

PD 7: Conflict Resolution – Glossary of Terms

Unit 1: The Cycle and Escalation of Conflict

Positive role of conflict: Conflict indicates involvement, clarifies ideas/defines identities, stimulates creativity, creates potential for better outcomes and new, deeper relationships.

Conflict escalation:

Stage 1. Problem-solving – constructive conflict in which the focus is on the problem, not the person.

Stage 2. Personal antagonism – the person and not the issue is seen as the problem; the problem may be forgotten and understanding it is no longer pursued.

Stage 3. Proliferation of issues – people involved begin case-building to find reasons to discredit those who they are in conflict with.

Stage 4. Triangulating – people involved look to others for support and to side with them.

Stage 5. Escalating Reactions – inhibitions which typically moderate behaviour are gone, and each party actively sabotages the other.

Stage 6. Antagonism and hostility – parties openly engage in conflict; there is a risk of violence.

Stage 7. Polarization – sides of the conflict are distinctly entrenched and reconciliation is not an option; relationships and company productivity greatly suffer.

Unit 2: Communication and Conflict

Attribution Theory: We tend to attribute negative intent to the other, while attributing positive intent to ourselves.

Intent-Action-Effect Model:

Intent: The communicator/actor's reason for initiating an exchange – i.e., what they intend to accomplish through a given action.

Action: The action or event which is carried out by the communicator/actor – i.e., the physical manifestation of one's intent (e.g. anything you can see or hear the communicator say/do).

Effect: The consequences of the communication or action, often only known by the party who is acted upon in terms of the impact the action has on them.

Unit 3: Triangulation

Triangulation: According to its most simple definition, triangulation happens when A talks about B to C, rather than talking to B directly.

Unit 4: Positions and Interests

Positions: People's stated perspectives or solutions on a given issue or to a problem. They are typically openly apparent.

Substantive Interests: Content-focused interests which are the main reason why people form perspectives to issues.

Positions: People's perspective or perceived solution to a matter.

Wants: Immediate and specific interests that can be broken down into substantive and procedural interests.

Interests: Things that lead people to hold certain positions on an issue; can be divided into wants and needs.

Needs: Foundational and psychological interests such as belonging, recognition/acknowledgement, self-determination, success and security.

Problems: Matters that can hold many different perspectives.

Procedural Interests: Process-focused interests in making things happen in a way that was already decided upon.

Unit 5: Communication

Communication Styles (Thomas & Kilman):

Accommodating: When people are in the accommodating stance, their primary purpose is the pursuit of their relationship with the other party, even to the exclusion of their own goals.

Avoiding: When people are in the avoiding stance, they pursue neither their goals nor their relationship with the other party. This can be an excellent stance when neither the relationship nor the goals are important or when the people involved in the situation would benefit from a cooling off period.

Collaborating: When people are in the collaborating stance, they seek to fully achieve both the individuals' goals, as well as to fully preserve the relationship.

Competing: When people are in the competing space, their primary focus is the pursuit of their goal (or their task), sometimes at the expense of the other individual's goal and the relationship.

Compromising: When people are in the compromising stance, they are willing to give and take on both their relationship with the other person and on their goals.

Unit 6: Power and Conflict

Positional Power: Positional power is given to an individual because of the role he or she possesses within some type of organizational system.

Personality Power: The power given to a person because of the construction of their character which gives them influence in various social contexts.

Identity Power: A person's "location" in various identity hierarchies also provides power resources. We receive identity power by virtue of our gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, social class, age, level of education.

Knowledge Power: Those with access to data relevant to the context in which they find themselves have more power than those who do not have data relevant to that context.

Power in Numbers: Power structures can be upset, challenged or balanced by those without positions of power when those people work together.

Power as Endorsed: Suggests that nobody can have power over you unless you, in some way, have given this person that power. All forms of power exist only so far as they are endorsed or negotiated between two or more people.

Unit 7: Strategies for Addressing Conflict

Dispute Resolution Policies: An alternative to grievance procedures that focuses on providing the most appropriate options and interventions for a given conflict.

Grievance procedures: A formal set of guidelines and procedures which outlines how conflict between employees and supervisors/managers/owners is resolved in a given workplace.

Dispute resolution process:

Step 1) Think about the situation.

Step 2) If necessary, ask for help. Decide whether you want to / need to talk with the other person.

Step 3) Talk directly with the other person.

Step 4) If Step 3 is unsuccessful, conversation with supervisor. (This step could lead to mediation).

Step 5) If Step 4 is unsuccessful, draw in further assistance. (This step typically involves talking with a manager. This step could also lead to mediation, or another dispute resolution method, such as decision making by the manager, arbitration, etc).

Unit 8: Managing a Conflict Dialogue

Collaborative Communication Style:

- Step 1: Self-reflection
- Step 2: Choose a safe and confidential way to request a fuller conversation
- Step 3: Initiate the conflict conversation
- Step 4: Intent-Action-Effect (IAE) and/or Positions and Interests (PI)
- Step 5: Action planning
- Step 6: Getting back in stride

Unit 9: Dealing with Difficult People

Difficult people: Characterized by inappropriate expressions of frustration, unjustified anger, obstinacy, negative reactions to criticism, undermining others' work, bullying.

Unit 10: Apologies and Final Thoughts

Principles of Good Apologies:

- 1) It is often wise to listen first and to ask how one's action has impacted the other person.
- 2) Be specific when apologizing.
- 3) Acknowledge your offence and the resulting harm that your action has had on the other person.
- 4) Take responsibility for the harm done.
- 5) If the other person is open to it, you may want to provide an explanation regarding what happened.
- 6) Express regret for the harm done.
- 7) If possible, try to repair the situation.