

Reducing Conflict 82 Your Choice

By Bob Whipple MBA CPTD “The Trust ambassador



The level of conflict you experience in life is your choice. I am sure that most readers would challenge that statement. Clearly, there are situations where conflict is unavoidable. This article will put the issue under a magnifying glass to understand how much control we have.

Types of conflict

The types of conflict are infinite as we are all different. It would take hundreds of volumes to describe all the situations that cause conflict in our lives. One common denominator is that conflict in your world involves you. I am not saying you are to blame, but you are definitely involved in the equation.

Your choice of how much to engage

Whether the root cause is someone being unfair or some external condition that creates friction, you are there. If you simply choose to not be a player, you can avoid or greatly reduce the conflict in your life.

The process goes back to one of my favorite quotes.

“The quality of your life and what you can accomplish is a function of what is going on between your ears.” R. Whipple

The first question to ask yourself when you feel too much conflict is whether it is worth it.

You do not have to resolve each issue

The technique of agreeing to disagree can help reduce the conflict in your life. Just because you see a particular issue differently from me does not mean we need to fight over it. We just have an area where we are not congruent in thought. We can still appreciate each other and work well together on the million areas where we agree.

Make a conscious effort to set aside some areas to reduce the rancor you experience. It is a healthy habit.

What about conflict with yourself?

Self-conflict is a special case where you may not even be aware of the issue. You can get quite worked up arguing with yourself on issues. In these cases, you may become exhausted trying to figure out the correct perspective.

We have a tendency to rationalize things as being okay when they are really unethical or dumb. Then we beat ourselves up for not having the integrity we profess.

One antidote is to become more conscious of when you are arguing with yourself. Have a kind of “check engine” light that goes off in your head when your energy is going in the wrong direction. Make a firm decision that you will not sabotage yourself in this way.

The trick is to catch yourself in the act, then decide to stop doing it. The “check engine” light analogy is a great aid in identifying this hurtful habit.

Your choice to use the Golden Rule

When you are in active conflict with another person, try to remember the Golden Rule. How would you like the other person to address you if the situation was reversed? Sometimes just changing the tone of voice is enough to lower the temperature.

Watch your body language.

We communicate more with our body language than we do with words. Remain calm and send signals that are consistent with that calmness with your body. Do not point at the other person.

Try talking much softer when you are in conflict. It may be difficult to do, but it can really lower the angst quickly when you lower your voice. Try it and see next time you feel worked up.

Conclusion

Conflict is a part of being a human being, but we really do have a choice for much of it. Try using some of the suggestions in this article next time you are in conflict. See if choosing to lower your stress level helps you lead a happier life.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals*, *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online*, and *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations.