



# feedists for fat liberation

## FFL Conflict Resolution Toolkit

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## 1.0 Introduction

Conflict can be scary. In western cultures that centre white supremacy, direct and assertive responses to conflict are not considered the norm, and many people are not raised in homes where conflict is addressed in healthy and meaningful ways. Current responses to harm and conflict are rooted in colonialism, white supremacy, and misogyny, and seek to uphold hierarchies, power and domination, and are focused on retribution and repeating cycles of harm, violence, and trauma. FFL recognizes that the current responses to harm and conflict which are accepted as normal in mainstream society do not seek to address the underlying causes of harm and conflict. By not addressing the root causes of harm and conflict, this creates an environment where conflict and harm are likely to be repeated. FFL envisions a world where there is liberation for all, and part of working towards a more liberated future includes transforming how conflict and harm is addressed, recognizing that we have all caused harm and we have all been harmed.

This document is intended to serve as a framework to guide FFL members through moments of conflict, so as to ensure that conflicts are an opportunity for growth. We recognize that conflict is a natural occurrence, and that oftentimes, conflict represents an unmet need. Through engaging in open conversations and holding ourselves and one another accountable, this may help mitigate conflict. We also recognize the importance of addressing conflict as soon as it presents itself, and providing the resources and environments that will enable conflict to serve as an area for growth. This toolkit may support FFL members to achieve this, and it is intended to be used alongside the judgment of FFL organizers. This toolkit is also intended to be a living document, and should be revised and updated as needed. This toolkit outlines how to identify conflict, along with ways to address it, and tools to support this to take place.

This document is intended for all members of FFL, and conflict can be identified by any member at any time, including conflict with a core organizing member. There are designated FFL conflict resolution mediators outside of the core organizing team who can support the conflict resolution process at a variety of levels. We encourage

openness, accountability, and transparency, and we hope this process can support members to embody this.

## **2.0 Goals of FFL's Conflict Resolution Process**

1. To use conflict as an opportunity for growth
2. To take a proactive, non-hierarchical approach to addressing conflict
3. To address conflict within a transformative justice framework
4. In achieving the above, we will ensure that conflict does not derail our organizing efforts

## **3.0 Review of FFL's Guiding Principles**

In determining and addressing conflict, FFL will refer to our guiding principles to ensure we are acting in alignment with our core values:

1. Feedism and Fat Liberation are fundamentally connected with one another. Feedism cannot be enjoyed outside of Fat Liberation, and Feedists are natural allies to the Fat Liberation movement. Envisioning a world where there is liberation for all must include feedist/fat fetish identifying people, and Fat Liberation offers a framework to support this.
2. Health has no bearing or involvement with this movement. We reject the medical-industrial complex and healthism in all forms. Health status has no bearing on a person's humanity and worth.
3. The most marginalized Fat voices will be centered. This includes Inifinat people, Superfat people, sex workers, Fat QTBIPOC, Fat BIPOC, Fat Disabled, and Fat Queer voices.
4. In supporting greater understanding between Feedist and Fat Liberation communities, we will take an intersectional approach that considers Feedism/Fat Liberation as they intersect with other justice movements.
5. We recognize that each person has a story and that story is sacred. We will meet people where they are in their Feedism/Fat Liberation journey.
6. We are committed to creating a space that is free from shame, judgement, hostility, coercion, and fear. We are committed to eliminating anti-fat bias/fatphobia in Feedist spaces, while also working toward making Fat Liberation a Feedist-positive space.

## **4.0 Conflict Resolution Team**

The conflict resolution team will be composed of core organizing members and non core organizing members and should be a team of approximately 5-8 people. In

certain situations, other FFL members may be asked to participate in a specific conflict resolution process because they bring forward a particular skill set or lens that would help facilitate the process. Team members should be familiar with the principles of transformative justice, FFL's conflict resolution process, and general best practices for conflict resolution rooted in transformative justice, available at:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1urHVXjyl\\_Hll6E-D2KmKUoajzChi8Wh6](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1urHVXjyl_Hll6E-D2KmKUoajzChi8Wh6)

Involvement in this team may require additional time, energy, and emotional investment during times that a conflict presents itself. This investment will depend on the nature of the conflict and what the best course of action will be, but members of this team can expect a higher investment during times of conflict. At the time a conflict is presented, all team members will check in with one another to ensure everyone has capacity to focus on the conflict at hand, with the understanding that not all team members need to participate in every conflict resolution process. Ideally, this will give team members the opportunity to take breaks in between conflicts so as to avoid burnout. During times of no conflict, there will be minimal energy and investment required for this team, aside from occasional check-ins with one another. By bringing in additional community members to conflict resolution processes as needed, this will also help share skills and knowledge relating to conflict resolution. This may also ease recruitment of new members to the conflict resolution team.

## **5.0 What Does Conflict Look Like?**

This section outlines the various ways that conflict in the feedism community can present. This document is intended to be preventative, so that individual community members involved with FFL can identify conflict before it becomes a serious concern. By recognizing conflict, this also enables people to take a more thoughtful approach to addressing conflict as opposed to being reactionary when it presents. This will ensure minimal disruption to FFL's organizing and liberation work. We recognize that conflict is a natural aspect of any community, particularly one like FFL where people may share personal, intimate, sexual, friendship, and activist relationships with one another, and it is important to build relationships and grow through conflict as opposed to allowing conflict to derail the important work of FFL. Conflict can also take many different forms, and the reasons for conflict, parties involved, and repercussions of the conflict will also dictate how it is addressed. Within FFL, conflict can present in many ways, including but not limited to:

- You are an existing organizer with FFL. A former romantic partner who you ended on bad terms with would also like to get involved
- A person who is known for stealing and reposting content from sex workers would like to attend an FFL event

- During an Open House, a new attendee makes some inappropriate comments. Another FFL organizer responds in a way that you perceive to be rude, dominating, and dismissive. You try and bring it up with your co-organizer after the Open House in private, but they are not open to your feedback
- An FFL member attends a mainstream fat liberation event. This member states that they are involved with FFL and receives negative pushback for self-identifying as a feedist
- A member who has previously harassed several members in online feedists spaces emails and states that they would like to get involved with FFL
- An FFL member regularly shows up to meetings late, unprepared, or simply misses them without giving warning. The work is consistently falling on the same small number of people who are gradually getting more burnt out
- A person who you were previously abusive toward would like to join FFL. You have never disclosed that you were abusive to this person and have never been accountable for your behaviour
- A new person is joining FFL. They state that you were previously abusive toward them but you did not think you were abusive and you do not have any specific memories of this interaction
- An FFL member does not complete action items or other tasks regularly that they state they will complete. They are not open to accepting help from others
- A conflict in a friendship or a relationship between two or more FFL members. This conflict interferes with regular meetings and events for FFL
- An FFL member does not respond to or ignores messages from another FFL member about FFL-related tasks

## **6.0 Things to Reflect on When Presented with a Conflict**

The following questions are intended to help all parties reflect on the conflict and process the events prior to engaging in a formal conflict resolution process. It is important to note that certain questions will not be applicable to certain situations. To ensure FFL is taking on an approach that centres those who have been harmed, questions highlighted in yellow should not be asked in situations of sexual or gender based violence.

- What do I hope to achieve from this process?
- What are the details and facts of what is happening? Have I taken the time to pause and reflect on the conflict and focus on what happened? Remember that it is ok to take some time and give yourself space between the events of what happened and trying to process them
- What feelings does this situation bring about for me? Can I name the emotions I am feeling? Can I identify where I physically feel these emotions in my body?

- What can I do to self-soothe at this time? How can I help regulate my emotions and sensations at this time?
- What are the stories and scripts I am telling myself about this situation?
- Who are the people in my networks I can go to for support, reflection, and accountability surrounding this situation?
- Can I pause for a few moments to envision how the other person(s) may be feeling?
- Can I reflect on how I am mentally framing this situation? Have I already decided on what the outcome will be? Have I already decided that one party is right and one party is wrong? Can I challenge this “right vs wrong” binary and hold space for nuances and complexities?
- Is there an unmet need this conflict is touching on?
- In trying to address this conflict, what are my needs? What are my boundaries?
- If I was harmful, can I recognize this? Can I hold myself accountable and practice forgiveness towards myself?
- What do I think lead to this conflict? Were there any precipitating factors?
- Am I prepared to listen openly to the other person’s story?
- What systems of oppression are coming into play with this conflict?
- How will I keep myself safe/grounded during the discussion?

## **7.0 What to do When You Recognize a Conflict**

If a situation is bothering you, and you feel support would prevent conflict from escalating, please reach out to FFL for support so we can cultivate connections for you and others:

1. Review the FFL Conflict Resolution Process
2. Take some time to pause and reflect on what has happened and to process the events
3. Consider if it is possible to reach out directly to the person you are in conflict with and to come to a resolution directly. Remember that it is perfectly ok to be open and transparent with others in a way that is assertive (not aggressive) and to share your feelings and concerns about what has happened. It can feel uncomfortable to confront conflict head on, but this can often be a good way of preventing conflict from spiraling further. However, if this is not possible, you can always reach out to someone from FFL for support .
4. If coming to a resolution with the person you are in conflict with is not safe, comfortable, or possible, reach out to a conflict resolution mediator or core organizing member. This person will help facilitate the next steps in conflict resolution

## **8.0 Creating Possible Resolutions**

Each conflict should be dealt with individually, and there is no “one size fits all” resolution to conflict. The following considerations are intended to help mediators and FFL members to better understand conflict and develop appropriate resolutions that seek to reduce harm while also creating further growth and connection through conflict.

1. Why is this conflict occurring? What factors lead to this? What systems of oppression are at play?
2. What are the accessibility, cultural, spiritual/religious, and trauma factors at play in this conflict?
3. What are the safety considerations?
4. What are the goals of engaging in this process?
5. What are the underlying needs and issues that lead to this conflict that should be targeted?
6. What is the capacity of everyone involved?
7. Is there a time frame for reaching a resolution?
8. What is the resolution that will cause the least harm and that will lead to future growth?
9. How will you present this resolution?
10. How will you implement this resolution?
11. What are the possible risks and repercussions of this resolution?
12. What resources are needed for this resolution?

## **9.0 Example Resolutions**

A number of example resolutions are also listed, though these are intended to serve as examples and individual circumstances and factors must be taken into consideration.

- A check-in plan is set-up with a member who struggles with following up with action items
- A member is invited to a 1:1 meeting prior to attending a large group meeting to discuss accountability and previously harmful behaviour
- A member is asked to participate in a webinar/workshop on a given subject about harmful behaviour with another FFL member before they can get involved further
- Two members engage in a facilitated/mediated discussion to process a previous negative interaction(s)
- A member is supported to provide an apology to another member with clear steps on how behaviour is being actively improved

- A member agrees to mentor another member who is displaying problematic behaviour
- A person who refuses to engage in a conflict resolution process is asked to not attend FFL meetings with other members until they are prepared to engage in conflict resolution. This member is still invited to be part of FFL mailing lists and they are invited to get in touch with core organizing when they are prepared to engage in conflict resolution
- A member is asked to temporarily step down from a project/core organizing until a resolution can be reached
- A conflict mediator meets with parties individually to consult and develop an appropriate strategy/resolution
- FFL releases a clear position on a previously ambiguous issue and holds true to this position/boundary
- FFL releases a public accountability in response to events that caused harm under FFL's name

## **10.0 FFL Conflict Resolution Meeting Steps**

1. Identify the problem and bring all parties to a meeting time that works for everyone
  - a. An FFL member experiencing a conflict can reach out to a facilitator FFL member to consider whether a meeting should occur to resolve the conflict
2. Designate a facilitator (another FFL member from pool of members with experience in conflict resolution):
  - a. The roles of the meeting facilitator should encompass:
    - i. Setting up a virtual meeting time that works for all parties participating in conflict resolution
    - ii. Serving as a mediator in conflict resolution
    - iii. Facilitating a dialogue between the parties
    - iv. Encouraging all parties to review [FFL's conflict resolution resources](#) and the FFL Conflict Resolution Process
    - v. Helping affected parties generate solutions or possible outcomes prior to and during meeting
3. At the meeting:
  - a. The facilitator will open the meeting by reading the FFL community agreements
  - b. The facilitator will determine the objective of the meeting at the beginning
  - c. Each party will first be asked to present their view of the conflict, directed to the mediator instead of directed at each other involved in the situation
  - d. The facilitator will walk through key aspects of the conflict with the participants



- e. A discussion between the facilitator and affected parties will take place to discuss
4. After the meeting:
  - a. The facilitator will assess: was the conflict resolved? What follow-up is needed? What else needs to be clarified?
  - b. Self-reflection: Affected parties will be asked to review their conflict resolution experience through the Loving Justice framework (see appendix)
  - c. If needed, additional meetings can be held at the discretion of the affected parties and potential facilitators

### **11.0 Community Accountability**

FFL recognizes that harm in interpersonal relationships can be complicated, and that it is not the result of a single issue or person. Rather, harm takes place as a result of a range of individual choices, behaviours, and actions, which take place in the context of systems of oppression, and trauma. Most of all, we recognize that harm happens in our own community. We know that in order to change patterns of harm, it takes all of us, and no one person can change this. To truly transform harm, we must transform the communities that harm happens in.

For FFL, when harm happens at the interpersonal level, we must recognize the role we have played in allowing this harm to happen, whether that was through intentionally ignoring harm that happens in our communities, or simply allowing conditions to exist that would allow harm to take place. We also recognize that it is not enough to expect individual people to change their behaviour or to repair relationships, and that as a community, we have a role to play in transforming harm.

When interpersonal harm happens within FFL, we will do our part to take accountability for our role in this harm and to take accountability for transforming our community so future harm does not continue. Community accountability for FFL may look like:

- Meeting with non-feedists/non-FFL members who have been harmed by feedists or FFL members to hear their stories and the change they would like to see take place in the feedist community.
- Prepare a public statement notifying the broader community of how FFL has been complacent in harm, and the steps we are taking to stop further harm from happening
- In collaboration with others, create protocols or processes to respond to specific types of harm

- Host a community/public meeting to discuss how FFL can change to move away from reproducing harm

## **12.0 Following the Conflict Resolution Process**

After harm/conflict has occurred and a resolution is being worked on, it can feel difficult or uncomfortable to be in community with others. For the person who has been harmed, it can be difficult to trust again. As a result of the harm/conflict, a person may be feeling vulnerable, or may be living with additional trauma from the event.

For the person who caused harm, they may experience feelings of being judged, self-criticism, shame, and isolation. Other community members may feel as if they need to choose sides, and may feel mistrust towards community members who have been harmful or toward FFL as an organization. The following points should be considered following a conflict resolution process:

### **For those who have been harmed:**

- Take some time to process what has happened
- Determine what you need to feel safe and secure
- In the hours, days, weeks, and months, continue to check in with yourself to ensure the resolution is still effective
- Determine what details you are comfortable sharing about the event and with who
- You do not need to forgive the person who caused you harm. If you find it is impossible to move on, reach out and express how you're feeling
- Check in about what you agreed to be accountable for on your part of the process

### **For those who have caused harm:**

- Take time to process what happened
- Determine what you need in place for safety and accountability
- Ensure you are familiar with what happened and the conflict resolution process
- Check in with yourself regularly to ensure you aren't repeating cycles of harm and to ensure you are in line with the conflict resolution process
- If you are struggling with the conflict resolution process, reach out for support

### **For community members:**

- Remember that those who were directly involved in the conflict may not want to share details of what happened and that is ok

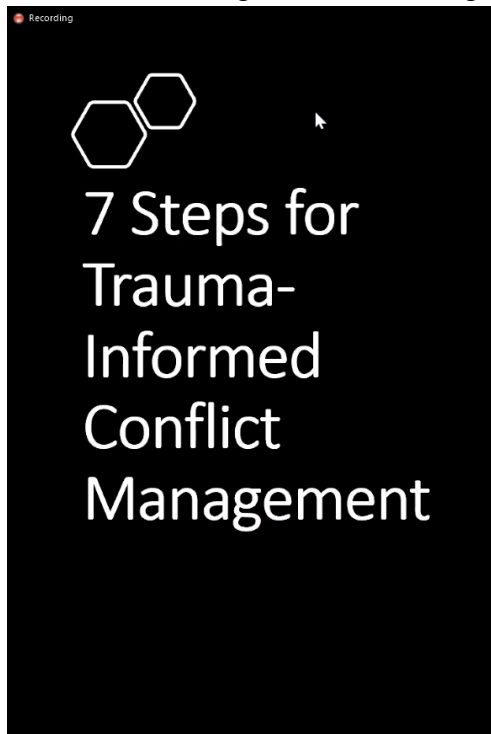
- The goal of FFL’s conflict resolution process is to move towards transparency, repair, and accountability, and to move away from criminalizing people. We are also aiming to avoid boxing people into categories of “bad” or “good”
- If you have concerns about a conflict resolution process, feel free to bring it up with an FFL core organizing member or with the conflict resolution team

### **13.0 Situations Where Only One Person Wants to Engage in a Conflict Resolution Process**

True conflict resolution requires investment from all parties who have been affected, though the extent and levels of engagement of each party may vary depending on their needs. In some situations, one party may not want to be part of a conflict resolution process. In other situations, it is possible that FFL members may not be able to get in touch with a person involved in a conflict, or team members may be dealing with a historic conflict. In such situations where only one person wants to participate in a conflict resolution, the focus should turn to trying to support that person individually, with the understanding that this person may continue to struggle with unresolved feelings surrounding the conflict. If possible, team members should also strive to explain the conflict resolution process and TJ framework to other individuals who do not want to participate in the process. Team members must also be clear about the need to have involvement from all parties in order to engage with a conflict resolution process, along with the expectation for there to be some degree of engagement in a conflict resolution process (if needed) if a person wishes to continue with FFL as an organizer.

## 13.0 Appendix

- Kai Cheng Thom's "Loving Justice Framework"



- 1) **Sacred pause** - I stop and take time
- 2) **Safety Check** - I ask myself how I'm doing and what I need, if I am in danger, I use my survival skills to get to safety
- 3) **Self-Soothe** - I practice using my internal & spiritual resources to soothe my nervous system
- 4) **Seek Connection** - I mindfully bring in people I trust to help me stay grounded and give me support
- 5) **Seek Resources** - With the help of my support network, I gather any tools or resources I need
- 6) **Seek Resolution** - If and when it is safe and appropriate to do so, I reach out to the party I am in conflict with **AND/OR** I ask an appropriate person or group to help me find other forms of resolution
- 7) **Stay Curious & (Self)-Compassionate** - I do my best to stay kind to myself and the other person and keep myself open to new narratives, understandings, and possible solutions.

