Resolve conflict in person, not in email

The co-worker in the next cubicle hums all day. Yesterday your boss dressed you down in front of the entire team. Another admin has been griping about the same issue for a week.

In every case, it would be all too easy to ignore the problem, or avoid confrontation by sending an email to the troublesome party. That's how people tend to resolve conflict these days—via email. It's quick, easy and less stressful.

But in every case, a live conversation is the better solution. Here's why:

√ **You probably won't get the tone right.** Email doesn't allow you to convey precise emotions. Just think of the different ways you might speak the words, "What do you mean?" Now imagine you're reading those words in print. What sort of tone would you imagine those words carried? Would they sound snarky, angry or merely curious?

√ **It's more difficult to move a relationship forward via email.** Part of the problem is that it's too easy to react quickly when you're typing a note, so people don't tend to be thoughtful about what they should say.

√ **Because of these first two points,** email discussions tend to drag on for too long. Words are misconstrued. Feelings get hurt.

Email, Facebook and Twitter have changed the way people communicate, and the trend toward short, digital communication is still going strong.

But we need to know when convenient communication isn't the best kind.

Next time you're feeling bothered or hurt, have the courage to pick up the phone or talk to someone face-to-face.

— Adapted from "Don't Send That E-Mail. Pick up the Phone," Anthony K. Tjan, *Harvard Business Review* blog.