

DEALING WITH ANOTHER'S ANGER

Interpersonal relationships among volunteers are, of course, unavoidable. For that reason the volunteer manager can count on dealing with other people's anger. Be prepared to help volunteers deal with their own anger and help them to develop coping skills to deal with other people's anger. Anger from another person can potentially hook us into their problem. Another person's anger can pose a threat to us and in turn create anger within us. Learning how to respond to another's anger is essential for healthy and capable volunteer development. The Extension Family and Community Leadership curriculum "Dealing with Conflict" identifies these steps.

- **Affirm the other's feelings:** *Acknowledge that you are receiving it and express a willingness to respond. To disallow another's anger only tends to increase it.*
- **Acknowledge your own defensiveness:** *Let the other person know what you are feeling. Acknowledge that your own feelings may lead to miscommunication. Develop an awareness of how anger is affecting you physically and emotionally.*
- **Clarify and diagnose:** *Give and request feed-back. Distinguish between wants and needs. Check expectations. Find out who owns what in the situation. When needs and wants are known, the resolution of the problem becomes more probable.*
- **Renegotiate the relationship:** *Plan together how similar situations will be dealt with in the future. Contracting to practice new behavior may help eliminate the sources of friction. Acknowledge regret and exchange apologies if that is warranted. Agree on a mediator if no progress is made.*

APPROACHES FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT

Conflict comes from anger, but conflict can emerge from other sources as well. Conflict may arise whenever volunteers deal with scarce resources. Because there is not enough to satisfy all desires at the same time, conflict begins. Resources are anything that is used such as time, money, materials, or even people to perform a task.

Another source of conflict may originate from value differences where two or more people desire different goals. These conflicts are more difficult to resolve because there are no tangibles or concrete items that can be negotiated.

There are several appropriate approaches for any given conflict situation. Volunteers should be guided to understand these approaches for conflict resolution.

1. **Avoidance** – represses emotional reactions, look the other way or leave the scene of conflict. This approach does not leave one feeling satisfied and leaves a hint of fear for next time.
2. **Diffusion** – a delaying action. This approach tries to cool off the situation and postpones the resolution until later. This tactic also leaves one feeling dissatisfied and anxious about the future.
3. **Confrontation** – this approach actually confronts the issue. It deals with a power struggle and creates either a win/win situation or more often a win/lose situation from which more conflict will emerge.
4. **Arbitration** – when a stand-off occurs and both parties are equally powerful and have equal rights, a third party may be necessary to resolve the issue. This tactic more objectively deals with conflict, but often still leaves a bitter taste in both parties' mouth.



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5. **Vote** – a civilized form of fighting. This method provides for a debate. But if both parties have some commitment to each other, such as a belief in democracy, a following of the majority will be permitted by the minority.
6. **Compromise** – uses negotiation and bargaining to “split the difference”. In this method a partial victory is better than winning nothing at all. Both sides lose something to get a greater goal.
7. **Win/win strategy** – strives to find a solution which is mutually satisfying to both parties. Both parties win.
8. **Consensus** – seeks to bring all parties to a mutually satisfying resolution. The problem solving process often creates a new answer.
9. **Synergy** – an intentional collaborative pursuit of solutions to provide something more together than what either could achieve alone.

Hints and reminders

When you first sense conflict, use these suggestions.

1. Check the legitimacy level.
2. Check the trust level.
3. Check the willingness and ability of the parties to locate the real cause of the conflict.
4. Check the expectations of the parties.
5. Choose the highest strategy that the situation will permit.
6. Avoid putting people in boxes.

Alternative Sources of Information

Consider alternative sources of information or training on conflict resolution or working with difficult people. Other 4-H or Extension staff members may also be a source of guidance for dealing with challenging individuals.



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Conflict Management Activity

SELECT A RECENT CONFLICT AND ANSWER THESE FOUR QUESTIONS

1. Why was there a conflict? Was it real or imagined? What was the source of the conflict? Clarify the issue.
2. What about feelings? What were you feeling? How about others' feelings? Describe the feelings using "I" statements.
3. What was going (should) happen? What did I (others) want to see happen? Were all needs met? Separate needs, issues, resolutions.
4. What action will work for both parties? What were you going to do? Write down the agreement.



COPING SKILLS FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In order to be successful in handling conflicts that arise, guidance is needed to develop certain skills. These skills include the abilities to:

- 1 determine the type of conflict,
- 2 confront a conflict situation,
- 3 listen to other points of view, and,
- 4 use a problem solving process to bring about a consensus

1 – DIAGNOSIS

- Decide whether the conflict is a value conflict or a tangible conflict or both

2 – INITIATION

- Confront the other individual without attacking or being demeaning.
- State the tangible effects of the conflict.

3 – LISTEN

- Hear the other point of view.
- Avoid argumentative statements.
- Utilize active listening.

4 - PROBLEM SOLVING

- Clarify the problem.
- Develop and evaluate a number of possible solutions.
- Decide together on the best decision.
- Plan the implementation of the solution.
- Plan to take another look at the solution at a later date.

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