



# DEALING WITH CONFLICT



People can experience conflict when there is a difference of ideas or opinions, and let's face it we are all unique and have different ideas and opinions to each other!

When working in a team consisting of people from different backgrounds and with different skills and experience, it is likely that you will experience some form of conflict.

Conflict can be either a positive or negative process for a team.

*Positive Conflict:*

A difference of ideas or opinions can be very productive in a team environment. It can encourage creative solutions to problems and generate innovation, variety and increased communication.

Positive conflict can also clear the air between team members, raise issues for clarification and resolution and improve relationships

*Negative Conflict:*

In some instances varied opinions are not productive. This is generally because the conflict is not communicated and dealt with appropriately. This can result in dysfunctional team dynamics and often presents some challenging behaviours.

When conflict is handled ineffectively it may also result in:

- Team members becoming frustrated
- Competition between team members and the development of a win-lose environment
- Increased stress levels and low morale
- Resentment between team members and the inability to work together effectively
- Ongoing anger between team members and outbursts of anger

## **How to deal with conflict**

Often the way we handle conflict is due to how we perceive conflict- some of us fear conflict, some of us avoid it, while others see it as an opportunity to address issues. Conflict can be healthy, if handled appropriately.

### **What to do if you are experiencing conflict in your group**

If you are experiencing conflict in your group, here are some strategies for managing this:

- Set aside some time to speak to your group members about the issues
- Be clear on what the issues are
- Address the issue rather than attack the person

Sometimes we may need to understand our own thoughts and feelings about the issue first of all. It may help to talk to a friend, family member, colleague or a counsellor before addressing the issue with the individuals/group.

### **Conflict with individuals/family/friends**

Similar to above, set aside time to talk through the issues and explore what options there are to address it. Consider options for how it might also be resolved. You may also be interested in finding out more about your own Conflict Management Styles (<http://sourcesofinsight.com/conflict-management-styles-at-a-glance/>).

### **Conflict with teaching staff**

If you are experiencing conflict with a Lecturer, tutor or staff member there are processes to help you address this. Similar to above you may wish to talk to a friend, family member, colleague or counsellor first before making a time with the individual to discuss. If you do not feel comfortable meeting with the staff member alone, you may wish to ask a friend to go with you.

There are University procedures and protocols in relation to Grievance with a staff member (<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/policies/4443>).







Counselling Support is available to assist students with personal difficulties that are affecting their study.

The service provides:

- Individual Counselling by appointment
- Telephone Counselling by appointment
- Mental health emergency response

**Counselling Support**

**Ground Floor, Horace Lamb Building**

**The University of Adelaide**

**Ph: +61 8 8313 5663**

**After hours support: 1300 167 654 or sms 0488 884 197**

This pamphlet was written by Student Life Counselling Support.