

COMMUNICATING:
How To Do It Better www.ucsf.edu/swe

**USE CONFLICT TO
CREATE POSITIVE CHANGE**

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COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT

*"Always bear in mind that your resolution
to succeed is more important than
any other thing."*

-President Abraham Lincoln

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**ALTHOUGH WE DON'T CHOSE
CONFLICT, CONFLICT IS INEVITABLE**

We have choices about how to use it

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MYTHS ABOUT CONFLICT:

Blame: It's the other person who's at fault

Fear: Conflict is always bad - confronting it directly will probably make the situation worse

Denial: If I ignore it, it will go away

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CONFLICT DOESN'T HAVE TO CONTROL YOUR LIFE!

Objective: learn to transform conflict into an opportunity to enhance both professional and personal interactions

TRANSFORMING CONFLICT
KEY # 1



STRIVE FOR SELF UNDERSTANDING

ASK: Am I contributing to the situation?
In what way?

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CONFLICT: A DAUNTING PROBLEM?

- ☞ Negative emotional content - strong emotions, feelings
- ☞ Poor or nonexistent communication
- ☞ Discouraging past experiences

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- ☞ Look at your own mindset
- ☞ Suspend judgment
- ☞ Question your assumptions / convictions

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Differing communication styles contribute to miscommunication and conflict.

(Prof. Deborah Tannen, Georgetown University)

Different "Conversational Rituals":

- Directness and Indirectness
- Ritual Opposition, Verbal One-Upmanship
- Teasing

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- ☞ Is conflict the only interpretation?
- ☞ Is conflict the best interpretation?
- ☞ Impact of relationship with the speaker

TRANSFORMING CONFLICT
KEY # 2



CHECK OUT ASSUMPTIONS
AND PERCEPTIONS BEFORE
MAKING NEGATIVE JUDGMENTS
OR CONCLUSIONS

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MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

"If any of us has a question or concern about the other's intent or actions, we will take time to step back and think about the situation before automatically making assumptions and getting angry."

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Before judging someone adversely:

- ☞ Engage in inquiry instead of accusation
- ☞ Clarify situation
- ☞ Gather as much information as possible

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Improve communication skills:

- ☞ Put your effort into listening, not arguing
- ☞ Listen for what you can understand
- ☞ Be open to new information
- ☞ Make an effort not to be defensive

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Let the speaker know you understand:

- ☞ Focus on objectives and hopes you share in common

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Be aware of feelings, emotions:

- ☞ Stay in control of emotions so they don't get in the way of your thinking and reasoning ability

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Be aware of your style of communication:

- ☞ How do you come across to the other person?

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Pay attention to time, place and manner:

- ☞ External circumstances matter

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Personal, cultural and/or other differences:

- ☞ Recognize and accept
- ☞ Understand that conflicts often result from misunderstandings regarding “cross-cultural communications”

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Improve work relationships:

- ☞ Give others the benefit of the doubt
- ☞ Avoid being judgmental and critical of others
- ☞ Treat all co-workers with respect

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Develop a positive attitude:

- ☞ Positive outlook correlates with positive health outcomes
- ☞ Replace negative thoughts and interpretations with positive ones

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Resolve conflicts early:

- ☞ Is the “presenting issue” the real issue?
- ☞ Deal with the “little issues” before they become bigger ones
- ☞ Develop a plan of action to address problems early on
- ☞ Take steps to resolve causes of on-going stress, anger, hostility

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Focus on problem solving:

- ☞ Think through your options in advance
- ☞ Seek assistance when faced with a sensitive situation you don’t want to tackle alone
- ☞ Investigate available resources

UCSF'S PROBLEM RESOLUTION CENTER ("PRC")

The PRC provides neutral and confidential services and resources to assist staff, faculty, students and administrators in preventing and resolving problems, issues and disputes.

www.ucsf.edu/resolve

UCSF'S PROBLEM RESOLUTION CENTER
("PRC")

Mediation convened by the PRC:

- ☞ Facilitates open communication and creative problem solving
- ☞ No one can be bound to an outcome unless she or he voluntarily agrees
- ☞ Mediation is available in addition to existing formal grievance procedures

UCSF'S PROBLEM RESOLUTION CENTER
("PRC")

Mediation convened by the PRC is:

- ☞ Voluntary
- ☞ Neutral
- ☞ Confidential

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The "magic" of mediation:

- ☞ Provides a time/place to hear and acknowledge each other
- ☞ Offers opportunity to understand opposing perspectives
- ☞ Encourages people to assess their options realistically
- ☞ Avoids win-lose scenario
- ☞ Helps people find alternatives to conflict

UCSF'S PROBLEM RESOLUTION CENTER
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Other Problem Resolution Center Services:

In addition to confidential conflict prevention and resolution services, the PRC provides neutral impartial assistance, including coaching and facilitation, to individuals and groups to enhance interpersonal and organizational communications skills.

www.ucsf.edu/resolve

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RESOURCES:

Links:

Problem Resolution Center: www.ucsf.edu/resolve; 502-1082

Prof. Deborah Tannen: <http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/tannend/>

Books:

Difficult Conversations by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton and Sheila Heen

Getting to Yes by Roger Fisher and William Ury

Gandhi's Way by Mark Juergensmeyer

Resolving Conflict at Work by Kenneth Cloke and Joan Goldsmith
