

# Micro Conflict Practice Guide

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Conflict isn't always big or dramatic. There are more subtle micro conflicts that can help us build trust and clarity when we explore them with curiosity and respect.

Micro conflicts are small, everyday tensions or disagreements that often go unnoticed or unaddressed. When left unaddressed, they can negatively impact our relationships and communication.

Disagreements don't have to divide us – with the right skills, we can transform them into moments of connection.

## This guide will help you:

- Explore micro conflicts and their role in workplace culture
- Understand healthy disagreement to improve communication
- Learn to distinguish positions from interests
- Engage in respectful, open dialogue

## Disagreements are healthy when you:

- Listen to understand
- Explore interests with curiosity, not judgement
- Speak from your own experience

## Positions VS. Interests

**Positions** = What we say we want.

**Interests** = The needs, concerns, or values behind that want.

### EXAMPLE

**Position A:** "I want the window open."

**Position B:** "I want it closed."

**Interests:** One person needs fresh air to focus; the other is cold and uncomfortable.

When we explore our interests, it can lead to more creative and respectful solutions. But when we focus only on positions, we can get stuck. Exploring interests helps us find common ground and build mutual understanding.

## Small Group Activity: Exploring Conflict

### STEP 1 Identify Positions and Interests

- A. In groups of 4–5, choose a discussion prompt from the list below.
- B. Identify possible positions and interests in the scenario.

### STEP 2 Practice Disagreeing Respectfully

Take turns practicing the sequence below, using the prompt you chose in the first step. Allow 2–3 minutes per person for each round of sharing.

- A. One person shares their view.
- B. Everyone else listens without interrupting.
- C. Someone asks: “What’s important to you about that?”
- D. The group summarizes what they heard.
- E. Someone responds: “I see it differently because . . .”
- F. Repeat around the group.
- G. Notice any shared interests as they come up.

#### DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- 1. Do we need a dress code?
- 2. Should we work in the office more often?
- 3. Should all meetings have an agenda?
- 4. Is it okay to message coworkers after hours?
- 5. Should people be able to decline meetings without explanation?

### STEP 3 Reflect

- What made disagreement easier or harder?
- What helped you feel heard?
- Did your perspective shift?
- How will you respond to micro conflicts differently going forward?