

Conflict conversations: Resolve, don't win

Adaptive module

~20 min

In more distributed teams, tensions settle on their own less often: they take hold, and the conversation meant to resolve them turns into a ping-pong of accusations. This module shows exactly how to lead it: the three ground rules stated aloud before tackling the issue, the silence that lets the other person get it off their chest, the words to name their emotion, and a final agreement on putting things right and next steps, never on versions of the past.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 01 Set three explicit ground rules: protect the relationship, ban verbal abuse, and see the discussion through until you reach an agreement.
- 02 Let the other person express their anger without defending yourself or taking their accusations personally.
- 03 Name the other person's emotion to lower the tension, without judging it or taking responsibility for what they feel.
- 04 Open up in turn: share how you feel, then guide the discussion to an agreement on putting things right and next steps.

WHO IT'S FOR

Anyone who wants to see a disagreement through to agreement, and managers who want to resolve tensions in their team.

- **Prerequisite:** none

HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

- 1 **Self-assessment:** on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.
- 2 **Expert video:** 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.
- 3 **Practice scenarios:** the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.
- 4 **Dated commitment:** one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.
- 5 **Memo to download:** key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

A SAMPLE PRACTICE SCENARIO

Nawel and Rodrigo organize client workshops together. A room wasn't booked: each thought the other was taking care of it. For half an hour, they have been comparing their memories without getting anywhere. A new workshop is coming up. How can they get out of this discussion and find an agreement for the future?

ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- Framework for the conversation that resolves conflict (set ground rules / let the other person get it off their chest / name the other person's emotion / open up / focus on the solution) – Afthonios method, inspired by de-escalation and negotiation techniques
- Naming the other person's emotion (de-escalation technique)
- Physical shift = mental shift

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- The "labeling" technique (naming the other person's emotion) in crisis negotiation – popularized by Chris Voss, former FBI negotiator
- Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, Sheila Heen, "Difficult Conversations," Harvard Negotiation Project, 1999 – moving beyond "who's right" to take in feelings, then sharing your part
- Marshall B. Rosenberg, Nonviolent Communication, 1999 – "observing without evaluating": distinguishing facts from judgments
- Weger et al. (2014) – active listening and feeling understood