

# **SESSION 7**

## **MANAGING CONFLICT**

### **Purposes**

- To discuss lessons learned by analyzing a problem drawn from members' service.
- To learn the positive and negative aspects of five styles of managing conflict.
- To practice these five styles using service-related situations.
- To apply the collaborative approach to a manageable conflict drawn from members' lives.

**Session at a Glance**

Min		Activities	Materials
25	1	Welcome, Discuss Field Assignment #6	Binders, prepared wall chart
35	2	Learning About Conflict-Management Styles	Handout A, prepared wall chart
50	3	Animating These Styles With Skits	
10	4	Field Assignment #7, The Learning Store	Handouts B and C

**Preparation for the Session**

1. Remind members to bring their binders to the session.
2. Prepare two wall charts:
  - a) Purposes of the session.
  - b) Write this statement: "Conflict is inevitable."
3. Copy and hole punch Handouts A - C.

## Activity #1

### Welcome and Discuss Field Assignment #6 – Problem Analysis

25 minutes

#### STEPS

1. Welcome members and share the purposes of the session.
2. In the large group, ask members the following questions:
  - **What struck you as particularly interesting or significant when applying a problem-analysis tool and the planning framework?**
  - **To what extent did you find the problem-analysis tool and the planning framework helpful? Why?**
  - **If you did not find either the tool or framework helpful, how would you improve them?**
  - **How might you use a problem-analysis tool or the planning framework in the future?**
3. Close the discussion by thanking the members for their efforts.

#### Talking Points:

- Abraham Maslow has said, “If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see all problems as nails.” Therefore, the more ways we have of tackling problems, the more productive we will be.
- It is not necessary to draw a problem tree or force-field diagram to analyze and solve a problem. We can use the concepts as patterns to follow in our minds when dealing with problems.
- You can learn more about effective problem-solving tools through books in the library. For example: *101 Creative Problem Solving Techniques: The Handbook of New Ideas for Business* by James Higgins.
- And, as Charles Kettering said, “A problem well-stated is a problem half-solved”.

## Activity #2

### Learning About Conflict-Management Styles<sup>1</sup>

35 minutes

#### STEPS

1. Post the wall chart with the following statement:

**CONFLICT IS INEVITABLE.**

2. Ask members to turn to the person next to them and discuss for a couple of minutes to what extent they think the statement is true.
3. Ask a few members to share highlights from their discussion.
4. Ask members to define "conflict."
5. Ask members to open their binders to page 12 and read Training Objective #7.
6. Convene small groups of five to six members each.
7. Distribute Handout A, page 137, to the members. Request that they read it and complete the tasks explained. This should take about 20 minutes.
8. After the groups complete the tasks from Handout A, call them into the large group and review their results one style at a time. Since we want to ensure that the members come up with key points, compare their responses to the information provided here. Fill in any glaring gaps in their responses.

*Facilitator's Note: The avoidance style is used as an example in Handout A; therefore it is not shown on these charts.*

#### ACCOMMODATION

Advantages	Disadvantages
The issue is not important to you but is important to the other person.	You might be viewed as weak.
You feel good about the sacrifice you are making.	This could lower your own self-esteem.
This might be a way to build trust with this person.	This could set the tone for the future. The other person might always expect accommodation.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from "Choosing a Conflict Management Style," by Martha Green, Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution & Conflict Management.

### COMPETITION

Advantages	Disadvantages
It might be effective in select situations with difficult-to-deal-with competitive-type people.	This style rubs off on others and shuts things down.
The conflict may get resolved quickly and cheaply.	There is usually no commitment to the solution.
	The relationship can be damaged.

### COMPROMISE

Advantages	Disadvantages
This might be used when time is short.	This does not work well with unequal sides.
A stalemate would cause more harm than the compromise.	When the solution is only half the desired outcome, the commitment may only be half as well.

### COLLABORATION

Advantages	Disadvantages
Increases probability of goal achievement.	Requires much time and effort.
Increases trust and builds relationships.	There needs to be a possible solution.
Produces greatest sense of ownership of solutions.	Enough resources must exist for everyone's needs.
Sets a good example for others to follow.	May be difficult to use in extremely emotional conflicts.

9. Close this portion of the session by reviewing the main points and thanking members for their participation.

## Activity #3

### Identifying and Practicing Conflict-Management Styles

**50 minutes**

#### **STEPS**

1. Introduce this activity and divide the members into five groups.
2. Assign a different conflict style in private to each group. Have each group develop an original skit that illustrates the style it was assigned. The skit should be between three- to five-minutes long.
3. After each skit is presented, ask the remainder of the groups to identify which conflict management style was portrayed.
4. After all five skits have been performed and identified, convene the large group and ask the following questions:
  - **Even though the skits were artificial, how did it feel to be involved in a conflict situation?**
  - **How does this experience compare to real life?**
  - **Why do people usually want to avoid conflict?**
  - **How might we overcome our fears and anxieties about dealing with conflict?**
5. Close this activity by thanking the members for sharing and reminding them that they now have:
  - Examined the advantages and disadvantages of five different conflict-management styles.
  - Acquired more ideas for overcoming their fears of engaging in conflict situations.

## **Activity #4**

### **Field Assignment #7 and The Learning Store**

**10 minutes**

#### **STEPS**

1. Distribute Handout B, Field Assignment #7, page 143. Ask members to read it. Answer any questions.
2. Pass back previous Learning Stores and distribute Handout C, page 145, for this session.

# **SESSION 7**

## **MATERIALS**

Handout A, Conflict-Management Styles	- 6 pages
Handout B, Field Assignment #7	- 2 pages
Handout C, The Learning Store	- 1 page

## Handout A

### Conflict-Management Styles

"In recent years, conflict has gotten a very bad name. It is associated with levels of misunderstanding and intolerance that can, and often do, lead to violence. But like anger, conflict can be channeled to improve the process and outcome of problem solving. Conflict becomes harmful when a person fails to recognize the interests of another, and fails to see how a diversity of perspectives will make solutions stronger. To make conflict productive, it is important to acknowledge it and deal with it. When conflict gets out of hand and starts impeding, rather than contributing to your work, you need to take steps to resolve it."<sup>2</sup>

In every situation we are responsible for our actions. Conflict situations offer us an opportunity to choose a style for responding to the conflict. The key to effective conflict management is to choose the conflict-management style that is appropriate for the conflict. Most of us have a favorite style that we use in conflict situations, but we are all capable of choosing a different style when it is appropriate.<sup>5</sup>

The five main types of conflict-management styles are described below:

1. **Avoidance:** People who choose avoidance do not get involved in a conflict. They might say, "You decide and leave me out of it." Or, they may act like the conflict does not exist, or they may withdraw and refuse to identify with either side in an argument.
2. **Accommodation:** People who choose accommodation put their interests last and let others have what they want. Many times they will sacrifice everything for the sake of the relationship.
3. **Competition:** People who choose competition put their interests ahead of anyone else's interests. Sometimes people who use this style try so hard to

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<sup>2</sup> From *By the People*, ed. Henry Boyte.

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from, "Choosing a Conflict Management Style" by Martha Green. The Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution & Conflict Management

Handout A continued

get what they want that they ruin relationships. They are always out to win, do not believe in the middle ground, and view conflicts as win-lose situations. Generally, as a strategy for victory is formed, the feelings of others are not taken into account.

4. **Compromise:** People who choose compromise think it is important to satisfy some, but not all, of their interests. People who compromise are likely to say, "Let's split the difference," or "Something is better than nothing." Sometimes guilt and manipulation are used to persuade people to compromise.
5. **Collaboration:** This is also called the cooperative approach and is the preferred style. People who choose collaboration seek a winning solution for all involved. They define the issues carefully, work through the situation, and implement mutually agreed-upon steps. Often the parties develop creative solutions. This style can be used to resolve conflicts and strengthen relationships.

One particularly effective approach within this style is called "experimentation." Using experimentation sounds like this, *"OK, I see your point. Let's try your approach first, and then we'll try my approach second. Then we'll compare the results. Whichever approach seems to work best during the experimentation phase will be the approach we use. If there is no clear best approach, perhaps we can combine our approaches."*

The last page of this handout depicts five different animals. Animals are associated with each style to help you remember the differences among the styles. The first task for the small group is to review the five conflict-management style descriptions and then match each style to the animal you think is associated with it. Take ten minutes.

Now that you have the five styles firmly in mind, the next task is to analyze them in terms of their advantages and disadvantages. Please work together in your small groups to develop your lists. Use the worksheet below to record your thoughts. Note that the avoidance style has been completed as an example.

Handout A continued

**AVOIDANCE** *(Example)*

<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>
The issue is not important.	It is almost impossible to know what the other person is thinking.
It often works with short-term problems.	This could generate long-term hostility.
Can be used if the cost of the solution is more than I am willing to pay.	My self-respect could suffer.
The process of gathering information is still on going.	I may have less intimacy with the person.
It is impossible to get the necessary information.	This issue could exist for a very long time.
	There is no chance to resolve the conflict if it is not dealt with.
	The relationship could be damaged if there is no communication.

**ACCOMMODATION**

<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>

Handout A continued

**COMPETITION**

<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>

**COMPROMISE**

<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>

Handout A continued

**COLLABORATION**

<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>

**ON THIS PAGE INSERT PICTURES OF THE FOLLOWING FIVE ANIMALS:**

- 1. LION**
- 2. TURTLE**
- 3. DOLPHIN**
- 4. CHAMELEON**
- 5. ZEBRA**

## Handout B

### Field Assignment #7 - We Can Work It Out

Practice is the best way to learn a skill. Therefore, before our next session, identify and manage a conflict using the collaborative style. The criteria for choosing this conflict are:

1. The conflict can be drawn from any area of your life.
2. The nature of the conflict should lend itself to a collaborative approach.
3. The conflict should seem manageable.
4. It should not be a conflict between two other people in which you act as a mediator.

Use the attached worksheet to record your efforts. During our next session, you will share your experiences. When we discuss these experiences, we will not be concerned with whom you were in conflict. Rather we will like to hear how you used the collaborative approach.

In addition to the information you learned in the session, here are a few more tips for managing conflict<sup>6</sup>:

- **Separate the people from the problem.** When people become angry with one another, it is very difficult to reach a solution even though everyone might benefit from it. Remember, it is not *who* is right but *what* is right.
- **Articulate your interests.** Clearly explain why you believe your idea has merit.
- **Listen carefully to the other person's point of view.** After listening you should be able to repeat the other person's perspective as well as explain your own. Recognize that not all people have your experiences and background, so they will likely perceive situations and solutions differently.
- **Find common ground.** People often disagree on the means to an end rather than on the end itself. Remind yourselves of what you are trying to accomplish.

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<sup>6</sup> Adapted from, *By The People*, Henry Boyte, ed.



## Handout C

### The Learning Store, Session 7

In order to help us better serve your learning needs, and to help you reinforce your own learning, please take a few minutes and thoughtfully answer the following questions about today's session. Please give this completed form to your facilitator. Thanks very much for your input.

Name:

1. Please list at least three things you learned or relearned today that you think will come in handy.
2. What did you find the most useful in the Field Assignment?
3. Was there anything you found less useful in today's session? If so, what was it?
4. What did you especially like about today's session?
5. What aspect(s) of this session could be changed to make it better in the future?