



Club Wellbeing

Tricky Conversations



Conflict in clubs is normal. Letting it fester is optional.

Lions Clubs bring together people of different backgrounds, opinions, personalities, and ways of doing things, united by a shared commitment to service.

That diversity is a strength. But it also means that disagreements, misunderstandings, and difficult conversations are inevitable.

The clubs that thrive long-term are not the ones where conflict never happens. They are the ones where members have the skills and the willingness to work through it.

Why Conflict Happens in Clubs

Understanding why conflict arises, rather than just reacting to it, is the first step toward resolving it well.

Common Triggers

- Decisions made without consultation
- Long-standing members feeling sidelined
- Newer members feeling unwelcome or unheard
- Unequal distribution of work and recognition
- Leadership styles that clash
- Unresolved history being carried forward
- Personal stress or life difficulty spilling into club
- Change to roles, processes, events, or direction

What Lies Beneath

Most club conflict is not really about the surface issue.

It is usually about one or more unmet needs:

- The need to feel valued and respected
- The need to belong and be included
- The need to feel heard
- The need for fairness
- The need for continuity and predictability

Address the need, and the conflict often resolves itself.

The RESOLVE Approach

Developed by Clinical Psychologist Andrew Fuller, the RESOLVE model offers a practical framework for navigating difficult conversations, adapted here for the Lions club context.

R	Respond with Respect	Lead the conversation, don't react to it
E	Engage	Create a safe space and genuinely listen
S	Seek Understanding	Find out where the real hurt lies
O	Observe Feelings	Notice the emotion beneath the words
L	Lower the Tone	Calm the nervous system, yours and theirs
V	Value Add	Ask what they need, not what you think they deserve
E	Empower	Move toward resolution together



RESOLVE in Practice.

Respond with Respect - *Lead, don't react*

When someone is angry or upset, the instinct is to defend ourselves. Resist it. Responding with respect means staying calm even when the other person isn't.

It means choosing to lead the conversation rather than being pulled along by it.

Engage - *Create safety first*

Find a private, comfortable space. Sit down together. Remove the audience.

Ask them to explain what is happening for them, and then only ask questions. Your job at this stage is not to respond or defend. It is to find out where they are hurting.

Seek understanding - *Listen in three ways*

Find a private, comfortable space. Sit down together. Remove the audience.

Ask them to explain what is happening for them, and then only ask questions.

Observe feelings - *The emotion beneath the words*

By the time someone brings a conflict to you, they have usually been sitting on it for a while. They may not be interested in solutions yet. They may just need to be heard.

Slow the conversation down. Give them the sense that you have time.

Lower the tone - *Calm the room*

Heightened emotions mean elevated cortisol and adrenaline, the brain is in threat mode and cannot think its way to solutions.

Lower the physiological temperature first. Offer water. Suggest a short walk. Breathe slowly yourself. Certainty reduces cortisol.

Value add - *Ask the unexpected question*

When the moment is right, ask simply: **"What would you like me to do? How can I help?"**

This is often the most disarming question in any difficult conversation.

It shifts the dynamic from confrontation to collaboration. It also invites the other person to stop and think, which is precisely what you want them to do.

Empower - *Move forward together*

Agree on actions, however small.

Even a single next step changes the dynamic from stuck to moving.

Arrange a follow-up. Check in on how things are going and acknowledge the courage it took to have the conversation at all.

Try to give people what they need, not what they deserve.

"I'm really glad you've come to me with this. Can we sit down and talk it through?"

Your job at this stage is not to respond or defend. It's to find out where they are hurting

"Could you speak a little slower? I really want to understand what's happened for you."

Saying
"Here is what I'd like to do next..."
creates a sense of safety that makes resolution possible.

"I'm really glad we could work through this together. Let's check in again in a couple of days."

What Tends to Make Things Worse

Avoid These

- **Responding publicly** - conflict in front of others escalates quickly and creates sides
- **Defending before listening** - this signals that you care more about being right than resolving
- **Bringing up history** - relitigating old grievances prevents resolution of the current one
- **Minimising** - 'It's not a big deal' is rarely received as reassurance
- **Ghosting the issue** - hoping it will go away rarely works and usually makes it worse

Instead, Try

- Private, calm, one-on-one conversation
- Genuine curiosity before any response
- Focusing on the present issue only
- Acknowledging how the person feels, even if you see it differently
- Taking the issue seriously, even if it seems small to you



When to Seek Further Support

Not every conflict can or should be resolved within the club. It is appropriate to seek support when:

- The conflict involves formal complaints or potential misconduct
- Personal safety is a concern
- Multiple attempts to resolve the issue have been unsuccessful
- The conflict is significantly affecting club culture or membership retention

Lions Australia has support structures available. District leadership, zone chairs, and our Foundation are all resources worth drawing on when needed.

Seeking help is not a sign of failure. It is a sign of commitment to the club.

A Moment to Reflect

Is there a conversation in your club that has been avoided or left unfinished?

What kind of club culture do you want to be part of building?

What would it look like to approach it with genuine curiosity rather than defensiveness?



The health of a club is built in thousands of small moments, the conversations we choose to have, and the way we choose to have them.

Thriving Members. Thriving Clubs.

An Australian Lions Wellbeing Foundation Initiative alwf.org.au/tmtc

Created in Partnership with Andrew Fuller - Clinical Psychologist, Family Therapist & Author andrewfuller.com.au

Wellbeing Series:

Social Connection | Anxiety | Tricky Conversations | Identity | Motivation | Sleep | Movement | Nutrition |

