

Conflict Management

Addressing conflict using C.F.O.R.

Conflict is a natural part of collaboration. For planning purposes, it is critical to have different stakeholders with varying perspectives in the room. Having the skills to manage conflict in a group setting will prove invaluable in moving from planning to action. Becoming comfortable giving and receiving feedback is a good first step in managing conflicts within groups and between individuals.

C.F.O.R. is a simple acronym to help structure feedback.

C-concern

F-feeling

O-ownership

R-request

CFOR Exercise: Pick a manageable, maybe trivial, conflict in your life and write an “I” statement for each of the letters. See example below.

C- “I am concerned that you are not washing your share of the dishes”

F- “I feel frustrated if when I end up doing your dishes”

O- “I own that sometimes I leave a dish or two in the sink overnight*”

R- “I request that you do your dishes the same day you use them”

*Notice the ownership includes the way in which the speaker may be contributing to the problem. Additionally, their request is specific and easy to track.

If you are having trouble thinking of an ownership, consider the origin of the conflict. Your ownership could sound something like, “I own that I didn’t say anything earlier when this first started to bother me.”

Once you have your example written down find a friend, pet, or mirror and practice reciting your C.F.O.R. three times.

This may feel robotic at first but with practice C.F.O.R. can be a powerful tool for addressing conflicts both big and small. Remember, timing is everything. The moment conflict arises may not be the right time to deliver feedback. For best results, check-in with whomever you would like to address and get their permission before providing your feedback. Managing conflict is a two-way street and how you receive feedback is just as important as how you give it. With practice your ability to receive and provide constructive feedback will make you a more effective leader in your community.