



## Dealing with Conflict

Conflict is a normal part of life. Healthy conflict can lead to positive changes in personal relationships and organizations. Negative conflict can however be very destructive and can sap energy from a group.

Conflict is usually caused by misunderstandings, personality clashes, differences in values or goals, unclear responsibilities and lack of resources or change. To help resolve conflicts you will need to:

- Stay calm and try to keep the group calm.
- Clearly define the problem.
- Try to draw out feelings and meanings.
- Give specific non-judgmental feedback when requested. Stay neutral.
- Be creative in seeking solutions. Propose a joint problem solving approach.
- Help the group look for a solution where everyone wins.
- Don't try to save the group. Allow them to work out their conflicts themselves as much as possible.

### Who Can Manage Conflict Effectively?

A person who can:

- describe issues clearly
- clarify what is being said
- paraphrase to confirm understanding
- analyze situations
- support others
- ask others what they are hearing
- listen responsively and attentively
- offer relevant information
- suggest alternatives
- accept other feelings
- avoid explaining the other's behavior
- is easy on giving advice

It takes common sense, patience and practice to effectively help people in conflict. Remember that conflict is normal and cannot be avoided. If constructively managed, it can create growth and development in people and groups.

### Ways to Prevent Problems from occurring in 4-H

1. Every person in 4-H is responsible for the physical, emotional and mental well being of others in 4-H.
2. Become familiar with the 4-H philosophy, purpose, objectives and regulations of the NH 4-H Program and your county program.
3. Make sure your 4-H clubs and councils have written constitutions or bylaws. This outlines the group's rules and regulations. Update these regularly to make sure they meet the group's needs. It is important that every group follow its by-laws.

4. Keep rules short and simple. Avoid creating rules that cannot be enforced.
5. Program information and regulations affecting a member should be given to the member's family at the start of the 4-H year. Clubs may choose to have parents sign an agreement form acknowledging the club rules.
6. Every club and council must plan programs that meet the needs of 4-H members. Give copies of the program plans to the member's families.
7. Elect club officers annually. Encourage shared leadership and delegation of responsibility among both volunteers and members.
8. Separate your role as a volunteer from any personal business. This avoids the perception that you are in a conflict of interest.
9. Be a positive role model. Practice a code of conduct based upon the purpose and philosophy of the 4-H program.
10. Keep confidential and sensitive information confidential. Protect the integrity of the people concerned.
11. Always keep the needs and safety of the members first.

For more information on this subject, see:

[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/4h6297/\\$FILE/ltw05.pdf](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/4h6297/$FILE/ltw05.pdf)

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