

Reducing Conflict 22 Care for Other People

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



The most potent way to reduce conflict within any group is to get the people to genuinely care for each other. It is so obvious, we sometimes forget.

There are always going to be stress points between people. That is a fact of life, but when people have the ability to rise above the petty annoyances and truly care for other people, the conflict has a short lifespan.

It's pretty hard to stay mad at a person who just brought you a chocolate chip cookie as a surprise. Sometimes a soothing and gentle word is enough to change the vector of some inter-group squabbles.

Important concepts

I learned a lesson early in my career that stuck with me. When you extend kindness when it is not expected, it has double the power. When you surprise someone with a gracious gesture, it really goes a long way.

Remember your body language

Another thing to remember is that it does not take tangible gifts to turn a sour situation sweet. What you say is critical, and how you say it is even more important.

Keep in mind that we extract more meaning from body language and tone of voice than the actual words that are being used.

If you are feeling anger toward another person, it will show all over your body. When there is conflict, get into a happier state of mind before trying to patch things up.

Notes can help

Often a note that has the right flavor will reduce conflict between people. Imagine you and Mike had an argument on how to accomplish a tricky step on a project. You decided to go with Mike's approach.

Now imagine you wrote a note to Mike's manager telling her how Mike's contribution was pivotal in allowing a successful conclusion to the project. You copy Mike on the note. He is going to appreciate the gesture and may even send a note of thanks back to you.

Remember to praise in writing when possible. If there is some constructive criticism, keep that verbal because verbal input has a half-life. Notes remain forever.

Find Special Ways to Demonstrate That You Care

There are an infinite number of ways you can show another person you care about her. One word of caution: make sure your gestures are genuine and not an act. When you put on a phony show of affection it can do more damage than you might think.

The other person will write you off as a jerk and your attempt to calm the situation will have backfired.

Free Video

Here is a 3-minute video that contains more information on how to care for other people.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWOSQ8xE598>

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