



# Five Tips on Dealing with Workplace Conflict

## “Team Player:

One who unites others toward a shared destiny through sharing information and ideas, empowering others and developing trust.”

-- Dennis Kinlaw

Do you know someone like this or would you like to? Conflict Alternatives can provide coaching opportunities for individual staff members and team building exercises and assessments for your medical practice. We would welcome the opportunity to work with you to help develop the ability of your staff to work as a team. Other topics available include leadership, communication, time management, conflict management, diversity and sexual harassment prevention.

For more information or assistance with conflict in the workplace, contact:

**Conflict Alternatives**

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While there is no easy pat answer for resolving all conflict in the workplace....and indeed it's not a good idea to get rid of all conflict (*more on that later, see Tip 5*)....there are some helpful tips that can help get a handle on conflict and keep it in the constructive mode, rather than the destructive mode.

1. **Define Acceptable Behavior**— People like to know what is expected of them. Having clearly articulated boundaries and definitions of acceptable behavior give people a sense of where the line of acceptability is in their interactions with one another and with the boss. Let people know what is okay and that which is not. No one likes surprises and besides coaching is easier when everyone is playing by the same rules.
2. **Hit Conflict Head-on** — Be proactive, not reactive, whenever possible. Healthy employees want to work in a relatively conflict free workplace and will do their part. It is important for an employer to recognize that conflict is a reality; it's not “if” but “when” and to work to minimize it or at least respond to it early on when it begins to develop. Of course, HOW one does that is important.
3. **Understanding the WIIFM Factor** — Employees, like employers, have goals, both personal and professional and considering both sides of an employment decision about change, time issues, environment, etc. can be critical in heading off misunderstanding, confusion and drama.
4. **The Importance Factor** — To paraphrase Kenny Rogers, “*Know when to hold them and when to fold them.*”....deciding on which battles are worth fighting and which ones are worth winning can be very important. Employers need to be the boss, but employees also need to know that their opinions and thoughts count for something. Deciding where the line is and what is most important can be critical. Sometimes saying yes is good.
5. **View Conflict as an Opportunity** — Conflict is an opportunity to see challenges, rather than barriers; to promote opportunities, rather than road-blocks; to celebrate diversity rather than sameness and to use conflict constructively rather than letting it be destructive. We can't avoid conflict, but it can be managed and used in positive ways.



Adapted from a Forbes article 2/2012 by Mike Myatt

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Don't find fault; find a remedy!

— Henry Ford