Department of Corrections
WASHINGTON STATE

Conflict Resolution
DOC Human Resources

Conflict
at a glance

**Do's and Don'ts
of Resolving Conflict**

Do

- Understand that conflicts are inevitable
- Resolve to address conflict quickly
- Focus on the problem
- Be open to solutions
- Acknowledge how employees are feeling
- Actively listen

Don't

- Focus on personality traits that cannot be changed
- Interrupt
- Attack
- Disregard the feelings of the individual employees
- Allow emotions to take over the conversation
- Impose personal value or beliefs

"Whenever you're in a conflict with someone, there is one factor that can make the difference between damaging your relationship and deepening it. That factor is attitude."

*William James,
Father of American Psychology*

Using Conflict Resolution skills is important when working with others, but it is necessary to understand the root of the conflict before using strategies to fix it. Conflict with others comes from differences in beliefs, expectations, goals, values and behaviors that make us rub each other the wrong way. Here are some valuable resources that could help you resolve conflict in the workplace.

Six Steps to the Conflict Resolution Process:

1. Clarify the disagreement – Obtain as much information as possible by asking questions until each side understands the other's point of view.
2. Establish a common goal for both parties – Find a commonality in both sides, and discuss what each party would like to see happen.
3. Discuss ways to meet the common goal – Brainstorm different approaches to meet the goal.
4. Determine the barriers to the common goal – Define what can and cannot be changed, and discuss ways to get around those roadblocks.
5. Agree on the best way to resolve the conflict – Discuss the responsibility each party has to maintain the solution, ensuring this conflict does not arise again.
6. Acknowledge the agreed solution and each party's responsibilities in the resolution – Get both parties to acknowledge a win-win situation.

Five Basic Methods of Resolving Conflict:

- **Competing** is most appropriately used by managers and leaders in the work place. It is used primarily for situations that require:
  - ➢ *quick action where there is no compromise or debate, or*
  - ➢ *when making hard or unpopular decisions.*
- **Collaborating** involves team input. This is useful when:
  - ➢ *all parties want to find resolution, but*
  - ➢ *are unable to agree on what it should be.*
- **Compromising** involves a "win" for both sides of the table. This is used when:
  - ➢ *resolving issues of moderate to high importance,*
  - ➢ *parties are of equal power and there is strong commitment on both sides, and*
  - ➢ *oftentimes used as a temporary fix to a situation.*
- **Avoiding** is to not handle the conflict. This is best used in situations that:
  - ➢ *are not work related, and*
  - ➢ *should be resolved in another arena.*
- **Accommodating** is allowing the other side to "win." It is used primarily for:
  - ➢ *maintaining perspective in a situation, and*
  - ➢ *keeping the peace and creating goodwill.*

Considerations should include time constraints, number of people involved, and the relationships and differences of the people involved.

Remember: It is important to address conflict because unresolved conflict leads to low morale and productivity and in extreme cases, workplace violence.

Conflict will always exist between employees. Effective supervisors have the skills to manage the conflict process and turn disagreements into ideas.

Reference:
Thomas & Kilmann. (2008). Conflict Resolution for Supervisors. *Society for human resource management.* Retrieved December 22, 2010, from http://www.shrm.org/TemplatesTools/Samples/PowerPoints/Pages/ConflictResolutionTraining.aspx