

Conflict Management: Lessons from the Field

Satellite Conference and Live Webcast
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12:00 - 1:30 p.m. (Central Time)

Produced by the South Central Public Health Training Center
in partnership with the Alabama Department of Public Health

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Program Objectives

- Define conflict and conflict management
- Describe how to structure a conflict management process
- Understand the importance of successful conflict management in the workforce environment
- Feel more confident about approaching conflicts

Conflict Unaddressed Leads To:

- Stagnated careers
- Job stress
- Lowered productivity
- Low motivation
- Termination
- Resignation

True or False?

- Harmony is normal and conflict is abnormal.
– False
- Sometimes, conflict can be resolved by simply ignoring it.
– False
- Conflict and disagreement are the same thing.
– False

What Is Conflict?

- Parties are interdependent
- They blame each other for something
- They are angry
- Their behavior is causing a business problem

What Is Conflict Resolution?

- Meets some individual and shared needs
- Mutual benefits exist
- Improves the relationship
- Moves conflicting parties past the conflict

Five Steps to Manage Conflict

- Adopt a learning stance
- Start from the neutral story and extend an invitation
- Explore their story and explore your story
- Problem solving
- Reinforce behavior change

Step 1: Adopt the Learning Stance

Persuasion	Learning Stance
<p>Assumption: I know all I need to know to understand what happened.</p> <p>Goal: Persuade them I'm right!</p>	<p>Assumption: Each bringing different information and perceptions to the table; likely to be important information that each of us doesn't know.</p> <p>Goal: Explore each other's stories – how we each understand the situation and why.</p>
<p>Assumption: I know what they intended.</p> <p>Goal: Let them know what they did wrong.</p>	<p>Assumption: I know what I intended. I don't and can't know what's in their head.</p> <p>Goal: Share the impact on me, and find out what they were thinking. Find out what impact I'm having on them.</p>
<p>Assumption: It's all their fault. (Or it's all my fault.)</p> <p>Goal: Get them to admit blame/ take responsibility for making amends.</p>	<p>Assumption: We probably both contributed to this mess.</p> <p>Goal: Understand how our actions interact to produce this result.</p>

Step 2

Start from the Neutral Story



Extend an Invitation

Start From the Neutral Story

- Neutral story is a description as an observer would tell
- Describes problem in a way that rings true for both sides
- No judgment about who is right

Extend An Invitation

- Let them know their perspective has a place in the conversation
 - “Can you help me understand?”
 - “Let’s work on how we might...”
 - “I wonder whether it’s possible to...”

Step 3

Explore Their Story

Explore Your Story



Explore Their Story: Listening

- **Authenticity**
 - Be honest about your thoughts and feelings
- **Inquire to learn**
 - Don't make statements disguised as questions
 - Don't cross-examine
 - Ask open-ended questions
- **Paraphrase**
- **Acknowledge their feelings**

Explore Your Story

- **Say what you mean**
 - Don't try to make your point indirectly
 - Avoid "easing in"
- **Don't present your conclusions as the truth**
- **Share where your conclusions come from**
- **Don't exaggerate with "always" and "never"**

Step 4: Problem Solving

- **Test conflicting assumptions**
- **Say what is missing**
- **Say what would persuade you**
- **Ask what would persuade them**
- **Brainstorm creative options**
- **Consider your alternatives**
 - Explain why you are walking away
 - Be willing to accept consequences

Reinforcing Behavior Change

- **Behavior is a function of its consequences**
 - Identify attractive incentive
 - Set specific timeline for follow-up
 - Identify consequences of failure to change

Follow-up Agreement

- **What do YOU need to do?**
- **What do THEY need to do?**
- **What specific behavior is required?**
- **How will you measure change?**

What to Do If Conflict Management Doesn't Work

- Look at the atmosphere you are promoting
- Test to ensure that you and the other party are dealing with the same conflict
- Ask the other party if they WANT to resolve the conflict
- Evaluate the value in continuing to attempt resolution
- Seek third party facilitation

Scenario 1

- My supervisor treats his new employees like royalty. He (the supervisor) loses sight that his experienced staff got him to the top. How can I professionally deal with this unfair situation?

Scenario 2

•When co-workers make a commitment to a community event and then decide not to show; without calling or apologizing after the event, what is the most professional response to have towards this person?

Scenario 2

•When collaborating with organizations and their staff in the community on various projects and its brought to your attention on more than one occasion that a staff member's (of the collaborating agency) behavior has been inappropriate with the general population how do you continue to work with the person and the organization?

Scenario 3

•My boss started acting jealous of my efforts, by micromanaging. Three times, in front of other employees, she raised her voice to me. Co-workers were in shock and so was I. Yelling or bullying is not allowed. I was advised to confront her, but I fear being fired on the spot.

Scenario 4

•One of our employees is under investigation to discover whether she illegally obtained benefits for a family member by falsifying official documents. She believes another employee turned her in and has confronted her in the office with this "accusation." They got into a loud argument and were suspended for the remainder of the day and told that such conduct would not be tolerated.

Scenario 4

•There have been no more overt incidents. However, most employees have aligned themselves behind one of the two employees and morale has reached a new low. What can be done?

Scenario 5

•In our office, there is a long term (15 yr.) employee who continues to show insubordination to her co-workers, and direct supervisor. She has been talked to on numerous occasions, with formal discipline and documentation noted. She has written notices in her file, yet continues to exhibit this type of behavior.

Scenario 5

•When talked to, she, often cries and says “she can’t lose this job” and says she won’t do this again. She then is good for a period of time. This particular employee is close to retirement (5-6 years). What can possibly be done without terminating her employment?

Scenario 6

•I was hired for a technical position. During the interview one of the people present was very condescending to me. When I got the job it turned out that this was the one who was my new supervisor. He told me that he didn’t want to hire me but was out-voted. He routinely says he doesn’t think I can handle the job. When I turn assignments in he just throws them on his desk and says he will review it later.

Scenario 6

•He has not given me any feedback; just more assignments. My six-month probationary period will end in 45 days. I have asked for a meeting to discuss these issues and he said he doesn’t have time right now. I am afraid that he is going to just “let me go” when my probationary period has elapsed. What can I do?

Scenario 7

•In the past I have been allowed to work a pretty flexible schedule. My former boss had no problem with this as long as I put my time in and was productive. Now I have a new boss who is insisting that I am in the office for regular hours. He told me that if I’m not in the office every day he and I will get in big trouble.

Scenario 7

•How do I explain to him that there is no real reason for me to be there for specific hours of the day when I have never been late on a project or assignment?

Scenario 8

•We just hired a new project manager who has become somewhat of a “teacher’s pet”. She has started taking credit for work she hasn’t done and communicating that back to our boss. We were asked to “get her up to speed” and have helped her through all of her initial assignments.

Scenario 8

• In a recent team meeting our boss commented in front of the group how amazed she was about her performance. The new employee never took the time to give us credit or to explain our role. We are very frustrated with the new employee and our boss. What should we do?

Scenario 9

•Over the past 11 years I have witnessed a lack of respect within our staff. It appears people feel they do their work well and that they should rarely be critiqued. Another area we have difficulties is when staff do not feel they can stretch beyond their typical work.

Scenario 10

•The director of a state agency was dismissed by the agency’s governing board due to failure to perform his work satisfactorily. The board has appointed a new director and he is carrying out his responsibilities to the board’s satisfaction.

Scenario 10

• The new director (with the board’s support) has made changes to improve the agency’s operations. One employee has undertaken a crusade to get the new director. Employees have aligned into two camps. How does the director resolve this conflict and get his staff to function as a team?

Scenario 11

•I oversee a twelve-month leadership institute for employees. Participants are placed in teams that work together on a year long project. Two months before the project was due, three members of one team came to me and complained that the other two members have not been attending the group meetings or contributed to the project in any way.

Scenario 11

•The three who came in do not want to share the credit with them for the final project. The other two team members have repeatedly said they were too busy to attend the meetings and that it really shouldn't matter. What should I do?

Scenario 12

•I have been a supervisor for ten years and it seems employees are always at odds with one another. someone is always mad at someone else, or refusing to work with him or her. It affects their work because when someone doesn't complete a project satisfactorily they will complain that it was someone else's fault. Why does this happen?

Future Programs

Consequences of a Foreign Animal Disease
on the Rural Community
Wednesday, September 12, 2007
12:00-1:30 p.m. (Central Time)

Infection Control Update 2007
Home Health Aides and Attendants
Wednesday, September 19, 2007
2:00-4:00 p.m. (Central Time)

For complete listing of upcoming programs visit:
www.adph.org/alphtn

Future Programs

Working Towards Independence:
Employment of Persons with Disabilities
Thursday, September 20, 2007
2:00-4:00 p.m. (Central Time)

Short-Term Birth Interval:
Counseling Family Planning Patients
Thursday, October 4, 2007
2:00-4:00 p.m.

For complete listing of upcoming programs visit:
www.adph.org/alphtn

Future Programs

Vector Control After Hurricanes
Thursday, October 11, 2007
12:00-1:30 p.m. (Central Time)

Collaboration: The Key to
Public Health System Improvement
Wednesday, October 24, 2007
12:00-1:30 p.m.

For complete listing of upcoming programs visit:
www.adph.org/alphtn