



Stony Brook  
University

# THE OMBUDS OFFICE

*We're here to listen with an open mind.  
We're here to help resolve problems fairly.*

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*Confidential*    *Impartial*    *Informal*    *Independent*

## HANDLING CONFLICT

**Use “I” statements.** Avoid “You” statements as they place the other person on the defensive.

**Don’t take it personally.** Some conflict is actually a sign of a healthy relationship.

**Find a confidential setting to honor each other’s privacy.**

**Allow the other person to express him/herself** and vent his/her feelings.

**Do not speak for anyone else.**

**One person speaks at a time** – do not interrupt each other.

**Stay in the present – in the “here and now.”** Bringing up past related or unrelated issues only serves to muddy the water and fuel the conflict.

**Stick to the facts.** Be as objective as you can.

**Focus on similarities,** not differences – look for common ground.

**Agree on a time out if the situation begins to escalate.** Return to the conversation when the interaction can be more productive.

**Always listen with a third ear** – very attentively. Note the content of what someone says, as well as the tone of voice and nonverbal gestures.

**Use the person’s name** as you address him/her. Don’t use negative or pejorative labels.

**Maintain eye contact** unless it is culturally inappropriate.

**Be respectful, professional and polite.**





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**Avoid being judgmental, accusatory or argumentative.** No name calling or labeling.

**Ask questions** to clarify anything you might not fully understand.

**Recognize that your “perception” of the situation is just that.** It’s neither right, nor wrong. It is how you view the world. Could you or the other person misperceive the situation? If so, is it a conflict or a misperception?

**Take responsibility for your actions** and make a good faith effort to do better. Do your best to solve the problem.

**Be willing to negotiate.** Recognize where compromise may serve as a win-win for both parties with each having to let go of something.

**Examine your possible contribution to the problem.** If so, admit it.

**If necessary, apologize and mean it.**

**Keep your promises.** Like the old cliché, “actions speak louder than words.”

**Remember — it’s not about who wins or loses.** It’s about being able to communicate effectively and to resolve problems.

**Others will be watching and learning from you.** Be a role model and teach them well. Knowing how to work through conflict is a very useful and important skill.

*“The reality today is that we are all interdependent and have to co-exist on this small planet. Therefore, the only sensible and intelligent way of resolving differences and clashes of interests, whether between individuals or nations, is through dialogue.” -----The Dalai Lama*

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