



Active Listening and Conflict Resolution Basics

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Approaches to Conflict

1. Power based approaches use power to handle the problem.
I'm the boss. We do it my way. You do the dishes.
Can also use threats, manipulation, physical force, intimidation, strikes, acts of disobedience
2. Rights-based approaches appeal to a general standard and apply it to a particular case.
Our policy says the interns do the dishes.
May be explicit in laws, policy manuals, contracts, religious moral codes, or may be implicit in given contexts.
3. Interest-based approaches ask the question "what needs or underlying interests are you trying to address by taking a certain position?"
You'd rather do the dishes, I'd rather take out the garbage.
Involves identifying underlying needs of the particular individuals in the conflict to generate new ways of meeting as many needs as possible.

Interest based approaches require good listening skills. Good listening require a certain amount of self-reflection and skills we can all learn and practice.

Role of the listener in conflict situations

Dealing with complaints or conflict, your role as a listener is

- ! To be impartial
- ! Create a positive and 'safe' confidential environment
- ! Help the speaker tell what is important to them
- ! Acknowledge experiences, concerns, needs and values

Listening priorities

1. Listen to **whatever is on the speakers mind**. Ask an open ended question, they'll answer with whatever is most important first.

Tell me how you see the situation

Tell me about what's been going on

You mentioned that X tends to happen – can you give me an example?

2. Give the person a chance to **tell all the events or facts** that relate to the problem. Gradually ask questions that help the person talk about the sequence of events.

What happened before she took out the compost?

So you said you went to talk to her about it last week. What was the effect of that?

- ! Impact of events/actions
 - ! How was your relationship affected by the fight?

- ! Specific details
 - ! What did the kitchen look like when you got here?

- ! Positive intentions
 - ! What were you hoping for when you....
- ! Interests, needs and values
 - ! What are some of your concerns about...
 - ! What is important to you about...
 - ! What would you like to be different about...

Signs that things are going well...

- ! Person will show less tension in body, voice etc.
- ! Tears of relief
- ! Person says relatively more positive things about the situation or person
- ! Person may offer statement of regret or apology
- ! Possible solutions may be suggested
- !

Active listening tips

Some tips to help difficult conversations go more smoothly...

- ! Be attentive, and try to remain open minded. You don't necessarily know what the other person is going to say.
- ! Respond sensitively to emotions being expressed. (Avoid "Don't cry, don't cry, it's gonna be fine!")
- !