

CONFLICT RESOLUTION DAY TIPS

CELEBRATE...Conflict Resolution Day - October 15, 2009. Conflict Resolution day was created by the Association for Conflict Resolution in 2005 to:

- Promote awareness of mediation, arbitration, conciliation and other creative, peaceful means of resolving conflict;
- Promote the use of conflict resolution in schools, families, businesses, communities, governments and the legal system;
- Recognize the significant contributions of peaceful conflict resolvers; and
- Obtain national synergy by having celebrations happen across the country and around the world on the same day. A list of CRD activities outside of Pittsburgh can be accessed at ACR's website, acrnet.org.

The **Mediation Council of Western Pennsylvania** offers 5 tips for resolving conflict in celebration of Conflict Resolution Day, October 15, 2009. According to Bernhard Behrend, President of the Mediation Council of Western Pennsylvania, everyone can be more effective in dealing with interpersonal conflict if they can remember to do the following 5 things:

1. Wait until your anger subsides before engaging in a conflict conversation. High emotions cloud judgments about how to move forward. Pausing may only take a minute or two, but has a big impact in being successful.
2. Start your statements with the word "I" rather than "You." This simple technique is very effective in changing the conversation from blaming the other to one about what you want to accomplish. If you accuse, the other will defend. If you seek assistance to accomplish what you want, they may very well be willing to help.
3. Keep the conversation about what to do next. While bringing up the past may be helpful in explaining what you want, the past is the past and can't be changed. There is no point in arguing about whose version of the past is the correct one. An agreement about the past is not necessary in order to agree about the future. Resolution is future focused.
4. Explore what is possible. Too often the arguments we get into are about which of our two proposed solutions is the better one. If there is no agreement about those two options, let those go and see what else might be satisfying. There are many ways to skin a cat.
5. Keep the conversation going. Don't give up until you are done. If you run out of options to consider, ask "Why do you like that idea?" Behind every position is an underlying interest. Find that interest and other options for resolution will become available. Let's say spouses are deciding where to go for dinner. She wants Chinese. He wants Mexican. If they stick with those two options it will become a battle of wills until one gives in. But why does each want what they want. Perhaps he wants spicy, and she wants a comfortable place in the neighborhood. The options multiply. With enough discussion they will find an agreeable choice.

Bonus tip: It is easier to resolve conflict with those who you dignify through the process. Listening telegraphs respect. Try to understand what the other is telling you, before jumping in with your ideas.

Celebrate Conflict Resolution Day by remembering to try these tips. They help make our world more satisfying and peaceful.

The **Mediation Council of Western Pennsylvania**, founded in 1982, is the only organization in the area devoted exclusively to the promotion of mediation, public education and support of the mediation profession. MCWP conducts regular educational programs for mediators and produces periodic programs aimed at acquainting the public with the broad scope of problems that can be solved through mediation. MCWP's web site is www.mediationwp.org. For additional information, please contact Bernie Behrend at 412-241-7888 or bbehrend@aol.com