can help you build confidence in handling disputes.



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do you typically feel when a conflict arises at work? (i.e. *anxious, defensive, withdrawn*)
- What kinds of workplace conflicts make you most uncomfortable?
- How do you usually respond—avoid, give in, get defensive, or try to resolve?
- What's one time you handled a conflict well? What worked?



## WRITING PROMPT

Describe a recent workplace conflict. What happened? How did you react? Would you change anything?



## CHALLENGE

Try acknowledging the feelings and sensations you have as conflict arises.

Pay special attention to any physical reactions you have.

*sweaty palms, tightness of breath, racing heart*



# STEP 2: REFRAMING CONFLICT AS OPPORTUNITY

While conflict can feel uncomfortable, it often presents an opportunity for problem-solving and strengthening relationships. Changing your mindset can make conflicts more manageable.



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do you currently view conflict—more as a threat or an opportunity?
- Can you recall a time when a disagreement led to a positive outcome?
- What are three ways workplace conflict can be beneficial?



## WRITING PROMPT

Write about a time when workplace conflict resulted in a productive or unexpected positive outcome.



## CHALLENGE

The next time you sense a disagreement, pause and ask yourself, “How could this be an opportunity rather than a problem?”



# STEP 3: STENGHTENING CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS

Effective conflict resolution involves clear communication and active listening. Practicing key techniques can help you stay calm and constructive.



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do you usually communicate during conflict?
- What's one communication habit you'd like to improve?
- Have you tried active listening or "I" statements before?
- What was the result?



## WRITING PROMPT

Write a short dialogue using "I" statements and active listening to handle a past conflict differently.

### ANATOMY OF AN "I" STATEMENT

**I feel...**

**When you...** *action*

**Because...** *impact on you*

**And I want...** *desired change*



## CHALLENGE

The next time you feel tension rising, pause, take a deep breath, and ask a clarifying question before responding.



# STEP 4: PRACTICING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Planning and practicing how you approach a difficult conversation can make it feel more manageable.



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What workplace conflict are you currently avoiding?
- What's the main point you want to express in that conversation?
- How might the other person see the situation differently?



## WRITING PROMPT

Draft a short script for handling a workplace conflict effectively.



## CHALLENGE

Role-play your script with a friend or using [LinkedIn Learning Role Plays](#). Or download our guide on [How to Have a Difficult Conversation](#).

*LinkedIn Learning is a free tool for employees at the University of Iowa.*



# 5

## STEP 5: REFLECT AND ADJUST

---

Regular reflection on your conflict experiences can help you fine-tune your skills and build long-term confidence.



### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What conflict situations went well this week?
- What would you do differently next time?
- How did your emotions shift as you practiced?



### WRITING PROMPT

Write about one workplace interaction where you spoke up or handled a disagreement differently. How did it feel?



### CHALLENGE

Each week, choose one new conflict skill to focus on and track your progress.