

Conflict Resolution

NW Volunteer Solutions LLC
 CASA In-Service Training, August 22, 2019



"Anybody can become angry – that is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose, and in the right way – that is not within everybody's power and is not easy."
 — Aristotle

Conflict 101

Definitions of conflict:

- a serious disagreement or argument, typically a protracted one.
dispute, quarrel, squabble, disagreement, difference of opinion **agreement**
- a prolonged armed struggle.
war, battle, fighting, confrontation, struggle, hostilities **peace**
- an incompatibility between two or more opinions, principles, or interests.
dash, incompatibility, friction, opposition, divided loyalties **harmony**

Conflict 101

Conflict arises from differences between people.

- Sometimes through these differences we complement each other.
- And sometimes we oppose each other.

Our differences are not themselves the problem
 -- it's what we do about them that matters.

Conflict 101

These differences are sometimes ascribed to respective personalities ("personality conflicts")
 -- and sometimes there are people with whom you just don't get along, and you might not even know why.

But that ignores both the root causes and any possibility of a solution.

Conflict 101

Disagreement typically comes from some difference in:

- Needs
- Desires
- Ideas
- Values
- Motivations
- Perceptions

Conflict 101

Sometimes these differences may seem trivial
-- until they're not.

Some differences may seem essentially arbitrary
-- it doesn't matter who "wins," so long as the problem is resolved.

So where is the line between a simple, trivial, arbitrary disagreement and a conflict?

Conflict 101

Disagreement escalates to conflict when one or both parties perceive some kind of threat (whether or not the threat is real).

- > We respond to conflicts based on our perceptions of the situation, not necessarily to an objective review of the facts.
 - > Our perceptions are influenced by our life experiences, culture, values, and beliefs.
 - > This explains why one party to a conflict might respond to conflict on a way that seems excessive or unwarranted to the other.
- > That perception of threat will tend to trigger strong emotional reaction.
- > Conflicts continue to fester when ignored.
 - > Because conflicts involve perceived threats to our well-being, they stay with us until we face and resolve them.

Conflict 101

When a disagreement escalates to conflict and engenders strong emotional reaction, usually the core of the problem comes from a deep personal need or value.

- > We call them "needs" because we need them.
 - > Safety and security.
 - > Love and intimacy
 - > Esteem, need to feel valued or respected.
- > And we call them "values" because we value them.
 - > Fairness and equity.
 - > Consistency or tradition.
 - > Reliability, trust, commitment.

Conflict 101

Conflicts often break down into one of three types, allowing us to identify what the need or value is:

- Interpersonal or relational conflicts
 - Often come down to identity or self-image
 - Or important aspects of a relationship, such as loyalty or lack of respect
- Instrumental conflicts
 - Structures, goals, processes, or means
- Conflicts of interest
 - The ways in which the means of achieving goals or accomplishing tasks are distributed
 - Or related factors such as relative importance, knowledge and expertise, etc.

Conflict 101

Conflict resolution is the process by which two or more parties reach a peaceful resolution to a dispute.

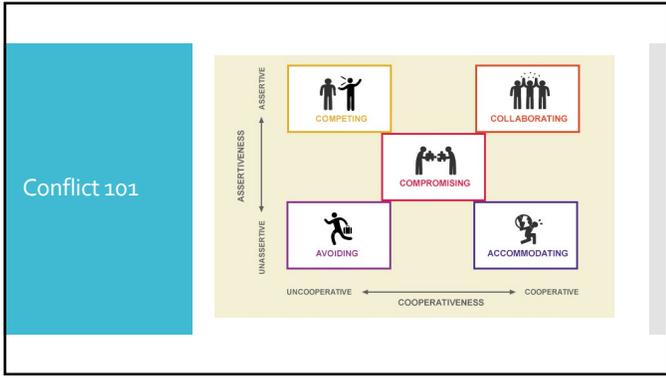
Why do we need to know how to resolve conflict?

- Conflict prevents us from getting things done.
- Conflict creates hurt feelings, disappointment, and discomfort.
- Conflict saps our energy and our attention.
- Conflict damages relationships, sometimes irrevocably.

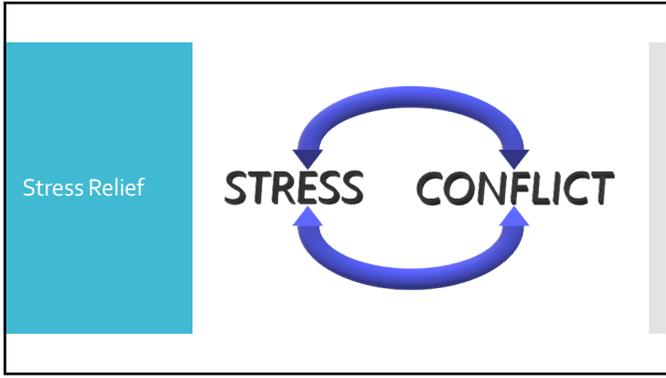
Conflict 101

How do we benefit from conflict resolution?

- We get past the conflict, of course.
- We build stronger relationships.
 - Turn your adversary into a co-operative partner.
 - Working it out cooperatively builds trust.
 - Opportunity to exhibit compassion, understanding, and respect.
- We find better solutions.
 - Working together allows you to balance needs.
 - Allows for creative problem solving.
 - You can find solutions where everyone benefits.



- Conflict 101
- Roadmap for conflict resolution
- > Stress relief
 - > Emotional awareness
 - > Communication
 - > Problem solving



Stress Relief

Stress relief comes first because if you're under stress, you may not respond to conflict in a healthy manner.

Stress Relief

Parker, S. *The Human Body Book*. London. Dorling Kindersley Ltd. 2007.

Stress Relief

The sympathetic nervous system provides all of us with our initial, internal reaction to stress:

- When you perceive a threat, your endocrine system releases a flood of stress hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol.
- These hormones get your body ready for emergency action.
 - Your heart beats faster, blood pressure rises, breath quickens.
 - Your senses become sharper.
 - Your circulatory system diverts blood away from your digestive system and your brain to your skeletal muscles.
- These physical changes get your body ready to flee or fight, but at a cost.

Stress Relief

Stress limits your ability to:

- Regulate your own feelings and emotions.
- Be aware of your own needs.
- Accurately read another's nonverbal communications.
- Hear what someone is really saying.
- Communicate your own needs clearly.

The bottom line is, you can't do any of the things you need to do to resolve a conflict unless you first recognize and take steps to relieve your own internal stress.

Stress Relief

1. Learn to recognize when you're stressed.

- Many of us spend so much time in a frazzled state that we can't remember what it feels like when our nervous system is in balance.
- This is where non-immediate stress relief practices can be valuable: meditation, exercise, enjoyable hobbies, talking it out with a trusted partner or friend, etc.
- We also need to learn to listen to our bodies.

Stress Relief

Cognitive Symptoms

- Memory problems
- Inability to concentrate
- Poor judgment
- Seeing only the negative
- Anxious or racing thoughts
- Constant worrying

Stress Relief

Emotional Symptoms

- Moodiness
- Irritability or short temper
- Agitation, inability to relax
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Sense of loneliness and isolation
- Depression or general unhappiness

Stress Relief

Physical Symptoms

- Aches and pains
- Intestinal distress
- Stomach aches
- Nausea, dizziness
- Chest pain, rapid heartbeat
- Frequent colds

Stress Relief

Behavioral Symptoms

- Eating more or less
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Isolating yourself from others
- Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities
- Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax
- Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

Stress Relief

Stress can also be self-generated; not all stress comes from external factors.

- Inability to accept uncertainty
- Pessimism
- Negative self-talk
- Unrealistic expectations
- Perfectionism
- Lack of assertiveness



"If you're surprised by how quickly someone goes from zero to 60, you weren't paying attention to how long they've been at 59."
— Aristotle



"If you're surprised by how quickly someone goes from zero to 60, you weren't paying attention to how long they've been at 59."
— me

Stress Relief

Learn to evaluate your own stress level.

- Observe your breath
 - Are you breathing fully, or shallowly?
 - Place a hand on your belly and notice when you "forget" to breathe.
- Observe your muscles
 - Are your muscles tense or sore?
 - Are your hands or jaw clenched?
- Is your stomach tight, cramped, or aching?
- Is your attention diverted or preoccupied?

Stress Relief

2. Identify your most typical stress responses.

- Internally, we all respond to stress in the same way because of the sympathetic nervous system.
- Externally, though, people respond to stress in different ways, and the same person may respond to different types of stress in different ways.
- The most efficient way to quickly relieve stress will often relate to your specific stress response.

Stress Relief

Psychologist Connie Lillas uses a driving analogy to describe the three most common ways people respond when they're overwhelmed by stress:

- Foot on the gas.
 - An angry or agitated (overexcited) stress response.
 - You're heated, keyed up, overly emotional, and unable to sit still.
- Foot on the brake.
 - A withdrawn or depressed (underexcited) stress response.
 - You shut down, space out, and show very little energy or emotion.
- Foot on both gas and brake.
 - A tense and frozen (immobilization) stress response.
 - You "freeze" under pressure and can't do anything.
 - You look paralyzed, but under the surface you're extremely agitated.

Stress Relief

Each of the three most common stress responses has a specific prescription that often works best:

- Overexcited stress response: If you tend to become angry, agitated, overly emotional, or keyed up under stress, you will respond best to stress relief activities that quiet you down.
- Underexcited stress response: If you tend to become depressed, withdrawn, or spaced out under stress, you will respond best to stress relief activities that are stimulating and energizing.
- The immobilization stress response is often associated with a past history of trauma and may not respond well in the moment.
 - Physical movement that engages both your arms and legs can be particularly helpful: walking, swimming, tai chi.
 - As you move, focus on your body and the sensations you feel in your limbs rather than on your thoughts.
 - This mindfulness element can help "reboot" your nervous system.

Stress Relief

3. Learn to use movement and your senses.

- Engaging one or more of your senses – sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch – is one of the fastest and most reliable ways to quickly relieve stress.
- Because everyone is different, you'll need to do some experimenting to figure out which techniques work best for you.
- As you employ different senses or types of movement, note the effect on your current stress.
 - Be specific: what particular scents or sounds or movements seem to work best?
- Explore a variety of sensory techniques so that no matter where you are, you always have at least one tool to quickly relieve stress.

Stress Relief

Sight Examples

- Cherished photos or favorite mementos
- Plants or flowers
- Nature: a garden, a park, the beach, or the woods.
- Colors that lift your spirits or calm you
- People watch

Stress Relief

Sound Examples

- > Music
- > Sing or hum
- > Wind chimes
- > A fountain
- > Nature: birdsong, crashing waves, wind through the trees
- > White noise
- > Vocal toning

Stress Relief

Smell Examples

- > Scented candles or incense
- > Essential oils
- > Flowers
- > Fresh air
- > A favorite perfume or cologne
- > Scented lotion

Stress Relief

Taste Examples

- > Fruits
- > Tea
- > Crunchy snacks (carrots, celery, nuts)
- > Dark chocolate
- > Gum or mints

Stress Relief

Touch Examples

- > A warm blanket
- > A comfort item, like a stuffed animal
- > Clothing that feels soft against your skin
- > Pet a dog or cat
- > Give yourself a hand or neck massage
- > Press the tips of your thumb and forefinger together

Stress Relief

Movement Examples

- > Go for a walk or a hike
- > Squeeze a stress ball
- > Stretch, or roll your head in circles
- > Wiggle your toes
- > Dance
- > Belly breathing: breathe deeply into your abdomen for five seconds, let it out completely for five seconds. Repeat for six cycles.

Stress Relief

Look for other examples that work for you.

- > Memories: How did you soothe yourself as a child? How did your parents?
- > Watch other people: How do they blow off stress?
- > Imagination: As you practice, you'll get used to being able to call up the calming or stimulating effects just by visualizing or imagining the sensory techniques.
- > Take new routes to normal destinations so you see new sights.
- > Take a break from technology.

Stress Relief

4. Practice until these techniques become habit.

- Start small, using these techniques when you encounter predictable, low-level stressors.
- Identify and target a predictable low-level stressor every time you encounter it for a predetermined period, like a week.
- Keep experimenting with different sensory techniques until you find the ones most effective for you.
- Practice wherever you are.
- Have fun with the process: if something doesn't work, move on and try something else.
- Talking about your stress relief practices will help you integrate them into your consciousness (and they're bound to start some interesting conversations).

Emotional Awareness

Emotional awareness is your ability to accurately perceive your own emotions in the moment and understand your tendencies across particular situations.

Emotional Awareness

Emotions play a greater part in most decisions than we usually want to admit.

Emotions are never good or bad, but simply appropriate or inappropriate.

If you don't know how or why you feel a certain way, you won't be able to communicate effectively or resolve disagreements.

Emotional Awareness

Emotional awareness helps you to:

- Understand what is really troubling other people
- Understand yourself, including what is really troubling you
- Communicate clearly and effectively
- Interest and influence others
- Stay motivated until the conflict is resolved

Emotional Awareness

Although knowing your own feelings may sound simple, many people ignore or try to sedate strong emotions like anger, sadness, and fear.

Your ability to handle conflict, however, depends on being connected to these feelings.

If you're afraid of strong emotions or if you insist on finding solutions that are strictly rational, your ability to face and resolve differences will be limited.

Emotional Awareness

	AWARENESS	MANAGEMENT
PERSONAL COMPETENCE	 Self Awareness Ability to identify & understand your feelings/tendencies	 Self Management Ability to adjust & direct your thoughts and actions
SOCIAL COMPETENCE	 Social Awareness Ability to accurately pick up others' emotions & perspectives	 Relationship Management Ability to effectively manage interactions & relations

Emotional Awareness

All of the emotional intelligence skills build upon emotional awareness:

- > Self-management is your ability to use your awareness of your emotional states to stay flexible and direct your behavior positively.
- > Social awareness is your ability to accurately pick up on emotions in other people and understand what is really going on with them.
- > Relationship management is your ability to use your awareness of your own emotions and those of others to manage interactions successfully.

Emotional Awareness

Emotional awareness is not about discovering deep, dark secrets or unconscious motivations; rather, it comes from a straightforward understanding of what makes you tick.

- > Where your emotions come from.
- > Which people and situations push your buttons.
- > What motivates and satisfies you.

Conflict 101

Emotional Awareness

Questions to ask in a conflict situation:

- >What am I feeling (angry / hurt / frightened)?
- >Why am I feeling this way?
- >What do I want to change?
- >What do I need in order to let go of this feeling?
- >What is the unspoken message I infer from the situation?
- >Whose problem is this, really?

Emotional Awareness

1. Acknowledge emotions.

- >Emotions are neither good nor bad, merely appropriate or inappropriate.
- >Emotions serve a valuable purpose.
- >Ask how people are doing, and when you are asked, answer honestly.
- >When people show emotions, let them know it's acceptable.

Emotional Awareness

2. Differentiate and analyze emotions.

- >We frequently substitute an emotion with which we're familiar for one we can't identify.
- >Be skeptical of your emotions, and don't necessarily trust your first emotional impulse.

Emotional Awareness

5. Manage others' emotions.

- As you understand your own feelings, you get better at observing and managing those of other people.
- Emotional intelligence includes the ability to put yourself in another's shoes and practice empathy and compassion.
- Identify the needs or values that are at stake for the other person just as you did with yourself.

Communication

Communicating well involves more than talking and getting your point across to others.

- Nonverbal communication.
- Listening.
- Understanding the difference between what is sent and what is received.

Communication

The most important information exchanged during conflicts and arguments is often communicated nonverbally.

- Eye contact
- Facial expression
- Tone of voice
- Posture
- Gestures
- Touch

Communication

When you're in the middle of a conflict, paying close attention to the other person's nonverbal signals may help you figure out what the other person is really saying, respond in a way that builds trust, and get to the root of the problem.

Communication

Active listening techniques:

- Asking questions
- Restating
- Using analogies to rephrase statements

Communication

OARS

- Open-ended questions
- Affirming: sincere statements of understand or appreciation that affirm the other person's effort or achievement.
- Reflecting: restating or paraphrasing the other person's words or feelings
 - Simple reflection is just repeating back what you've heard.
 - Complex reflection goes deeper and hypothesizes at the meaning or emotion underlying what the other person has said.
- Summarizing
 - Collecting summary pulls together everything they've just said.
 - Linking summary connects something they've just said with something you know from prior interactions.
 - Transitional summary pulls together the high points to either wrap up or shift the conversation in a new direction.

Communication

Tips for being a better listener

- Listen for the real reasons the other person is upset.
- Make certain you fully understand the other person's point of view.
- Resist the temptation to interject your own perspective.
- Ask if anything remains unspoken before taking your turn.

Problem Solving

Conflict Resolution Model

1. Search agreement on the solution and how to achieve it
2. Name the issues/ Put it on the table
3. Jointly identify possible drivers of the conflict
4. Identify common interests and goals
5. Together, brainstorm possible solutions
6. Make sure the solution addresses each party's interests

Problem Solving

Prioritize resolving the conflict over being right.

- Maintaining the relationship should always be more important than winning an argument.
- Demonstrating your willingness to collaborate or compromise can defuse some conflicts immediately.

Problem Solving

Pick your battles.

- > You need to consider whether this conflict is really worth your time and energy.
- > That may mean working on your reaction to the issue rather than the issue itself.
- > Weigh your needs and values against allowing the conflict to go unresolved.

Problem Solving

Focus on the present.

- > Deal with one issue at a time.
- > Don't stockpile grievances.
- > Holding on to grudges impairs your ability to fully understand the present conflict.

Problem Solving

Accurately state the problem.

- > Be specific; vague complaints are hard to address.
- > Don't over-generalize.
- > Don't indulge in imaginary scenarios.

Problem Solving

Approach the conversation with respect and empathy.

- Put yourself in the other person's shoes and try to understand how they feel.
- Avoid accusations.
- No hitting below the belt.
- Know when to apologize and when to forgive.

Problem Solving

Approach the conversation with respect and empathy.

- Successful conflict resolution must be "hard on the problem, soft on the person".
- Put yourself in the other person's shoes and try to understand how they feel.
- Avoid accusations.
- No hitting below the belt.
- Know when to apologize and when to forgive.

Problem Solving

Focus on shared goals instead of disagreements.

- Evaluate the situation from everyone's perspective.
- Look for the actual interests underlying the conflict.
- Why do you need this orange?

Problem Solving

Don't take any of this personally.

- Don't get defensive.
- This works both ways: it's not personal to the other person either.

Problem Solving

Know when to let something go.

- It takes two people to keep a conflict going.
- If collaboration is going nowhere, you can choose to disengage and move on.
