

BIFF

A BIFF ResponseSM is designed to calm a hostile conversation. They can be written (or said) by anyone, although it takes practice and it helps to have someone review your BIFF Response before you send it. BIFF stands for **Brief, Informative, Friendly** and **Firm**. This method is described in depth in the book *BIFF: Quick Responses to High Conflict People, Their Personal Attacks, Hostile Email and Social Media Meltdowns*.

A BIFF Response can be highly effective when considering the following ten questions regarding a draft of a BIFF Response.

1. Is it Brief?
2. Is it Informative?
3. Is it Friendly?
4. Is it Firm?
5. Does it contain any Advice?
6. Does it contain any Admonishments?
7. Does it contain any Apologies?
8. How do you think the other person will respond?
9. Is there anything you would take out, add or change?
10. Would you like to hear my thoughts about it? (from a coach or colleague helping the writer of the BIFF Response.)

(BIFF tips)

“5. Does it contain any Advice? By this, I mean are you telling the other person how to deal with a particular problem a particular way? This almost always triggers a defensive and often attacking response back at you. Unless the person you’re dealing with specifically asked for your advice, it’s usually better not to give it – especially in a BIFF Response that’s intended to end the conversation or give two limited choices. So do you see any advice in your BIFF Response as its currently written?”

“6. Does it contain any Admonishments? In other words, are you speaking to the person like a parent telling a child how to behave. This never works in a BIFF Response. When people are feeling defensive, the last thing they want is for you to tell them they are doing something wrong. The whole point of a BIFF Response is to calm down and end the conversation, without triggering a defensive response. Do you see any hint of that in your BIFF Response as it is currently written?”

“7. Does it contain any Apologies? This can be confusing. In general, apologies are a good thing. However, if you are dealing with a high conflict person, they tend to use your apologies against you, like ammunition. Avoid apologizing for anything of substance, like: “I shouldn’t have done such-and-such.” Or: “I’m sorry I hurt you by doing xyz.” Or: “I guess my strategy failed.” Or: “I know I haven’t been sensitive to your needs.” These types of apologizes blame you and High Conflict Persons are preoccupied with blame, and will use it to prove that it really is: All YOUR Fault! Of course, social apologies are okay, like “I’m sorry I’m a few minutes late.” Or: “I’m sorry to see that you’re in this difficult situation.” With this in mind, do you see any apologies in what you have written?”

Bill Eddy is the author of [BIFF: Quick Responses to High Conflict People](#) and the President of the High Conflict Institute. High Conflict Institute offers seminars, consultations (including BIFF Consultations), books and other resources for dealing with difficult people at work, at school, in divorce and anywhere. www.HighConflictInstitute.com.