



Health Workforce Initiative

Hi-Touch Healthcare: The Critical Six Soft Skills

Grab-N-Go Independent Training Module:

Conflict Management

HEALTH WORKFORCE INITIATIVE STATEWIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE, CALIFORNIA
COMMUNITY COLLEGES CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



Conflict Management

Grab-N-Go Independent Training Module

This publication was produced pursuant to grant agreement number 14-326-001. This project was supported by Economic and Workforce Development funds awarded to the Butte Community College District by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. Copyright (c) 2016 Chancellor's Office California Community Colleges. Permission is hereby granted to reproduce this work, in whole or part, for educational use only.



Conflict Management

Background Information

Quality patient care is significantly impacted by the working relationships among healthcare workers due to the collaboration required among those healthcare workers. Enhanced patient outcomes have been consistently linked to productive workforces and collegial workplace relationships.ⁱ One threat to collegial workplace relationships is conflict. Conflict can arise between employees, between employees and the organization, between employees and clients, and between departments within the organization. Unresolved or mismanaged conflict in healthcare teams has been shown to have grave consequences for the delivery of quality care and patient safety.ⁱⁱ Additionally, poorly managed conflict can lead to personnel turnover, absenteeism, decline in productivity, and increased employee stress.ⁱⁱⁱ

Although conflict can be extremely problematic, the goal is not to eliminate it but to effectively manage it. Conflict is inevitable when people with different knowledge and skill sets collectively work together to solve problems.^{iv} Conflict arises from the incompatibility of goals, mismanagement of scarce resources, and the interference from others in achieving our goals; however, conflict does not necessarily lead to poor quality outcomes.^v In fact, conflict as the expression of varying points of view is necessary in healthcare to ensure that all parties involved



fully understand the pertinent information surrounding the issue or problem and that these parties have fully vetted the available options.

Therefore, it is important for healthcare employees to understand what conflict is and how to create a culture that promotes *constructive* conflict. Moreover, it is equally important to understand how to manage and decrease destructive conflict to nurture collegial relationships so that patients receive the highest quality of care. Optimal patient care cannot be provided if healthcare employees do not collaboratively work together to provide the best course of treatment for patients. This module will examine types of conflict, conflict management styles, and conflict resolution strategies.



Training



Overall Goal: Participants will gain a greater understanding of the dynamics of conflict and how to effectively manage conflict.

WIIFM: What's in it for me? Conflict is inevitable and is the result of people with different knowledge, expertise and skills collaboratively working together to solve problems. To ensure high quality patient care and collegial working relationships, it is imperative that healthcare workers learn how to manage conflict effectively.



Materials Provided:

1. Conflict Management Module PowerPoint
2. Activity #1: What is Conflict?
3. Activity #2: How Do We Frame Conflict?
4. Activity #3: Anything, Something, Everything
5. Activity #4: What is Your Conflict Management Style?
6. “Conflict Management Questionnaire” handout
7. “Scoring Sheet” handout
8. Activity #5: Conflict Is...
9. Activity #6: Write a Case Study



Directions for the Trainer: Activity preparation information is included in this document and/or within the PowerPoint presentation notes. Each PowerPoint slide, as appropriate, includes detailed explanations and instructions for the trainer. As with all Grab-N-Go Modules, you can use it all for a more detailed training, or simply use one or two of the many Activities—A la Carte style!



ACTIVITY #1

What is Conflict?



Goal: To demonstrate that conflict is frequently viewed as inherently negative when dissent can be productive.



Materials Needed (Quantities vary by how many in the group):

- PowerPoint Slide #5
- Pen/pencil and paper for each participant
- Flip-chart paper



Procedures:

Option: If time is limited, lead a whole-group brainstorming discussion for 3 – 4 minutes in which participants state, out loud, words that come to mind when they hear the word “conflict.” Then, proceed to step 5.

- Divide participants into groups of three.
- Explain that each person should individually write down all of the words that come to mind when he or she hears the word “conflict.” Announce that they will have one minute.
- After one minute, ask the groups to compile their lists and to write down any additional words that come to mind (3 – 4 minutes).
- On the flip-chart paper compile a list from all of the groups (3 – 4 minutes).
- Note that few words will be positive. Lead a discussion by asking the following questions (animated on PowerPoint slide 5):
 - How does our definition of conflict influence the way we think about conflict?
 - How does our definition of conflict affect the way we react to conflict?
 - Are there negative consequences of conflict?
 - Are there positive consequences of conflict?



ACTIVITY #2

How Do We Frame Conflict?



Goal: To demonstrate that how we perceive conflict shapes how we process and react to conflict.



Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint Slide #11



Procedures:

- Divide the participants into groups of three and assign one metaphor to each group (or two to each group depending upon the number of groups).
- Display the list of conflict metaphors on PowerPoint 11 and give the groups 3–4 minutes to reflect on how each metaphor frames conflict and what behaviors would be consistent with that frame (use the information in the parenthesis below to prompt discussion if groups are struggling with getting started).
 - Conflict is a war (series of battles, winners and losers)
 - Conflict is a trial (arguments and evidence, best argument wins)
 - Conflict is a struggle (difficult and ongoing part of life)
 - Conflict is an act of nature (happens to people and can't be prevented or controlled)
 - Conflict is a game (fun competition and people test their skills)
 - Conflict is a bargaining table (brings people for a common purpose)
 - Conflict is a dance (learn how to choreograph movements together)
 - Conflict is a garden (experiences represent seeds that if cared for will lead to a fruitful harvest)
- Ask each group to share their observations.
- Lead a discussion by asking the following questions:
 - What other metaphors come to mind? (Option: give groups 2 minutes to brainstorm more metaphors.)



ACTIVITY #2

How Do We Frame Conflict?

- Additional metaphors:
 - Conflict is an explosion (ticking time bomb and then an explosion)
 - Conflict is animal behavior (a natural part of life and only the strongest survive)
 - Conflict is a mess (messy and contaminates things)
 - Conflict is a tide (ebbs and flows and can be predictable)
- What metaphors do you experience or observe most in your organization and with your colleagues?
- How do those metaphors impact the delivery of healthcare?



ACTIVITY #3

Anything, Something, Everything



Goal: To demonstrate the differences between destructive and constructive conflict.



Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint Slides #15 – 16



Procedures:

Step One (PowerPoint Slide #15)

- Have participants find a partner.
- Instruct the partners to face one another.
- Instruct the partners to say, “Anything, something, everything!” As soon as you say “everything,” **yell** out an everyday item (glass, book, toothbrush).
- Debate why your item is better than the other person’s item (2-3 minutes).
**This is a competition and you want to WIN!!!!
- Lead a discussion by asking the following questions:
 - Was your debate an example of destructive or constructive conflict? Why?
 - What behaviors are exhibited when conflict becomes destructive?
 - How did you react?
 - Is this normally how you respond to conflict?

Step Two (PowerPoint Slide #16)

- Instruct the partners to say, “Anything, something, everything” and to yell out an everyday item after they say “everything.”
- Explain to them that you want them to engage in a productive dialogue that includes listening and asking questions to better understand the other person’s perspective.
- Lead a discussion by asking the following questions:
 - Was your discussion an example of destructive or constructive conflict?
 - What behaviors are exhibited when conflict becomes constructive?
 - How did you react?
 - Is this how you normally respond to conflict?



ACTIVITY #4

What is Your Conflict Management Style?



Goal: To increase personal awareness about the conflict management style we most frequently use to resolve conflicts.



Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint Slides #17 - 23



Procedures:

- Provide each participant with a “Conflict Management Style Questionnaire” handout (pages 1 – 2).
- When everyone has completed the questionnaire, provide each participant with the “Scoring Sheet” handout.
- Allow 8 – 10 minutes for participants to complete the questionnaire.
- Allow 3 – 4 minutes for participants to complete the scoring sheet.
- After participants have completed the questionnaire, discuss each of the management style slides (PowerPoint Slide 18 – 23)



Conflict Management Styles Questionnaire

The statements listed below can be thought of as descriptions of some of the different strategies for resolving conflicts.

Read each statement carefully. Using the following 5-point scale, indicate how typical each statement is of your thoughts and/or actions in a conflict situation. Enter your score (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) on the line next to each question.

5 = Very typical of the way I think and/or act in a conflict

4 = Frequently typical of the way I think and/or act in a conflict

3 = Sometimes typical of the way I think and/or act in a conflict

2 = Seldom typical of the way I think and/or act in a conflict

1 = Never typical of the way I think and/or act in a conflict

- ____ 1. I don't like conflict and will avoid it whenever I can.
- ____ 2. I strive to get my own way in conflict situations.
- ____ 3. I generally let others get what they want if it means the relationship remains positive.
- ____ 4. Compromise in conflict situations is always a good thing.
- ____ 5. Achieving a win-win outcome is best in conflict situations.
- ____ 6. If someone wants to get into an argument with me I would rather walk away.
- ____ 7. As long as I get what I want in a conflict then I am happy.
- ____ 8. I do not resist the demands of others, particularly if they are forceful in exerting them.
- ____ 9. I resolve conflicts by meeting the other party half way.
- ____ 10. Collaborating in conflicts produces the best results.
- ____ 11. I see conflicts as negative and to be avoided at all costs.
- ____ 12. I believe that giving in to the demands of others shows weakness.
- ____ 13. I value positive relationships with others more than getting my own way.
- ____ 14. A little bit of give and take goes a long way in resolving conflicts.
- ____ 15. I use creativity to solve seemingly impassable problems in conflict situations.
- ____ 16. In a group conflict situation I stay quiet and do not contribute.



- ___ 17. Conflicts have winners and losers and I make sure I am the winner.
- ___ 18. To remain popular with others I like to give them what they want.
- ___ 19. I regard conflicts as negotiations where both parties do not get all that they want.
- ___ 20. Consulting with others and really understanding their needs gets the best results in conflict situations.
- ___ 21. I see no point in getting involved in conflict situations.
- ___ 22. I use personal willpower to get my way in conflicts.
- ___ 23. In a conflict I use humor and a soft touch to prevent escalation of the conflict.
- ___ 24. Accommodating the other person makes for the best outcome in a conflict situation.
- ___ 25. It is possible for both parties in a conflict to get 100% of what they want if they are creative enough.
- ___ 26. If I think that a situation will turn into a conflict I will avoid it.
- ___ 27. I do not mind *not* telling the truth in conflicts if it means that I get my way.
- ___ 28. I can “blow with the wind” in conflict situations.
- ___ 29. I normally strive to get at least half of what I want in a conflict situation.
- ___ 30. I value the result as much as the relationship with the other party in a conflict situation.
- ___ 31. If someone wants to draw me into a conflict I tell them that I don’t want to get involved.
- ___ 32. I think flexibility in conflict situations is a sign of weakness; therefore, I stick to my demands until they are met.
- ___ 33. I do not put my needs above the needs of others in a conflict situation.
- ___ 34. For an easy life, why not just compromise?
- ___ 35. Open and honest communication in a conflict leads to the discovery of unexpected and positive outcomes.



Score Sheet

Avoiding	Competing	Accommodating	Compromising	Collaborating
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
11.	12.	13.	14.	15.
16.	17.	18.	19.	20.
21.	22.	23.	24.	25.
26.	27.	28.	29.	30.
31.	32.	33.	34.	35.
Total =	Total =	Total =	Total =	Total =

The higher the score, the more that style is preferred or used. The lower the score, the less that style is preferred or used.



ACTIVITY #5

Conflict Is ...



Goal: To demonstrate that defining conflict positively can lead to the use of more constructive conflict strategies.



Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint Slide #25
- Flip-chart paper (one per group)



Procedures:

- Before the activity begins, hang one flip-chart paper per group on the walls.
- Divide participants into groups of 3 to 4 people depending upon the number of participants (three groups minimum works best).
- Instruct the groups to develop a definition of conflict that does not use any negative terms (allow 5 – 10 minutes depending on time constraints).
- Ask the groups to write their definition large enough to be visible to the larger group.
- Ask each group to explain their definition and why they believe their definition will lead to more constructive conflict.
- Lead a discussion by asking the following questions:
 - What definitions would be most appropriate for the types of conflict you face on a regular basis? Why?
 - What might be some positive outcomes of conflict?
 - What do you like about the definitions posted around the room?



ACTIVITY #6

Write a Case Study



Goal: To provide participants with an opportunity to engage in conflict resolution strategies relevant to the conflicts faced on a regular basis.



Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint Slides #26 - 27



Procedures:

- Divide the participants into groups of 2 to 3 people depending upon the number of participants (3 groups minimum works best).
- Instruct the groups to write a brief case study (or a description of a conflict) they have experienced (5 – 10 minutes).
 - Be clear that the case studies should not use anyone's real name or title.
 - It can be a hypothetical example.
- Collect the case studies and distribute one case study, face down, to each group (do not allow groups to work on their own case studies).
- Briefly review the conflict resolution strategies on PowerPoint Slide #27.
- BEFORE proposing a resolution to the conflict, instruct the groups to follow the steps outlined on PowerPoint 27 (8-10 minutes).
- Ask each group to write down their notes and to be prepared to share their proposed solutions.
- Report Out: Ask each group to read the case study out loud and to share in detail how they addressed each of the conflict resolution strategies and what courses of action should be taken to ensure a constructive conflict approach. Ask participants to reflect on the proposed solutions and to make additional observations or suggestions.
- Lead a large group discussion by asking the following questions:
 - Did you find this approach to be effective? Why or why not?
 - Did you identify issues you might not have considered without this approach?
 - Did you struggle with any of the steps? If so, which steps and why?
 - What suggestions can you make to help others?



References

-
- ⁱ Almost J., Wolff A.C., Stewart-Pyne A., McCormick L.G., Strachan, D., & D'souza C. (2016). Managing and mitigating conflict in healthcare teams: An integrative review. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 72(7), 1490–1505. doi: 10.1111/jan.12903
- ⁱⁱ Kim, S, Buttrick, E., Bohannon, I., Fehr, R., Frans, E. & Shannon, S.E. (2016). Conflict narratives from the health care frontline: A conceptual model. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 33 (3), 255-276. doi: 10.1002/crq
- ⁱⁱⁱ Gardner, D. (January 31, 2005). Ten lessons in collaboration. *OJIN: The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, 10 (1). doi: 10.3912/OJIN.Vol10No01Man01
- ⁱⁱⁱⁱ Haraway, D. L., & Haraway III, W. M. (2005). Analysis of the Effect of Conflict-Management and Resolution Training on Employee Stress at a Healthcare Organization. *Hospital Topics*, 83(4), 11-17.
- ^{iv} Adams, K, & Galanes, G.J. (2014). *Communicating in groups: Applications and skills* (9th ed.) New York: McGraw-Hill.
- ^{iv} Rothwell, D. J. (2013). In mixed company: Communication in small groups and teams. (8th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
- ^v Adams, K, & Galanes, G.J. (2014). *Communicating in groups: Applications and skills* (9th ed.) New York: McGraw-Hill.