



Resolving Conflict

Many people are uncomfortable when it comes to confrontation. I understand the concept of having the conversation in your head; so you can plan out what you want to say and how you want to say it. Sometimes these mental conversations are enough to settle the issue, as you realize you are making too much out of a simple situation.

I know that I have spent hours lying in bed at night having conversations with people with whom I am angry and frustrated. Not only does this practice disrupt your sleep, your attitude and your health, it never really resolves the issue, and is potentially damaging to your relationships.

Don't get me wrong, I don't believe that you need to confront every action. If you have the conversation once in your head, don't worry about it. If it comes back and you have it again, perhaps start thinking about holding a real conversation.

By the third in your head confrontation, start planning how you will deal with the real confrontation, because it looks as if you are going to need to do that.

How to Hold a Real, Necessary Conflict or Confrontation

Start by preparing yourself to confront the real issue. **Be able to state the issue in one (or two), non-emotional, factual based sentences.**

For example, assume you want to confront your coworker for taking all of the credit for the work that the two of you did together on a project. Instead of saying, "You took all the credit, blah, blah, blah..." and venting your frustration, which is what you might say in your mind, rephrase your approach using the above guidelines.

Say instead, "It looks as if I played no role in the Johnson account. My name does not appear anywhere on the document, nor I have been given credit anywhere that I can see."

(I've used additional communication techniques such as I language as well in this statement. Notice that I avoided using the words I feel because that is an emotional statement, without proof and facts. The facts in this statement cannot be disputed, but an I feel statement is easy for your coworker to refute.)

Make your initial statement and stop talking. When the person you are confronting responds, allow them to respond. It's a human tendency, but don't make the mistake of adding to your initial statement, to further justify the statement.

Defending why you feel the way you do will generally just create an argument. Say what you want to say (the confrontation), then just allow the other person to respond.

Especially since you've probably held the conversation in your head a few times, you may think you know how the other person is going to respond. But, it's a mistake to jump to that point before they have the opportunity to respond. Resist the temptation to say anything else at this point. Let them respond.

Avoid arguing during the confrontation. Confrontation does not mean fight. It means: state what you have say. Listen to what they have to say. Many times it actually ends right there.

Do you need to prove the other person right or wrong? Does someone have to take blame? Get your frustration off your chest, and move on.

Figure out the conflict resolution you want before the confrontation. If you approached your coworker with the initial statement, "You took all the credit, blah, blah, blah..." her response is likely going to be quite defensive. Perhaps she'll say something like, "Yes, you have been given credit. I said both of our names to the boss just last week."

If you already know what you are looking for in the confrontation, this is where you move the conversation. Don't get into an argument about whether she did or didn't mention anything to the boss last week - that isn't really the issue and don't let it distract you from accomplishing the goal of the confrontation.

Your response could be, "I would appreciate if in the future that we use both of our names on any documentation, and include each other in all of the correspondence about the project."

Focus on the real issue of the confrontation. The other party will either agree or disagree. Keep to the issue at this point, and avoid all temptation to get into an argument. Negotiate, but don't fight.

The issue is you aren't receiving credit, and you want your name on the documentation. That's it. It isn't about blame, about who is right or wrong or anything other than your desired resolution.

You will rarely look forward to confrontation; you may never become completely comfortable with, or even skilled in, confrontation. However, it is important that you say something when you are frustrated and angry. If you can't stand up for yourself, who will?