



Ensure that disagreement is expressed sensitively.



Disagree with the idea, don't criticize the individual.



Respond to disagreement with a spirit of inquiry. Ask for clarification or examples.

HANDLING CONFLICT

During Board Meetings



Separate personalities from ideas.

Because meetings depend on interaction among people with different values, perspectives, and communication styles, it is almost inevitable that conflict will sometimes occur. The impact of conflict depends on what the conflict is about, how it is initiated, and how it is managed.



Humor is an effective means of reducing tension.

Submerged conflict eventually surfaces. When someone raises a seemingly negative point of view, he or she at least gives others a chance to address the issue. When they can't express differences, people may enter into covert forms of conflict that aren't readily apparent. Encourage candid discussion. Uncontrolled conflict, however, can lead to hurt feelings, withdrawal, and destruction of the group. Use these tactics to keep conflict healthy and productive.



Focus on commonalities. Point out the similarities between individual perspectives. Let the group know you want to build on those.



Ask two people who most oppose each other to sit down together and work out a common approach.



If the board is deeply divided, postpone decision-making. Appoint a task force to work on a proposal to the board. Include all factions on this task force.