



Changing Your Mindset for Better Conflict Resolution

When we experience a conflict, we can often get stuck in defensive, ego-driven mindsets. These mindsets make it difficult to see beyond our own experience and wants to collaborate with others on a solution that works for everybody. In this exercise, you will learn about three *conflict resolution mindsets* that encourage effective, productive conflict resolution. Then, using recent conflicts, you will have the opportunity to practice shifting into these mindsets.

Conflict resolution mindsets

Establishing shared goals

Every human being has the same basic physical, mental, and spiritual needs. We often believe that our goals are different from others' when we cling to our ideas about the best way to accomplish our goals. There is always some common ground in a workplace conflict. If you both work in the same organization, you probably both want to achieve the mission of the organization. If you can find and agree on some shared goals, you can work towards an effective resolution.

Unconditional respect

One basic need we all have is to feel that others respect us. We feel crushed when we perceive that we are being treated as though we aren't as smart, kind, capable, dedicated, or worthy as others. When we behave as though we believe that everybody is worthy of respect, deserves to have their needs met, and has good intentions, many arguments can be saved.

Empathy

When we are mired in our uncomfortable feelings related to a conflict, it can feel almost impossible to consider the other person's perspective. Assuming that they could easily give us what we want and that they are simply refusing seems to be a default setting. In reality, everybody faces unknown challenges. If we can develop an understanding of what those challenges might be, we can more easily work with the person instead of against them.

Go to the next page to complete the mindset-shifting exercise.



Shift Your Mindset

Think of a recent interpersonal conflict that brought up strong, uncomfortable emotions for you. Based on your experience and what you know, write out the answers to the questions under each of the conflict resolution mindsets. This exercise is even more productive if you can involve the person with whom you are having the conflict.

Establishing shared goals

- 1) What did you want that you felt like you couldn't get?
- 2) What did the other person want?
- 3) Which of your individual needs (safety, respect, resources, etc.) were not being met during the conflict?
- 4) Which of the individual needs from question #3 do you think the other person has?
- 5) Thinking about the work you are doing with the other person, write down three shared goals you are both trying to accomplish.

Unconditional respect

- 1) What are some characteristics or behaviors that you respect?
- 2) Write down three each of your needs for good physical health, mental health, and spiritual health.
- 3) Are the needs from question 2 being met? Why or why not?
- 4) What physical, mental, and spiritual health needs might the other person have?
- 5) What are the disadvantages of showing every person respect? What are the advantages?

Empathy

- 1) What do you want the outcome of this conflict to be?
- 2) What do you think the other person would like the outcome of the conflict to be?
- 3) What challenges would keep you from giving the other person what they want?
- 4) What challenges do you think would keep the other person from giving you what you want?
- 5) What uncomfortable emotions are you experiencing around this conflict (see the [HS Emotion Wheels](#) to get help with emotion selection)?
- 6) What uncomfortable emotions do you think the other person might be experiencing?