



## Steps in Approaching Conflict

*Sand Creek Group Employee Assistance Program*

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Not everyone can be best friends. Conflict is a common and unavoidable occurrence in work and personal life. Taking time to correctly handle a conflict can reduce stress and make difficult relationships more manageable. The following steps will help you deal with conflict when it arises.

### **Identify the problem:**

Before a conflict can be resolved, the problem must first be identified. Analyze the situation. Part of this step is to identify your own feelings. What are the issues and behaviors that are bothering you? Focus on specific actions rather than focusing on someone's "irritating personality."

### **Define the problem:**

Make a list of the behaviors that you are having difficulty with and the impact of those behaviors on you. At this point, ask yourself: "What do I want the person to do differently that would improve the situation?" Also consider which of your behaviors may be contributing to the problem.

### **Make a choice:**

How important is the resolution of this conflict to you? Is this something you are prepared to address at the current time? Consider whether or not you are ready to calmly listen to the other person's response. At this point, it is important to remind yourself of your inability to control others, and that includes the other person's response to your concerns.

### **Maximize communication:**

Choose a time and location for having the conversation with a goal of maximizing privacy and allowing adequate time to talk. Be aware of your tone, language and willingness to listen. Use statements beginning with "I feel" or "I think," rather than beginning your statements with "You." Try to maintain an open and attentive posture and take into consideration the different communication style of the other person. You may need to give the other person time to think about your feedback before asking him or her to respond.

### **Look for solutions:**

The more clearly you present your own needs and expectations, the greater the likelihood that you will get the result you desire. As you consider your needs and listen to the needs of the other person, look for overlap or opportunity for both of you to have a positive outcome. As much as you are able, try to avoid blaming statements. Focus on desirable behavior changes and the goal of improving the situation.

## **Ask for help:**

Consider contacting your Employee Assistance Program for consultation on resolving conflict situations you may be experiencing at work or in your personal life. If you have questions about any aspect of the program or to speak to a counselor, contact: The Sand Creek Group at 651-430-3383 or 1-800-550-MCIT (6248).