HANDLING CONFLICT

Use “I” statements. Avoid “You” statements as they place the other person on the defensive.

Don’t take it personally. Some conflict is actually a sign of a healthy relationship.

Find a confidential setting to honor each other’s privacy.

Allow the other person to express him/herself and vent his/her feelings.

Do not speak for anyone else.

One person speaks at a time – do not interrupt each other.

Stay in the present – in the “here and now.” Bringing up past related or unrelated issues only serves to muddy the water and fuel the conflict.

Stick to the facts. Be as objective as you can.

Focus on similarities, not differences – look for common ground.

Agree on a time out if the situation begins to escalate. Return to the conversation when the interaction can be more productive.

Always listen with a third ear — very attentively. Note the content of what someone says, as well as the tone of voice and nonverbal gestures.

Use the person’s name as you address him/her. Don’t use negative or pejorative labels.

Maintain eye contact unless it is culturally inappropriate.

Be respectful, professional and polite.
Avoid being judgmental, accusatory or argumentative. No name calling or labeling.

Ask questions to clarify anything you might not fully understand.

Recognize that your “perception” of the situation is just that. It’s neither right, nor wrong. It is how you view the world. Could you or the other person misperceive the situation? If so, is it a conflict or a misperception?

Take responsibility for your actions and make a good faith effort to do better. Do your best to solve the problem.

Be willing to negotiate. Recognize where compromise may serve as a win-win for both parties with each having to let go of something.

Examine your possible contribution to the problem. If so, admit it.

If necessary, apologize and mean it.

Keep your promises. Like the old cliché, “actions speak louder than words.”

Remember — it’s not about who wins or loses. It’s about being able to communicate effectively and to resolve problems.

Others will be watching and learning from you. Be a role model and teach them well. Knowing how to work through conflict is a very useful and important skill.

“The reality today is that we are all interdependent and have to co-exist on this small planet. Therefore, the only sensible and intelligent way of resolving differences and clashes of interests, whether between individuals or nations, is through dialogue.” — The Dalai Lama

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