

may have personal resources, friends or confidants, who could help in this fashion. The university community provides a number of settings for facilitating conflict resolution as well. Residence Hall Advisors are ready to assist in conflict arising in one's residential setting. The Counseling Center offers their counseling resources to help individuals find positive resolutions to instances of conflict. The Campus Ombudsman Office is another key resource involved in searching for and promoting positive avenues of conflict resolution.

Remember, how you handle a conflict now will provide a model which will influence your future differences and contentions with parents, spouse, children, friends, neighbors, etc. ad infinitum. Conflict will at times be experienced; it is how it is responded to which will have a major impact on the quality of our lives, relationships, and communities.

How we deal with conflict provides not only a window out onto the world, but also a mirror of ourselves. There is often a real parallel between how we deal with conflict in our external world and how we deal with conflict within ourselves, i.e., conflict in the form of mixed feelings, varied desires, and complex goals which initially may seem contradictory and difficult to reconcile. Instead of attempting to avoid conflict, or to exterminate it out of existence, see what you can learn from it. We'll all be better off - within ourselves, our relationship, and our world.

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## The Challenge of Diversity and Conflict

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## The Challenge of Diversity and Conflict

The university is paradoxically both extremely pluralistic and yet one community. We are pluralistic in our varied academic, social and personal dimensions. We are community in how we respond to our diversity. How we deal with diversity, to a large extent, defines the quality of our community. The real challenge of diversity is to become able to respond with respect, encouragement, and openness to those whose interests, values, customs, and perspectives differ from our own. To have diversity be a source of enrichment, rather than a source of dissention and divisiveness, is not, however, easy.

Inevitably, people who see things differently and whose values vary significantly are going to be in conflict. Our backgrounds and our priorities can be markedly different; at times the resulting conflict can be intense. But this contention can be invaluable for learning. Indeed, these events and

encounters may be essential for us to understand the dynamic world we inherit. They will also enable us to re-examine and reaffirm the essential value we hold, while enabling us to perhaps jettison our peripheral stereotypes and non-essential biases.

When conflict does emerge, what can we do?

First, explore in quiet, honest reflection with yourself what your sense of the conflict is about, and why you are ticked off. Often people tend to ignore early indications of irritation and conflict, not wanting to have to deal with it or hoping it will passively go away, rather than being up-front with themselves about their feelings and actively sorting through how to best deal with it. Avoiding conflict is not a virtue, but learning to deal with it in positive ways is certainly a valued ability.

Second, in your thinking about the conflict, be as specific as possible about what the immediate issues are. Generalizing the issues and personalizing the conflict, rather than keeping the focus on immediate perceptions and concerns, only escalate the tension and

make resolution less accessible.

Third, consider meeting with your "opponent", calmly, sharing your concerns and asking them what their perspective is. When people can talk about differences in exploratory, open ways, rather than initiating attacks and jumping to conclusions about acceptable outcomes, animosity can often be reduced and creative resolutions discovered.

Fourth, explore together, if possible, how you both can address the problem, rather than fight each other. Can, perhaps, ways be found for the needs of both parties to be met? Shifting from a strict winner-loser, right-wrong, either-or manner of looking at the conflict can allow resolutions to emerge which will satisfy the basic needs on both sides, and leave all involved feeling as if they "won" in regards to both the outcome and the process.

Fifth, if an impasse arises and you both want to solve the problem, seek a trusted third party who will not take sides but will help to clarify what you are both contending, and who will assist you in working through obstacles and towards a mutually agreeable solution. You