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Tips On How To Resolve Conflicts Effectively, Part Four – March 23, 2010
by Joe Salama

So much of my work is about listening. Listening to the parties. Making the parties listen to each other. Making the parties know that they have been listened to. Conflict is created when communication fails. If we can reestablish communication, we should be able to diffuse the conflict.

Not everyone chooses to be involved in a conflict. They are often bootstrapped to one by virtue of their profession, partnership, or relationship. Mediation can help people learn how to create a functional dialogue to avoid unnecessary friction.

Remember people: Every conflict in your life requires your participation in order to keep it going. To clarify further: You are participating in an activity which is causing you great distress, unhappiness, and cost **by your choice**. At the very least, do not fuel the conflict any further. Ideally, seize the bull by the horns and demand a mediation with the other side to resolve the conflict. To do otherwise would be choosing to continue an activity that is causing you great distress, unhappiness, and cost - which would be irrational. That said, there ARE some situations that you can be in - because of financial pressures for example - where you are temporarily forced to maintain difficult relationships. If you are in such a situation, you must make sure you have a plan in place to change things so the temporary situation doesn't become permanent.

You have the power to direct much in your life. You have the ability to determine which relationships - professional or otherwise - need help before they explode. You are the primary person in charge of communicating your interests. Seize the day before the day seizes you.

When confronted with any new conflict, remember these three points:

(1) IT CAN BE UNDONE. That is the first thing that a person in the heat of conflict must understand. A conflict DOES NOT have to continue to its [il]logical conclusion.

(2)The second is that THE OTHER PARTIES LIKELY FEEL THE SAME WAY THAT YOU DO, despite their grandstanding and poker faces. Believe it. It isn't fun for anyone....

(3)The last is YOU CAN ALL GAIN WITHOUT ANYONE LOSING. Collaborating on a solution can address every party's needs, rather than one party forcing its needs on the others.

So relax, sit down, and try to communicate effectively and understand the other parties. If you can do it right, everyone wins.

We all need to find the proper time to workout, decompress, scream, blow up bad guys in video games, or do what we need to do to release the stress/negative energy/bad vibes before they come back out in some manner we don't want. The time is well invested, despite that it is often seen as "unproductive" time. Life is an endurance sport, and you don't want to be caught at age 45 without having learned how to relax properly.

A corollary to the last paragraph, finding the time to decompress, is not working too hard. People say this so often that the words don't mean anything anymore. Hard work is considered a good character trait. And certainly money is not in abundance for very many of us these days. It is therefore very easy to work too hard. One indication that you are working too hard is when you run into a figurative wall at work that you can't seem to get past, a problem that can't be solved.

Whether you are a mediator trying to solve a difficult conflict, or whether you are frustrated at work dealing with an obtuse client, or whether you are trying to figure out the instructions that came with the Ikea dresser you just bought, a fresh perspective **always helps**. If you don't have time to take a break, you can get a fresh perspective instantly by asking a colleague for their opinion. The deeper you immerse yourself into a problem, the farther you get from seeing the big picture of what it is that you are trying to solve.