Quick tips for the conflict avoidant

Do you like to maintain positive, friendly relations with your teammates? Do you like to think of yourself as a good, nice, person who would never start a fight? You could be just as responsible for the dysfunction on your team as your aggressive, combative colleagues. That's because it's a problem when you shy away from open, healthy conflict about the issues.

If you struggle to embrace conflict, use these tips to move forward productively when conflict arises.

Express your contrary opinion as an "and." It's not necessary for someone else to be wrong for you to be right. "I hear that you think we need to leave room in the budget for a luncheon AND I'm concerned that we need that money for teacher professional learning. What are our options?"

Use hypotheticals. If you don't feel comfortable being assertive, try asking your teammates to imagine a different scenario. "I hear your concern about getting the right teacher leaders to implement this new program. If we could get the right people…what could the implementation look like?

Talk about the impact of actions. Rather than disagreeing with the plan, help your teammates think through the consequences by asking good open-ended questions about the impact. "Okay, we're contemplating piloting this teacher evaluation system in only our middle schools. How is that going to land with parents?"

Ask about the underlying issue. If you disagree with a proposed action, start with discussion by trying to understand the rationale. If you understand the reason for the action, you might be able to find another way to accomplish the same goal. "I'm surprised you suggested we release the observation results to the whole team. What is your goal in doing that?"

Adapted from: **Davey, L. (2013, October).** 4 tips to overcome your conflict avoidance issue. Available at www.psychologytoday.com/blog/making-your-team-work/201310/4-tips-overcome-your-conflict-avoidance-issue.