

## Growing Memories

What is a memory garden? While every garden is unique, memory gardens are always special places. They are designed to create new memories as well as bring back fond memories of days gone by.

The memory garden is a sensory rich environment to be enjoyed during all seasons. It provides a tranquil setting that everyone can enjoy, and includes features that make it user-friendly for older adults and those with memory impairment.

### Easy to Use

Memory gardens are laid out with looping pathways to allow continuous exploration. Short walkways branching off the main pathways terminate in circular areas in which park benches are placed. The benches invite visitors to sit down and rest, and when they turn around to sit down their focus is redirected to the main pathway.

Memory gardens accommodate those who use wheelchairs and may have reduced stamina. The gardens are designed with raised planter beds to bring the soil, flowers and plants closer to visitors. The surrounding low wall of the raised planters and park benches provides an ideal place to rest before continuing on. Numerous resting places enable visitors to enjoy the garden for a longer period of time.

### Getting Outside

As the mobility of elders declines, so can their levels of direct exposure to daylight. Gardens provide enticements for people to be outside. We all need to experience the high light levels associated with daylight to keep our sleep and wake cycles synchronized with daily light cycles. Sunlight on our skin has the additional health benefit of synthesizing vitamin D, allowing calcium to be absorbed by bones and tissue (many older adults who experience bone fractures are vitamin D deficient).



### Growing Closer to Nature

Memory gardens create opportunities for the intuitive connection to the natural world: to plants, animals, birds and butterflies, as well as opportunities to experience the changing of the seasons. As mental function declines, people with dementia operate more on a sensory, rather than an intellectual level. Therefore, it is important to provide positive sensory stimulation by which they can gather information about their environment. In memory gardens, persons with dementia can recall past experiences and find countless subjects for discussion with family and friends.

### Finding a Memory Garden

The Alzheimer's Association and the American Society of Landscape Architects have collaborated on several memory gardens throughout the United States. Additionally, many long-term care facilities and hospitals have on-site memory gardens. To help you find a memory garden near you, the Therapeutic Landscapes Resource Center features a national listing of therapeutic gardens on the organization's website at [www.healinglandscapes.org](http://www.healinglandscapes.org).

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# Successful Relationships at Work – Strategies for Dealing with Conflict

This article looks at different ways of dealing with conflict at work. It covers:

- Avoiding the build-up of conflict;
- Different strategies for dealing with conflict;
- How to collaborate.

## Avoiding the build-up of conflict

Conflict that is allowed to build up can become very stressful and upsetting for both parties. To prevent this from happening, try to deal with issues as soon as they arise.

Ideally you can do this by speaking directly to the person involved by saying, "I noticed you seemed annoyed when I did that, is there anything you'd like to talk about?" It also may be appropriate to bring the issue up at a meeting, "I've noticed some teething problems in the way we deal with invoices at the moment," or to speak to your manager.

**Avoidance** is very commonly used, and involves avoiding the person or the situation involved in the conflict. This method isn't usually helpful as nothing is resolved, but it may be necessary if you feel too vulnerable to cope with the situation, e.g. it may be useful to take some time off work until you feel stronger.



## Different strategies for dealing with conflict

Avoidance, accommodation, competition, compromise and collaboration are the five usual ways of dealing with conflict.

**Accommodation** is where you "submit" to the conflict, e.g. by listening to unhelpful criticism and believing it. If you have low self-esteem you are more likely to use this method. Like avoidance, it is not a very successful method of resolving issues. It could be used if you know a solution is coming soon from an outside source.

**Competition** is where the conflict becomes a "fight," e.g. a colleague tells your manager you've been leaving early, so you retaliate by telling your manager that they've been stealing pencils. This can be useful with mild conflict, but it often leads to the conflict escalating. It also means you are lowering yourself to the other person's level.

**Compromise** is where you work out a solution where you both "give a little," e.g. if your colleague wants help with their project, you offer to help them with half of it. This is a more useful strategy but it can leave both parties feeling a little disappointed.

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**Collaboration** is where you commit to working together to arrive at a solution that is acceptable to both of you – a "win-win" situation.

### How to collaborate

Collaboration can feel risky as it involves being very clear about your needs and having an open conversation with the other person to try and understand their point of view. To collaborate successfully, you need to:

- Recognize that part of the responsibility for the conflict is your own. You may have avoided addressing the conflict earlier, or you may have reasons for your position that you haven't been open about. Taking responsibility for this may encourage the other person to do the same;
- Learn how to manage yourself during the conversation, e.g. how to relax if you are likely to become angry, or how to be more assertive if you lack confidence;
- It might help to have a third person present for your conversation. Getting emotional during the conversation is unlikely to be helpful;
- Have belief in what you are saying. Make sure this comes across by maintaining eye contact, having positive body language and not sitting while the other person is standing;
- Try to focus on the behavior and not on the person, e.g. "I find it difficult to concentrate when you talk loudly" rather than "you're such an awful gossip;"
- Try and find out why the other person feels the way they do – if you can understand each other's reasons then you'll be more likely to come up with a solution that suits both of you.



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Remember, people who enjoy creating conflict are often re-enacting difficulties from their lives previously – seeing their behavior in this way may help you to be empathetic and will mean the conflict is more likely to be resolved.

If you feel you are being bullied in any way, speak to your



manager, human resources representative, OEAP coordinator and/or get support from your union representative and from friends and family.

Nobody enjoys conflict, but improving your conflict management skills will help you to stand up for your rights whilst helping other people get what they need, and will have benefits in both your professional and your personal life.

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