

Exercise #6

Case Study: Applying Words that Work to Resolving Conflicts

In this group exercise you will write and talk about how to use words that work when resolving conflicts.

Instructions: Which words that work would you apply to the following examples, and why?

1. Two library employees have been arguing fiercely for 30 minutes about where to put a large shipment of library furniture. You have only five minutes to calm them and get them to make a decision, and you have no authority to make either of them do anything.

2. One of your colleagues keeps changing the specifications on an important software order. Before the tech services department decides to cancel the order out of sheer frustration, can you help this person make a decision?

3. A library user and a circulation clerk are engaged in a heated debate about how often the book drop is emptied. The library user claims that the book drop is emptied only two or three times per week. If it had been emptied every day, the library user's book, which was logged in as overdue, would have been logged in as returned on time. The circulation clerk claims that the book drop is always emptied out at least once a day. The line at the circulation desk is getting longer and you can see the irritated looks on the faces of the other clerks and library users.

4. A particular person in the library (staff or library user—take your pick) really seems to rub you the wrong way. You notice, in the middle of a conversation, that you are becoming more emotional and you want to cool down so you can finish the conversation without upsetting the other person or saying something you will regret. Which words could you either say out loud or to yourself silently, so that you remain calm, good-humored, and constructive?

5. You are the person in your workplace other people visit to discuss problems. You try to give good advice, but no one seems to listen to you or change their behavior. Which words can you use to change their behaviors?