



OFFICE OF
**HUMAN RESOURCE
DEVELOPMENT**
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Academic Leadership Support

Office of Quality Improvement & Office of Human Resource Development



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8 Steps For Conflict Resolution Overview

4. Take a Listening Stance into the Interaction

- Seek first to understand, then to be understood” (Covey)
- Use Active Listening skills

Active listening text:

When engaged in a conflict, we have a tendency to “push, push, push!” Of course, this is because “you just don’t understand me!” One of the most important challenges we face in negotiating solutions to conflicts is the need to resist the urge to push and, instead, make a special effort to listen. If we dedicate ourselves to active listening, we significantly improve the likelihood that our ideas and feelings, in turn, will be understood by the other person. And if we truly come to understand the other’s point of view in the conflict, we may actually clarify why the situation has become so combustible to this point.

“Taking a listening stance” begins by preparing oneself to listen:

- Take a deep, cleansing breath and relax
- Remove distractions, as much as possible
- Sit (or face) the other person directly, with an open body posture
- Focus on listening as your first priority in the conversation

Taking a few moments to prepare reduces the strength of the emotional stranglehold that has likely accompanied your anxiety about the conversation. You may find that you need support resources for stress management. If we are overwhelmed by stress, it is difficult to listen effectively. Thus seeking support for stress management could be a helpful element of this process. Approaches to anger

management may be found at http://wiscinfo.doit.wisc.edu/eao/special_topics/page4.htm

When listening to the other person's point of view, the following responses are often helpful:

| What to Do | How to Say It |
|--|--|
| Encourage the other person to share his or her issues as fully as possible. | "I want to understand what has upset you." "I want to know what you are really hoping for." |
| Clarify the real issues, rather than making assumptions. Ask questions that allow you to gain this information, and which let the other person know you are trying to understand. | "Can you say more about that?" "Is that the way it usually happens?" |
| Restate what you have heard, so you are both able to see what has been understood so far – it may be that the other person will then realize that additional information is needed. | "It sounds like you weren't expecting that to happen." |
| Reflect feelings – be as clear as possible. | "I can imagine how upsetting that must have been." |
| Validate the concerns of the other person, even if a solution is elusive at this time. Expressing appreciation can be a very powerful message if it is conveyed with integrity and respect. | "I really appreciate that we are talking about this issue." "I am glad we are trying to figure this out." |

By taking a listening stance into the interaction, you set the scene for your opportunity to share your concerns about the conflict. Again, we recognize that this can be very challenging! But, if you persevere the effort is often worth it.

Article courtesy of [Office](#) of Human Resource Development University of Wisconsin-Madison and Harry Webne-Behrman located at <http://www.ohrd.wisc.edu/onlinetraining/resolution/stepsoverview.htm>
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