



# Dispute Resolution Skills Worksheet

## What to say when...

*Content Designed by Dr. Colleen Vandneboom for EWU*

### 1. What to say to someone who makes a mean or belittling comment:

- If someone says something mean or belittling, calmly ask them to repeat it. Often, they are looking for a reaction, and making them say it again takes the fun out of it. You can then follow up with, "Was your intent in saying that to embarrass me?"

### 2. What to say to focus on the problem, not the people:

- Remember, the issue isn't with each other; it's the problem at hand. For example, "I see that the garbage needs to be emptied, and we're both heading out of town. How should we solve this?" Approach the other person as a teammate, not an adversary. For example, "How can we solve this?" or "How should we approach this?"

### 3. What to say if you get triggered by a statement or action:

- In the absence of data, we will always make up stories. When you find yourself making assumptions due to missing information, try saying, "The story I'm telling myself is this..." or ask yourself, "What else could they mean by this statement?" "Tell me more."

### 4. What to say if the other party gets triggered by a statement or action:

- If someone says something triggering or misinterprets what you said, respond with, "Tell me more," or "What did you hear when I said that?" This encourages further dialogue and reduces miscommunication.

### 5. What to say if the other person interrupts you:

- First time: Let it go and offer grace—assume good intent.
- Second time: Use their name and a power statement, such as, "Hey Fred, I can't hear you when you interrupt me."
- Third time: Assert your boundaries more firmly.

### 6. What to say to tell someone hard news:

- The compliment sandwich can be misleading. Try being direct: "Thank you for talking with me—I have bad news, but I felt it was important to be honest with you because I know you value honesty."