

Reducing Conflict 87 Create a Development Plan

By Bob Whipple MBA CPTD



How can creating your own development plan help to reduce conflict in your life? It sounds like a weird juxtaposition of concepts. I will discuss the wisdom of the approach in this article.

The idea is to rise above the rancor. Change your outlook so you reduce the negative mental activity on the part of both people.

Knitting a development plan into the context of reducing conflict

I am not talking about taking courses on how to “win friends and influence people” here. Clearly, by becoming a more charming personality you would find fewer challenges with others. I am thinking about changing your outlook when you have a basic disagreement with another person.

Take a step back

Think about what is going on when you are in conflict. You and the other person see two paths forward that are not the same. The other person is trying to get you to see the wisdom of their views and you are doing the opposite. You are both doing a lot of shouting and not much deep listening.

Within the acrimony, you each have the desire to reach in and change the mindset of the other person. Your focus might be on how you can “fix” the other person to see the issue your way. You truly believe your solution is the best one.

Change your focus

A stronger focus on the schism between you and the other person will cause the divide to become deeper. The rancor escalates naturally because you become frustrated that the other person is not budging from their stance. For the other person, the frustration is likely just as intense.

You find yourself thinking about how to make the other person change. That pattern is a natural progression. Suppose you are thinking about the problem and a new way to force the other person to change. That mindset means that you will be consumed with thoughts of how to back your opponent into a corner. The angst will continue to escalate because it is the same old story, only now more intense.

Take an alternate approach

Try changing your self-talk. Consider how you can show up differently for the other person. Think of various options for how **you can change**. Your language and mindset will change to be more inviting for the other person.

First of all, you are no longer projecting yourself as a perfect person who has all the answers. You recognize that the only person you can really change is yourself. Be willing to try a completely different tack. In doing so, you will listen more and talk less so you hear the other person's points better.

The other person recognizes and appreciates your change in body language. As the tension eases, you consider ways to soften your stance. You start thinking about compromise ideas and get creative with potential solutions. The other person might even engage in some brainstorming ideas about a resolution.

Try reversing roles

Once some reasonable level of discussion is going on, you might suggest reversing roles. In that concept, you try to verbalize the other person's points and they try to articulate yours.

Be careful not to suggest reversing roles before establishing some helpful rapport. You can get caught where the other person does a double reverse, and you will be worse off. I have seen that happen, and it is game over!

Agree to disagree

Another resolution might be that you both agree to disagree. You can still have a healthy relationship even if you do not have a total agreement. Just find peace within the situation on your own.

Share your development plan

You can share your development plan with the other person once you are beyond the shouting stage. For example, you might say, "This week I have been focusing on being less judgmental. Have you noticed a change?" You are making progress when the other person sees the shift from being "fixed" to helping you fix yourself.

Conclusion

When you are in conflict with another person, recognize that you believe you are right. The other person is equally convinced that they are right. To make progress, you need to shift your thinking patterns. Become part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

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