

WINNIPEG

**CONFLICT
Resolution**

Safety Tool Box November 2001



**MEDIATION
SERVICES**



WINNIPEG
DEVELOPMENT
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ENTENTE SUR LE
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DE WINNIPEG



Winnipeg

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Committee For **Safety**

What to do when you have a problem with your neighbour

It is a normal, natural part of life to have differences with the people with whom we live, work and play.

We can also have differences or difficulties with the people that we live beside or near.

Often, we don't choose our neighbours. Our neighbourhoods can change and sometimes we don't feel comfortable with these changes.

When we are in conflict, emotions can make it hard to talk about our concerns in a constructive way. Miscommunication, misunderstandings and assumptions can easily happen.

It is, however, possible to look at a conflict as an opportunity to get to know each other better and to understand each other's perspective.

Often, when we are able to work out a conflict together in a way that satisfies both people, the relationship becomes stronger.

Options for conflict resolution

Some **typical** responses to conflict with a neighbour are:

- Avoiding or ignoring the problem and hoping it will go away - often this will not resolve the conflict and feelings of frustration can escalate.
- Getting other people in the neighbourhood involved or on your side (spreading rumors) - can make the conflict bigger and more complex than the original issue and can cause division in the community.
- Giving them a "taste of their own medicine" or getting back/getting even (retaliation) - this usually causes the conflict to escalate and increases the possibility for violence.
- Calling the police - there are times when the police can provide help in conflict situations. However, when the police are called as a first approach, it can put people on the defensive, increase hostility and become a barrier to communication between you and your neighbour.



Some more constructive options can be:

1. Talk directly to your neighbour and work it out together. This is called **interpersonal negotiation**.

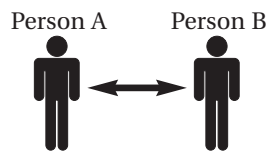
Usually this requires strong communication skills, some feelings of trust or respect between you, and the ability to be calm and clear when talking about your concerns.

2. Talk to your neighbour with the assistance of a neutral third party intervenor. This is called **mediation** or **conciliation**.

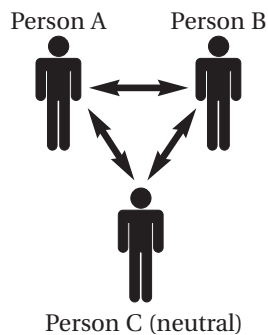
This could be a person you know and trust - like another neighbour, a family member, a friend, or an elder. Or it could be a person you don't know (like a community resource worker or community mediator).

If it is a person you know, make sure that they are neutral - meaning that they are not on your side or the other person's side. You will also need to think about whether your neighbour would be willing to be approached by that 3rd party on your behalf.

Negotiation



Mediation or Conciliation



Conflict/Situation Checklist

These are some questions to ask yourself to help you respond in a helpful way. Take the time to work through these questions.

1. How long has the conflict gone on for you?

2. Is the other person aware of your concerns

or your differences?

Yes No Maybe

3. Have you tried to talk about it with them in the past? Yes No

What happened?

4. What are your interests: the wants, hopes, concerns, fears, desires, needs, and expectations that are at the root of the problem for you?

5. Be specific about your concerns and describe them in a way that your neighbour can hear and understand.

describe _____

6. What can you anticipate their perspective to be?

describe _____

7. What ideas do you have for how to address the problem?

decribe _____

8. Is there any room in your thinking to hear about your neighbour's ideas?

Yes No

explain _____

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9. What level of emotion do you feel when you think or talk about the issue/s?

10. How do you feel about your neighbour aside from this situation?

11. Have you worked out issues or problems with each other in the past? Yes No

describe _____

Key Tips

If you want to take a constructive approach, these are key tips that will increase the likelihood of success.

- In making an approach, **set a positive tone**.
- **State your intention** for a positive resolution.
- Find a mutually convenient time and location for the discussion.
- **Be prepared** for what you might say - rehearse and role-play.
- Be prepared for what you might hear.
- **Be respectful** - use the person's name.
- **Speak calmly and clearly**.
- **Speak slowly** enough that the other person can take in the information.
- **Be open** to different ways of looking at the situation.

Don't:

- **Use sarcasm** to get your message across.
- **Use labels or name-calling**.
- Approach your neighbour when either you or they are feeling really angry.
- Talk about solutions until you both understand each other's point of view.



Steps in a conflict resolution discussion:

Whether you are having the conflict resolution discussion on your own, or with the assistance of a third party facilitator, these are some steps to follow:

Each person has the opportunity, without being interrupted, to share his or her perspective.

Person A shares their perspective

Person B restates what they heard and understood

Person A provides any clarification

Person B shares their perspective

Person A restates what they heard and understood

Person B provides any clarification

When both people feel that they have been understood, together, both people try to identify what the **main issues or problems** are.

Then both people **brainstorm** on what some solutions might be.

Then they try to **select the solutions** that would meet both of their needs and, if appropriate, form some kind of agreement on what will happen in the future.

Resources:

Mediation Services

- A Community Resource for Conflict Resolution

302-1200 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 0T5
Phone: 925-3410

Mediation Services can provide coaching and third party intervention (mediation and conciliation) for neighbours, families and community groups in conflict. No fees are charged for this service, donations are encouraged from those who are helped by the service and who can afford it. Mediation Services also offers a wide range of workshops and courses to increase individuals' comfort and confidence in dealing with conflicts. Meeting room space is also available to rent for community use. A resource library is also open to the public.

Other places to find neutral facilitators/mediators:

Community Health Centres
Community Resource Centres
Friendship Centres
Family Resource Centres
Women's Centres

