



We have flown through the air like birds, and swum the sea like fishes, but we have yet to learn the simple act of walking the earth as brothers. ~Martin Luther King

Responses to Conflict

When a conflict arises, some of the most common responses are:

- avoidance
- denial
- accommodation (giving in)
- aggression
- compromise
- collaboration

Some of these reactions simply bury or postpone the conflict, and it usually resurfaces later. Other reactions may allow tension or hostility to escalate or grow, and can lead to violence. Still other reactions can lead to an actual resolution. Note that the same response is not always the best one in every circumstance (e.g., You would not try to negotiate with someone who has a weapon, nor would you choose to accommodate someone in the face of taunts or ridicule).



Remember that onlookers to a conflict have a role to play in the escalation or resolution of a conflict.

Following is a list of possible forms of conflict resolution. Read through them, making sure you know what each one means. Then, rate them on a scale of the least effective to the most effective. Be willing to give examples and to explain the reasons for your rating. You may wish to describe under which circumstances, or in which type of conflict, each resolution would be appropriate.

- *communication*
- *arbitration*
- *litigation*
- *compromise*
- *withdrawal*
- *using chance*
- *delegation*
- *clearing up misunderstandings*
- *mediation*
- *legislation*
- *negotiation*
- *competition*
- *opting out*
- *intervention*
- *collaboration*
- *problem-solving*
- *empathy*
- *sharing*
- *taking turns*
- *avoidance*
- *voting*
- *consensus-building*
- *other?*

Mediation: an objective third party helps the disagreeing parties reach agreement

Arbitration: an authoritative third party makes the decision on the part of both parties

Intervention: an action from an outside group or person influences the conflict

Using chance: flipping a coin, tossing dice, picking a number

Legislation: a rule is made and agreed to by both parties, with consequences for not following the rule

Litigation: the conflict is taken to the courts for legal resolution and consequences

Delegation: one member of a group is named to act on behalf of the group involved in a dispute

Voting: several choices are presented and the option with the most votes is chosen

Empathy: putting yourself in the shoes of the other party

