

Excellent!

## Conflict Prevention

Conflict management is an essential skill that helps to solve a number of problems.

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Introduction

Effective communication helps to deal with stressful issues that anyone confronts on a daily basis. Although conflict is often a factor that can help to create new ideas, any conflict may well have destructive consequences.

Readings in Chapter 11 describe the new method of dealing with destructive conflicts and preventing them. This practice should have the best long-term effect, as it allows resolving the problem before it actually ignites. An example provided on the first page of the chapter clearly proves that throwing all efforts on dealing with the issue is not always the most effective tactics. Dealing with the cause of the problem may yield better results than diminishing the negative consequences of a conflict. I strongly agree with this idea. There are plenty of potential sources of a disagreement, as we live in a very stressful world. It is impossible to engage in every conflict situation and then look for a compromise. Valuable resources may be wasted as a result, let alone the stress experienced by people involved.

The second valuable idea that I found very useful in the class readings is about the core values, which lead to effective communicative practices. I learned that negative approach towards the conflict is the least efficient one. It has been stated in the Chapter 11: "we loose a lot when we make people into enemies". A path of confrontation is obviously a destructive one, which causes further complications. No conflict has been successfully resolved without a constructive dialogue. Even if one manages to prove his/hers point and forces other person into the conclusion to which he/she disagrees internally, the conflict will not simply vanish. Such tactics postpone the actual outbreak of the open confrontation, but do not eliminate the core idea, which caused the problem.

It is in fact rather easy to prevent most of the conflicts. All it takes is a positive attitude, respect towards the other person and an ability to engage in a dialogue. I especially

liked the idea of assuming that people around you are as dedicated and hard working as you are. Such approach is definitely going to generate greater results than blaming one another for the problems that arise.

There is a very demonstrative example from my personal experience to prove this point. A group of my friends was responsible for a creation of an internet shop for a medium-size local enterprise. The project had a relatively low budget and a pressing deadline. The team was supposed to pick a domain name, hosting provider, write the content of the pages and pick a designer firm to create the front page as well as the structure of the future web site. There was no clear leader in the project, as each team member had greater expertise in some narrow field (industry details, market condition, clients' perceptions, etc). It is clear that the creation of an entirely new web site involves quite a lot of work, which might eventually become the source of a stressful situation and hence a conflict. It is hard to finalize the text so that it can suit everybody's taste, there might be some misunderstanding concerning the order and payment procedures and other meaningful techniques. Luckily, one of my friends had an experience as an HR manger and knew how to arrange the cooperation in a positive and effective way. The team adopted the positive working principles in order to prevent all the conflicts before they could harm the working atmosphere of the team. All of the team members agreed to trust and respect each other. Moreover, as all three of the guys were interested in the positive outcome of the project, they decided to always assume that each was working to his full capacity. Nobody was expected to critique too hard or to present too many negative comments. A significant number of problems arose during the realization of the project: hired IT agency missed the deadlines, some of the texts had to be redone many times and the payment system was rather hard to establish. Some of these problems were a result of the team members' mistakes. However, because of the pre-set positive mood all the issues

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were finally sorted out. If, however, every problem resulted in actual conflicts, the project would have never been finished.

The third hint that I have found very useful concerned learning from history. It is always very useful to figure out what was the problem before, so that if the situation repeated, it would be easier to figure out a solution. There are no two identical conflicts, but any can be described and fit into a certain category. Remembering a history of the previous conflicts is a very useful for the solution of the future ones. The reading suggests remembering the actual reason for the problem and dealing with it rather than its consequences. Moreover, the next time one notices the conditions leading to the conflict before, he/she can react and discuss the issue before it results in an actual problem. It is also very important to understand that some matters can potentially lead to a conflict. No matter how perfect the atmosphere seems, there always are some matters that might cause a misunderstanding sooner or later. In order to avoid that, it is better to sort everything out before the problem actually appears. Thus, the conflict will never emerge, as the potential reason for its outbreak was eliminated while the relationships were stable.

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Although I share most of the perceptions stated in the book, I still disagree to some points in chapter eleven. Behavior of an “avoider” type does not seem to be constructive the way authors put it. It is clear that some people are more aggressive by their nature and some prefer to avoid conflicts. The chapter does provide some pieces of advice for the conflict avoiders. It is definitely vital to learn how to escalate the discussion making sometimes. Moreover, starting a discussion may also be a very valuable tool as it does give more control. However, I can not completely agree with the idea of avoiding a destructive escalation. The authors advise people who prefer to avoid the problem to simply get out of a situation that might cause discomfort. As the example states, the wisest practice is to simply take a break from the tension.

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OK. I disagree with such an approach towards preventing the conflict. Running away from the problem will not make it go away. It may be much wiser to enter a destructive confrontation and try to make it adequate. It is important to know how to stand to one point and not simply run away each time the personal feelings are hurt. Effective management and conflict prevention is about improving the communication and not avoiding the ones that may potentially stress you out. I would advise an avoider to face the complicated situation once or twice. After a couple of negative experiences a person can learn to have better control of oneself.