

CLD1-7-4H



Facilitator's Guide

Understanding and Dealing with Conflict

Even a straight pin is no good if it loses its head. — Anonymous

Rationale:

Conflict is as common as rain and arises wherever people come in contact and have competing needs or different viewpoints or perspectives. Conflict is not always negative and may be needed to keep organizations growing and to provide personal growth opportunities. Successful conflict resolution relies on understanding how to utilize the correct conflict response for each circumstance and the removal of barriers for effectiveness.

Goal:

To develop understanding of effective conflict responses for different situations and how to remove barriers to conflict resolution.

Program Objectives:

- Recognize the characteristics of five conflict management approaches.
- Demonstrate the application of appropriate responses to potential organizational conflict situations.
- Analyze the effect of positive and negative emotional communication behaviors toward effective conflict resolution.

Pre-Program Preparation:

- Copy and read the “Understanding and Dealing with Conflict” factsheet.
- Review and prepare “How to Deal With Conflict” participant quiz copies.
- Prepare five communication response posters for display: avoidance, accommodation, competition, compromising, collaboration.
- Prepare positive and negative communication behavior statement cards for Learning Activity 3.

Introduction:

Plain and simple, when people come in contact with each other, conflict will arise. Conflict is not always bad and is sometimes needed in order to keep an organization growing. How we deal with the conflict that arises will affect the potential outcome.

Introductory Activity:

Think of a situation that you have experienced in a group setting that involved conflict. Without talking about specific people, share your insights to the following two questions with the person beside you.

- How did people in the situation deal with the conflict?
- How did the way the people handled the situation affect the outcome?

Objective 1: Recognize the characteristics of five conflict management approaches

Facilitator Opening Statements:

“We each have our own way of dealing with conflict. The techniques we use are based on many variables, such as our temperament, personality, environment and our stage in life. There are five major styles of conflict management to choose as a response, depending on the situation and circumstances. While there are no right or wrong approaches, some ways are more effective than others in providing the best opportunity for successful resolution and growth.”

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Learning Activity 1:

Provide “Understanding and Dealing with Conflict” quizzes for each participant. Ask participants to individually complete the quiz and score their response tendencies in each of the five categories: avoidance, accommodation, competition, compromising and collaboration. Create a display poster (or flip chart) of each category as you share characteristics of each response. With each group, ask participants to raise their hands to indicate the category in which they scored the highest.

Objective 2: Demonstrate the application of appropriate responses to potential organizational conflict situation

Facilitator Comments:

Review potential positive and negative aspects of each conflict response. For example:

- **Avoidance** – This response is good for trivial matters, or when more study is needed. Avoidance doesn’t deal with real issues and suppresses communication.
- **Accommodation** – This response is good for preserving relationships when the issue is more important to others and continued use may suppress joint communication and may build resentment.
- **Competition** – This response is effective when winning or survival is important. Competition creates a situation where someone (or one side) must lose with little shared in the solution.
- **Compromising** – This response attempts to find common ground and share power. In a compromise, someone must give up ground in order to reach a shared solution. A compromise might yield a “lose-lose” situation where both parties feel as though they have lost or given in on an important point.
- **Collaboration** – This response satisfies the needs and desires of both parties; especially with concerns that are too important to compromise or in a situation where competing views make compromise difficult.

Learning Activity 2

Divide participants into the five conflict response groups, based on their highest quiz category scores. Ask each group to discuss the following scenario:

‘You are all members of the Jasper County 4-H Council. You have been selected as your county’s Outstanding Community Service Organization, receiving

a \$500 donation. As a council you must decide the single best use for the money. Think silently about your individual preferred use for the money, then hold a group discussion on what should be done with the money. Use the characteristics of your group’s pre-dominant conflict response in handling disagreement in your discussion.

Were you individually satisfied with the results? Why or why not?

Next, assign groups a different conflict response style, asking participants to use the characteristics of this response in their discussions. Then pose the question: Was this response more or less effective for your situation and members? Why or why not?

Objective 3: Analyze the effect of positive and negative emotional communication behaviors toward effective conflict resolution

Facilitator Statements:

- “Conflict gives rise to emotional response that can positively or negatively affect communication and conflict resolution. There are some basic do’s and don’ts for communication behaviors in a conflict situation”:
- For starters, “Calm down!” The old adage, “Even a straight pin is no good if it loses its head” applies in conflict resolution.
- Find a place and a time to talk.
- Ask questions; listen more than you talk.
- Focus on the problem, not the person.
- If compromise or collaboration is needed, it is important to maintain a positive attitude and an open mind.
- Non-verbal communication is often more significant than what we say. Open- or close-mindedness can be communicated very effectively without saying a word.
- Verbal communication can be quite disruptive if it includes harsh language, insults, blame or threats.
- Interruptions or a refusal to listen are other obvious communication barriers.
- Sarcasm is seldom helpful in resolving conflict. It may be more subtle but is no less damaging than harsh words.
- Finally, don’t make excuses, change the subject, try to read the person’s mind or put words in the mouth of the other person.

Learning Activity 3:

Distribute the following positive and negative communication behaviors to participants. (Use multiple cards for large groups.)

- Use body language to show disapproval of all the ideas other than yours.
- Insult other people's ideas.
- Interrupt each person and state your ideas.
- Make sarcastic remarks about the discussion process.
- Ask positive questions to learn more about another's idea.

Return to your club discussions regarding the use of money. Ask members to demonstrate their positive or negative behavior in their club discussions. Discuss which behaviors led to effective conflict resolution and which behaviors became barriers for developing a group solution.

Summary

We cannot possibly live a life that is free of all conflict; however, we can manage our responses to conflict. Understanding the appropriate response can help make conflict a productive rather than a destructive fact of life.

Peace cannot be kept by force, it can only be achieved by understanding. — Albert Einstein

References:

- Hustedde, Ronald J, Steve Smutko, Jarad J. Kapsa. Turning Lemons into Lemonade: Public Conflict Resolution. Southern Rural Development Center series #221. <http://srdc.msstate.edu/trainings/lemons/221.html>.
- Thomas, Kenneth W. and Ralph H. Kilmann. Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. Mountain View, CA:CPP, Inc, 1974-2009. www.kilman.com/conflict.html.

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My First 4-H Club Meeting

1. What year did you attend your first 4-H meeting? _____

2. Who invited you to attend your first 4-H meeting? _____

3. Where was your first meeting held? _____

4. What do you remember most about your first 4-H meeting? _____

5. What activities were conducted at your first 4-H meeting? _____

6. What business was discussed at your first 4-H meeting? _____

7. Were refreshments served? _____ And if so, what was served? _____

8. Who took you to your first 4-H meeting? _____

Did that person stay at the meeting with you? _____

9. Were you excited to attend the meeting? _____

Were you nervous about attending? _____

What do you remember most? _____
