

BASIC STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING CONFLICT, DEALING WITH CONFRONTATION, AND DIFFUSING ANGER*

1. **Being assertive in voice (firm and steady) and non-verbal behaviors:** A calming presence can give others the feeling that you are in control.
2. **Being empathic:** Acknowledge the other person's feelings. Knowing he/she is understood can often break through hostility.
3. **Acknowledging your own feelings:** Self-disclosure about how you are feeling can help people focus on the interaction between the two of you. It is very important to *own* (i.e., take responsibility for) your own feelings during a confrontation.
4. **Asking for clarification the problem:** This gives you time to make an accurate assessment of the problem so that you can avoid misunderstandings and hasty decisions. It allows you both to think out loud and confront any misperceptions. Also, paraphrasing what the other person has said to you helps to avoid making *assumptions* about what the other person is feeling; it is better to be wrong and ask for clarification than to make an assumption without obtaining confirmation.
5. **Allowing a person to "blow off steam":** The other person may be too upset to clarify the problem and problem solve. Allowing time to calm down may help. Moving to a less congested area may facilitate the process.
6. **Requesting a time out:** You may want to ask the person who is very upset or angry to come back later after he/she has calmed down. This should be done in a calm and non-judgmental manner.
7. **Dealing with criticism:**
Fogging—Accept the possibility of truth in a manipulative criticism, calmly acknowledging that you hear the criticism, but not getting yourself trapped into feeling defensive or needing to explain yourself.
Negative assertion—Assertively accept those things which are due to your errors by agreeing with the critical statement to you, though not necessarily conceding the entire accusation.
8. **Using the broken record technique:** Be persistent and repeat your question, request, or statement over and over again, but without getting angry, irritated, or loud. Avoid explaining or justifying your point of view; simply restate it in a calm but persistent manner.
9. **Shifting gears:** Often repeating yourself will not engage the other person. You may need to shift from the content to the behavior. Suggesting that you start over is one way to handle this shift.
10. **Setting limits:** You have the right to set limits as to what you are willing to put up with in terms of another's behavior. This can be done in a very firm but non-aggressive manner. At times, this may involve compromise—particularly if you are dealing with a supervisor—but you can still set limits within the existing structure and parameters.

*Adapted from the book *When I Say No, I Feel Guilty* by Manual Smith