

# How to Engage with Conflict

The following is an excerpt from the Collaboration and Team Science Field Guide (p 101), which was adapted from Cloke and Goldsmith, 2000.

## HOW TO ENGAGE WITH CONFLICT

If you are leading or participating on a team, consider the following steps for managing and resolving conflict:

- **Understand the culture and the context of conflict**—seek out the meaning of the conflict for yourself and/or the other parties.
- **Actively listen**—assure others you have heard what they said and ask questions to confirm your understanding.
- **Acknowledge emotions**—they will likely be part of the conflict, but expressing them and hearing them can help lift barriers to resolution.
- **Look beneath the surface for hidden meaning**—hidden fears, needs, histories, or goals may be the underlying source of the problem.
- **Separate what matters from what is in the way**—get away from discussing who is right or wrong and focus more on how to satisfy mutual needs.
- **Learn from difficult behaviors**—let those experiences help you develop your skills in managing difficult situations and having empathy for and patience with others.
- **Solve problems creatively and negotiate collaboratively**—this also means committing to action.
- **Understand why others might be resistant to change**—the problem could be an unmet need.

### References:

Bennett, L. & Gadlin, Howard & Levine-Finley, Samantha. (2010). *Collaboration and Team Science: A Field Guide*. ( <https://www.cancer.gov/about-nci/organization/crs/research-initiatives/team-science-field-guide/collaboration-team-science-guide.pdf>)

Cloke, K. and J. Goldsmith (2000). *Resolving personal and organizational conflict: stories of transformation and forgiveness*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishers.