

# Emotionally Intelligent Approaches to Conflict

By Jeremiah Gruenberg

- ◆ **Team Attitude** – You are a team, working on addressing a “common enemy.” Attack the problem, not each other. Be unified in finding a solution.
- ◆ **Calm** – Emotions will get in the way of objectivity. Take time and space when needed in order to maintain an environment of positive interaction.
- ◆ **Kindness** – Even when being brutally honest, be sure to be kind. Don't use your honesty as a weapon. If you do, you will be arming the other person to do the same.
- ◆ **Lay a Positive Foundation of Agreement** – Where do your perspectives overlap and support each other? Put the negative conflict in the proper context. It is probably small in comparison to the positive. Chances are, you share a lot of common ground.
- ◆ **Don't Trust Your Initial Assessment** – Don't assume that you immediately understand the situation or understand someone's motivations. Give people the benefit of the doubt.
- ◆ **Listen First** – When addressing any conflict, be sure to begin with a time of listening and understanding each other, *without attempting to solve the problem*. This should be seen as a process of research. Make sure you understand what is really going on, or your problem solving won't address the real issue. No genuine communication can occur if listening is not prioritized.
- ◆ **Repeat Back Your Understanding** – In order to be sure that you really understand what is going on, you should explain your understanding of the other person's perspective back to them. This will ensure genuine understanding for all parties, and allows the other party to clarify or give further explanation, if needed.
- ◆ **Ask Why** – Why does someone think the way they do? What is their motivation? Ask the deeper questions in order to understand on a deeper level.
- ◆ **Write out Three Possible Solutions** – Jointly write out two solutions which favor each party's perspective, and then write out another solution that is a compromise or “third way.”
- ◆ **Consider a Third-Party Mediator** – Get someone who isn't emotionally involved in the conflict to look at the solutions and review the merits of each.
- ◆ **Make a Decision Together with a “Test-Drive” Timeline** – Agree together on one of the solutions. If it helps the process, agree to follow this solution for a certain length of time, at which point the issue can be reassessed more objectively, based on the results of the decision. It is usually easier to agree to something when you know you can revisit and renegotiate in the future.

Need consulting, coaching, or speaking on this topic?

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