



How to Handle a Confrontation

KB



Most of us really dislike dealing with confrontations, whether we have to confront others on an issue or when we are confronted by someone else. When confrontations occur, the reactions can range from getting angry to becoming withdrawn to becoming aggressive to becoming completely ineffective in dealing with the situation, the issue at hand or the feelings that we have related to the confrontation. What follows are strategies to deal more effectively with confrontation and to manage the emotions that often accompany confrontation.



Prepare for the Confrontation

Sometimes, waiting for a confrontational that you know is pending can result in a tremendous amount of stress, anxiety and worry. It may prove helpful to prepare yourself mentally and emotionally for confrontation.

1. Think about the nature of the issue that the confrontation is about. Think about whether or not there is something you can do to make the situation better and, if there is, have a plan in mind to handle the situation.
2. Remember, there is no need for a confrontation to escalate into an argument. If things take that turn, you have the power to manage your feelings, contain your anger or fear and then step out of that confrontational interaction.
3. Don't jump to conclusions or automatically assume the worst about what might take place with the confrontation.
4. Remember that you are not a child and the other person in the confrontation is not your parent. A "supervisor" or "boss" maybe, but not your parent. Therefore, as adults, work to make sure that you listen, non-defensively, to what the other person is saying to you and then say what you think and feel so the other person can better understand your position.
5. Reframe the "confrontation" as a "meeting" that you're going to have with the other person.



Manage the Confrontation

When confrontations occur, there are some important things to keep in mind:

- Despite, perhaps, being nervous or upset when a confrontation occurs, do your best to stay calm. The more upset you get the more difficult it will be for you to think clearly. High emotions usually overcome intellect.
- Regardless of what the issue is that involves the confrontation, do your best not to take personally what is being said about you. Some of what is said might be that person's opinion, it might be some isolated instance they're talking about, but, even if what is being said to or about you is true, it doesn't define who you are as a person. Take responsibility for your part in the issues being discussed, but remember the confrontation is about behavior, not about you as a person.
- While keeping your emotions in check and not taking things personally, try your best to sift through what is being said and take from it some concrete things that you can use to improve in whatever area is being discussed. If it is you who are confronting someone, try to sift through what you're saying to the other person and pull out concrete things that they can do to improve their performance in whatever area is being discussed.
- It's never a pleasant experience when we are confronted by someone about an issue and we can often get annoyed by what is being said and getting annoyed is okay, but it's important to keep it in check and not respond openly in an annoyed manner. Behaving as though you're annoyed during the confrontation, whether you're on the giving or the receiving end of it, will not help the situation.