

Step	Self-assessment questions	What to say to a family
1. Notice the conflict	<i>Am I feeling angry or irritated or bored. . . .</i>	<b>This is an internal reflective step</b>
2. Prepare yourself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get into a 'ready to negotiate' state of mind.</li> <li>• Examine the situation</li> <li>• Decide on the purpose of working through the conflict</li> </ul>	<i>Am I too angry to fully listen? Am I still thinking I am right?</i>  <i>What information do I need to know?</i>  <i>What are the consequences of not addressing this conflict?</i>  <i>What are my needs that should be addressed in dealing with this?</i>	<b>These are an internal reflective step</b>
3. Find a non-judgemental starting point	<i>What would an impartial third person say that this conflict is about?</i>	<b>"Let's start with the big picture – what we are hoping for in Mrs X's situation"</b>
4. Reframe emotionally charged issues	<i>How can I describe the issues so that it is something that we both need to work together on?</i>  <i>Am I moving on to the 'me against you' stance?</i>	<b>"For a lot of people providing food is a way of showing love. If that is a part of the issue, let's talk about other ways you can do that"</b>  <b>"I don't think of withholding intravenous fluid as starvation. It is a medical intervention that isn't always good for someone who is in the last phase of life"</b>
5. Respond empathetically	<i>Have I given explicit feedback that shows I understand the other person's feelings?</i>	<b>"I know you would never want to feel that you were starving your mother. These decisions require a lot of thought"</b>
6. Look for options that meet the needs of both parties	<i>Does this option address that other person's and my concerns?</i>	<b>"How about I describe a treatment option and you can tell me your reactions both positive and negative. "</b>
7. If no satisfactory agreement can be reached, get help	<i>What resources exist to help you in your organisation?</i>	<b>"I think it would be helpful to have another impartial person help us discuss what is best"</b>

Adapted from Back A, Arnold R: Dealing with Conflict in Caring for the Seriously Ill – "It Was Just Out of the Question" JAMA, March 2005, 293:11