

New Rules of Engagement at Work!

Before meeting with members of a work team with whom you have disagreements:

Withdraw and calm yourself, which will help you to enter the meeting feeling better grounded.

Prepare yourself for unpleasant emotional reactions others may experience so you will be less likely to react in ways that may worsen and perpetuate emotional reactivity.

Imagine a thick glass wall between you and the other person and **focus mainly on your own feelings, thoughts, and actions without reacting**.

Seek common ground from the outset of a work project and revisit this focus whenever conflicts emerge.

Present your positions and ideas using **“I-statements.”**

Be open to others’ perspectives.

Restate your best understanding of others’ points, values, and interests using key phrases they use.

Ask for confirmation or correction. Request that others do the same.

Contribute to the development of a shared vision that is compelling to all group members.

Advocate for a division of labor that permits each participant to employ some of their best skills, knowledge, and interests.

Point out emerging increments of agreement and progress toward mutually desired outcomes.

Stay focused on freshly emerging issues versus getting bogged down addressing more complex problems prematurely.

Break bigger problems into sequential steps and tackle them one at a time.

Acknowledge your contributions to difficulty and express a desire to get back on track.

It might help to **discuss differences from a third person perspective**, summarizing two different perspectives openly and without judgment the way a third party might describe them.

Even before agreeable solutions begin to emerge, it is important to **notice and encourage earnest efforts by others.**

Establish routine patterns of connection, such as starting each conversation by reviewing shared interests and areas of agreement.

When you encounter avoidant or adversarial reactions:

Remind yourself that everyone engages in some version of these patterns at times.

Reflect on whether your reactions (or theirs!) are fleeting or whether they represent a person's characteristic style of handling conflict.

Ask what the other person needs to open the door to mutual understanding and trust.

Be willing to acknowledge what you need.

Establish an agreement to take breaks to regroup as needed.

If you do become entangled in a heated exchange:

Differentiate between your intentions and the impact of your comments and actions.

Taken from "Moving from Conflict to Collaboration" by Stan Clark, ED.D., EAW Psychologist