

Conflict resolution and dealing with disruptive behaviour

Managing conflict

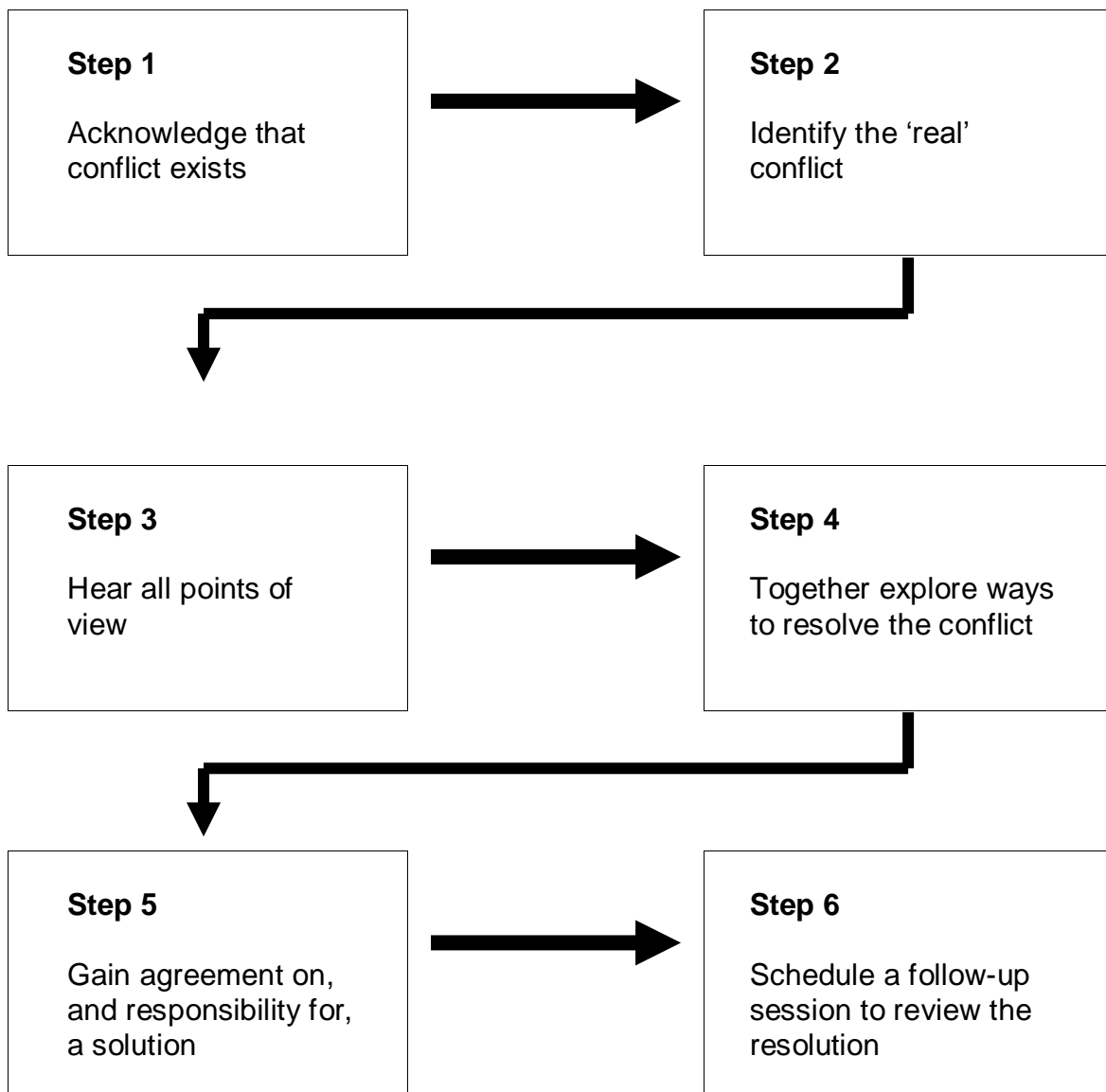
There are various actions the Research Team Leader could take if disagreement occurs in the meeting, but the action will depend on the reason for the conflict. Some suggestions are provided below:

Action	Comments
Do nothing/concur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful if the conflict appears temporary, if conflict is of no great importance. • There may be a case when you are wrong or you wish support for a later issue, in which case you may take no further action to argue your point.
Engage in prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This can be minimised by creating a set of ground rules early in the project that have been agreed by all members. They can be referred should disagreements or disruptive behaviour arise. • Additionally, a one-to-one conversation with anyone you suspect may be likely to disrupt the meeting might prevent this occurring.
Use of indirect methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions designed to tease out and bring to the fore underlying reasons for conflict amongst members can be useful. For example 'Why does this problem exist...', 'What kind of data do you have to support this ...'. • This may be useful when conflict arises between two people of equal power and may result in a compromise. It may bring about a lasting or temporary settlement if the issue is complex.
Physical intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On very rare occasions if conflict is heated asking the member to change seats or move around the room may solve the problem. It is hoped that conflict can be resolved before this point is reached. • When a solution needs to be found but two parties seem at loggerheads with one another it may be productive to invite input from other members.
Confronting and feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This can only be successful if done with assertion. It entails reiterating the group rules and the points made, as well as providing feedback about the impact of the behaviour. For example 'Thumping the table and shouting is not helpful to this discussion. Please stop and sit down.' • Intervention in terms of 'forcing the issue' may be necessary if a quick decision is required or a course of action is unpopular.

Emergency halt

- When conflict and disruptive behaviour results in the meeting becoming counter-productive then it might be appropriate to close the meeting and reconvene either after a short break or at another time. A resolution must be found or the damage to relationships may become permanent.

Six Steps to Conflict Resolution



Points to remember:

- It takes time to resolve conflict, avoid being sidetracked by irrelevant or misleading arguments/responses
- Focus on the 'real' issue throughout
- Target the behaviour, not the person
- Be supportive and optimistic

Source: Chang, RY (1995) *Success Through Teamwork*, Kogan Page, London