

## HOW TO RESOLVE INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

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Disagreements are part of life. They often occur when we forget that not everyone sees things the same way. Conflict should be viewed as an opportunity to grow, not a contest for domination. Lutherans are traditionally shy, but when push comes to shove they value healthy relationships above all.

### 1 Adopt a healthy attitude.

Your frame of mind is critical. Approach the situation with forethought and calm. Prayer can be invaluable at this stage. Do not approach the other party when you're angry or upset.

### 2 Read Matthew 18:15-20 beforehand.

Consult the Bible to orient your thinking. This is the model Jesus provided and can be used to call to mind an appropriate method.

### 3 Talk directly to the person involved.

Avoid "triangulation." Talking about someone to a third party can make the conflict worse, as they may feel they are the subject of gossip. Speaking with the other person directly eliminates the danger and boosts the odds of a good outcome.

### 4 Express yourself without attacking.

Using "I statements" can avoid casting the other person as the "bad guy" and inflaming the conflict. "I statements" are sentences beginning with phrases such as "I feel ..." or "I'm uncomfortable when ..."

### 5 Keep "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) as your goal.

Your "truth" may not be the other party's. Your objective is to discover and honor each other's "truth," not to put down the other person. Be ready to admit your own faults and mistakes.

### 6 Seek out a third party to act as an impartial witness.

If direct conversation doesn't resolve the conflict, locate someone both parties trust to sit in. This can help clarify your positions and bring understanding.

### 7 Build toward forgiveness and a renewed friendship.

Agree upon how you will communicate to prevent future misunderstandings.

## Be Aware

- Seemingly unrelated events in your or the other person's life may be playing an invisible role in the conflict at hand. Be ready to shift the focus to the real cause.
- You may not be able to resolve the conflict at this time, but don't give up on future opportunities.