



In A World Of Conflict, 3 Resolution Strategies To Use At Work In 2024

By Anna Shields, Consensio, 19 December 2023

There has been so much conflict around the globe in 2023. As individuals, our ability to influence events on the world stage is limited, leaving many of us feeling powerless, disheartened, and hopeless. Even if the conflicts we encounter every day in our working lives don't relate to current events, they often make us feel the same emotions. While there's much that will still feel out of our control, in the issues we face at work, many more options are open to us. Here are three strategies for resolving workplace disputes in 2024.

1. Be the change

In conflict, people often feel stuck and unable to see a way out. Maybe there's a belief that the other party will never change or that we have to accept existing team dynamics. But often, it only takes one person to make change happen, and the one person that can make that change is you. For example, you could explain to a colleague that you felt hurt when they questioned your suggestion rather than let resentment build. They might have had no intention of making you feel this way and may be completely unaware of their impact on you. The conversation may reveal that their questions were from a place of interest and curiosity rather than critique. When one person takes the time to explain to someone what effect their behavior has on them, this clarifies things and can reset the dynamics of a relationship.

2. Explore your choices

In the midst of a dispute, there can be a tendency towards adopting a fixed mindset. This means we perceive that we only have limited options, leading to a sense of helplessness. But the reality is that for most of us, there are always choices. Taking time to review all the available options, perhaps with the help of a trusted friend or colleague, can reveal more choices than we first thought possible. For example, rather than taking out a grievance, you could have a conversation facilitated by a third party, such as a mediator. Or, after considering other perspectives on the situation, you may make an informed choice to take no action. Just acknowledging these choices is a step forward.

3. Build connections

Conflict at work can leave individuals feeling isolated and disconnected, exacerbated by other aspects of modern working life, such as remote or hybrid working or, on the flip side, long and stressful commutes. This year, an advisory issued by U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy describes loneliness and isolation as a "public health crisis" and suggests a remedy, that "relationships are a source of healing and well-being hiding in plain sight". Positive social interactions, be they with family, friends, or work colleagues, have a sustaining and calming effect, which is especially useful in times of stress. Building our relationships with colleagues not only nurtures connections but also forges trust, which helps us better navigate conflict when it arises.

We can all hope for a more peaceful world in 2024. In our own working lives, we can turn this hope into reality. When we feel powerless in the face of conflict, it is reassuring to know that some things are within our control.