**Sample Conflict Resolution Policy**

As members of [YOUR GROUP NAME], we deeply value our relationships with each other and recognize that the quality of these relationships strongly influences everyone’s experience who is part of this group. While conflicts are an inevitable and natural part of working together in collaborative groups, it is important that each of us to speak up when something is really bothering us, maintain respect for each other throughout the conflict resolution process, and commit to growing through these experiences, rather than allow problems to fester beneath the surface or solidify into grudges. Because groups that suffer from ongoing, unresolved conflicts tend to be less effective and enjoyable, we commit to using the following process with each other.

Please note that while this is not a formal legal contract, it represents a good-faith agreement between group members that is designed to be utilized whenever a significant conflict occurs. Significant violations of group agreements and values are also subject to this policy.

1. All group members are entitled and encouraged to take a step back (or time out) whenever a situation becomes tense, difficult, or conflictual, both inside and outside of group meetings. After a reasonable break to cool down (between five minutes and a few days), all parties agree to reconvene as soon as possible to address the conflict.

2. If possible, parties in conflict seek first to resolve the conflict among themselves, using the four-stage process of [Nonviolent Communication](https://www.cnvc.org): observation (what happened from your perspective, without interpretation or embellishment), feelings (how you actually felt about the situation, taking ownership for your reactions and suspending judgment about others’ intentions), needs (which of your fundamental basic needs were not met by this situation - see [Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow's_hierarchy_of_needs) for help identifying them), and requests ([Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria) steps that can be taken to remedy or improve the situation). All parties should have the ability to share their own observations, feelings, needs, and requests without harassment or derision, and receive a straight answer about whether or why you are not able to meet them. If a particular request cannot be met, parties should work to find another way to meet the underlying needs that have already been expressed. Once all parties have agreed that their needs have been sufficiently met, a plan should be written down and made available to all group members (including those not involved in the conflict). If this plan fails, or any party feels they cannot resolve the conflict among themselves for any reason, we will proceed to step three.

3. Here, the conflict is brought to a meeting of all group members and a neutral facilitator is chosen by the consent of all parties involved. The facilitator will then attempt to lead participants through the Nonviolent Communication process described above. If a neutral facilitator cannot be agreed upon or the process fails at this point for any reason, a further step may need to be taken.

4. At this point, the group will seek out a pro bono professional mediator or facilitator of Nonviolent Communication who can provide additional support. If this outside mediator is unable to resolve the conflict, a pro bono mediator cannot be found, or the parties in conflict are unwilling to pay for professional assistance, the other members who were not directly involved in this conflict may decide to move on to the fifth and final step.

5. At this stage, all attempts to resolve the conflict with the cooperation of all parties involved have been exhausted. As a last resort, group members who have not been directly involved in the conflict may either decide on a plan to resolve it or ask one or more parties to leave. If a plan is made and one or more of the parties involved fails to uphold their responsibilities, they will automatically be asked to leave.

This policy exists, not because we don’t trust each other to do the right thing, but to provide us with a map for resolving conflicts that we can rely on even in the midst of the most chaotic situations (which may or may not occur). It is extremely challenging, if not impossible, to come to a decision on a process for resolving conflicts when group members are already embroiled in conflict.

While will not approve any new group members who refuse to sign onto this policy, if you have any questions about it, please ask existing members before signing. This commitment is considered binding and ongoing until you leave the group.

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Your Name Today’s Date