“Conflict emerges when disagreements, differences, annoyances, competition or inequities threaten something important.”
(1997, Friends Conflict Resolution Programs)

What are some sources of grad school conflict between students & supervisors? *

- **NOT ENOUGH TIME:** They don’t have enough time for me.
- **LACK OF OPENNESS:** When I talk, they don’t seem to hear my point of view.
- **DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS ABOUT RESPONSIBILITIES:** I refuse to work all weekend – I want time to explore Toronto & meet other grad students.
- **DIFFERENT VALUES RE: IMPORTANT GRADUATE SKILLS:** Spelling doesn’t matter – it’s the research that counts.
- **UNCLEAR CONVERSATION:** I don’t understand what made them so upset.

* These sources of conflict were identified both by students AND by supervisors. This reminds us that when we are trying to resolve a conflict or a difficult issue, we should consider the other person’s perspective and interests in addition to our own.

**Conflict = Opportunity?**

At the [GradCRC](https://gradcrc.utoronto.ca) we talk to lots of grad students who have questions about their supervision, are concerned about the workload, finances, having time for family/friends or about what happens after grad school.

*No issue is too small to discuss* – we want to help you to understand your options and ways to connect to the right resources and/or put your best foot forward. Ask us how conflict = opportunity.
THREE (3) Steps to managing grad school conflict:

1. **REACH OUT EARLIER THAN YOU THINK.** Often the first step is to contact your department advisors, or the G2G are happy to talk with you about your options and strategize about who, where, when and how to talk to someone about your concern.

2. **ASK QUESTIONS** to get as much INFORMATION as you can & appreciate how much information you already have! Information is powerful.
   - Wondering what you can expect in terms of your supervision? Read the SGS Graduate Supervision Guidelines [uoft.me/bestpractices](http://uoft.me/bestpractices).
   - Check for answers to questions such as “Feeling like an imposter in grad school?”, “Identify as having a disability?” or “Looking to learn about emerging mental health issues and university supports?” on our website resources page: [http://gradcrc.utoronto.ca/grad-student-resources/](http://gradcrc.utoronto.ca/grad-student-resources/).

3. **REMEMBER YOU ARE NOT ALONE** on the grad school journey! Find details about many supports in the Essential Grad Guide. Map out your supports.

Setting boundaries in grad school:

“Boundaries are guidelines, rules or limits that a person creates to identify for themselves what are reasonable, safe and permissible ways for other people to behave around them and how they will respond when someone steps outside those limits.”


**How do I start?**

- **PRACTICE SAYING NO** – Start small! Boundary-setting takes practice.
- **BE CLEAR** – Use phrases such as “I prefer...” “I want...” or “That doesn’t work for me.”
- **BE PROACTIVE** – Communicating clearly early on in your supervisory or professional relationship can prevent conflict!