Who Likes Conflict or Confrontation

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When I hear someone complaining about a coworker, supervisor, or manager, my standard response is, "have you discussed the issue with that person?" The answer I often get is "no, I don't like conflict" or "I don't like confrontation."

Well, who does like conflict or confrontation? But is having a conversation with someone about something that is bothering you or disagreeing with conflict? Does it have to be confrontational? No! But for some reason, many of us assume the conversation will not go well.

In my first supervisory position, I was often surprised that a conversation I was dreading to have sometimes went well and that some conversations I thought were going to go well sometimes did not. I came to realize that understanding the other person's point of view and how I approached the conversation was the key!

I learned never to assume I knew the other person's point of view. I learned to ask open-ended questions to understand the other person's point of view or concerns and address what is important to them while explaining my position. I learned to listen to understand rather than listening to respond.

The same techniques can be applied when serving on a state association or NAVTA committee, or Executive Board with individuals of varying backgrounds and differing opinions. Expressing the viewpoint of the constituents you represent is essential to the decision-making process! In today's fast-paced society with significant social media influence, we sometimes respond quickly without knowing all the facts, responding in anger or frustration without stopping to truly consider other points of view. But respectful, open, honest communication often resolves conflict and may lead to better solutions to a problem and possibly even new friendships!