**AES**

**8:30-9:45**

**CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: STRATEGIES AND SKILLS**

**TALKING POINTS**
1. What is conflict?
2. Sources of/reasons for conflict
3. How do you know when there is conflict? What does it look like?
4. Some common responses to conflict
5. Proactive ways to avoid/mitigate the possibility of conflict
6. Your approach
7. Once it is a conflict… methods of resolving

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## WHAT IS CONFLICT?

A display of conflict behavior due to a clash of seemingly incompatible goals or emotions or as a result of hostility.

Conflict behavior: any behavior that helps a person reach his a goal that is incompatible with the goal of another, or that displays hostility toward the other.

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## COMMON CAUSES OF CONFLICT

## We can conflict with: a person, a standard, a process

1. Cultural differences
2. Differences of opinion
3. Unclear roles or expectations
4. Emotional responses to an issue or person
5. Unequal status ; power
6. Misunderstanding of the language;   e.g. something said that should not have been; something not said that should have been; something communicated in the wrong manner (e.g. emailed instead of face-to-face, speaking in anger, using put-downs etc.)
7. Personality differences-there are many good tools for understanding this concept. e.g. DISC, Myers-Briggs, Anthony Gregorc model.
8. Hurt feelings/feelings of being disrespected
9. Having different pieces of ' the truth'
10. Positional bargaining- people take a stand and hold fast to it rather than recognizing the actual need behind that position.

| Deep-Rooted CONFLICT | Short term DISPUTE |
|---|---|
| Moral values | Feelings |
| High stakes questions | Interests that are negotiable |
| Power | Ideas |

**CONFLICT IS HUMAN!!**

It involves the human factor. There is no "formula" when dealing with individuals, no prescription. It is dynamic and vulnerable

Responses and ability to be objective are affected by many variables
- Self image / self-confidence / perceived status
- Emotion
- Physical well-being
- How their day is going; did someone offend them today
- Are they feeling empowered, connected to the group
- By definition, conflict is a clash of emotion, which affects the ability to reason
- Details of a solution might be different for every person, every time
- This is what makes conflict so complicated and ubiquitous

## HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN THERE IS CONFLICT? WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Sometimes it is obvious, but other times not

It is possible that those "in charge" are unaware of present conflict behavior
- Are people talking behind your back?
- Are you being undermined?
- Is there lack of buy-in for seemingly good ideas?
- Do people seem unhappy?
- Are cliques forming?

**SOME COMMON RESPONSES TO CONFLICT**

**1.** Those in the leadership role might:

**a.** Take the top-down approach

b. Retreat/give up

c. Use conflict as an opportunity to build relationships, trust and sense of ownership

2. Those under the leader might:

a. Stand firm on their position in order to protect their egos

b. Look for others who feel like they do

c. Take no apparent action but harbor feelings of resentment, which leads to feelings of hostility.

**MITIGATING THE POSSIBILITY OF CONFLICT IN TOUR TEAM**

# IDEAS FOR HANDLING CONFLICT THAT WORK

1. When angry, separate yourself from the situation and take time to cool out.
2. Attack the problem, not the person. Start with a compliment.
3. Communicate your feelings assertively, NOT aggressively. Express them without blaming.
4. Focus on the issue, NOT your position about the issue.
5. Accept and respect that individual opinions may differ, don't try to force compliance, work to develop common agreement.
6. Do not review the situation as a competition, where one has to win and one has to lose. Work toward a solution where both parties can have some of their needs met.
7. Focus on areas of common interest and agreement, instead of areas of disagreement and opposition.
8. NEVER jump to conclusions or make assumptions about what another is feeling or thinking.
9. Listen without interrupting; ask for feedback if needed to assure a clear understanding of the issue.
10. Remember, when only one person's needs are satisfied in a conflict, it is NOT resolved and will continue.
11. Forget the past and stay in the present.
12. Build 'power with' NOT 'power over' others.
13. Thank the person for listening.

## RESPONSES TO AVOID

Various kinds of behavior make conflicts worse. Here are some examples:

- **Finger-pointing.** Finding fault or blaming someone else does nothing to solve the problem is great for building unhealthy tension in a team.
- **My way, or the highway.** When you push and push for your point of view and show little interest in considering someone else's, you only increase the volume of debate, which drowns out any prospects of settling debate.
- **Insults galore.** Name-calling and other personal insults are not invitations for resolving a conflict.
- **Verbal threats and ultimatums.** These sound like, "I'm going to get you," or "This way or else!" Such outbursts intimidate some people, turn off others, and they're not exactly the best way to promote good teamwork.
- **Defensiveness.** Justifying your action instead of listening to what someone else is trying to tell you builds a wall between you and the other party, making agreements nearly impossible to achieve.
- **Avoidance.** Running away from the problem and hoping that it goes away — avoidance at its best — seldom resolves an issue.
- **Beating around the bush.** Attempting to address the concern at hand but then rambling and talking around the point simply clouds the issue so much that it's left unaddressed.
- **Telling others and not the source.** Complaining to others about what someone else has done and not talking directly to that person is a great way of stirring divisiveness on a team. Many people place this behavior at the top of the destructive-behavior list.
- **Flaming e-mails.** This means blaming and complaining electronically about the source of your concern and not talking directly to that person. Sometimes the perpetrator makes this unacceptable behavior even worse by copying others with the disruptive e-mail.
- **Focusing on perceived intentions.** Making assumptions about another person — and, of course, assuming the worst — is not a great frame of mind for dealing with team members about your concerns.

# FIVE BASIC METHODS FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT

| Method | How it works | When to use it | When not to use it |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Denial or withdrawal** <br><br> **Running Away** | person tries to solve problem by denying its existence - results in win/lose | issue is relatively unimportant; timing is wrong; cooling-off period is needed; short term use | issue is important; issue will not disappear, but build |
| **Suppression or smoothing over** | differences are played down; surface harmony is emphasized; results in win/lose; leads to resentment and possible sabotage if issue remains suppressed | issue is relatively unimportant; preservation of the relationship is primary; timing is wrong; cooling-off period is needed | issue is important; others are ready and willing to work on the issue |
| **Power or dominance** | decision by majority rule or by person in authority; results in win/lose and resentment by the loser | when this method has been agreed upon in advance, process is seen as fair; authority is respected and trusted | losers feel unheard ignored, or disrespected |
| **Compromise or negotiation** | Each party gives up something in order to meet halfway. results in win/lose if "middle of the road position ignores the real diversity of needs or viewpoints | all parties have enough leeway to give; they trust and respect each other; resources are limited | issues of deeply-held principle rather than material interests; parties are not fully committed to the relationship |
| **Collaboration** | Abilities, values and expertise of all are recognized; each party's position is clear, but the emphasis is on group solution. results in win/win for all | there is enough time available to complete the process; parties are committed to relationship and process; and trained in use of process | when time, abilities, commitment and/or trust are not present |

# WHAT'S YOUR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE?

Listed below are 15 statements. Each strategy provides a possible strategy for dealing with a conflict. Give each a numerical value
1=Always, 2=Very often, 3=Sometimes, 4= Not very often, 5= Rarely, if ever.

Don't answer as you think you should, answer as you actually behave.

\_\_\_\_ a.  I argue my case with peers, colleagues and coworkers to   demonstrate the merits of the position I take.

\_\_\_\_ b.  I try to reach compromises through negotiation.

\_\_\_\_ c.  I attempt to meet the expectation of others.

\_\_\_\_ d.  I seek to investigate issues with others in order to find solutions that are mutually acceptable.

\_\_\_\_ e.  I am firm in resolve when it comes to defending my side of the issue.

\_\_\_\_ f.  I try to avoid being singled out, keeping conflict with others to myself.

\_\_\_\_ g.  I uphold my solutions to problems.

\_\_\_\_ h.  I compromise in order to reach solutions.

\_\_\_\_ i.  I trade important information with others so that problems can be solved together.

\_\_\_\_ j.  I avoid discussing my differences with others.

\_\_\_\_ k.  I try to accommodate the wishes of my peers and colleagues.

\_\_\_\_ l.  I seek to bring everyone's concerns out into the open in order to resolve disputes in the best possible way.

\_\_\_\_ m.  I put forward middle positions in efforts to break deadlocks.

\_\_\_\_ n.  I accept the recommendations of colleagues, peers, and coworkers.

\_\_\_\_ o.  I avoid hard feelings by keeping my disagreements with others to myself.

Scoring: The 15 statements you just read are listed below under five categories. Each category contains the letters of three statements. Record the number you placed next to each statement. Calculate the total under each category.

| Style | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Competing | a. \_\_\_\_\_ | e.\_\_\_\_\_ | g. \_\_\_\_\_ | _____ |
| Collaborating | d. \_\_\_\_\_ | i. \_\_\_\_\_ | l.\_\_\_\_\_ | _____ |
| Avoiding | f. \_\_\_\_\_ | j. \_\_\_\_\_ | o. \_\_\_\_\_ | _____ |
| Accommodating | c.\_\_\_\_\_ | k. \_\_\_\_\_ | n. \_\_\_\_\_ | _____ |
| Compromising | b. \_\_\_\_\_ | h. \_\_\_\_\_ | m. \_\_\_\_\_ | _____ |

Results: My dominant style is _____
( Your LOWEST score)

And my back-up style is_____(Your second Lowest score)

**Co-operative power**

**Responding to resistance from others**

When faced with a statement that has potential to create conflict, ask open questions to reframe resistance. Explore the difficulties and then re-direct discussion to focus on positive possibilities.

**Explore - Clarify details**

| | |
|---|---|
| It's too expensive. | Compared to what? |
| Too many/much/little/few. | Compared to what? |
| I want the best. | What would be best for you? |

**Find options**

| | |
|---|---|
| You can't do that around here. | What would happen if we did? |
| He (she) would never... | How can we find ways for it to happen? |
| They always... | Are there any times they don't? |
| We've tried that already. | What was the outcome? |
| This is the only way to do it | Yes, that's an option. What else could we consider? |

**Redirect - Move to the positive**

| | |
|---|---|
| It will never work. | What would it take to make it work? |
| I won't... | What would make you willing? |
| It's a failure. | How could it work? |
| It's disastrous. | What would make it better? |
| He's (she's) useless. | What is he (she) doing that is acceptable? |
| It's impossible. | What would it take to make it possible? |
| I can't. | You can't see a way to do it at the moment? |
| I don't want to. | What would you like? |

**Go back to legitimate needs and concerns**

| | |
|---|---|
| He's (she's) a hopeless case! | It's hard to see how to work with him (her)? |
| You fool (and other insults)! | What do we need to do to sort this out? |
| How dare you do such a thing! | What do you dislike about it? |
| It should be done my way. | What makes that seem the best option? |
| His/her place is a pig's sty! | He/she puts a different emphasis on tidiness to you? |
| He/she doesn't do their fair share. | Where do you think his/her priorities may lie? |

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**KEY POINTS/SKILLS FOR RESOLUTION**

1. Opportunity- view conflict not as something to be feared and avoided but as an opportunity to bring forth and resolve issues that otherwise my go unnoticed and fester.
2. Listening-this is a chance to find out the real issues behind the behavior, to have a dialogue for better understanding. Even if the teacher does not get what he wants, at least he will feel validated in his feelings by knowing you cared enough to listen.
3. This is not about "you", the leader. Eg. The leader may be angry that there are those who are resistant to a change. This should not about how you, as the leader, are feeling unsupported or angry about their response. Rather it is about finding out what is driving that behavior in the teachers. Covey calls this "seek first to understand". You might find that their concerns are founded and you might have to make alterations. Or you might find there is a misunderstanding on their part.
4. Respond, don't react. In order to move forward, the emotional points need to be acknowledged and then put aside.
5. Move to get off the "position" and onto the real need behind it.
6. Must have a true desire to resolve the issue, not just to "win".

**SUMMARY**

1. Wherever you have individuals working together, conflict is bound to arise. This is not to be feared but is often a necessary catalyst for improvement.
2. Rarely do individuals just "get over it".
3. Perception IS reality. You cannot change the way people react to their perception. You can only hope to clarify their perception. E.g.: Someone may fear flying because they truly believe that the plane will crash. If you believed the plane would crash, you would respond the same way. All you can do is to help the person realize the unlikelihood of a crash.
4. Most conflict arises out of an inability to truly communicate.
5. Most conflict is built on the fact that everyone has a piece of the truth. That piece is their reality.
6. If you do not have a protocol in place for how conflict will be handled and where concerns can be expressed, people will find their own way of handling it. Have a protocol established ahead of time, before you need it.

http://www.crnhq.org/pages.php?pID=12