



NCHSE

National Consortium for
Health Science Education

Managing Team Conflict

Standards 8.23

Conflict

- A struggle for power, property, etc.
- Strong disagreement between people, groups, etc., that results in often angry agreement.
- A difference that prevents agreement: disagreement between ideas, feelings, etc.

(Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Causes of Conflict

- Conflicting styles.
- Conflicting goals.
- Conflicting pressures.
- Conflicting roles.
- Conflicting personal values.
- Conflicting perceptions.
 - Perception is subjective.
 - Refusal to acknowledge that another person's perception is valid.

Elements of Conflict

- Issues
 - What is the conflict about?
- Parties
 - Who is involved?
- Relationships
 - What is the relationship between the people involved?
- History
 - What is the history of the conflict?
- Styles
 - How have the parties chosen to deal with the conflict?
- Management
 - What is the history of the efforts to manage the conflict?

Conflict Styles

- Avoiding – pretending like nothing is wrong, denying.
- Accommodating – give in, ignoring own concerns.
- Problem Solving – make everyone happy, look closely at sources.
- Compromising – everyone wins some and loses some; wants to find a solution.
- Competing – get what you want, not matter what; some win and some lose.

Conflict Desirability vs. Undesirability

- Conflict can be advantageous.
- Conflict helps eliminate or reduce the likelihood of groupthink (desire for group conformity).
- A moderate level of conflict, across duties, within a group may result in increased group performance.
- Conflict among personalities may result in lower group performance.

Functional vs. Dysfunctional Conflicts

- All conflicts are not unproductive.
- Conflicts can be useful, constructive, and positive.
- Conflict can promote innovation, creativity and development of new ideas, which make organizational growth possible.
- *It has been said that all major reforms and changes occur as a consequence of conflict.*

Dysfunctional Conflicts

- A dysfunctional conflict is an indication that a situation is hostile, destructive, or on the verge of collapse.
- Dysfunctional conflicts are unproductive.
- Dysfunctional conflicts can delay or prevent the attainment of a goal.

Think – Pair – Share

- Identify a specific, recent conflicting situation in which you were involved.
- What did you say?
- Could you have used more effective verbal skills?
- Was the tone used offensive? Did you build trust?

Self-Awareness

- Self-awareness is a recognition of our personality, strengths, weaknesses, and our likes and dislikes.
- A requirement for effective communication and managing conflicts is the development of empathy for others.

Conflict Management Techniques

Collaborating

- Win-win
- Use when
 - There is a high level of trust.
 - You want others to also have "ownership" of solutions.
 - The people involved are willing to change their thinking as more information is found.
 - You need to work through animosity and hard feelings.
- Drawbacks
 - The process takes lots of time and energy.
 - Some may take advantage of others.

Conflict Management Techniques

Compromising

- You bend, I bend
- Use when
 - People of equal status are equally committed to goals.
 - Time can be saved by reaching intermediate settlements on individual parts of complex issues.
 - Goals are moderately important.
- Drawbacks
 - Important values and long-term objectives can be derailed in the process.
 - May not work if initial demands are too great.
 - Can create cynicism, especially if there's no commitment to honor the compromise solutions.

Conflict Management Techniques

Accommodating

- I lose, you win
- Use when
 - An issue is not as important to you as it is to the other person.
 - You realize you are wrong.
 - You are willing to let others learn by making mistakes.
 - You know you cannot win.
 - It is not the right time.
 - Harmony is extremely important.
- Drawbacks
 - One's own ideas don't get attention.
 - Credibility can be lost.

Conflict Management Techniques

Competing

- I win, you lose
- Use when
 - You know you are right.
 - Time is short and a quick decision is needed.
 - You need to stand up for your rights.
- Drawbacks
 - Can escalate conflict.
 - Losers may retaliate.

Negotiation

- Regular part of everyday life
- Negotiation skills are valuable in helping people with shared and opposing interests to reach an agreement
- Not all conflicts can be negotiated

The Process of Negotiation

Assertive Communication

- Don't be influenced by others' opinions.
- Accept and own any mistakes.
- Learn the art of saying "no" politely.
- Analyze body language.
- Avoid boasting.
- Praise specific behaviors.

"The basic difference between being assertive and being aggressive is how our words and behavior affect the rights and well being of others."

-Sharon Anthony Bower

Gather the Facts

- Give others the benefit of the doubt.
- Do not depend on third-hand information.
- Always ask, don't accuse.

Clear Expectations

- Create a strategy.
- Give clear instructions for all people involved.
- Use clear language and do not sugarcoat the facts.
- Set expectations that are reasonable and that can be accomplished.

Mediation

- Facilitate discussion and stay neutral.
- Establish a resolution structure for conflict resolution i.e., prepare for resolution, uncover all points of view, learn what is important to each person, search for all possible solutions, and commit to a mutually beneficial agreement.
- Maintain ground rules.
- Facilitate discussion.
- Listen carefully.
- Ask for suggestions.
- Bring in additional resources if needed.