



Risk Management Practices

Managing Conflict

All adults attending, volunteering and/or working for the Indiana 4-H Programs are expected to adhere to the Adult Behavioral Expectations to create a safe and supportive environment, and promote the well-being of all youth.

Specifically, adults are expected to conduct themselves in a courteous, respectful manner, exhibit good sportsmanship, and demonstrate reasonable conflict management skills.

Tips for dealing with difficult people:

- Listen to them. Some people just want to be heard.
- Be honest and transparent.
- Share any information that might lead to resolution of the issue.
- Address any issues that may otherwise be a barrier to open dialogue. (i.e. the elephants in the room).
- Don't be afraid to pause or end the conversation if all sides are not engaged or if negative attacks are launched.
- Weed out the negative talk to get to the positive conversation.
- Use Conciliatory Gestures to start or de-escalate conversations:
 - **Apologize-** for what you can. You don't have to take all of the blame.
 - "I am sorry if what I said made you feel that way."
 - "I am sorry that I did not share the information with you that you needed."
 - **Self-disclose-** information that may help the other person see why you did/said something.
 - "I am new to this role and am still learning what the rules are myself."
 - "I did not realize that was happening and am glad you shared this with me now."
 - **Take responsibility-** for the things you can/should.
 - "I should have sent the information out to everyone."
 - "I should not have said that in front of the other volunteers."
 - **Express positivity-** for the other person. Should be genuine.
 - "I appreciate your honesty."
 - "I appreciate your willingness to talk with me."
 - "The skills you bring to your volunteer role are invaluable."

Tips to getting conversations back on track toward a solution:

- Shift from opposition to partnership.
- Reframe the conversation from convincing to learning.
- Be honest and transparent.
- Avoid assumptions.
- Be open to other ideas or perspectives.
- Have ownership for your part.
- Avoid blame, contempt, defensiveness and stonewalling.
- Listen to all sides and work to find a solution that works for all.
- Involve everyone in finding a solution.
- Use Constructive Responses to facilitate positive conversations.
 - **Take the other's perspective-** try to understand what the other person is saying and/or feeling. Be careful to not put words in their mouth. Ex. I can see how this situation can be frustrating.
 - **Create solutions-** offer options to solve problems that can help all parties feel like they have gained something.
 - **Express feelings-** it is not easy to share our emotions, but it can help all parties remember that everyone involved is human and has feelings. Ex. I struggle with the restrictions as well, but know they are in place for our protection.
 - **Reach out-** an invitation to share. It is not always easy to share your emotions and thoughts in a difficult situation and a simple, "Please share your thoughts with me." can do wonders!
 - **Reflect on the situation-** this is an internal process and involves thinking about what was said/done and what you may be able to do differently in the future for this or similar situations.
 - **Delay your response-** this is an internal process that can truly help in a difficult situation. As simple as it sounds, it is not always easy to implement as it requires us to check our emotions and hold our comments if they may be defensive or damaging.
 - **Adapt your actions/reactions** - this is an internal process and will require you to acknowledge that difficult situations are sometimes unavoidable, but not unsolvable. It may involve making adjustments to how you interact until things

Remember...

- You are human and have the right to your own thoughts, feelings and emotions.
- You can only control yourself, so focus on how to control your words and actions.
- You can choose to be positive.
- Your greatest test will be how you handle people who mishandled you.