**WORKPLACE CONFLICT**

Conflict in the workplace is inevitable.

And unless your work completely isolates

you from co-workers, customers, suppliers

and vendors, it's likely that you have

already experienced some form of

conflict in your professional life. How

you handled that conflict was probably

a fair indication of your ability to cope

with both your own stress, and the

reactions of others to stressful situations.

Negative reactions to the stress involved

in workplace conflict may include

expressions of anger, resentment and

even hostility. It is important to

recognize that these reactions are part of

a normal response process as a result of

an overall feeling of helplessness and

frustration with a stressful situation and

are not a personal attack. It is equally

important to ensure that your own

response does not fuel the anger. To help

you direct your responses, diffuse anger,

and control conflict situations, some

general guidelines for effective conflict

communications are listed below. Try

them during your next (and there will be

a next) workplace conflict, or adapt them

to use during personal conflict situations

with family and friends.

1. *Don't take it personally*. Realize that

the individual is angry at the

situation, not you personally.

2. *Let the individual vent their anger* by

allowing them to speak without

interruption.

3. *Apply active listening skills* including:

• maintaining eye contact

• asking questions and addressing

them by name

• taking notes when necessary

• restating your understanding

of the problem

The person probably already feels

that no one is taking them seriously.

Your interest will show them that

you are genuinely concerned and

want to help them.

4. *Apologize and mean it.* Even if you

did not cause the problem personally,

tell the person how sorry you are

that they have had a bad experience.

5. *Take responsibility*. Do not make it

appear that you are passing blame

or passing them off to someone else

to deal with this issue.

6. *Do what you can to solve the problem*

*right away.* If you don't know the

answer to something, tell them you

don't know but promise to find out

for them.

7. *Keep your promises.* The person is

probably already feeling betrayed

and your doing what you say you

are going to do will go a long way

to regaining their trust.