Strategies for Managing Conflict

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Ground Rules

Please pay attention and maintain an open mind

Please share what you are comfortable sharing

Please honor what is being shared by others and maintain privacy

Put phones on silent 😊

No technology – be present

Anything else?
Objectives

Identify a definition for conflict and causes of conflict

Recognize five approaches to conflict, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of each approach and when best to use

Identify our own personal conflict styles

Discuss strategies for successfully managing conflict situations
“Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional.”

— Max Lucade
Conflict

1. A serious disagreement or argument, typically a protracted one.
2. A serious incompatibility between two or more opinions, principles, or interests.
Causes of Conflict

- Communication style
- Expectations, personal beliefs and values
- Role and status
- Awareness of environmental stressors
- Learning styles
- Generational differences
- Shared resources
- Conflicting goals
- Conflicting personalities
What does it look like?

Unspoken tension between parties
Negativity
Ignoring input of others
Avoidance
Anxiety
Game playing to exert some sort of control
On-going questioning
Excessive display of knowledge
Conflict Theory

Thomas and Kilmann Conflict Styles

- Competing
- Collaborating
- Compromising
- Avoiding
- Accommodating

COOPERATIVE
Accommodating

Strategies

• Giving in or giving up
• Denying one's own needs
• Placing harmony in the relationship over the issues in conflict

i give up
Accommodating

When to practice:
• When one is wrong/other is right
• When there is a desire for harmony in the relationship
• When relationship is more important than the dispute
• When losses can be minimized
• When a party needs to “save face”
• When one wants leverage for future conflict
Disadvantages:
• Requires party to give something up
• Issues likely to remain unresolved
• Does not generate creative solutions
• Can cause frustration and/or resentment
• Creates a loss of influence in situation/relationship
• Can damage relationships
• Can foster competition over “niceness”
Avoiding

Strategies:
• Ignoring the problem/conflict
• Denial of the problem/conflict
• Evasion of the problem/conflict
• Joking about the problem/conflict
Avoiding

When to practice:
• When the issue or relationship is unimportant
• When there is no chance of a positive outcome
• When risks of confrontation outweigh benefits of resolution
• When other party has significantly greater power
• When one or more parties needs time to “cool down”
• When it is appropriate to let others resolve conflict
Avoiding

Disadvantages:
• Decisions made by default/without input
• Issues likely to remain unresolved
• Loss of influence in a situation or relationship
• Leads to self-doubt and loss of self-esteem
• May be unable to deal with conflicts in the future
• Demonstrates a lack of caring/investment
Strategies:
• Hostile remarks or jokes
• Threats and/or coercion
• Denial of own responsibility
• Verbal arguments
• Physical altercations
• Covert actions
When to practice:
• When immediate and decisive action is necessary
• When there is no relationship of value
• When the issue is more important than the relationship
• Where a party needs to prove commitment/strength
• When total victory is desired
• When competing can bring parties together/make both better
Competing

Disadvantages:
• Strains/damages relationships
• Requires that one/both/all be “losers” in conflict
• Conflict may escalate
• Less likely to use constructive approaches later
• May encourage covert actions
• Can lead to stalemates
• Creates resentment and/or desire for revenge
Compromising

Strategies:
- Both parties give and take to find a “middle ground”
- Offer a short-term resolution for “peace-keeping”
- Appeals to fair play/fairness
Compromising

When to practice:
• When a temporary solution is needed
• When parties are of equal power
• When parties wish to save time and energy
• When doing so “seems fair” to all parties
Compromising

Disadvantages:
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Collaborating

Strategies:

• Open and honest dialogue that is positive and constructive
• Willingness to listen to another view
• Emotions dealt with properly
• Seeking input from other party
• Willingness to accept responsibility for one’s actions
• Giving ground without “giving in” (reason v. compromise)
Collaborating

When to practice:

• When the relationship is important
• When a mutually satisfying outcome is sought
• When both views/sides are too important to compromise
• When underlying issues need to be addressed
• When one wants to avoid destructive means for handling conflict
• When new and creative solutions are desired
Collaborating

Disadvantages:
• Takes more time and energy
• Requires both parties to be committed to the process
• Makes a party appear unreasonable if he/she later decides against collaboration
• A collaborative party may appear weak to an aggressive party
Steps toward resolution

- Make the approach
- Share perspectives
- Name the issues
- Build understanding
- Agree on solutions
- Plan next steps
Top Tips

1. Share negative emotions only in person or on the phone.

2. Pepper your responses with the phrase, "I understand".

3. Take notice when you feel threatened by what someone is saying to you.

4. Practice making requests of others when you are angry.
5. Try repeating the exact words that someone is saying to you when they are in a lot of emotional pain or when you disagree with them completely.

6. Take responsibility for your feelings to avoid blaming others.

7. Learn to listen to the two sides of the conflict that you are in as if you were the mediator or the counselor.
Top Tips

8. Take a playful attitude towards developing the skill of emotional self-control in high conflict situations

9. Wait a few days to cool down emotionally when a situation makes you feel wild with intense feelings, such as rage

10. Make a decision to speak with decorum whenever you are angry or frustrated
Resources

Five Conflict Resolution Styles at a Glance, JD, Sources of Insight, March 11, 2011

Five Approaches to Conflict Resolution, by Vanessa Cross, Demand Media, Small Business

University of Florida; Managing Conflict in the Workplace; Julie Gatlin, et al.; 2008

University of Missouri-St. Louis; Conflict Resolution in Project Management; Amy Ohlendorf; 2001

Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution & Conflict Management; Choosing a Conflict Management Style; Martha Green

MMM TRAINING SOLUTIONS, www.mmmts.com

Wikihow.com


“Conflict Resolution”, David Thompson, DNSc, MS, RN and Jill Marsteller, PhD, MPP

“When Things Don’t Work: Recognizing and Resolving Conflict” , Leadership Program, 2012-2013, Catherine L. Morrison, JD Associate Faculty, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health


