

THE SURPRISING TRUTH ABOUT BEING CONFLICT AVOIDANT

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Do you apologize when someone steps on your foot? Do you tell your in-laws that you love surprise visits? If so, you may be conflict avoidant.

While it's natural to feel uncomfortable about clashing with others, **your efforts to maintain harmony at any cost are probably backfiring.**

When you suppress your feelings and sidestep difficult discussions, you usually wind up causing more conflicts in your life. You also undermine intimacy, increase anxiety, and prevent yourself from creating solutions to daily challenges.

To find the peace you're seeking, you'll need to move from being conflict avoidant to conflict resilient. Use these suggestions to change the way you deal with disagreements.

Dealing with Constructive Conflict

Making friends with conflict will help you to be happier and more successful. **You'll also find it easier to connect with others when you talk through disagreements rather than withdrawing or letting resentments build up.**

1. **Accept your feelings.** Maybe you panic because any signs of friction trigger strong fear and anxiety. **The first step to taking control is embracing those feelings rather than resisting them.**
2. **Rehearse your response.** Think about what you want to say before a confrontation occurs. Role playing or writing your thoughts down may help.

3. **Stick to the facts.** Conflict avoidant personalities often have strong emotions. However, when you're talking things through it pays to be rational. Others may try to dismiss your feelings, but facts are more difficult to ignore.
4. **Recognize common ground.** You can be agreeable while you disagree. Collaborating with others is more effective than trying to be right or casting blame.
5. **Assert yourself.** At the same time, you need to advocate for yourself. **Believe in your own worth and stand up for your interests.**
6. **Listen closely.** Show the same consideration for others. Once you state your position, give them a chance to air their side. Try to understand their concerns and let them know you care about their welfare too.
7. **Propose solutions.** Be prepared to explain the specific outcome you're seeking. You may not always get what you want, but you're more likely to succeed if you know how to ask for it.
8. **Consider therapy.** Conflict avoidance is often rooted in stressful childhood experiences that may be difficult to deal with on your own. Ask your doctor or trusted friends for a referral if you feel like talking with a counselor may help.

Avoiding Destructive Conflict

While it's usually advantageous to face conflicts head-on, **there are some situations where avoidance can be appropriate.** Know when to make an exception.

1. **Set priorities.** Starting out with small steps can help you make progress, but there are some issues trivial enough to overlook. It's okay to forgive another

shopper who brings one too many cans of cat food into the express lane.

2. **Cool down.** Distinguish between avoiding conflict and taking a strategic pause. **Give yourself and others a few minutes to calm down rather than say something you'll regret.**

3. **Seek support.** Maybe someone other than yourself is more suited to resolving the conflict, such as the police or a coworker's supervisor. There may also be occasions when you need a mediator or other third party to help reach an accord.

4. **Prepare for consequences.** Sometimes the stakes are be too high even if you have a valid argument. You may need to stay silent temporarily if your boss is likely to terminate you for objecting to forced overtime.

Conflicts are a natural and potentially beneficial part of any relationship. By building your confidence and strengthening your communication skills you can learn to express your true feelings, collaborate with others, and resolve disagreements.