

THE LANGUAGE OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

HOW WE SAY THINGS CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

Across cultures, tone, phrasing, intonation and word choice can either calm a tense discussion or inflame it. These phrases help replace confrontation with collaboration, fostering understanding in multicultural teams.



EXPRESSING DISAGREEMENT CONSTRUCTIVELY

"You're wrong." → "I see it differently."
"That's not true." → "I'm not sure I see it that way."
"We already discussed that." → "Can we revisit this briefly to make sure we're aligned?"
"That won't work." → "That might be challenging."
"That's a bad idea." → "I have some concerns."

Cultural Note:

In some cultures, direct disagreement is seen as assertive and efficient; in others, it can be considered disrespectful. Framing disagreement as curiosity helps maintain respect.



MANAGING FEEDBACK AND CRITICISM

"You didn't do this right." → "I think there's another approach that might work better."
"This is wrong." → "This could be improved by..."
"That's not good enough." → "Let's see how we can make this stronger together."
"You should have known that." → "I realise this wasn't clear. Let's review it together."
"That was a mistake." → "This didn't go as planned. What can we learn from it?"

Cultural Note:

Feedback that sounds too soft to some cultures may sound harsh to others. Aim for *clarity with kindness*.



BUILDING COMMON GROUND

"You don't understand." → "Maybe we're looking at this from different angles."
"We'll do it my way." → "Let's find an approach that works for everyone."
"That's not my problem." → "Let's see how we can tackle this together."
"That's your fault." → "There seems to have been a misunderstanding."
"You're making this difficult." → "This seems complex. Let's take a step back and look at options."

Cultural Note:

Many cultures value "saving face", so avoiding blame helps preserve relationships and trust.



SOFTENERS & PHRASES THAT SHOW EMPATHY

"Calm down." → "I can see this is frustrating. Let's take a moment to think it through."
"That's not my responsibility." → "Let me check how we can handle this."
"You're overreacting." → "I can tell this issue matters to you."
"That's impossible." → "That might be difficult, but let's see what's possible."
"You have to..." → "Could I suggest..." / "It might help if we..."

Cultural Note:

Empathy is expressed differently around the world. In some places, acknowledging emotion openly is appreciated; in others, a calm, solution-oriented tone shows respect.



CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION TIPS

- ✓ **Ask, don't assume.** Phrasing questions gently ("Could you clarify...?") avoids implying blame.
- ✓ **Acknowledge differences.** Try "From your perspective..." or "In your context..." to show openness.
- ✓ **Watch tone and pace.** What sounds confident in one language may sound aggressive in another.
- ✓ **Pause before replying.** Silence can signal thoughtfulness, not resistance.
- ✓ **Summarise to confirm understanding.** "So, just to check I've understood you correctly..."

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Remember:
Language shapes perception. Politeness, phrasing and empathy can prevent small misunderstandings from becoming major conflicts, especially in multicultural teams.

