



## Communication Chemistry Through Constructive Conflict

**Just a hint of conflict can spark anxiety for many of us.** We value getting along with others, and most of us hope our interactions and communication are always civil, direct and calm. The reality is, conflict is inevitable. How we cope in these situations makes the difference between either building relationships or damaging--even destroying--them.

Some people try to avoid conflict whenever possible. Others may try to squash it quickly. Some have managed to master the secret “chemistry” for communication that allows them to be fearless (or at least more prepared) when dealing with conflict.

Here, we’ll reveal key traits that are common to constructive and destructive conflict so that you can begin to:

- Learn to distinguish the difference between constructive and destructive conflict communication

- Avoid destructive conflict and embrace constructive conflict communication

- Recognize how destructive conflict communication can become a barrier to conflict resolution

- Reflect on constructive and destructive conflict communication that happened in your past--or is happening now--to help you change how you react and respond in the future.

Communication chemistry is a continuous, open, energetic flow of dialogue that builds vital connections and lasting bonds. It is a positive exchange that can ignite creative solutions to issues by helping identify priorities and exploring effective responses. Blending our ideas, outlooks, backgrounds and strengths comprises the essence of communication chemistry.

Each of us views life through a unique lens. When faced with situations or circumstances that create conflict, we must forge pathways for airing differences. This can free us to examine, explore and create.



Conflict occurs when the diverse views of one or more individuals triggers a heightened emotional reaction. It can arise from any clash of feelings or viewpoints that leads to misunderstanding, misperception or even a standoff.

Conflict is not necessarily bad. It can often be a key step to change, innovation, productivity and growth. Constructive conflict allows space for discussing differences, while maintaining the positive communication chemistry that preserves workplace relationships.

## Constructive vs. Destructive Conflict Communication

### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

#### CONSTRUCTIVE

Avoids tones that raise defenses or anxiety. Characterized by **speaking in calm, measured vocal tones** that may put some extra energy and emphatic stress on words.

Values the relationship more than immediately changing others' minds. Focuses on **building a collaborative partnership** to explore new ideas, examine creative opportunities and test new solutions.

Seeks ways to **listen deeply to another's point of view** before jumping to conclusions. Recognizes that there are gray areas where each can learn from the other to find a better solution than either one envisioned.

#### DESTRUCTIVE

Features **loud, sarcastic tone of voice** along with facial expressions and gestures that are designed to intimidate.

Places **little value on preserving relationships**. Frequently devolves into disrespect, insults or bullying to push an agenda.

Aims to **influence others to see things in one way only**. Binary thinking often comes down to: "I am 100 percent right and everyone who doesn't see it my way is 100 percent wrong."



## CONSTRUCTIVE

Continues to **seek new pathways for deeper discussion**. Sometimes this requires going back in time to establish more context for the discussion that help explain “whys” behind a difficult topic . Searches for ways to build trust.

Rooted in ongoing forgiveness. Accepts that others might not clearly see numerous issues impacting the situation. Demonstrates a **high degree of patience** as the context is outlined and explained. Hears and offers supporting details and is able to identify the bigger vision. Pauses to allow time for reflection.

Expands. Maintains openness and ease. Engages others, **giving them a sense of security, even when venturing into difficult topics**. Facilitates a positive communication journey through a challenging subject, they begin to possess the magnetic leadership quality known as charisma.

Relies on communication strategies and tactics, keeping a **laser-like focus** on objectives.

## DESTRUCTIVE

Can **create an impasse or standoff** as when someone states, “There’s just no getting through to .....”

Suffers from tunnel vision and shortsightedness. One or more of the parties takes a stance that **ignores the contextual history of the issues involved, rejects long-term consequences**, and questions why anyone would bring up either. Insists that the focus is on the here and now and the determination that their ideas are correct.

Constricts. **Builds walls, defenses and barriers** to new ideas. This results in an impasse as the flow of communication is blocked so there is no room for deep reflection or enlightenment to emerge.

Leans towards heightened emotions, often **failing to articulate clear objectives**.



## WHY USE CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT COMMUNICATION?

Communication chemistry starts to bubble when you apply constructive conflict practices. Grounded in confidence, skill and trust, constructive conflict fuels, strengthens and preserves bonds and provides a place to begin or maintain productive discussions.

Most important, you no longer need to fear conflict! Instead, you can begin to recognize destructive conflict communication and apply constructive conflict communication. Using constructive conflict communication strategies boosts your credibility, competence and professionalism and allows you to respond to others with positive energy, working together to imagine and explore new solutions to old problems.

## WAYS TO EXPLORE & LEARN MORE

Journal Entry (reflection)

Listen (podcast)

Watch (Video)

Discussion (Facebook Live / Ask Wizard)



