Course Objectives

Upon completion of the module, participants will be able to:

1. Identify the nature, sources and developmental stages of conflict.
2. Identify the necessary components of an effective conflict resolution.
3. Describe the five basic styles of conflict resolution.
4. Explain each of the suggested steps in conflict resolution.

Part 1:

Understanding Conflict

Conflict:

*A clash between two or more opposing elements, ideas or persons.*

Crisis:

*A stressful life experience which compromises one’s ability to function.*
Attitudes Towards Conflict

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<tr>
<th>Unproductive Attitudes</th>
<th>Productive Attitudes</th>
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Effective Conflict Resolution

- Efficiently meet the interests of concerned parties
- Improve - or at least not damage - the relationship of concerned parties to each other.

Why Meet the Needs of the Other Party?

- Because with all probability you'll be working with the same individual(s) in the future.
- If you are close enough to develop a conflict, you are close enough to benefit from a healthy relationship.
- Demonstrating concern for the interests of the other party is an excellent beginning for an even better relationship than existed prior to the conflict.
- The other side cannot be expected to support a resolution and/or an agreement that does not come close to meeting its interests.
  - Conflict will continue (covertly or overtly)
  - Sabotage is a possibility
**Sources of Conflict**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inter-Rune</th>
<th>A conflict between two or more roles occupied by an individual</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intra-Rune</td>
<td>A conflict within a single role occupied by an individual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>A conflict between two or more individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intra-group</td>
<td>A conflict between two or more factions within a common grouping (e.g. central administration vs. individual departments, new ideas vs. traditional approaches)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intergroup</td>
<td>A conflict between two or more readily identifiable, distinct groups (e.g. Cougars vs. Huskies, Republicans vs. Democrats)</td>
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**Stages of Conflict**

1. **Frustration**  
   Individuals or groups involved become upset with one another; typically feel somewhat "helpless" and discouraged.

2. **Conceptualization**  
   Individuals or groups involved begin to identify a "common enemy" or common problem.

3. **Behavior**  
   Individuals or groups involved begin to act out this growing frustration and "belief" in relation to the "party responsible" (in their perception).
   - Shunning, name-calling, blaming, nonverbal expressions of feelings/attitudes are common examples
   - As stress levels continue rising, individuals begin to demonstrate the symptoms of negative stress in physical symptoms, behavioral effects, subjective effects, and mental abilities.
4. **Outcome**  
*Parties involved will continue hostilities until relationship becomes dysfunctional or destroyed*

*or*

*Some type of resolution is forthcoming.*

5. **Intervention**  
- *Intervention at any juncture can prevent actual conflict.*  
- *Successful intervention requires honesty and openness in communications.*

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**Types of Conflict**

1. **Conflicts over facts or data**
   
a. Examples:  
   - The number of annual leave days an employee has available for use  
   - The proper procedure for completing travel forms  
   - Whom to contact re: a specific issue

b. Usually among the easier to resolve.

c. **Possible Resolutions**  
   - Share data and source for both sides  
   - Assist in developing plan for mutual validation of information  
   - Consult official records  
   - Consult Policies and Procedures Manual

2. **Conflicts over methods or policies**

a. Examples:  
   - How a particular operation or task is to be done  
   - One source gives one method; other sources use other methods.

b. **Possible Resolutions**  
   - Consult the "official" policy; work toward following it until such time as collaborative change can be effected.  
   - Collectively and collaboratively agree to a change until such time as official changes are forthcoming.
3. Conflicts over goals or purposes

a. Examples:
   - Issue: the hiring of more personnel
   - Issue: lowering admission/graduation standards

   Resolution is typically more difficult because there may be a significant degree of belief, attitude, and/or emotion involved. Generally, differences (perceived or actual) in prioritization of functions/goals also exist.

b. Resolution
   - Seek origin of **each** side's argument and look at the issue from each perspective (try to understand the other person's frame of reference).
   - Seek an overriding goal which both can accept and collaboratively determine what that means in terms of specific issue.

4. Conflicts over values and philosophies

a. Usually the most difficult to resolve because beliefs, attitudes, and emotions associated with these issues tend to run deep.

b. Examples:
   - "Women belong in the home."
   - "Capital punishment is a criminal act."

c. Resolution
   - Recognize and diffuse any overt emotion
   - Explain the origin of the values and why they matter
   - Seek to affirm each side's values
   - Use rational explanation in seeking movement
   - Seek shared values that override the conflicting ones
Part 2: Managing Conflict

Two Aspects of Any Conflict

To truly resolve a conflict, one must deal with both dimensions.

When Responding to Conflict

- You get what you expect
- Choose your response wisely
- Respect the other person's point of view
- Try to understand why the other person feels as he/she does
- Be open to learning and to change
- Not all conflicts will entail the same degree of emotional commitment
- Generally, one cannot resolve the conflict until the emotional fervor has been defused
Defusing Emotional Tension

Definition: to "remove the fuse" or to "dissipate" the emotional tension

Note: Selecting the most effective technique or combination of techniques is largely dependent upon the nature of the conflict and the relationship between involved parties.

- Offer your hand in greeting
- Allow ventilation for a few moments
- Break eyeshot and earshot
- Undercutting (lower your voice)
- Sit down
- Offer sign of hospitality
- Take notes
- Use plural pronouns
- Remain calm

- Use active listening
  - Respond to the person’s feeling state
  - Example:
    "Sounds like you are really frustrated, angry, upset, irritated, etc."
  - Paraphrase the content of what the other person said

- Distract the other party from anger
- Example:
  A compliment or a simple observation about something else.
• Use an effective "I statement"
  
  o Steps in construction:
    
    ▪ Address the person by name or title
    ▪ Identify specifically the problem behavior
    ▪ Explain how it causes you to feel
    ▪ Explain why it causes you to feel that way
    ▪ Remain calm, confident, and patient
    ▪ Example (Note transition words):
      
      "John, when you shout so loudly it really frustrates me because I really can’t understand what you are saying nor how I can help you.”

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**Conflict Behavior Scale**

Watch the video and place yourself into the situation displayed. Then respond to each of the 15 questions on the assessment provided by the instructor. Record your responses in the appropriate columns below.
Five Conflict Resolution Styles

Basic Assumptions:

There is no one "best" style of conflict resolution for all situations; each style has its appropriate use depending upon the situation. In selecting the style, be aware of its advantages, disadvantages, and potential drawbacks. Elect to use the style that is most appropriate for the specific situation.

1. Avoidance

   a. Nature

      • "Avoidance" entails refusing to acknowledge up front the existence of the conflict

      • (May be reflective of an "If I ignore it, maybe it will go away" mentality)

      • May entail a deliberate postponement of intervention until one or more parties is willing to discuss the issue more rationally

      • When used consistently, avoidance is reflective of a management style that is not concerned with people nor with results

   b. Appropriate uses

      • When the issue is trivial and/or inconsequential and the probabilities of its growing out of proportion are nonexistent or minimal

      • When the risks of involvement outweigh the gains

      • When more information is needed before intervention

      • When the "issue" is symptomatic of a larger problem (preferably already under discussion)

      • When others can resolve the conflict more effectively

      • When you honestly lack the power or influence to intervene successfully
c. **Drawbacks**

- Avoidance restricts potentially constructive input from all parties
- Avoidance prevents creative problem solving
- It denies others your input
- Too much of your energy is put into avoidance rather than confrontation
- Typically avoidance is at best a temporary solution
- Important issues may be settled and decisions made by default
- Avoidance tends to be a "lose-lose" solution

2. **Accommodation**

a. **Nature**

- Accommodating is a style of conflict resolution in which the supervisor's/leader's interests are sacrificed to satisfy someone else's
- When used regularly, it reflects a management style that is primarily concerned about people (human relations) at the potential expense of results

b. **Appropriate uses**

- *When you are wrong!*
- When the issue matters more to the other person(s) and "giving in" is a viable solution
- To build up "credits"
- When the issue is of little consequence
- When harmony is a top priority and goals are not jeopardized
- To let others learn from a mistake
- When you are outnumbered and goals are not jeopardized
c. **Never use accommodation if:**
   - Goals, mission, values of the organization are jeopardized
   - Safety is jeopardized
   - Institutional or legal mandates are compromised
   - Ethical standards are compromised

d. **Drawbacks**
   - Your side's interests are not met
   - May result in stressful relationships
   - Tends to be a "win-lose" resolution: they "win" and you "lose"

### 3. Compromise

#### a. **Nature**
   - Compromising is an attempt to find some middle ground that partially satisfies both sides and adequately addresses the issue
   - Each side "gives" - presumably each gains and "gives" in nearly equal amounts
   - If used regularly, compromising reflects a management style that has a moderate level of concern for both people and results

#### b. **Appropriate uses**
   - When the issue is too volatile for collaboration
   - When opponents with equal power are immovable and attached to mutually exclusive positions
   - When a temporary resolution is required pending further research, discussion, collaboration
   - To alleviate time pressures
   - When other styles could further jeopardize goals (or safety, institutional, or legal requirements)
c. **Advantages**

- Compromise is less time consuming than collaboration
- It does result in each side "getting something"
- Both sides are represented in deriving the resolution

d. **Drawbacks**

- Does not necessarily promote "team effectiveness”, as there are still the two sides
- The best resolution/decision may be lost in the bargaining
- Compromise can result in further division of those involved - a "we" vs. "they" dichotomy
- There tends to be a perception by each side that the other received more than "half the loaf"
- The "crumbs" may be lost in the process
- Neither side’s interests are fully met
- Compromise is only a partial "win-win" solution; there is still the "lose-lose" present

4. **Competition**

a. **Nature**

- Competing is a style of conflict management and resolution that entails pursuing your own concerns at the other's expense
- Competing entails an authoritarian / autocratic approach to conflict management
- When used regularly, competing reflects a style of management that focuses upon and has a high concern for results and a low concern for people
b. **Appropriate uses**

- When quick action or an immediate decision is required
  - **Examples:**
    - In an emergency situation
    - When facing an unanticipated imminent deadline
- To protect individuals and the organization from those who would take advantage of others and/or of the situation
- On issues vital to the organizational mission and compatible goals are not shared by others
- When neither collaboration nor compromise seems to be working and a decision is of the essence
- On issues involving unpopular decisions that must be enforced
- On vital issues when you are sure you are right and others appear not to agree or to be inclined to participate meaningfully in collaboration

c. **Drawbacks**

- It curtails exploration of new approaches
- Your goals are achieved at the expense of others' feelings and ideas
- It is a "win-lose" solution; you "win," they "lose"
- It leaves a legacy of bitterness and/or resentment
- It results in minimum commitment (and little motivation)
- It often requires additional effort at a later point (e.g.: becomes a temporary resolution)
5. **Collaboration**

b. **Nature**

- Collaboration is a style of conflict management in which everyone actively attempts to devise a solution that fully addresses the primary needs of both (all) sides.
- It is the preferred style of conflict resolution involving emotional issues, goals, values, and philosophies.
- Used regularly, collaboration reflects a management style that is high in concern for people and results.
- Collaboration results in a "win-win" solution.

c. **Appropriate uses**

- When the issue is too important to compromise.
- When commitment is desirable/necessary/critical.
- When the issue is highly controversial and/or emotional.
- When there is no clearly defined policy or best decision.
- When the issue is complex.
- When others share organizational goals.
- To explore alternative courses of action to reach a permanent solution.
- When time to reach a decision or resolution is not a critical factor.

c. **Drawbacks**

- It takes time and effort.
- It requires sincere and active participation of others.
- It requires a willingness to work toward a true resolution.
# Conflicts Management Model

## Competition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADVANTAGES</th>
<th>DISADVANTAGES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Useful when quick action is required.</td>
<td>Stops exploration of new ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protects against those who take advantage of non-competitive behavior.</td>
<td>One’s goals may be achieved at the expense of others.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WIN/LOSE.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Little commitment.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temporary solution.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Collaboration

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADVANTAGES</th>
<th>DISADVANTAGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mutual exploration of new approaches,</td>
<td>Can be time consuming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual resolution.</td>
<td>Requires participation from others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gains commitment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>WIN/WIN.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanent solution.</td>
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## Compromising

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Gains commitment.</td>
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<td>WIN/WIN.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanent solution.</td>
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## Avoidance

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<th>ADVANTAGES</th>
<th>DISADVANTAGES</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Useful when risk out-weighs gain.</td>
<td>Restricts input.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postpones tensions.</td>
<td>Temporary solution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Useful when others can solve the problem more effectively.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Useful to postpone action until more information surfaces.</td>
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## Accommodation

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<th>ADVANTAGES</th>
<th>DISADVANTAGES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Useful to preserve harmony.</td>
<td>Sacrifices your own point of view.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoids disruption.</td>
<td>Limits creative resolution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevents competition.</td>
<td>WIN/LOSE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful when issues are not important to you.</td>
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Four Principles of Conflict Resolution

1. Separate the People from the Problem
   - Separate personality issues from the problem
   - Do not attack the other side(s) as people
   - Respect the other side(s) and treat them as you wish them to treat you -- as intelligent human beings
   - Let the others know you view them as allies working against the same villain - the problem

2. Focus on Interests, Not Positions
   - Do not let yourself or your side get locked into a definite position
   - Once a person takes a "position," it is difficult for the person to "back down" for fear of losing face
   - If you fix in on one singular position, it limits opportunities for creative solutions that may well meet both sides' needs
   - If you "lock in," you (psychologically) almost force the other side into a position
   - Help the other side not to lock into a position
   - Suggest the other side explain their interests and concerns and listen attentively
   - Truly listen
     - For feelings
     - For content
   - You may be able to detect some possible alternatives regarding solutions
     - Clearly explain your interests and concerns
     - Identify common concerns.
3. **Generate a Variety of Options before Deciding**
   - Muzzle your critical instincts and avoid non-verbal negatives
   - Don't put up roadblocks; open gates and build bridges
   - Quantity tends to build quality

4. **Seek Objective Standards**
   - Try to resolve two-sided issues by looking for an objective standard both can accept
   - Look at how other comparable units, groups have resolved the issue; see what relevant professional organizations, standards suggest

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**Steps in Conflict Resolution**

1. **Assert Common Interests**
   - Develop a cooperative spirit
   - Commit to working together to solve the common problem/issue
   - Increase motivation

2. **Express Each Side's Concerns and Interests**
   - Do NOT accuse or evoke defensiveness
   - State interests, not positions
   - Avoid letting anyone back himself/herself into a corner and become "fixed" on a position
   - **LISTEN** to the comments of the other side
   - Use listing in written form to keep track of concerns and interests; post for visibility
   - Look at the other side's concerns and interests and start thinking how you can use your power and influence to **help them as well as yourself**
3. **Develop Criteria for Good Solution**
   - Incorporate the interests of both sides
   - Look at the standards developed
   - Define the ideal solution
   - If this seems impossible, check out the listing; be sure interests are really interests and not positions

4. **Generate Action Ideas**
   a. **Define the problem**
      - What exactly is going on?
      - What are the symptoms?
      - What are the agreed-upon facts?
   b. **Analyze the problem**
      - Look at the causes (distinguish symptoms from causes)
      - Identify your common goal(s)
      - Look at the needs
      - Look at the resources you have available
      - Look at the barriers
   c. **Generate broad approaches**
      - Without being specific, look at some theoretical strategies or cures
      - These can be refined later
   d. **Suggest specific action ideas**
      - Refine the broad approaches.
      - Get specific.
      - Spell out steps to address the problem.
5. **Develop Action Ideas**
   - Map out ideas for action.
   - Delegate and divide responsibilities (action plans).
   - Check the feasibility with other concerned parties

6. **Implement Best Suggestions**
   - Keep communication open
   - Expect some minor glitches and be ready to make some minor adjustments
   - Use an action plan to insure implementation

7. **Evaluate Results**
   - Monitor action plans throughout
   - **Make adjustments as necessary**
   - Develop a regular schedule or a plan for ongoing evaluation
Conclusion

1) Assess the situation

2) Separate relationship issues from substantive issues

3) Remind yourself that you will treat the person well - no matter what

4) Be unconditionally constructive

5) Stop wishing the people or situation were different!

6) Formulate a plan for resolution