

...resolve a conflict with a colleague



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Anke uses her expertise from both fields to address science communication, to coach scientists in this area and to share her knowledge in workshops.

For many people, that sounds like a pretty delicate matter. Addressing the conflict comes with the worry of making the problem bigger. What if the person gets really angry or doesn't see a conflict at all?

Of course, all this could happen. But don't hope the conflict will resolve itself. Address it as soon as possible to prevent it from escalating further. Conflicts could become very contagious to the rest of your team.

And maybe your colleague is even glad that you are addressing the difficult situation between you. So, it's worth looking at how best to address a conflict and come to a good mutual solution.

Resolving conflicts requires open communication.

But before you approach your colleague, it's good to be clear about the situation yourself. How do you feel? And what would you need to feel better? If you could use a little support for that, check it out here -

<https://www.gefuehlsmonster.de/en/self-management/>

Once you have reflected on the situation for yourself, ask your colleague to talk to you.

A calm setting and trusting atmosphere are crucial when discussing sensitive issues with a colleague. Choose the right place where you can have a conversation without distractions. All parties should be able to feel comfortable and relaxed. Therefore, the timing also plays an important role. Talks between here and there are not promising.

Confidentiality

Before you start, assure your colleague that the conversation will remain confidential. And ask your colleague to keep what you will say confidential as well. Respecting confidentiality is very important to build trust and openness.

5 Steps Method

Then describe the conflict from your point of view. How do you experience the situation?

Share your observations of a situation or problem. You can start with:

I noticed that...

I experienced the situation as follows...

From my perspective, the problem is...

Describe the effect this has on you.

This means for me...

For me this has the following effects...

Voice your feelings

I felt...insecure.

I was...angry, sad...

This confused me...

and the underlying needs.

and I need more information,

and I need your support,

and I need clarity.

Then ask the other person to describe their view of the situation.

How did you experience this?

What is your view on the situation?

Formulate your request.

For me it would be helpful, if...

How could a good solution look like?

Active Listening

To understand each other properly, you can use Active Listening as a tool. That means to demonstrate genuine interest in your colleague's perspective. Give the other person your undivided attention, maintain eye contact, and avoid interrupting the person with your own thoughts or conclusions. Also, show empathy and try to understand the other person's feelings.

Find a common goal

You must find common ground to resolve the conflict. One helpful way is to find areas where you agree or share common goals. Focus on mutual interests and look for a solution that benefits both parties. In order not to limit yourself in your ideas, use brainstorming as a method. In this way, you can explore different ideas and work towards finding a solution that addresses both perspectives.

Solution Cards

A helpful tool are solution cards. To do this, both parties write on moderation cards: “I am ready to

do...” and “I wish...” One idea per card. No conditions shall be written down.

When all the cards are written, one party reads out all its cards. Then it is the other party's turn. After all the cards are face up, they are sorted. Here, an “I wish card” from one party is always combined with an “I am ready card” from the other party. You can use this to come to a mutual agreement.

Seek mediation if necessary

If you're unable to reach a resolution through direct discussions, involve a neutral third party. Ask your institute for a mediator, to facilitate the conversation and help find a resolution. You should also ask a mediator if the conflict has existed for a long time.



Structural conflicts

When resolving conflicts, have in mind that often the circumstances in which you are working will encourage or cause conflicts between people. So, if it is a structural conflict, you can agree on how best to deal with the situation. On the other hand, you could address the problem to those responsible.

Especially in the context of science, there are several conditions that favour conflicts - temporary contracts, high pressure and an uncertain career future are just a few of them.

Summary

Remember, conflicts are natural, and resolving them constructively can lead to stronger (working) relationships.

Addressing conflicts requires patience, active listening, and a commitment to finding a solution that benefits all people involved. By addressing conflicts in a timely and constructive manner, you can promote more harmonious and productive work for your entire research group or team.

If you have topics for the „how to“ section we have not yet touched, please email to jGfV@GfV.org.