

Advices On Conflict

Compiled and edited by the
Deepening & Strengthening Committee
Lancaster Friends Meeting
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In this community as in every community, conflict happens. The question is not whether or not we will have conflict, but how we choose to deal with it. Learn to see conflict as an invitation from God, an opportunity to learn the lessons of love, tolerance, service, and forgiveness, lessons which can only be learned in community.

Remember that we are a covenant community. We are bound together by our yearning for God, and any differences among us exist in that context. The extent to which we know and love one another has great bearing on our capacity to deal with conflict; therefore strive to do your part in contributing to the network of relationships and atmosphere of trust that will carry us through any conflict. Every shared meal, every heart-to-heart conversation, every act of kindness and friendliness toward one another strengthens the web of our community, and ultimately helps us to face our differences constructively, and see beyond them in a spirit of love.

Keep faith with our tradition. Our Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business provides a time-honored way of reaching communal decisions in the context of our inevitable differences. Our Quaker process can sometimes seem slow and inefficient, but we continue to use it because in the long run it nurtures and sustains us as a community. Difficult decisions take time, patience, and forbearance. Remember that our process depends on full participation from members and attenders; willingness of each one present to speak his or her own truth; but also willingness to let go of our own partial truth as together we seek unity.

Learn to listen. Listen to God, knowing that the Light can bring us into a unity beyond any differences. Listen also to one another, knowing that for individuals in conflict, the experience of being heard and understood can be healing. Be generous in your listening: willing to give of your time and attention, and also willing to be influenced by what you hear.

Use the resources of our community. If you should find yourself in a situation of conflict, seek out others who are willing to listen to you, and open yourself to their counsel. In particular, members of Care and Counsel can provide skilled listening, mediation, and clearness committees to help individuals deal with conflict.

Be tender with one another. In an ideal community, all conflict would be directly faced, promptly dealt with, and resolved to everyone's satisfaction. We are not that community. Sometimes, despite our best efforts, differences remain. Learn to accept these situations with tolerance, humility, and an intact sense of humor. Know when to let go. Facing conflict is important, but remember that love is the most important thing.

Let **love** be the first motion.

