

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 (i.e. *anxious, defensive, withdrawn*)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: STRENGTHENING 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

ANATOMY OF AN "I" STATEMENT

I feel...

When you... *action*

Because... *impact on you*

And I want... *desired change*

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



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.



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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.