



# FIRST AID FOR CONFLICT

*DO try this at home*

*This model of conflict management can be used with 2 or more people - stick closely to the steps. I'm going to use a co-parenting conflict and a neighbourhood dispute as working examples through the steps.*

## 1. Meeting Organisation

- Offer everyone involved in the conflict a chance to sit down and talk
- Set a time and place
- Agree on a time limit – 2-3 hours is most peoples limit for productive participation
- Bring a note book and pen
- Appoint a scribe – or take turns
- Agree to some ground rules: no interrupting, no blame , no shouting, no personal insults, no threats , no mobile phones
- OK to leave if you feel too emotional to continue

## 2. Introductions

- Take turns to say what you would each like out of the meeting
- One speaks at a time, everyone else listens actively

*E.g. 1. To work out what we are doing with the kids during COVID changes / how to get my ex to take social isolation seriously, the kids might get sick*

*E.g. 2. How to stop my neighbours dog barking now we are all working from home / how to get my neighbours to stop complaining about my dog*

## 3. Identifying the Issues

- Come up with a list of “concerns”

*E.g. 1. I'm worried about the kids catching buses to school, / I have to work and the kids school is closed / our kids are too young to be at home alone.*

*E.g. 2. I am concerned I'll lose clients because the neighbour dog barks all day and I am now working from home. I'm already stressed enough and now the neighbours are calling and texting all day and shouting at our dog. I'm worried they might hurt her.*

## 4. Formulating the Meeting Agenda

- Turn your concerns into questions

*Eg. 1. How can we best look after our children during social isolation ?*

*E.g. 2. What do we each need to live next door to each other peacefully at the moment?*

Congratulations- you now have the meeting agenda – take a short break.



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## 5. Hearing Phase

- Take turns to talk about what is important to you around each question
- No solutions or responses at this stage, just listen to each other

*E.g. 1. I think the children should stay at home, I don't want them getting sick. // I have to go to work and I heard the children are safe at school.*

*E.g. 2 We need quiet all day long to have online meetings and business calls. My kids are here as well and that's hard enough without the dog barking. // My dog doesn't usually bark, she is lonely and hears the kids playing. She can't come with me to work. I need to know she is safe and I can't answer calls all day from an angry neighbor.*

## 6. Creating Options Phase

- This stage is fun. Everyone suggests ideas- write them down and call them options – include all options.
- No debating just write them up.

*E.g. 1. The kids can stay at school and wear masks. The kids can stay with family. The parent with job flex can work at home. Kids stay with friends during the working day*

*E.g. 2. We can soundproof the office room. Can do work on the other side of the house. Kids play in neighbours yard with the dog. Owner buys a citronella anti- barking collar.*

Congratulations- you are almost done now- important to take another short break at this stage.

## 7. Agreement Phase

- This is the final stage, remember plans can be trialed. The goal is not to be right but to find something you can all live with.
- Look at each option. what are the pros/cons/limitations etc. for each.
- Ask questions and be curious around how each may work.
- Emotions are not invited to this phase. If they do pop in, take another break and come back again.
- Solutions and compromises often present themselves in this phase after all your hard work before.
- Agreements can be: creative, merge several ideas, trialed and re-evaluated, made between people without costly legal fees

## How to Listen Effectively

- Be attentive, look at the speaker, open body language.
- Make the goal hearing rather than bring 'right'
- No interrupting, if an issue arises, write it down for later
- Ask questions, curiosity killed the cat but is invaluable in communication
- Listen how you liked to be heard
- Have clear roles, speaker/listener then swap so all have a chance to hear and be heard
- Use "I" when speaking about your opinions. "I find it really hard to work when...", rather than, "your dog is ..."

**If emotions prevent the process running through- seek assistance from a neutral third party. As an expert mediator I have 15 years of analyzing conflict- often entrenches and assisting people build the skills to hear, be heard and find new ways forward. I can mediate face to face, over the telephone as well as through online platforms such as Skype or Zoom.**