

# 11 Tips for Difficult Conversations and Conflict Resolution

All these tools require practice because they don't usually come to us naturally. If you want to practice, you're welcome to make an appointment with the Ombudsperson: [calendly.com/nhaddad-ombuds](https://calendly.com/nhaddad-ombuds)

1

## Don't ignore it.

Don't hope that it will go away. Conflict is not the enemy. It is a catalyst for change. Embrace it.

3

## Try to substitute "and" for "but."

For instance, when I am in the midst of a conversation, instead of listening, I find myself preparing my response. When you start with "And..." it gives your conflict partner the sense of having been heard.

5

## Imagine yourself as an outside observer.

Is there a perspective that is larger than yours or your conflict partner's? Can you see the story that is being told?

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## Conflict is multi-dimensional.

We often think of conflict as having two sides, but often, it is multi-dimensional. All for all the possible dimensions.

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## Resolution has to be and feel fair for it to work.

Consider the resolution of WWI. It led directly to WWII, partly because the WWI resolution that was so punitive, resentment, not peace was born.

11

## What is the difference between interests and positions?

A position—as the definition suggests, a position if fixed, therefore, it is not open to change. You can however acknowledge the other person's interests and see where they do and don't coincide with your own.

2

## Define the issue and stick to it.

4

## Be curious.

Ask questions. Instead of focusing on who is right, find out why the other person thinks that way, why they behaved that way, what were they trying to get across? Often, we spend conflict finding all the ways we are right. Instead, try finding out why the other person might be right, try seeing things from their perspective.

6

## Are you talking more than the other person?

Check yourself to see if you are listening enough. Listening is a huge part of establishing trust, without which, resolutions can't last.

8

## Consider timing.

Sometimes, a resolution is all about getting the right people in the right place at the right time. Consider Ireland and England the conflict (euphemistically referred to as "the Troubles") began in the late 1960s and was resolved with the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. What changed? The right people arose at the right time to hammer out an agreement—and that was years in the making. They didn't suddenly decide to get together over Easter and work it out.

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## Talk about best case outcomes.

That will give both (or all) of you a chance to see how close or how far apart you are. It will also clarify interests and keep you out of positions.



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