

## Rule 7a: Manage the *How* and the *What* will Take Care of Itself

*From Greg Giesen's Eight Simple Rules to Managing Conflict*

There are two components to every argument/conflict. There's the conflicting issue (the *what*) and there's the interpersonal dynamics during the conflict (the *how*). Guess which one is most important?

That's right, the *how*.

Very simply, how you do conflict will directly impact the outcome of the conflict itself. If you are kind, respectful, constructively assertive and focused on win-win outcomes, you'll get one kind of results. If you are mean, rude, aggressive, and focused on being right, you'll get an entirely different kind of results.



The *how* sets up the *what*. Failure to effectively manage the *how* means all bets are off as to the success of the confrontation/conflict. When you focus on the issue without any attention to the interpersonal dynamics, you are asking for a fight; a fight that could do some serious long-term damage to your spouse, partner, colleague or friend.

*Okay, you say, but what if it's just the clerk at the store?*

No difference. It's still a relationship.

Think about it. How would you want to be treated if someone confronted you? Would you want them to be respectful or hard charging and in your face?

It's not complicated. Manage the *how* and the *what* will take care of itself. Here are some initial suggestions for managing the *how*:

- Begin with the end in mind (Rule 1). Have a plan...know what you want...and move the conversation in that direction.
- Avoid going up the ladder (Rule 2) and making assumptions until you have all the information to work with.
- Use a conflict style (Rule 3) that is best suited for getting win-win results.

- Take the initiative (Rule 4) to talk with the other party regardless of who is at fault or who is in the right or who is in the wrong.
- Focus on understanding the problem from their perspective first before expressing yours (Rule 5).
- Be prepared to ask for what you need (Rule 6) and to ask the other party for what they need from you.



In the end, it's all about respect! It's about how you feel in their presence during a confrontation and how they feel in your presence. If both of you feel respected, heard, acknowledged, and appreciated in the presence of each other, the *what* part of the conflict will be a slam dunk because you managed the *how*. The reverse is also true.

Stay tuned for Rule 7b where I share my secrets to successfully mediating conflict along with some informal and formal techniques to manage the *how* so you too can have constructive and meaningful relationships.

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