

Nine Thought Keys to Minimize Workplace Conflict

We can choose our friends but we really can't choose our co-workers. So inevitably most of us will discover a co-worker whose attitude or personality is strikingly different from our own. It's easy and enjoyable to work with individuals whom we like and can "connect with." But it can be a real challenge to work side by side with someone whose outlook or values seem alien! Vivian Scott, a professional mediator and author of *Conflict Resolution at Work for Dummies*, suggests nine perspectives that will reduce the likelihood of an ugly blow-up at work:

- **Your future:** Most of us value our jobs as the vital link to economic security and a better future. Remembering this will help you look beyond the current situation and resist workplace conflict that can jeopardize job security.
- **Your perspective:** It's easy to get so wrapped up in on-going workplace conflict that you lose all perspective of the situation. Maybe you can detach from the daily drama and try to neutralize your personal negativity.
- **Your responses:** You can't control another's actions, thoughts or feelings. But you have the power to control your own responses. You can monitor the way you react and try to keep calm realizing that an aggressive response will not solve the problem -- only make you look silly!
- **Your investment:** Consider how long you've lived with this conflict and how much effort you are putting into it. In order to reduce your stress and emotional pain, reduce your investment in the conflict. Spend less time thinking about it, talking about it and engaging in it.

- **Your role in the conflict:** As tough as it is to admit, you probably have some responsibility in the conflict. Ask yourself, "What have I said or done - or not said or done - that has kept this conflict going?"
- **Your energy:** Changing where you focus your energy can greatly diminish the conflict. Instead of putting 110% into "winning" the conflict, let it go and shift the focus to your work, your health and your family.



- **Your own story:** When you read a good book, you create a movie in your head. With workplace conflict, you can do the same by choosing how to depict the scene to yourself or others. You don't have to be the angry victim. You can be the cool-headed adult!
- **Your emotions:** You can allow negative emotions to escalate – and make you increasingly miserable – or you can find a way to purge them. Calling your Employee Assistance Program to ventilate and examine your emotions with a professional counselor is a great way of reducing emotional pain.
- **Your character:** When you find yourself saying, "He makes me so angry that I react like a jerk," you are surrendering control of your moral fiber to that other person. Better to take personal responsibility and not give the other person the power to make you behave in a way that is unbecoming, embarrassing or dishonorable.