

Conflict Resolution: Dealing with Difficult People and Difficult Situations

What if



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Take-Aways

1. Define difficult behaviors.
2. Enhance awareness of difficult people behaviors.
3. Identify action plan for addressing difficult behaviors.

Take-Aways

4. Identify de-escalation strategies to consider when dealing with difficult people and situations.
5. Have fun!



"I'm going to train you to 'Confront Difficult People' ... okay, raise your hands if you're a difficult person."

Everyone is Somebody's Difficult Person

Observations

- People are creatures of habit.
- How people communicate is habit.
- People often interpret what is said, wrong.

Observations

- People seldom say exactly what they mean. (exception: Native New Yorkers)
- People are better at speaking to, rather than listening to others.
- People would rather agree with others to avoid confrontation.

Observations

- People behave in certain ways to get their needs met. (learned behavior)
- When our needs are not met, we react. (has often worked in the past)
- The stronger the need, the stronger the reaction.

Observations

- In every organization, in every family, with every group of people, interpersonal conflict emerges.
- Sometimes the conflict is based upon communication styles.
(open, honest, direct)

Observations

- 95% of all conflict is a result of miscommunication. (Lost in translation)
- Sometimes the conflict is based upon personality styles.
- Sometimes the conflict is based upon untreated medical and/or mental health condition.

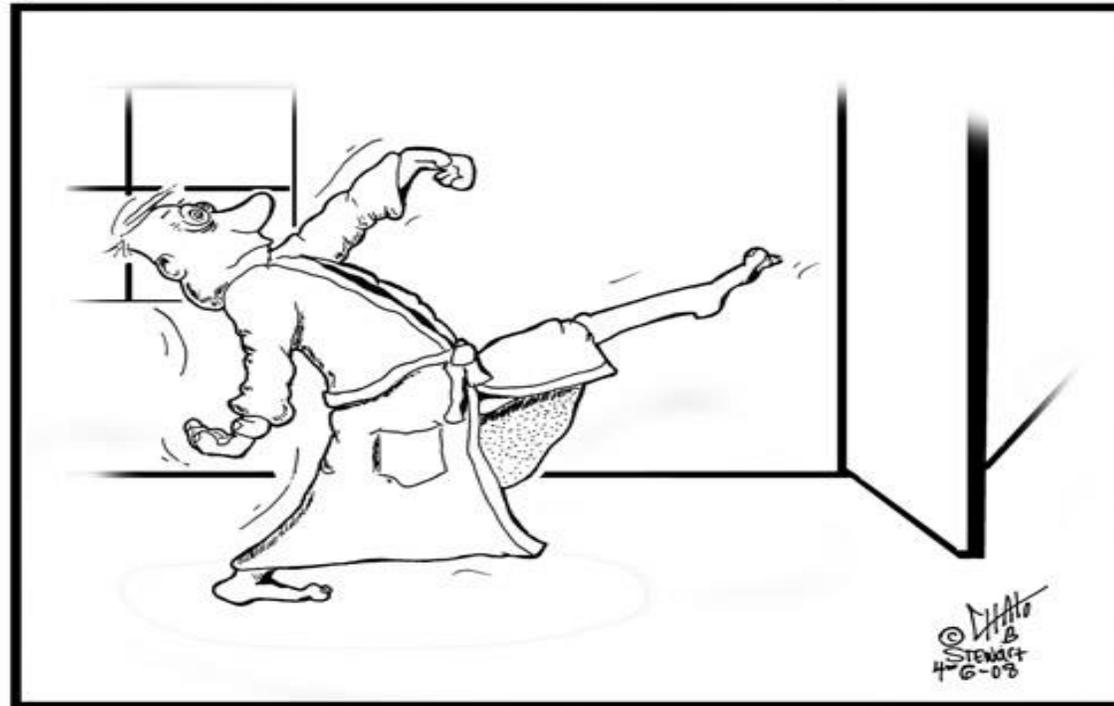
Bottom Line

- We all exhibit good and at times, not so good behaviors. (called being Human)
- Our behaviors are demonstrations of who we are and how we communicate our response to daily living and life in general.

If you only Remember ONE Thing: Behavior is Communication

MentalHealthHumor.com

By: Chato B. Stewart



Dancing the Medication Mambo

Ever encountered someone who frustrates you so much that you feel like you want to pull your hair, jump around the room or just scream out loud?

You're not alone.

Share traits of a difficult person you have encountered?



Difficult Person Defined

Consistently makes it hard to accomplish a task or often makes it hard to interact with.

Behaviors:

- Hostile or aggressive
- Negative or pessimistic
- Withdrawn or passive
- Overly agreeable but doesn't deliver
- Opinionated and defensive

Difficult People Behaviors Traits

- Negative attitude
- Avoids conflict
- Manipulative
- Pot-stirrer

Difficult People Behaviors Traits

- Selfish/self-centered
- Won't take responsibility for their behavior
- Arrogant/pompous attitude
- Disrespectful

Difficult People Behaviors Traits

- Passive-aggressive
- Demanding and impatient
- Denys their behavior
- Disregards policies & procedures

How to Determine if Someone is Being Difficult

- How would those around us rate their behavior? (acceptable norms)
- Have I seen this behavior in similar past situations? (patterns/baseline)
- Is this person under a great deal of stress or suffered a recent loss?

Impact of DP

- It's just plain stressful.
- Tense or charged work environment.
- Affects staff morale (Staff & resident retention)
- Reduces effectiveness and lowers productivity.
- Potential for higher unit turn-over and damage.



Why Are People Difficult?



**“I don’t like to be difficult, but
it’s the only thing I’m really good at!”**

Anatomy of a Difficult Person

- Learned behavior.
- Often based on emotional factors.
- Doesn't know any other way. (habit)
- Low self-esteem, self worth.
- Symptom of a medical or MH condition.

People are Difficult Because

- They're aware that they are perceived as being difficult, and they like it. (Intimidation and manipulation)
- Their Behavior is often rewarded.

People are Difficult Because

- Because it has worked for them in the past.
- **Tip:** Reward the behaviors you want to see repeated, inflict pain where you don't.

Difficult People Behaviors



BULLDOZER



THE BULLY



SNIPER



EXPERT



COMPLAINER



SILENT TYPES



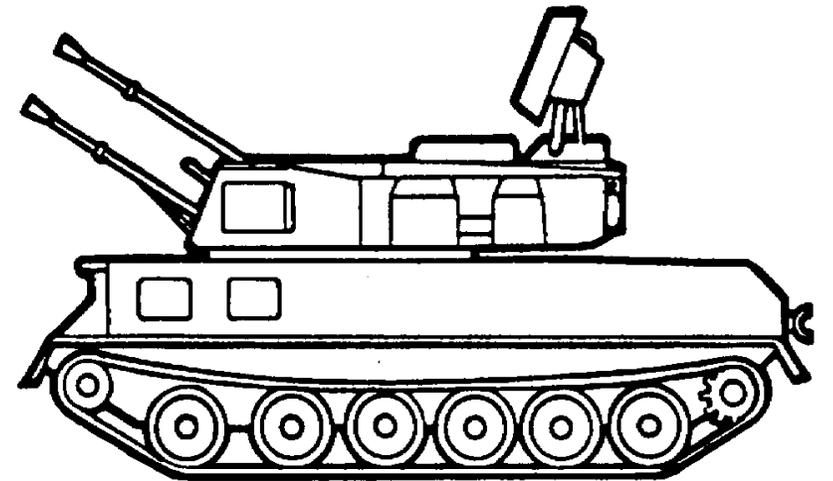
BALLOON

The Tank

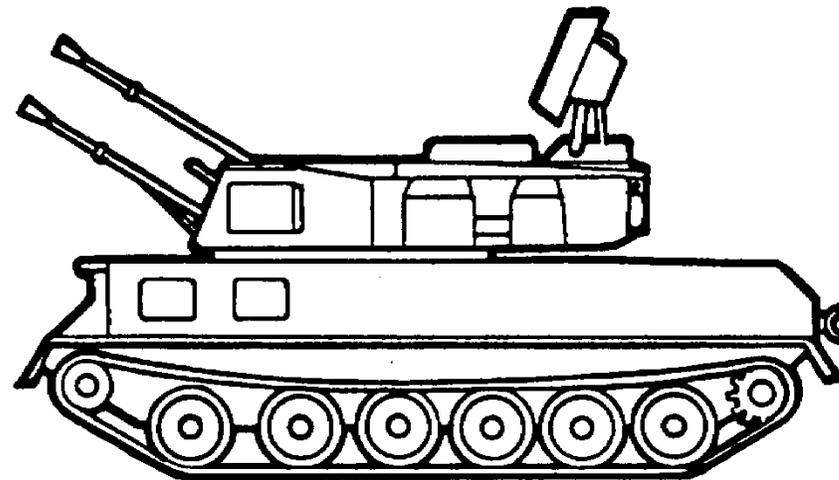
“I’m going to roll right over you”

Behaviors:

- Confrontational
- Pointed and angry
- Pushy/Bossy/Bully
- Aggressive
- AKA: Bull Dozer and Dictator



Your Goal To Command Their Respect



Action Plan

Hold your ground.

- ✓ Stay put and hold your position.
- ✓ Silently look them in the eyes and shift your attention to your breathing.
- ✓ Breathe slowly and deeply. Intentional breathing helps you regain self-control.
(Mantras)

Action Plan

Interrupt the attack.

The best way to interrupt anyone, who is yelling is to evenly say their name over and over again until you have their full attention.

Action Plan

Aim for the bottom line and fire!

Bottom line varies according to your situation but it usually no more than about two sentences long.

Examples:

“From my point of view.”

“The way I see it.”

Action Plan

Peace with Respect.

Redirect to a peaceful solution by offering them the last word, only you decide when that is.

The Sniper

“I’ve got you in my sights”

Behaviors:

- Secret attacks/hidden back-stabbing
- Innuendo digs
- Non-playful teasing
- Negative undertones
- Undermining & saboteur



Your Goal

*To expose them, bring them
out of hiding*



Action Plan **Expose them.**

Get them out in the open, putting them on the spot can potentially be enough to stop their behavior.

Action Plan

Respond to them with a question.

- They will usually respond with denial or volley the responsibility to you.

Example: “I’m only joking, you’re so serious, can’t you take a joke?”

- Speaking up and exposing them lessens the chance of similar attacks in the future.

Action Plan

Respond to them with a question.

- “It sounds like you’re making fun of me. Are you?”
- “What are you trying to tell me with that look?”
- “Did you really mean what you just said?”

Action Plan

Use searchlight questions.

Use questions to expose the Sniper's behavior

1. "When you say _____, what are you really trying to say?" (**Intent**)
2. "What does that have to do with this?" (**Relevancy**)

Example

“When you say that I can’t take a joke? I’m wondering what are you’re really trying to say.”

The Whiner

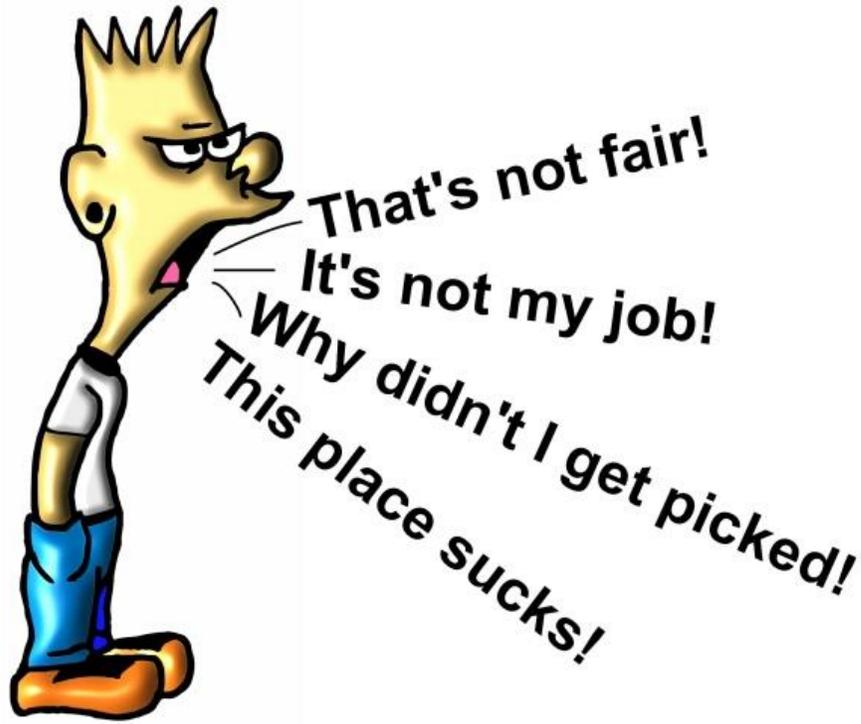
“Why me?, I never, I always, etc.”

Behaviors:

- Finds fault with everything
- Points out problems, offers no ideas or solutions
- Self-fulfilling cycle of passivity, blame, and powerlessness
- Strong sense of what should be happening



Your Goal Form a Problem-Solving Alliance



Action Plan

- ✓ Don't agree with them as it just encourages them to keep complaining.
- ✓ Don't disagree with them as they will feel compelled to repeat their problems.

Action Plan

- ✓ Don't try to argue them out of their negativity.
- ✓ Respond with your own optimistic expectations.
 - "I believe that everything will turn out great."*
 - "I'm sure we will get it done on time."*

Action Plan

Listen for the main points.

- ✓ The last thing you want to do is listen, but that's just what you need to do.
- ✓ Listen with pen and paper to catch the main points of the complaint.

Action Plan

Interrupt and get specifics.

- ✓ Command the conversation through tactful interruption, ask for their help.
- ✓ Ask clarifying questions to get to the specifics of the problem because vague problems are rarely solvable.

Action Plan

Stay focused on solutions.

- ✓ Chunk the problems down. They might feel overwhelmed because they've magnified the problem.
- ✓ Solving smaller problems will help build momentum.
- ✓ Sometimes they need a new perspective and support before they can switch into problem solving mode.

The Clam

“No Comment”

Doesn't contribute to the conversation or offer verbal or non-verbal feedback.

Behaviors:

- Silent
- Unresponsive
- Non-committal



The Clam

- Like turtles, they retreat into their shells to avoid conflict and responsibility.
- They get away with not talking because most people are uncomfortable with silence and are too quick to fill in the gaps.



Your Goal

Persuade them to talk.



Action Plan

Show them the future.

- ✓ Sometimes the only way to get them talking is to take them out of the moment and into the future.
- ✓ There they can see the consequences of continued silence and perhaps find enough perspective and motivation to open up.

Action Plan

- One of the best tools in your tool belt is to ask the right questions.
- If you're not getting the response you want, you might not be asking the right questions.

Action Plan

Ask open-ended questions.

- ✓ Can't be answered with a yes, a no, or a grunt.
- ✓ Use questions that begin with **Who, What, When, Where, and How** they tend to open up topics for discussion.

Open-Ended Question

Would you please help me understand the problem you are facing?”

Wait at least one full minute. If they won't respond set another date and time to discuss the matter.

Action Plan

Share the ramifications.

- People aren't always aware of the impact of their actions or inactions.
- Explaining the impact might help.
- Reward behavior you want to see repeated, inflict pain where you don't.

The Yes-Person



“Sure, I’ll do it”

- Says yes without thinking things through.
- React to the latest demands on their time by forgetting prior commitments, and overcommit until they have no time for themselves then they become resentful.

The Yes-Person

Behaviors:

- Quick to agree
- Rarely delivers or follow through
- Over commit themselves
- Sociable, outgoing: need to be liked and make others feel liked
- Martyr for the Team



Your Goal

*Get a commitment you
can count on*



Action Plan

Help the person learn to plan.

- Use past experiences as a learning opportunity.
- Go back together and approach the task.
(Coach and model behavior)
- Help them focus in on the specific action and steps and process involved in accomplishing the task.

Action Plan

Ensure commitments.

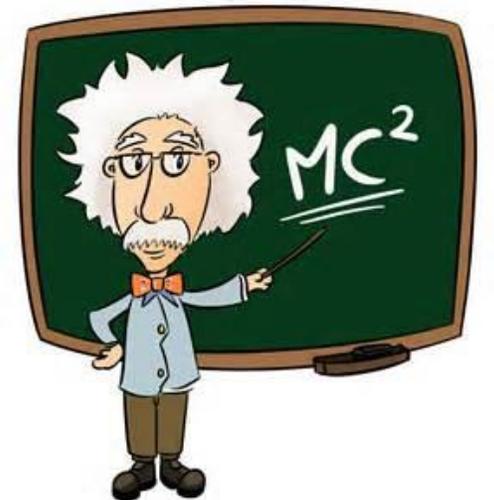
- ✓ At the end of the discussion, thank them for talking with you and ask, “What will you do differently the next time you’ve made a promise to me and you are unable to carry it out?”
- ✓ Follow through to ensure commitment.

The Know-It-All

“Let me tell you all about it”

Behaviors:

- Expert on everything and happy to share it with you
- Frequently right
- Seeks respect
- Values facts and logic
- Feels your ideas are inferior
- Can be condescending & pompous

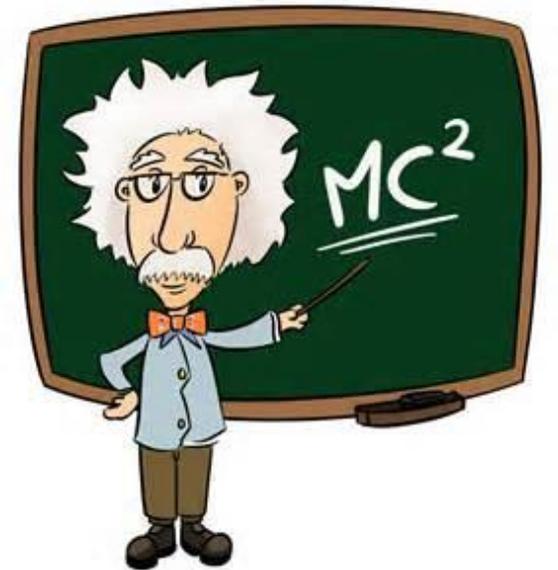


The Know-It-All

- Low tolerance for correction and contradiction.
- If something goes wrong they will speak with the same authority about who's to blame, You!

Your Goal

*“open their mind to
new ideas”*



Action Plan

Be prepared and know your stuff.

- ✓ Clearly think through your ideas ahead of time.
- ✓ Often monitor information for errors and will pick up any shortcoming and use it to discredit your whole idea.

Action Plan

Backtrack Respectfully.

- ✓ You have to do more backtracking with them than any other DP trait.
- ✓ If you don't backtrack you run the risk of having to listen to them as they repeat themselves over and over again.

Action Plan

Turn them into a mentor.

- ✓ Openly acknowledge them as your mentor in some area of your life that you seek to develop. (patience)
- ✓ Recognize them as an subject expert and be willing to learn from them and you will become less of a threat.

Action Plan

Don't make it personal.

- One of the challenges when presenting information is when making a point becomes an argument, a debate, or personal attack.
- Keep it objective.

*You can't direct the wind, but
you can adjust your sails.*



The No Person

“It will never work”

Behaviors:

- Negative, believes everything will fail.
- Lacks trust.
- Resistant to change, Mantra is “It won’t work”
- Harmful to morale and taps potential for despair in others.



The No Person

- Kills momentum and creates friction.
- Deadly to morale, able to defeat ideas with a single syllable.

Your Goal
Transition Them toward
problem solving.



Action Plan

Try Reverse Psychology.

If their instinct is to play Devil's advocate try asking them for the opposite of what you want and test their reactions.

Action Plan

- ✓ Act as if the negative feedback is meant to be helpful.
- ✓ Appreciate them for having high standards, for speaking up, and concerns about details.

Action Plan

Leave the door open.

- Tend to operate in a different time reality than other people.
- Any effort to rush them to a decision will force them to slow down.

Examples

- “If you change your mind let us know,”
- “When you think of a solution get back to me,”
- “Why don’t you think about this for a while and report back any ideas you have.”

Action Plan

Test your No Person early.

- ✓ If you need their support seek them out early, rather than getting blocked downstream.
- ✓ Their buy-in might take time even if your idea is sound.

Action Plan

Build an Ally.

- ✓ If you get them on your side it can help build momentum.
- ✓ They can help you figure out what the main blockers or resistance will be.

Action Plan

Divide and conquer.

If they are more powerful among a group, meet with them individually and in advance.

Action Plan

Involve them in the solution.

- ✓ Ask them to temporarily wear a collaborative hat.
- ✓ Safer for them to play out your ideas and temporarily step out of their behavior.

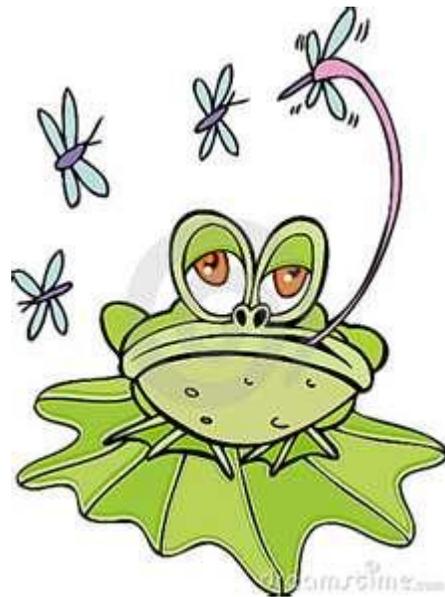


Be thankful for all the difficult people in your life, and learn from them. They have shown you exactly who you do not want to be.

Conflict Resolution: Enhancing your tool box



*Frogs have it easy; they
can eat what bugs them.*



Conflict

- Natural part of life.
- Difficult & uncomfortable
- Involves collaboration/compromise
- Ignoring it makes it worse



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- Unfortunately there is no cookbook or magic formula. Finding a solution that works for a particular individual in a particular situation is largely a matter of trial and error.
- Even when a solution is found it may not work every time. Adjustments need to be made as the disease progresses.

Finding a solution that works for a particular individual in a particular situation is largely a matter of trial and error.

1. First Do No Harm. (Benevolence)
2. Request and participate in training opportunities, ask questions. (Increase awareness and enhance knowledge)
KUDOS!
3. Ask for assistance & support. (Supervision)
4. Do the best YOU can. (Competence)

Good Communication is Key



- Utilize active-listening skills.
- Willingness to change your point of view.
- Willing to compromise and negotiate.
- Avoid using the words “always and never.”

*To “Listen”
Another’s Soul
Into a condition
Of disclosure
And discovery
may be almost
The greatest
Service that any
Human being
Ever performs
For another*

Douglas Steere from “Gleanings: A Random Harvest”

Active Listening Skills

- Be Present
- Maintain good eye contact
- Do not interrupt
- Maintain good posture.
- Maintain a non-threatening position
- Mentally rehearse difficult conversations
- Breathe (shallow vs. deep)

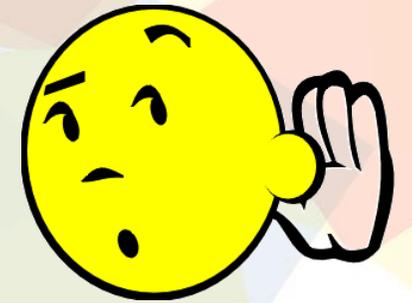


Active Listening Skills

- Success is determined by delivery style. It's HOW you say WHAT you say.
- Most of what people hear is based on the delivery.
- When words and tone are in conflict, people believe the TONE.



Listening in 3 Channels



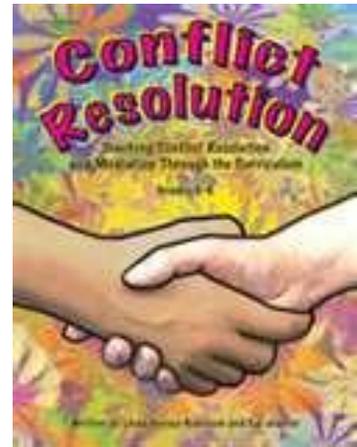
- ✓ Verbal: actual words use (7%)
- ✓ Vocal: tone, inflection, volume, speed, tempo, pitch (38%)
- ✓ Non-Verbal: body language (55%)

Active Listening Statements

1. “I understand that this is important to you.”
2. Let me make sure I understand what you are telling me.”
3. “You’re (insert emotion) because....., am I correct?”

Conflict Resolution Strategy

1. Ask to speak with the person you have the conflict with.
2. Actively listen (two-sides to every story.)
3. Define the problem.
4. Identify and offer solutions.



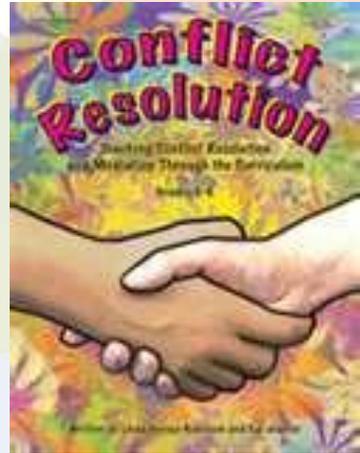
Conflict Resolution Strategy

5. Select the best solution.

Collaborate & Compromise

Win/Win

6. Follow through and evaluate. Was the conflict resolved? If not, repeat steps 1-6



Getting Through a Confrontation

If person is frustrated but not yet angry

- ✓ Listen and paraphrase
- ✓ Acknowledge feelings
- ✓ Identify specific actions to reach solution.
- ✓ Don't Patronize
- ✓ Don't overwhelm
- ✓ Don't accept responsibility except where appropriate

Assess the Situation

1. What is the behavior, with whom does it occur, how frequently?
2. Why do you think it is occurring?
3. Has the person acted the same in similar situations?

Assess the Situation

4. Is my reaction out of proportion?
5. Was there a specific trigger?
6. Will honest, open, and direct communication help?

Getting Through a Confrontation

If person is angry or hostile

- ✓ Acknowledge feelings
- ✓ Keep the discussion on topic
- ✓ Stay focused on resolution
- ✓ Don't rise to the bait
- ✓ Don't make excuses or long explanations



Getting Through a Confrontation

If the person is abusive and unreasonable

- ✓ Keep universal safe distance
- ✓ State the rules
- ✓ State the limits
- ✓ Be clear and concise
- ✓ Call for back up or remove yourself from the situation

*Remember sometimes
silence is the best answer.*



De-escalation Strategies

- Don't forget to breathe.
- Use Mantras for emotional self-regulation
- Priority is to help the person to regain a sense of control. (stabilize: provide hope and a way out)

De-escalation Strategies

- Stay Calm
- Try to keep the conversation focused, objective and stay in the present.
- As hard as it can be, try not to get overly emotional.
- The more you can stay calm, the more control you can have in the situation.

Immediate Danger

- If the situation is life-threatening or if serious property damage is occurring, call 911.
- When you call 911, explain the nature of the emergency and your relationship to the person.

DECOMPRESS

DEBRIEF

DOCUMENT

DECOMPRESS

- Set aside time for extra sleep.
- Talk with a friend or loved one.
- Talk with your health care professional.
- Watch a funny movie.
- Spend time in nature, like going to a park.
- Write in a journal.
- Spend time on a hobby.
- Volunteer for your favorite organization or help someone else.
- Cut back on a few non-essential responsibilities.

Debrief

Following an incident, it is important to reflect back on what has happened to learn how to potentially prevent or minimize future incidents.

Some important questions to ask include:

- What situations or triggers led to the incident?
- What worked to reduce tension or avoid a conflict?
- What steps did we or could we have taken to keep everyone safe and calm?

Follow

Follow all your organization's policies & procedures.



Inform

Inform your supervisor.



Complete

Complete incident report form.

Final Thoughts

- Pick your battles
- Be present, Listen actively, reflect back
- If you don't understand, ask questions
- Don't become part of the problem, focus on solutions.

Final Thoughts

- Always provide yourself an escape route.
- Use buddy system.
- Inform your supervisor.

Document.

Self-Care

- Remember to take care of yourself.
- Don't try to control people or events.
- Speak up!
- See something, do and or say something.
- Take relaxation breaks.
- Exercise, releases endorphins
- Allow yourself some playtime every day.
- Practice positive self-talk. (mantra)
- Take a vacation, MH day, staycation.
- Tend to your garden of friends.

Resources



- 2-1-1 & 9-1-1
- National Alliance on Mental Health <http://nami.org>
- National Institute of Mental Health
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>
- AARP/ALZ.org
- Area Agency on Aging (AAA)
- <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth>
- Crisis Line (24 hours) (206) 461-3222
- County Designated Mental Health Professionals (MHPs)
(206) 263-9200
- Geriatric Regional Assessment Team (GRAT) (206) 923-6300



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Bloomberg says employers want employees to support colleagues in crisis with Mental Health First Aid at Work.

READ MORE. ▶

Get Involved and Make a Difference

What if

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