Well-Being Program
Guide to Conflict Resolution

Being Well Together

A Well-Being Support Guide Created for You

The ACR® is committed to supporting your well-being. Guides like these, created by fellow radiologists, are designed to help identify activities that may enhance your well-being and mitigate burnout. These resources are part of the ACR Radiology Well-Being Program, which includes access to the Well-Being Index for ACR members and an ACGME-aligned well-being curriculum for program directors.

Additional support guides are also available on topics including self-care, resilience, diversity and more. Find everything at acr.org/WBI.

About Conflict Resolution

Frustrations in medical practice can come in many forms and from many sources:

- Demands for greater productivity
- Escalating demands on your time such as electronic health record (EHR) documentation
- Expectations for greater communication/connection with patients and caregivers

Many of the conflicts in health care are the product of structural issues that seem difficult to address. For example, with whom do you talk to about addressing the conflicts created by the demands of the EHR? Developing good working relationships among the various stakeholders is the foundation upon which the larger structural issues may be successfully approached. Conflicts can also be more personal, such as conflicts with supervisors, peers, or those you supervise. Signs of conflicts that require resolution can come in many forms and should not be ignored (conflicts typically don't get better if left unaddressed). Signs include:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Changes in eating habits, weight loss or gain
- Repetitive negative thinking about an issue or a person
- More general negativity or cynicism

Like any other skill, conflict resolution requires knowledge and practice. The resources within this guide provide guidance in recognizing conflicts that need attention, and offers skills that can lead to success.

Conflict Resolution and Burnout

Burnout is typically the result of differences between expectations (yours and others) and reality. Many obstacles can create those differences, including absence of time, resources, emotional support, etc. One significant contributor can be conflicts with others. While there may be differences in how each of these types of conflict originate or are resolved, some basic principles of conflict resolution can lead to improvement and/or success wherever conflicts arise.

Objectives

This guide will take you through readings, activities and other resources to provide you with tools you can use to reduce symptoms of burnout as they relate to conflict resolution:

- Learn how to identify conflicts that need attention
- Identify techniques for attending to conflict resolution
- Understand how to implement successful conflict resolution in your workplace

Resources

Conflict Resolution Tools — Article and Exercises

[Teaching Conflict Resolution in Medicine: Lessons from Business, Diplomacy, and Theatre](#)

These resources concentrate on the development of effective teams and focus on teaching conflict resolution skills using a hierarchical approach to preserve interpersonal relationships in medicine. This includes:

- Conflict management and conflict resolution styles
- Small-group negotiations
- Case-based clinical scenarios
- Personal reflection
- Facilitated debriefs

The tools are all customizable and time-flexible. Note: You must download the appendices to access the exercises and presentations.

Activity Time

🕐 Flexible

Crucial Conversation Tools

[Crucial Conversations and Conflict Resolution Interprofessional Simulation](#)

This set of exercises and simulations is designed to help understand and improve communication skills, especially as they are needed in difficult interprofessional conversations specific to health care. Included is a facilitator guide, a PowerPoint slide deck, simulation and role-play scenarios focusing on specific types of conflict in health care, and a summary survey. The use of these simulations should produce more transferable skills and an understanding of conflict resolution in various situations specific to health care. Note: You must download the appendices to access the exercises and presentations.

Activity Time

🕐 Effective use of the materials should take at about an hour. There are sufficient materials representing multiple situations and types of issues for additional use.

Conflict Resolution Kit — Articles and Exercises

[Conflict Resolution Network](#)

This includes a summary of levels of conflict that can be used to see how minor tensions rise to more serious problems (earlier resolution avoids much bigger challenges later).

In this kit, 12 approaches to conflict resolution are discussed with a variety of examples that help you understand how each is applied and where it may be appropriate. The best use of this will be thinking through specific examples where these approaches can be used in your work environment. These materials are general to all varieties of conflict, not just health care.

Activity Time

🕐 30 minutes to an hour depending on how thoughtfully you approach it.

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Mind Tools on Conflict Resolution — Article and Video

Conflict Resolution Using the "Interest-Based Relational" Approach

This is a brief summary of the interest-based approach to conflict resolution, with specific steps for implementation, shifting the focus from the conflict to the interests of the parties, and the search for mutually acceptable solutions.

Activity Time

🕐 9 minutes

What's Next?

Successful conflict resolution requires practice in context. Take what you learn here and apply it! It's best to start with resolution of smaller disagreements and work up to more complex and difficult conflicts that are harming you, other medical professionals or patients. Some of the most difficult conflicts are those in which there are differences in diversity among those who are having the conflict. Understanding the perspective of those with whom the conflict occurs can be an important first step to successful resolution.

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