

From Conflict to Peak Performance

Manager Workbook

PRESENTED BY:

PENN Behavioral Health

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA HEALTH SYSTEMS

Table of Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Conflict and Productivity
- III. What is Conflict?
- IV. Characteristics of Conflict
- V. Managing Conflict
- VI. Recognizing Early Stages
- VII. Dynamics of Conflict
- VIII. Ground Rules
- IX. Effective Dialogue
- X. Establishing the Compromise
- XI. Starting Point
- XII. Conclusion and Discussion

Conflict and Productivity

- Performance
- Morale
- Retention
- Safety
- Cohesiveness
- Diversity
- Motivation
- Contagious Negativity
- Client Service
- Organizational Reputation

QUESTIONS:

What are the key concerns regarding conflict in your organization?

How long have they been a problem?

What would your workplace be like if there was significant decrease in conflict?

Defining Conflict

Why It Occurs

- Interests / Positions
- Perspectives/ Beliefs
- Personalities / Styles
- Behaviors / Values
- Attitudes / Biases
- Retaliation / Injustice
- Lack of Fairness / Concern

When It Occurs

- Stress
- Anger
- Communication Breakdown
- Trust Issues
- Personal Problems

Where It Occurs

- Individuals
- Groups
- Departments
- Organizations

How It Occurs

- Intensity
- Frequency
- Patterns

ACTIVITY:

Track the elements of conflict in your organization by asking the questions above.

Characteristics of Conflict

Those Who Are Most Likely to Engage in It

- Have to Be Right
- Need to Prove Something
- Won't Back Down
- See Things as "All or Nothing"

Environments Most Likely to Support It

- Stressful / Tension Filled
- Lack of Control
- Constant Changes
- Fast Paced
- Competitive
- Lack of Staff Integration

Situations Most Likely to Create It

- Real or Perceived Competition
- Unresolved Problems
- Personality Clashes
- Misread Intentions

QUESTIONS:

- Which of these factors do you have control over?
- Which of these factors are uncontrollable?
- Which factors have some control over you?

Difficult Individuals

Liars (Passive)

Conflict Avoidance
False Accommodation
Broken Compromises
Indirect Imposing

Antagonists (Aggressive)

Hide Behind Others or Principles
Accommodation to Meet their Own Goals
Constantly Change The Rules
Direct Imposing

Subverters (Passive-Aggressive)

Two Faced Avoidance
Accommodation Only to Allies
Purposeful Manipulation of Situation
Selective Imposing

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS:

How do you commonly handle these difficult types of individuals. How quickly do you confront them? What are your goals? What do you normally accomplish? How or Why did they become that way?

Difficult Situations

- **Lack of Clarity and Uncertainty:** feeling a lack of control over situations and not knowing how to cope
- **Job Pressure:** doing the work of several people due to perceived lack of resources or unreasonable workload
- **Job Scope:** juggling various responsibilities with limited authority and feeling vulnerable / unsupported
- **Rapport with Management:** conflicting visions / views, remote management issues, or lack of time or motivation
- **Spillover into Home / Family:** taking work home (figuratively and literally) and lack of professionalism
- **Repetitive Tasks:** boredom, monotony, or burnout
- **Performance Issues/Quotas:** deadlines, unattainable standards high-performance expectations
- **Dependence on Others:** difficulties with co-team members or feeling bogged down by bureaucracy
- **Job Instability/Downsizing:** organizational changes

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS:

How many of these factors negatively impact your staff?

What are you doing to reduce or alleviate some of them?

What does your staff do to resolve some of these dynamics?

What are your expectations for your staff regarding their efforts to resolve these issues?

Early Stages of Conflict

Breakdown in Communication

Distrust or Disrespect

Small Skirmishes

Discontentment or Tensions

Changes in Emotions

Changes in Behaviors

Awareness by Others

Complaints or Concerns

ACTIVITY:

Make a list of how many of these behavioral indicators have occurred in the last month, last six months or last year.

In the future, document where they take place, when they take place, who is most likely to exhibit them & why they exist.

Later Stages of Conflict

- **Lack of communication** leads to observable performance problems and client care/safety concerns
- **Distrust or Disrespect** leads to formation of cliques or isolation behaviors
- **Small Skirmishes** lead to open aggression and major battles
- **Discontentment or Tension** leads to loss of optimism and morale
- **Changes in Emotions** lead to negative moods and attitudes
- **Changes in Behaviors** lead to disrupted routines and loss of quality
- **Complaints or Concerns** lead to loss of staff and organizational reputation

ACTIVITY:

Make a list of how many of these behavioral indicators have occurred in the last month, last six months or last year.

In the future, document where they take place, when they take place, who is most likely to exhibit them & why they exist.

Managing Conflict

- Earliest Intervention
- Understanding of Dynamics
- Ground Rules
- Effective Dialogue
- Compromise
- Resolution

QUESTIONS:

Are there more early conflict indicators or later conflict indicators among your staff?
Which of the above six management tools would have been most affective for you to reduce the conflict or eliminate it altogether?

Dynamics of Conflict

Styles

Impose
Avoid
Accommodate
Compromise
Collaborate

Roles

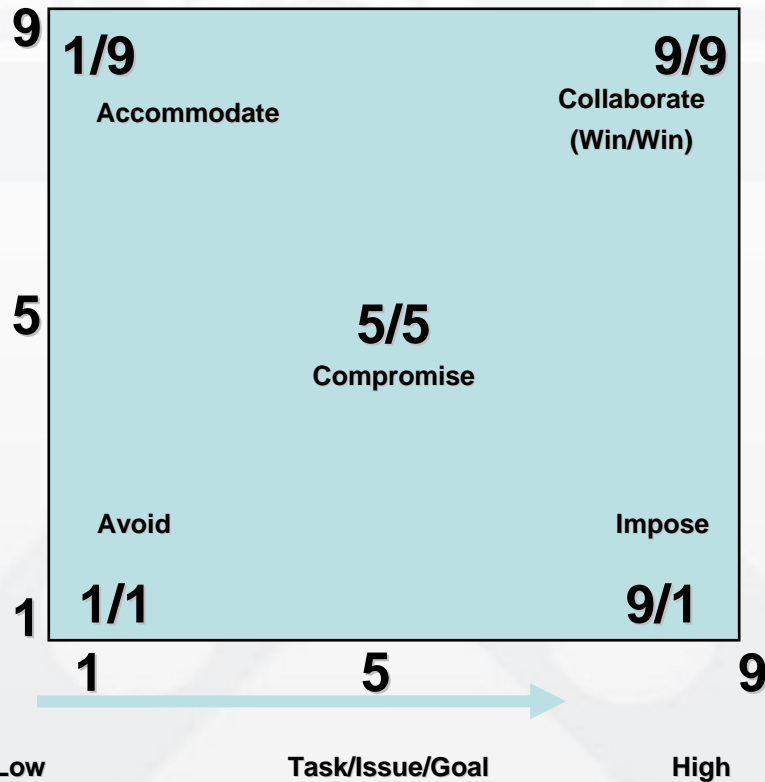
Supervisors
Difficult Clients
Subordinates
Customers
Co-Workers

ACTIVITY:

Think about which styles do you use most often when you are stressed and which of the above styles become roles that you (or your staff) play at work. Write down the reasons why you (or they) get stuck in roles and what could be done to change that dynamic.

Conflict Matrix

Relationship
High



ACTIVITY:

Think of a situation where you were on one end or corner of the matrix and the other person was at the other end or corner. How did you gain a compromise and what was the first comment you used to initiate the discussion?

Ground Rules

Controlled Confrontation

Solution Oriented Approach Process

Versus Quick Fix

Building Trust

Building Respect

Accomplishing Mutual Goals

QUESTIONS:

How would you communicate to your staff the importance of each of the above techniques in gaining a collaborative relationship? How would you model these rules in a respectful and collaborative way?

Effective Dialogue



Ideas

Thoughts

Perspectives

Motives

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS:

The goal of the collaborative approach is to explore the various ideas, thoughts and perspectives of everyone in order to gain the best of all worlds rather than defeating or competing with others in dialogue. How do you keep your staff from arguing over differing ideas, ways of thinking, or perspectives? How would you prevent two employees engaged in an argument from immediately questioning each other's motives and moving toward mud slinging?

Effective Dialogue

Assertive Language

- **I Sense, Hear, Perceive, Understand, or See.**
Is that right, accurate, or true?
- **I Feel This Way About That (event or behavior).**
Here is where I stand.
- **I Therefore Respond in This Way (regarding the event or behavior).**
Here is what I must do.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS:

Keeping the conversation in an assertive language format is one way to keep the dialogue open and clear.

This language seems wooden when used initially but with practice and positive intent, this can eliminate many of the misperceptions or assumptions which normally plague communication.

Establishing the Compromise

Identify Responsibilities

How am I responsible?

How are they responsible?

Problem Solve

What do I need to do first?

What is the *real* problem?

Re-Negotiate

What do I agree to?

What do they agree to?

Re-Build the Trust

How can I drop my biases?

What will it take to earn their respect?

Re-Establish the Compromise

Who?

What?

Where?

How?

ACTIVITY:

Make a copy of this sheet and use the questions to set the groundwork (your homework) for a situation where you need to gain a compromise. Go into the discussion with your game plan to walk away with either a win/win or a 50/50.

Resolving Problems

Earliest Identification

Communication Rules

Process of Investigation

Clarification of Objectives

Commitment to Resolution

Resolution and Results

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS:

Problem resolution requires certain conditions for effective results. Waiting too long, letting emotions speak, trying to solve the wrong issues, not knowing your ultimate goals and objectives, losing the commitment of others, or getting the wrong resolutions or results can be disastrous.

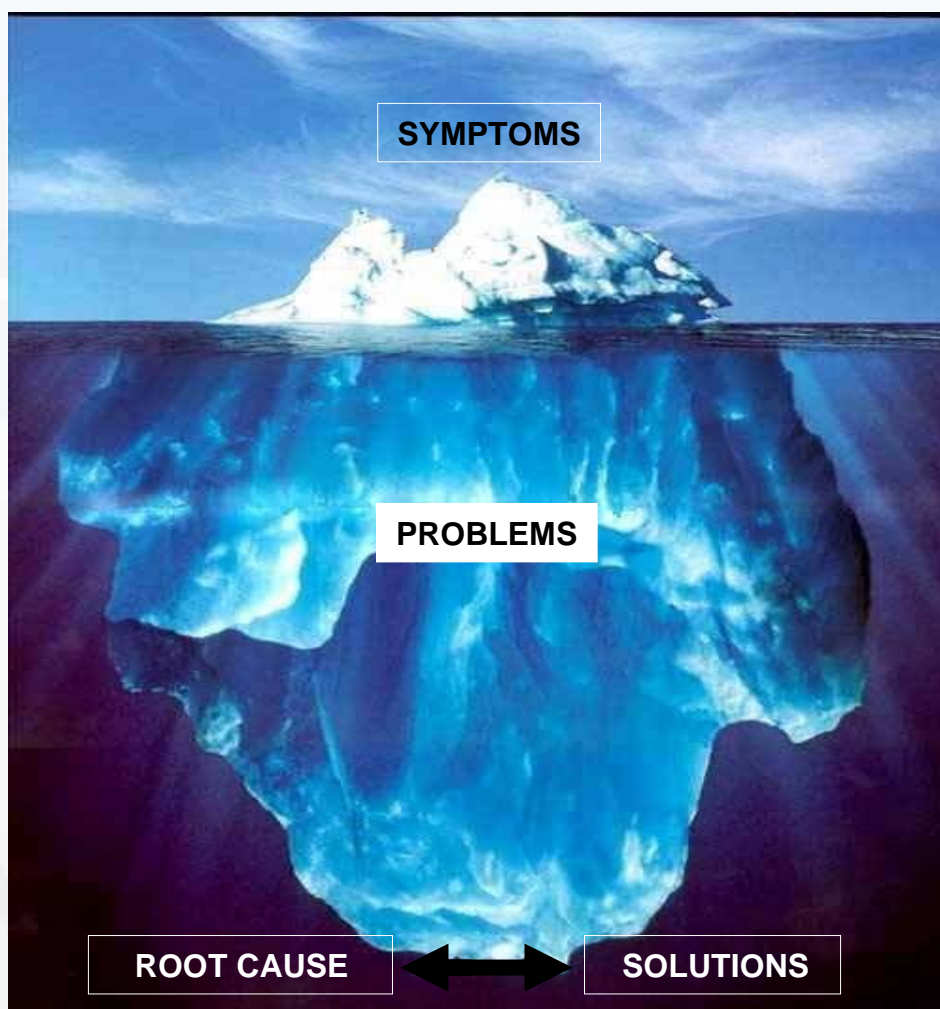
Communication Rules

- 1. Both parties state their problem.**
Each must clearly define his/her position and interest.
- 2. Let them talk while you listen.**
Use active listening skills to gain understanding of the situation.
- 3. Ask clarifying questions.**
Get specifics and make sure you have the full picture.
- 4. Stay in the present and the future, not the past.**
This will help you to avoid generalizations.
- 5. Stick to the topic at hand.**
Pulling in other issues will only escalate the conflict.
- 6. Look for areas of agreement.**
Identify common ground.
- 7. If the discussion escalates, withdraw, but not before scheduling the next discussion.**
Recommend a “cooling off” period for a specified amount of time.
- 8. Use mutual restating.**
Paraphrase what the other is saying.
- 9. All requests for change should be stated in behavioral terms.**
Resist personal attacks by using “action” words.
- 10. Body language rules.**
Make certain non-verbal communication matches verbal statements.

ACTIVITY:

Make a copy of this sheet and use it with your staff when setting the guidelines for respectful interactions during problem solving.

Iceberg or 80/20 Rule



QUESTIONS:

When your staff bring issues to you, how do you distinguish between the symptoms and problems that cause them?

Does your staff know how dig below the surface to the problems and the reasons why those problems exist.

If you were to ask them, "Why do these symptoms exist?" or "Why do these problems exist?", how would they respond?

Investigation Process

Symptoms:

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

Problems:

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

Root Cause is...

Priorities:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

ACTIVITY:

The next time you face a problem (a conflict, a difficult situation, a stressful dynamic, a major change) use this worksheet to investigate the problem from top (symptoms) to bottom (root cause) and ask yourself the question, "Which of these issues should I address first, second, third, etc...?" (priorities). Now go to the next page.

Clarification of Objectives

Commitment to Resolution

The Root Problem is...

This is how it is affecting me...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

According to me, I should...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

According to me, you should...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

ACTIVITY:

Take the problem from the previous page and focus on the root cause (problem). If it is affecting you to the point of action, what should the actions be (for you and for others)?

Corrective Intervention

Fact

Observe

- Frequency
- Intensity
- Patterns

Impact

Document

- Facts
- Dates
- Impact

Contact

Inform

- Isolated
- Respectful
- Questioning

React

Resource

- Skill (they can't)
- Will (they won't)
- Dill (they wouldn't)
- Thrill (they shouldn't)
- Nil (they just didn't)

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS:

Problem resolution requires an intervention determined by: its longevity or intensity, its development and current dimensions, its source or impetus, and its intent or motivation. Gather facts, consider the impact, make a contact, and determine what motivated the person (or what is needed) to react.

Resolution and Results

TASK	PERSON (S) RESPONSIBLE	CURRENT STATUS	COMPLETION DATE

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS:

Problem resolution requires a concrete resolution and clear results. Execution of the resolution is crucial to the success of completely eliminating the symptoms and solving the major problems creating those symptoms.

Using a task or project orientation can help to define the goals, the person(s) responsible for their completion and the updated progress and expected end dates.

Starting Point

To Prevent Conflict

- **Monitor** your own style
- **Explain** the importance of interpersonal relationships in the business dynamic
- **Set Expectations** and define repercussions
- **Encourage** dialogue and develop solution oriented approaches
- **Establish Compromises** & document and enforce breaches
- **Focus** on the mutual goals

QUESTIONS:

How do you take active steps to prevent conflict in the workplace?

Could your own style be creating conflict among your staff?

Have you clearly explained and set expectations regarding the appropriate interactions at work?

Have you encouraged your staff to discuss work related problems and develop compromises or goals?

Starting Point

To Reduce or Defuse Conflicts/Problems

- **Gather Information**
Chronology, current dynamics, and participants
- **Examine Behaviors**
Not reasons, attitudes or personalities
- **Deal with Facts**
Filter out rumor, gossip, or hearsay
- **Begin with Compromise**
Determine ultimate goals and objectives
- **Negotiate Personal Needs**
Not wants or desires
- **Create Clarity**
What was agreed to and expectations
- **Maintain Dialogue**
Through a commitment to open communication (when issues arise) and trust-building dialogue on a regular basis

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS:

Here are actions managers can take when a conflict or problem has already developed and the goal is to affectively reduce or defuse the dynamics involved with it.

Starting Point

To Resolve and Eliminate Problems

Identify the Symptoms

“What makes your work hard for you?”

List the Problems

“What are the dynamics creating these symptoms?”

Dig down to the Root Cause

“Why do these problems exist? “Where or when did they first occur ?” Who is responsible for the solution and why?”

Prioritize Problems

Deal with the most urgent or most resolvable first.

Construct a Plan

“According to me, I should do this...; and according to me, they should to this...”.

Determine the Pros and Cons of the Plan

“Is it worth it?” “If we do this what will be the overall effects?”

List steps/tasks

Include timeframes and divided responsibilities

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS:

Here are actions managers can take when a problem has been active for a period of time and the goal is to affectively resolve and eliminate the symptoms, problems and root causes.

Ending Point

To Prevent Conflicts & Problems from Returning

Be Consistent

Intervene on all issues constantly and consistently.

Be Fair

Treat all participants fairly and ask for their ownership in the process.

Be Assertive

Do not tolerate any inappropriate behaviors.

Be Respectful

Your approach, demeanor, your voice tone, and your words need to all reflect your desire to get the best outcomes.

Set Regular Times for Individual Dialogue

Let them know that their concerns will be heard regarding their needs, not necessarily their wants or wishes.

Set Regular Times for Group Dialogue

Limit the discussion to items that have gone through the resolution process.

Follow-up

Follow-up on previous conflict issues and problem situations with updates regarding success or the need to revisit.

QUESTIONS:

Here are actions managers can take to assure that the conflicts and problems are appropriately managed (when they cannot be resolved) so they do not return again.

What to Avoid

- Enabling
- Counseling
- Taking Sides
- Ignoring
- Postponing
- Instigating
- Pacifying
- Posturing

QUESTIONS:

How can managers resist getting inappropriately involved in work-related conflicts?
How can managers remain “objective” when the same individuals or situations continually create the tensions at work?

Conclusion & Discussion



Concept Summary

Manager Summary

Case Scenarios

Conclusion & Discussion

Concepts:

Workplace conflict impacts managers, employees and the health and productivity of the working environment.

Conflict is un-predictable but it does follow certain patterns based on the person, the environment, and the trigger events which are occurring.

Effective conflict resolution requires the use specific steps and defined goals such as early intervention, clarity of the dynamics and rules and affective dialogue to reach compromise and resolution.

Averting or defusing conflict (before it escalates) involves using the right style for the specific situation which is based on the particular individuals and their goals.

The collaborative (win/win) style is usually the most respectful and engaging and therefore often the most affective and successful in most situations.

When the collaborative style is not possible or plausible (because of the timing, the situation, or the person(s) involved) a compromise may be required.

Compromises can be established through probing questions regarding goals and the current commitment for reaching them.

Problem identification, interrogation, prioritization and ownership are all needed for complete resolution and elimination.

Personal attention to their own specific styles, agendas, and behaviors by managers is essential to eliminate management perpetuation of inappropriate workplace conflict.

Behaviors that tend to create or escalate conflict in the workplace should be resolved as soon as possible.

Conclusion & Discussion

Managers should:

Recognize workplace conflicts, assess their intensity/frequency and document their occurrences and resolutions.

Not assume they can predict all conflicts but rather be aware of employee tensions, stressful environments, and triggering events that lead to conflict.

Deal immediately with poor workplace relationships through intervention, confrontation and explanation of the expectations.

Use the tools of effective dialogue to gain compromise and conflict resolution.

Strive towards collaboration by using respect, honesty, and sincerity.

Encourage all staff to use the collaborative approach in their relationships

Develop the Ability to accept different ideas, thoughts, and perspectives

Utilize problem solving techniques when creating or re-establishing a compromise which will lead to eventual collaboration

Encourage their staff to be problem solvers rather than identifiers and help them take ownership for their role in solving the problems

Be aware of their own responsibility and influence in reducing conflicts and resolving problems in the workplace

Conclusion & Discussion

Scenario 1

You and another employee are constantly in conflict and have lost your ability to effectively communicate. Other employees are indicating that it is upsetting them and making them anxious. You have spoken to the other person numerous times about the importance of resolving your differences and disagreements but the problem persists. You are a valued employee and work well with other co-workers but when you are together with this other person there is constant tension.

ACTIVITY:

1. Identify main issues.
2. Determine the problem (person, environment, trigger events).
3. Evaluate the importance of resolving the problem.
4. Develop possible interventions or solutions.
5. Set up a plan to assure the problem remains resolved.

Conclusion & Discussion

Scenario 2

You work with an employee who is extremely difficult to work with and uses an imposing, aggressive style with other co-workers and with you. You have tried to avoid him; However, your work requires that you interface with him on occasion, and you resent his abrupt and condescending demeanor. This person insists that he does not have a problem and that if you have a problem with him you need to “get over it”.

ACTIVITY:

1. Identify main issues.
2. Determine the problem (person, environment, trigger events).
3. Evaluate the importance of resolving the problem.
4. Develop possible interventions or solutions.
5. Set up a plan to assure the problem remains resolved.

Conclusion & Discussion

Scenario 3

You do not get along with your manager who is constantly challenging you (your ideas, your thoughts, and your views). You have tried talking to her, to work out a mutual solution to your working relationship, but she denies there is a problem and says you are overreacting. The situation is getting worse because you believe she is now going to make your life more difficult.

ACTIVITY:

1. Identify main issues.
2. Determine the problem (person, environment, trigger events).
3. Evaluate the importance of resolving the problem.
4. Develop possible interventions or solutions.
5. Set up a plan to assure the problem remains resolved.

Conclusion & Discussion

Scenario 4

You have a person in your life who appears to be a chronic liar. He not only stretches the truth about minor issues but you think he may even occasionally falsify information or tell elaborate stories to manipulate you and the situation. Other people have pointed out this deceptive behavior and have come to the conclusion that they cannot trust this person. He continually asks you to do something but whenever you confront him, he says that the other individuals are just jealous and are maliciously attacking his integrity.

ACTIVITY:

1. Identify main issues.
2. Determine the problem (person, environment, trigger events).
3. Evaluate the importance of resolving the problem.
4. Develop possible interventions or solutions.
5. Set up a plan to assure the problem remains resolved.

Conclusion & Discussion

Scenario 5

The department where you work is going through some major changes regarding staffing, responsibilities and structure. Many of your co-workers are complaining about the situation. It is consuming every conversation and preventing appropriate collaboration to get routine tasks completed. You are confused about your allegiance (whether to be concerned about the impact of the changes on you and your colleagues or just stick to business) and you wonder how you can get your work done and still be a “team player” with your current colleagues.

ACTIVITY:

1. Identify main issues.
2. Determine the problem (person, environment, trigger events).
3. Evaluate the importance of resolving the problem.
4. Develop possible interventions or solutions.
5. Set up a plan to assure the problem remains resolved.

Conclusion & Discussion

Scenario 6

Your work is piling up and you are assuming more tasks and having less time to complete them. You would like to delegate some of the tasks and responsibilities to other staff or other people but everyone seems on overload and you feel that you are ultimately responsible for the tasks and do not want to set someone else up for failure. You have decided that the only way to complete your load is to work late into the evenings but you are losing momentum and are experiencing some signs of fatigue and burnout. Your family is also complaining and tells you that this is “only a job” and you should let things drop to prove you are overburdened.

ACTIVITY:

1. Identify main issues.
2. Determine the problem (person, environment, trigger events).
3. Evaluate the importance of resolving the problem.
4. Develop possible interventions or solutions.
5. Set up a plan to assure the problem remains resolved.