

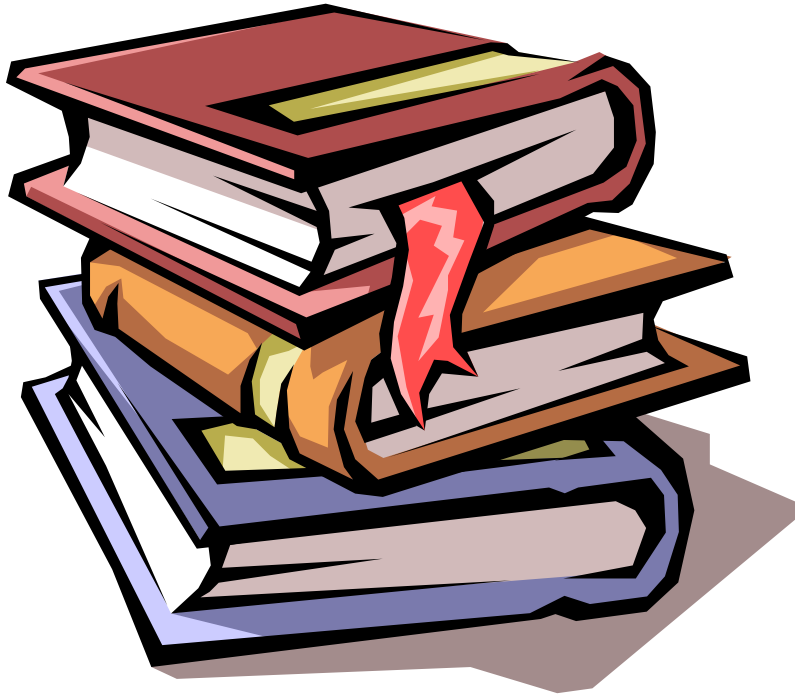
Conflict Management

Confrontation Without Alienation

Objectives

- To be able to define, recognize and understand the cycle of conflict
- To understand different styles
- To be able to use tools effective in conflict management
- To understand how conflict can be a positive

What Is Conflict?



- It is involving two or more parties where the issue they care about is in contrast
- Usually conflict includes perceptions, emotions, behaviors and outcomes

Signs of Potential Conflict

- May be “in your face” confrontation, highly emotionally charged
- May be silent, but purposeful acts to bother other party
- May be comments/accusations made to third party (“back biting”)
- May be a change in work performance and general attitude

Case Study

Betty Smith and Fred Jones both work for the School of Diagnostic Imaging. Betty has been working as an instructor for 14 years and Fred is new. Fred often asks Barbara for assistance. Whenever he asks, Barbara snaps and states she has no time due to caring for own students. In addition, Betty criticizes Fred in front of peers, his students, and anyone within earshot.

Fred becomes nervous about approaching Betty and often makes decisions by guessing what to do. He has started to avoid Betty and dreads his time at work. He is thinking of quitting and looking for another job due to the stress. Fred's other co-worker's share his feelings about Betty and tell him several other employees have left due to this issue.

Cycle of Conflict

- Step 1: Frustration
- Step 2: Conceptualization
- Step 3: Behavior
- Step 4: Outcome

Frustration

- Anticipation or realization the needs/goals are not going to be met
- Conflict begins when:
 - Betty ignores Fred's feelings of being overwhelmed and frustrated
 - Denies Fred's requests for help
 - Embarrasses Fred in front of other people

Conceptualization

- Become aware of frustration and identify what the conflict means to you
- Win/Win, Win/Lose or Lose/Lose
- Conflict progresses when:
 - Betty is thinking only of own workload and lets her feelings be known
 - Fred views Win/Lose situation where Betty wins and therefore avoids discussing issue
 - Fred experiences increased job stress/frustration

Behavior

- Verbal and/or nonverbal messages exchanged between parties
- This step can resolve quickly or continue the length of the relationship (indefinitely)
- Conflict progresses when:
 - Betty is aggressive and demeaning verbally and through behavior
 - Fred is passive. Also, Fred is complaining to others.

Outcome

- Behavior choices shape outcome
- When both parties agree the issue is solved or they will let issue go and continue relationship
- Determines level of continued frustration (could cycle again)
- Conflict resolves/continues when:
 - Fred makes a choice how to handle the situation
 - If Fred continues on his path his ability to function on the job will be compromised
 - His feelings of frustration will grow
 - If the situation is dropped residual negative feelings will remain affecting the relationship

Styles to Manage Conflict

The 5 Thomas-Kilmann Conflict-Handling Modes:
(looks at assertiveness and cooperation)

- Competition
- Accommodation
- Avoidance
- Collaboration
- Compromise

Competition

- Assertive and uncooperative
- Power-oriented
- Individual pursues own concerns at other's expense
- Goal is to win (Win/Lose)

Competition

Advantages:

- Focused
- Decisive
- Direct communication

Disadvantages:

- Hinder people around you
- Less information gathered

Uses:

- Emergent situations
- Cost-cutting
- Discipline

Accommodation

- Unassertive and cooperative
- Opposite of competing
- Neglects own concerns to satisfy others
- Self-sacrificing

Accommodation

Advantages:

- Learn from others
- Reasonable
- Approachable

Disadvantages:

- Ideas don't always get attention they deserve
- Loss respect and influence

Uses:

- When competing is damaging desired outcome
- Satisfy needs of others
- Preserve harmony

Avoidance

- Unassertive and uncooperative
- Individual does not pursue own concerns or those of others
- Conflict goes unaddressed
- Forms:
 - Side stepping issues
 - Postponing issue until later
 - Withdrawing from situation

Avoidance

Advantages:

- Allows cool down
- Gather information

Disadvantages:

- Stirs hostilities
- Leads to other issues
- Become overwhelmed

Uses:

- No chance of satisfying concern
- Confrontation cost outweighs benefit
- Someone else better able to resolve issue

Collaboration

- Both assertive and cooperative
- Opposite to avoiding
- Individual pursues both parties concerns to find satisfying solution for all
- Involves going beneath the surface of a disagreement to find true conflict

Collaboration

Advantages:

- Understand views of others
- Reveals hidden agendas
- Gain commitment of others
- Develop better relationships

Disadvantages:

- Too much discussion
- Taken advantage of
- Time consuming
- Not good in emergencies

Uses:

- Developing teamwork
- Developing interpersonal relationships
- When issue is too important to be compromised

Compromise

- Intermediate in assertiveness and cooperation
- Objective to find expedient, mutually acceptable solution
- Middle ground (gives more than competing, less than accommodating)
- Explores issue more than avoiding, less than collaborating

Compromise

Advantages:

- Arrives at expedient solution in timely manner
- Resolution in competitive disputes
- Allows closure

Disadvantages:

- Can give mediocre solution
- Does not promote creativity

Uses:

- Bargaining
- When only means to effect change
- Foster cordial behavior

What Styles Are Fred and Betty?

Based on the Situation What
Style Would Be Effective in
Resolving the Conflict?

Keys to Resolving Conflict

- Avoid a positional posture
- Be aware of vocabulary
- Be aware of body language
- Be aware of voice tone/inflection
- Active listening

Positional Posture

- Conflict = “I” v. “You”, “Us” v. “Them”
- Ask questions outside the conflict box
 - “What is the issue?”
 - “What is motivating that issue in me?”
 - “What is motivating issue in other party?”

Now a dialogue can be productive

Vocabulary

- “I” statement: “I feel... when...”
- Use “and” instead of “but”
- Empathy statement: “I understand you are feeling... and...”
- Request statement: ...and what I need from you is...”
- Clarifying questions: “What did you mean when you said...”, “Is this a good time?”

Caution: Vocabulary

- Sarcasm
- Ordering
- Judging
- Ignoring
- Absolutes: “All”, “Never”, “Ever” or “Always”
- Threats: “If” followed by “You”
- Blaming: “Why” followed by “Can’t”, “Don’t” or “Won’t”

Body Language

- Eye contact
- Avoid eye rolls
- Good posture
- Be aware of facial expressions
- Use “supportive stance”
- Demonstrate openness

Voice Tone/Inflection

- Avoid sighing
- Lower voice
- Even tone
- Be aware of responses (okay, yeah-yeah, whatever, ...)
- Avoid singing a response

Active Listening

- Hearing vs. listening
- 90% of communication
- Responding v. reacting
- Remember two people are involved

How Can Fred Change His Path to Resolving Conflict With Betty?

What Can Betty Do to Help?

Positive Outcomes

- Strengthened relationship
- Self awareness
- Better work/family environment
- Improved communication
- Respect from others
- Good role model