

## Conflicting viewpoints: Map the positive and negative interpretations of conflict

**Purpose:** To help team members understand conflict and how it may be *either* productive or destructive.

**Materials:** Copies of the article, “Experts agree: Conflict creates better teams;” paper, chart paper, pens or pencils, markers, highlighters.

**Time:** 15 to 30 minutes depending on group size.

1. Prepare copies of the article, “Experts agree: Conflict creates better teams;” and provide the article to each member of the group. Have the group read the article prior to meeting to allow members time to think more deeply about the ideas or to investigate the resources.
2. Ask each member to write the word “conflict” in the center of a piece of paper and circle it. Members then should write all the words and phrases they associate with “conflict” around the circle.
3. Have members highlight the associated words in different colors, categorizing them as neutral, positive, or negative. They should then calculate the percentages of positive, negative, and neutral items.
4. Ask members to reflect on the percentages. How many had more than 90% positive? How many had more than 90% negative?
5. Ask members to share their insights and discuss.
6. Chart the negative associations with conflict, and ask team members to brainstorm ways to eliminate or minimize these negatives.
7. Chart all of the positive associations with conflict and have team members create statements of positive ways to view conflict.
8. Debrief. Ask:
  - What do our associations with the word “conflict” indicate about our approach as a team to conflict?
  - What experiences have led us to our understanding?
  - What results have we had when we were in conflict in the past?
  - How has our response to conflict contributed to the outcome?
  - How might our response to conflict affect the outcome?
  - What positive outcomes might occur as a result of conflict?
  - What approaches to conflict might yield a positive outcome?

Source: Adapted from the Foundation Coalition, [www.foundationcoalition.org](http://www.foundationcoalition.org).