



CONFLICT AVOIDANCE, PART TWO: AVOIDING CONFLICT THROUGH FRICTION

You're committed to facing conflict—great! But then you find yourself in a conflict situation and you are flooded by your emotions. Your brain is telling you to get ready to fight, run away as fast as you can, or freeze until you become invisible (more on this in “This Is Your Brain on Conflict”). What can you do?

One of the best strategies for getting yourself out of emotional flooding and into a mindset to have a hard conversation is to interrupt your brain's natural tendency to get you out of the situation by taking a break or pausing. Stepping away momentarily, taking a few deep breaths, or going on a quick walk creates friction in your brain's processes that can allow you to re-set and prepare for a hard conversation. Sometimes all you need is a few minutes. Other times you need to give it a couple of days.

Here are a few examples of what you can say to create space and return to the conversation with clarity:

If you are in the midst of conflict, give yourself a moment to assess what you need and communicate that to the person you're in conflict with.



Try: “Can you give me a minute? I'll be right back.” Or “Any chance we can pick this up later this afternoon? I need some time to think through a couple of things.”

If you didn't address conflict in the moment and it is not resolved, ask to revisit it.



Try: “Can we talk about what happened in the staff meeting tomorrow? I'm free at 2pm. Would that work for you?”

Similarly, if the person you're in conflict with is seeming overwhelmed, ask them if they want to re-visit the conversation another time.



Try: “I can tell this has brought up some hard feelings. Do you want to pause and talk tomorrow?”

The most important thing is not to use a pause in the conversation as an excuse to skip out on it altogether. Whether it's two hours, two days, or two weeks later, circle back and talk things through.