



CONFLICT AVOIDANCE, PART ONE: REASONS WE AVOID CONFLICT

We may think that the workplace is one in which we won't have conflict or shouldn't. We may try at all costs to avoid or ignore it in the hopes that it will go away on its own.

Spoiler alert: it won't.

Not only is avoiding all conflict unrealistic, but it can mean that we're not being honest with one another and we're not addressing the small issues that can pile up over time and lead to even bigger problems.

Conflict avoidance is appealing because navigating through conflict can often be uncomfortable. Negative emotions arising from conflict cause us discomfort and, in some cases, overwhelm us with feelings of threat (otherwise called "flooding"). So, we push the emotions away and hope they'll dissolve over time. But they don't. They stick around and cause resentment, loss of connection, and lack of engagement.

Working through conflict can also be difficult, especially if we don't know what to say or do to make things better. We haven't learned the skills or practiced using them. We fear that our attempts will go badly and make things even worse.

Sweeping workplace problems under the rug may temporarily provide us some reprieve from the discomfort of conflict, but it may also resurface in the future in ways that prove even more damaging to ourselves, our colleagues, and our collective team atmosphere.

Ignoring conflict can cause the underlying issues to become entrenched making it harder, and yet even more important, to resolve.



Avoidance is the best short-term strategy to escape conflict, and the best long-term strategy to ensure suffering."

Brendan Burchard