

**Resolving Workplace
Conflict – Keeping the
Focus on Solutions**

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Conflict Resolution Agenda


- Our Perceptions – Opportunities or Roadblocks??
- The Role of Attitude
- Psychological Foundation for Conflict Resolution
- Basic Skills in Resolving Conflict
- Anger – The Great Saboteur
- Conflict Management Styles
- Resolving Conflict Respectfully – One Step at a Time
- Discussion Questions (Small Group)
- Close & Questions

Solutions

How well we handle the problems in our lives depends on whether we are more problem-oriented or more solution-oriented.

If problems tend to overwhelm you, you obviously should concentrate more on solutions. Someone once wrote: "If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail."

Don't get hooked on problems. Crisis-thinking only leads to crisis experiences. A problem is only an opportunity to find a solution.



Political Lessons in "Conflict"

- If ground rules of engagement are fuzzy, emotions will oftentimes rule
- If the outcome of the interaction is perceived as win-lose, ground rules are often ignored
- Adversary is viewed as: evil intent; mean spirited; incompetent; uncaring; foolish; unflattering images used to reinforce this image
- Election outcomes:
 - Unifying the factions is very difficult
 - Modifying our image is also very difficult

Political Lessons (Cont)

- What are the lessons???
- Hold everyone accountable to ground rules of respect, honesty & civility
- Practice what we preach!!

Individual Guiding Principles to Managing Conflict

- Preserve dignity and self-respect
- Listen with empathy
- Don't expect to change other's personalities
- Be flexible but maintain your independence

Communication Skills

		Poor	Effective
A T T I T U D E S Self Centered Collaborative		Abusive Personal Focus	Manipulation Win/Lose Outcome
		Misunder- standings Halting Progress	Solution- Based Relationship Building

- ### Establish Ground Rules
- Preserve dignity and respect
 - Give everyone a chance to express themselves, uninterrupted
 - Discuss present problems only
 - Discuss one problem at a time
 - Use feedback to check accuracy

- ### Levels of Workplace Conflict
- Purpose / Goals
 - What Is To Be Done?
 - Roles / Responsibilities
 - Who Does It?
 - Process
 - How Do We Do It?
 - Relationships
 - How Do We Relate to Each Other and to Clients we serve?

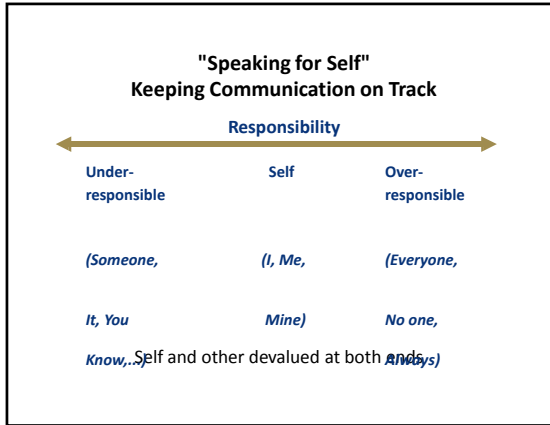
A Psychological Foundation for Conflict Resolution

- Reassuring a “sense of belonging” lies at the heart of successful conflict resolution
- Providing a climate where it is safe to be vulnerable allows respectful opportunities to voice differences while promoting a willingness to come together
- The focus is on creating a mutual understanding of differences that allow for the best possible outcome – it’s not about “winning” or fault finding.

We need to keep people from acting out their “littleness, fear and shame”

- This will manifest itself as anger, sadness, and inadequacy
- Respect & safety help people be true to themselves w/o judging others
- Acknowledgment of other viewpoints is an antidote to toxic conflict (escalating spiral of win/lose battles)

- “Connect to Correct” sets the stage for successful conflict resolution (R. Sternau)
- The above principles make possible the prospect of agreeing to disagree in the workplace and still being able to follow through with meaningful action
- Self respect is intact, which encourages respecting others



Active Listening Skills

- The Key to Listening is Following Rather Than Leading
- Remember: Understanding is Your Goal
- Five Steps to Successful Listening:
 - Attending--Look, Listen & Track
 - Acknowledge--Brief Response
 - Inviting More Information
 - Summarizing--Create "Shared Meanings"
 - Asking Open Questions
- Avoid "Why?"

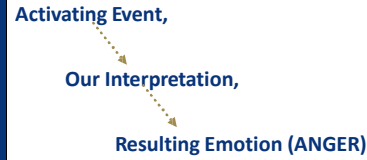
Anger in the Workplace

- Annual Instances of Workplace Violence based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2000):
 - 564 Homicides (2005 data)
 - 2,000,000 Physical Attacks
 - 6,000,000 Threats
 - 16,000,000 Verbal Harassment & Bullying
 - ** out of labor pool of 100,000,000 workers
- Increased fear, lowered morale, decreased productivity, increased absenteeism & turnover are the most common results

Findings from 1999 University of North Carolina Study:

- 78% of U.S. workers say incivility has worsened over past 10 years
- 12% chose to quit a job to avoid a rude co-worker
- 52% lost productivity at due to worrying about how they had been treated
- 22% reported deliberately slowing down their work in response to rude or insensitive behavior of others
- Inappropriate anger at work is a leading cause of job terminations – cited ahead of job incompetence

The Anger Cycle



The Anger Cycle

- Anger stems from Unmet Needs, Wants & Expectations
- Our Interpretation of Events is Where We Assign Blame!!
- Externalizing of Blame Fuels Escalation of Anger
 - "I Have No Control, They did it to Me!"
 - Encourages us to View the Other as Mean-Spirited or Ignorant
- To Stop the Escalation Process We Need to Focus on the Activating Event and Our / Their Interpretation of that Event

Expressing Anger Respectfully

1. Look for early warning signs of anger.
2. Admit your anger and accept the fact that you are angry (They didn't do it to me!).
3. Take a "time out" to cool down and to strategize. Take control! Don't sacrifice relationships for short-term gains!
4. Identify the source of your anger. (Look for your primary feelings--sad, fearful, etc.)

Expressing Anger Respectfully

5. Separate the energy of your anger from the issue related to your anger (the situation, idea, event or person that is involved with your feeling of anger).
 - Regains control over your behavior
 - Models Mutual Respect
 - Focuses on solutions instead of defending your anger

Expressing Anger Respectfully

6. Decide how & when you will express your anger. Ask yourself, "What do I want to get from this encounter and how can I best communicate that?"
7. Talk to the other party involved with your anger feelings. Strive for win-win, respectful interchanges.
 - Use "I" statements
 - Practice active listening skills
8. Closure through increased understanding, practicing mutual respect, commitment to change, and at times forgiveness.



- ### “Anchors” for Addressing Co-Worker Conflict
- What Do You Need From Your Co-Worker to be Successful?
 - How Can You Help Your Co-Worker be Successful?
 - Who Else Needs to be Involved to Give a Broader Perspective & Insure that Any Solution is Appropriate within the System?
 - Respectful Attitude & Active Listening creates
 - More Thorough Understanding, Broader Middle Ground & Brainstorming Opportunities
 - Respect, Agreement & Trust

- “I” Statements are Imperative
- “Labeling” Co-workers Doesn’t Win any Friends or Gain an Audience – Focus on Behaviors
- “Win-Win” has to be the Ultimate Goal if Agreements are to Last & Trust is to Increase
- What Action Steps would help Resolve Issues and Promote Cooperation?

What Role Can All Parties Play in Implementing these Action Steps?

- After Action is Taken:
 - Timely & Respectful Feedback is Essential
 - Provides a Check-and-Balance for Attempted Solutions

Resolving Conflict Respectfully

- Identify & Define the Issue
 - How big is the issue?
 - Who's issue is it?
- Decide the Procedures for Working Through the Conflict
 - When, Where & How?
- Understand the Issue Completely
 - Understand All the Perspectives!!

Resolving Conflict Respectfully

- Identify What People Want
 - Discovers common goals and themes
- Brainstorm Options
 - Everyone's input is necessary to insure ownership of potential solutions
- Choose Actions to Take
 - What steps will successfully meet the needs being addressed to the best degree?

Resolving Conflict Respectfully

- Test the Action Plan for Yourself
 - What might hold me back?
 - Communicating this helps create a more realistic action plan & builds trust
- Evaluate the Outcome
 - This can cycle you back into the process at any point
 - Creates formal closure for all
 - Opportunity to acknowledge efforts and CELEBRATE progress

(Sherod & Phyllis Miller, "Talking and Listening Together")

Conflict Resolution Discussion Questions

- Think of a few conflict situations you have either been involved in or directly witnessed. Of those situations, think of one situation that played out quite favorably. Then bring to mind one situation that did not play out well at all.
 - These situations may be shared within a small group discussion, but please disguise names and specifics as appropriate.

Discuss the following questions:

1. What were your initial feelings and reactions to each conflict scenario?
2. What attitudes, behaviors, and/or strategies helped the successful situation play out positively?
3. If the situation was one that deteriorated into increased conflict and a negative outcome, what attitudes, behaviors, and/or strategies seemed to influence that direction?

What might you (or those involved) have done differently to work against that negative outcome?



**Questions about Conflict?
Contact The Sand Creek Group**

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