

CONFLICT SOLUTIONS

Success Without Conflict

Soaring Above the Tar Pit of Debate

Expert Advice to Resolve Workplace Discord

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C. DeVere Sheesley, MA
President



Yvette
Consultant

IN ACCORD
Fixing Interpersonal Conflict at Work
1327 SE Tacoma St. #132
Portland, OR 97202
503-723-9982
info@inaccordnw.com

Imagine you're having a discussion with a colleague who says something you disagree with. Since this happens to all of us with regularity, it's easy to visualize, isn't it? It's how you respond that has the potential to profoundly improve your effectiveness at work.

During moments of cognitive dissonance, we often reactively disagree with the statement. While we're at it, we're frequently disagreeable with the conveyor of the message. Then we're off and flying. As we try to persuade and cajole the other person, we slide—tactical point by tactical point—into a sticky La Brea Tar Pit. Down in this muck, we evaluate the interaction's success by how adroitly we debate, how convincing we are, and how far we might budge the other person from their flawed point of view. We gorge on our own rhetoric, the potency of our emotional appeals, and the finesse with which we slay opposing arguments. By focusing on winning, we may triumph in a dinosaur-combat sort of way—but at the expense of the other person's sense of trust and safety around us. The opportunity to have a true dialogue and strengthen collegiality is left writhing in oily tar. This is how relationships erode.

But it doesn't have to be this way. What if, instead of arguing to win, we "argue" to learn? This shifts the focus to engaging in a conversation that helps us—and our counterparts—gain new insights, expand our knowledge, and challenge our perspectives. Yes, it requires open-mindedness, skillful active listening, and the willingness to consider alternative viewpoints.

(continued)

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04.

PREPARING FOR RESOLUTION

05.

THREE QUESTIONS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT

06.

NEGOTIATING AMONG WORKPLACE DICTATORS

"Avoidance is the best short-term strategy to escape conflict, and the best long-term strategy to ensure suffering."

-Brendon Burchard

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However, it is worth the investment. By engaging in arguments to learn, you'll broaden your understanding of the issues (thereby strengthening your position), refine your own point of view, and enhance your overall critical thinking skills. Your interactions with coworkers will have the potential to become enriching and constructive engagements rather than having the potential to belittle and silence your colleagues.

People will seek you out as a person they can trust, someone they can explore ideas with. This strategy is also slyly contagious; when you argue this way, you'll almost certainly notice similar changes to the other person's argumentation style.

Won't it be fun to watch others crawl out of the tar pit while you soar overhead on your massive pterodactyl wings, observing it all? Yes, perhaps the metaphor is a bit overwrought, but in situations where learning, understanding, and collaboration should be the primary goals, arguing to learn is more beneficial. Next time you find yourself disagreeing with a colleague, hopefully you will be inspired to exercise your wings.

Perspective:

Approximately 1.3 million
Earths can fit inside the sun.