

## Rob's Basic Tips for Resolving Everyday Conflict

1. Do not start by “making your case,” i.e., listing all the reasons you are right and the other person is wrong. This does not mean you cannot support your position at the appropriate time.
2. Instead, listen to the other person’s story/point-of-view with the goal of *understanding*. Listen without judgment or interruption. Ask questions to clarify what you don’t understand. Your other goal is to demonstrate to the other person that you do understand, which is not the same as agreeing with them. Your desire to understand must be sincere or listening will not help.
3. Before talking with the other person, think about the situation from their point of view. Most importantly, what do you think they want and why? What would you be willing to do to satisfy what they want? Is there something else that might satisfy them that you could or would do? What do you want? What’s most important to you and why?
4. Think about the facts as you see them and as the other person might see them. What do you know with certainty? What do you think you know but don’t know for sure? What would you like to know? Remember that perception and memory are not infallible—both yours and theirs. This should allow you to gain awareness of any assumptions you are making; avoid making them or at least consider how reasonable they are.
5. Why is the other person doing what they are doing? Can you identify any standards they adhere to that might explain their behavior? What societal norms or personal values might be guiding them? What ones are guiding you? Is it reasonable to expect the other person to abide by yours?
6. Don’t blame others. Take responsibility for anything you have done that contributed to the conflict. Separate out each action that contributed to the problem so that you can see them clearly. Only then consider how you and/or society might assign moral responsibility.
7. Don’t assume that you know someone’s intention. Separate how the other person’s actions affect you from what they intended. Consider the effect of your actions on the other person.
8. Keep in mind that you may be the only “adult in the room.” Resolving conflict can be extra hard when the other person continues to behave badly. But you behaving badly too will certainly not resolve it.
9. When helping others resolve conflict, help them understand the situation with all of these same techniques. Remember that it may be much easier for you to understand the situation without their emotional entanglement; cut them some slack and don’t be judgmental or take sides.
10. Conflict is difficult. Take good care of yourself.