

Tapestry Conflict Resolution Process



3 Steps for Resolving Conflict

For those times when conflict arises, Tapestry has established a 3-phased approach for addressing it. Additional details can be found below the following table. If resolving a conflict within the Tapestry community requires additional support, the **Right Relations Team (RRT)** is available.

Steps	Actions	Implementation	Additional Information
1	Personal Reflection	Examine your own role in the conflict. Why is this matter important to you?	Try writing down what happened and why, to get it clear in your own mind.
	Take Time	Sleep on things before acting impulsively. Get a reality check from a trusted third party. Compare your perceptions.	Focus on behaviors not people. Avoid mentioning names.
	Seek to Understand the Other Person(s)	Seek understanding of the situation by asking humanizing questions. What sort of influences might be at play?	Is there a background story that you might not currently be aware of? What might be causing the behavior?
2	Address the Concern Directly	Talk directly with the person (member, minister, staff) with whom you have the conflict. Agree on a mutually acceptable time and place to talk in private as soon as possible after the incident.	During the discussion, use “I” statements (“I feel” not “you did”). Actively listen to the other person; if necessary, repeat what the person just said to make sure you heard it correctly. If a direct conversation is too difficult, consider putting your thoughts in writing, again using “I” statements. (Email is not appropriate for this sort of writing.) Be available to hear the response.
3	Seek Assistance	If needed, those in conflict are encouraged to contact the RRT directly, or may be referred by the Board or Minister to the RRT. If the concern is related to job performance this can be referred to the person or committee in charge or supervision.	Anonymous complaints are not acceptable. Be prepared to take responsibility for your concerns. All participation is strictly voluntary. Confidentiality is a key ground rule.

Conflict Resolution Steps (with additional details):

Step 1 (Personal Reflection):

- When conflict occurs within Tapestry, those in conflict are encouraged to work it out together in a face-to-face meeting.
- First, own your issue. Anonymous complaints are not acceptable.
- Examine your own role in the conflict. Why is this matter important to you? Try writing down what happened and why, to get it clear in your own mind.
- Get a reality check from a trusted third party. Compare your perceptions. Did this person see or hear it in the same way? Based on your telling of events and your feelings, would they feel the same way?
- Seek understanding of the situation by asking humanizing questions. What sort of influences might be at play? Is there a background story that you might not currently be aware of? What might be causing the behavior?

Step 2 (Address the Concern Directly):

- Agree on a mutually acceptable time and place to talk in private as soon as possible after the incident.
- Talk directly with the person (member, minister, staff) with whom you have the conflict.
- During the discussion, use “I” statements (“I feel” not “you did”). Actively listen to the other person; if necessary, repeat what the person just said to make sure you heard it correctly.
- If a direct conversation is too difficult, consider putting your thoughts in writing, again using “I” statements. (Email is not appropriate for this sort of writing.) Be available to hear the response.
- If you feel that safety is an issue, or that the conversation is too difficult to manage alone, use an appropriate third party; the Right Relations Team has members who are available to help.
- If the conflict is not with the person but with how that person is performing a job (staff, RE teacher, etc.), address your concern to the proper supervisor of that person.

Step 3 (Referral to RRT):

- If needed, those in conflict are encouraged to contact the RRT directly, or may be referred by the Board or Minister to the RRT.
- One or both members should complete the **Conflict Resolution Assistance Request Form**.
 - All participants in the RRT process participate on a strictly voluntary basis.
 - Confidentiality parameters and ground rules for interacting during the RRT process are defined and agreed to prior to initiating the process.
- After gathering information about the conflict and determining that it is within their scope of practice the RRT will provide a safe and structured environment with facilitation for disputants to resolve the conflict. (See "scope of practice of the RRT" below.**)

Step 4 (Referral to Outside Resources):

- If no resolution is reached, RRT members suggest next step to disputants, including the possibility of calling upon the "Healthy Congregations Team" of the PSWD of the UUA.

Step 5 (Debrief and Document):

- RRT members debrief the conflict resolution process with one another and make a record of the mediation using the **Conflict Resolution Assistance Form** with additional pages as needed.

- Debriefing and sharing of final documentation (where appropriate) with those in conflict will be the final step in the process.

Right Relation Team Roles and Practices

RRT Composition:

A pool of 5 mediators is available to help individuals resolve conflict within Tapestry. Depending on the situation 1-3 members would be utilized for a given referral.

Mediators will utilize the following key steps:

A. Initiation

- 1. Validate participants' willingness and courage in seeking mediation.
- 2. Explain the process (impartiality of mediators, and goal of voluntary agreement)
- 3. Go over ground rules for session:
 - Speak respectfully
 - Try to remain open to hearing the other person's point of view
 - Each participant will have equal opportunity to speak
 - Confidentiality
 - Any other rules which are important to participants

B. Clarification

- 1. Ask the first questions and restate the answers to clarify issues.
- 2. Move conversation between participants to reduce tension and hostility.
- 3. Clarify, validate, and follow leads, and ask about both issues and feelings.
- 4. Take notes and summarize issues at end of the session.
- 5. Summarize issues and ask if there is anything more before moving on.
- 6. Transition occurs when all major issues are clarified and participants seem ready to speak to each other. One mediator explains any next phases and validates efforts of participants.

C. Finding mutual understanding

- 1. Mediators choose an easy issue or common ground for participants to begin this phase.
 - Guide parties to speak to one another, beginning with chosen topic.
 - Help them to restate the other's point before responding, especially at first when understanding is key.
- 2. Transition occurs when parties understand main concerns and they trust each other enough to work together at solutions.

D. Agreement

- 1. Mediators help participants develop a mutually-agreed upon resolution.
 - Begin with easy issues and working towards most difficult disagreements.
 - Make sure each agreement is clear, mutual, and workable.
 - Bring back suggested solutions from earlier phases.
 - Guide participants to resolve each important issue.
 - Do not suggest solutions.

- Create and read aloud, point by point, a written resolution.
- 2. Transition occurs when both participants agree to sign it.

E. Closure

- 1. Affirm and encourage both parties and their work in the session.
- 2. Give a copy of the agreement to both participants or let them know when they will receive it.
- 3. Determine which of the mediators will follow up with participants in 2–4 weeks.

The scope of practice of the RRT includes the following:

- Conflicts between members within church setting.
- Conflicts between members and staff.
- Conflicts involving a minor with parental consent.
- Members' concerns with treatment in deliberation regarding policy changes.
- Facilitating respectful dialogue within the fellowship.

The RRT is also available for the following conflicts, if invited:

- Conflicts with minister (Invited by the minister or by the Committee on Shared Ministry).
- Staff to staff conflicts (Invited by the Board of Trustees).
- Conflicts involving policy (Invited by the Board of Trustees).

The scope of practice of the RRT excludes the following:

- Conflicts that arise outside of our fellowship.
- Issues needing professional services (mental health issues, marriage therapy, threats of violence or any illegal activity).