

Reducing Conflict 88 Follow Up

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When there is an episode of conflict, it is smart to follow up on the resolution. This article describes why the follow-up is helpful and offers some tips on how to do it well.

I will discuss the role of follow-up in both kinds of conflict. The first kind is where there is a resolution and the second kind is where there is ongoing conflict.

There is no rule book on how to do this closure process. Each case needs to be considered a separate analysis.

Most conflict situations have a resolution, so follow-up helps

In this case, the parties have been able to settle their differences. They return to a more normal or balanced relationship. It is a good idea to document the agreements so there are no lingering misunderstandings. A good practice to do this involves both parties stating their understanding of the resolution.

If there is still a difference of opinion, that fact will become evident quickly. Having the lingering issue clarified by both parties gives an opportunity for some creative thinking. Work to create a new compromise and document that one. Keep working on the issue until both parties agree on the solution.

Follow up when the conflict is ongoing

In this situation, the parties cannot reach a settlement. Having each side state their case allows for full disclosure of the issues. It also provides the opportunity to do a reverse role play. Sometimes taking the opposite side of an argument provides new insights. That process could lead to enough progress to state a compromise solution.

Having all the issues out on the table also allows the parties to agree to disagree. The individuals do not need to be enemies forever. They can coexist and work well together even though they do not agree on every point.

Be alert for backsliding

Sometimes parties will agree to a compromise position just to reduce the rancor or satisfy management. In that case, watch for a retrenching of the conflict rising up in the future. You had some indication of progress, but it was short lived.

There were good intentions, but the follow-up was missing.

Changing conditions can rekindle the conflict

If people have had conflict in the past, they are susceptible to more in the future as conditions change. Even though the specific trigger is different, the old wounds are easily reopened. Be especially observant after a conflict is resolved that the compromise has become habitual.

Conclusion

Conflict is a natural part of the human condition. It is always a good idea to follow up after the conflict is over to ensure the cure is sustained.

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