



Positive Principles Newsletter



By Guy Harris

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Welcome new **Positive Principles** subscribers.

November has been a great month. I travelled to Florida to speak at a business conference. I went to Atlanta to co-facilitate a train-the-trainer session. I completed a book project (*Sell Naked on the Phone: Stripping Away the Barriers to Your Success in Sales*) where [JJ Brun](#) and I contributed much of the human behavior content and my friends [Joe and Dawn Pici](#) contributed the phone technique portions. Finally, I had a great Thanksgiving holiday with my family at home in Indiana.



This month I have continued my series of articles on conflict resolution concepts. I find that much of the literature on conflict resolution describes great techniques (phrases, approaches, steps, etc.) for resolving conflicts. I see value in most of it, yet the material often overlooks or ignores a critical component in the conflict resolution process – emotional control. This month I am addressing this issue.

Thanks for subscribing to **Positive Principles**. I hope that this series of articles will help you and the people that work with you grow in the ability to address and resolve conflict.

Have a great day,
Guy Harris
The Recovering Engineer

Key Quotes:

"Anger is only one letter short of danger."

- Anonymous

"The happiness of a man in this life does not consist in the absence, but in the mastery, of his passions."

- Alfred, Lord Tennyson

This month's tip – **Stay CALM in conflict.**

I have seen lots of good suggestions for approaches to resolving conflict, and most of it prescribes the steps for conflict resolution with little recognition of the emotional component of the process. In my experience, controlling the emotional aspect of the conflict often interferes with the effective application of otherwise fantastic conflict resolution approaches.

With this thought in mind, I developed an acronym to help myself and others address the emotions (anger, frustration, fear, apprehension, etc.) associated with addressing and effectively resolving conflicts. In order to control your emotional response, work to stay **CALM** in the conflict where **CALM** means:

Check your motive (intent)

Do you want to be [RIGHT](#) or do you want to [RESOLVE](#) the conflict? Any time I enter a conflict situation with the intent to prove that I am RIGHT, the effort generally fails. So, the first step to controlling the emotional component lies in checking my motive as I enter the discussion. I find

that I have to consciously choose a resolution mindset because I default to a “prove I’m right” approach. In my work with clients, I see that many other people have this tendency as well.

Ask questions

[Asking questions](#) rather than making statements helps to focus your thinking on understanding the other person’s perspective over expressing yours. In conflict, we often want to justify our position rather than understand the other person’s. As a result, we make statements rather than ask questions. I have found it difficult, if not impossible, to understand the other person’s perspective when I am focused on explaining mine. (Kevin Eikenberry has a [great article](#) on asking questions.)

Listen carefully

This may be the most difficult, and most powerful, step towards controlling your emotional response. [Listening](#) does not come naturally to many people. Once you have checked your motive, chosen to pursue resolution over being right, and asked good questions; listen to the response. I have found that forcing myself to slow down and listen, helps me to do the next step more effectively.

Monitor your voice tone and body language

While you are listening to the other person, body language trumps voice tone (since you should be silent while listening). So, carefully consider how you position yourself. Keep your arms in an open, receptive posture. Stand (or sit) comfortably facing the other person. Relax your facial muscles. In other words, look like you care. I have seen psychological research that tentatively links control of your physical actions with controlling your emotions. So, controlling your physical reaction can lead to better control of your feelings and to improved communication with the other person.

When you master the ability to remain **CALM** in a conflict situation, your ability to resolve it productively will skyrocket.

So for now, I encourage you to remember this month's tip . . .

Stay CALM in conflict.

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