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## 8 Steps For Conflict Resolution Overview

### 3. Identify a Safe Place for Negotiation

- **Appropriate Space for Discussion/ Private and Neutral**
- **Mutual Consent to Negotiate/ Appropriate Time**
- **Role of Support People (Facilitators, Mediators, Advocates), as needed**
- **Agreement to Groundrules**

#### **Safe Space**

In order to have a constructive conversation, people generally need to feel that they are in a "safe place," --a place where they can take the risks involved in honest communication about meaningful issues.

If possible, identify a private, neutral room in which to hold your conversation, preferably a space that isn't "owned" by one person or the other. If the conversation starts in a more public place (for example, if confronted by a customer), suggest that it might be helpful if the two of you could, at least, move to a more private area within the room.

#### **Appropriate Time**

Be sure that the time is also acceptable and appropriate. Do not try to negotiate a complex agreement in fifteen minutes! If time is limited, agree on a scope for this discussion and then set up an opportunity for follow-up. You might say, "Let's get started in the brief time we have available and then get together again."

Consider the use of third parties as appropriate to the needs of the situation: Facilitators and mediators can impartially focus on the process, so people involved in a dispute can fully participate in dialogue. Advocates can be especially helpful when there are significant power differences, or when one party or another might require additional support and assistance in order to effectively participate. The Employee Assistance Office, or the Office of Quality Improvement, or the new Ombuds Program for

Faculty and Staff, or the Union Leaders and Stewards are excellent resources for assistance. Finally, keep in mind the importance of ground rules in order to improve the likelihood of a civil, constructive dialogue. Simple ground rules include:

- One person will speak at a time
- We will make every effort to listen to one another with respect
- We will seek to understand one another's point of view, and be flexible about differing perceptions of the issues at hand
- We will agree to honor the confidentiality of our discussions, within reasonable parameters that are clear to all of us.

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