

Career Headlines

What Matters about Conflict Is How You Respond

Good conflict builds you up and bad conflict tears you down. In work situations, good conflict is called *constructive* and bad conflict is called *destructive*. Conflict will usually be *constructive* in these situations:

- You stop thinking, "I'm okay, but you're the problem."
- The other person doesn't have to lose for you to win.
- You both feel you can express your thoughts without being criticized.
- You take each other seriously.
- You are respectful to one another.
- Both of you feel you influenced the outcome.
- You both commit to the agreement you reach.
- Your relationship is strengthened.

Turn each of the characteristics above into its opposite, and you will see what *destructive* conflict looks like.

In your job, destructive conflict is damaging because it diverts your energy, increases your stress and frustration, and destroys your job commitment.

On the good side, constructive conflict can advance your career in these ways:

- Improve your decision making
- Stimulate your creativity
- Increase your energy
- Add pleasure to your work
- Improve relationships with coworkers
- Show you are a professional
- Demonstrate your maturity
- Lead to personal growth
- Impress your supervisors

Action: For each statement in the first list of bullets, find the one that is hardest for you to accept and describe why it's difficult for you.

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