

Conflict Management & Resolution

Part I



Refugee
Sponsorship
Training
Program

The Nature of Conflict in the
Refugee/Sponsor Relationship

Overview

- The nature of conflict in a multicultural society
- Newcomer/sponsor conflicts
- Cultural differences and conflict
- Power and conflict
- Refugee's experience of loss of power
- Newcomer/sponsor conflicts – a reassessment

What is CONFLICT?

The Nature of Conflict

Conflict is:

- everywhere
- inevitable
- universal
- natural
- neutral
- all about differences – in expectations, values, goals, culture
- generally perceived as negative
- can have positive or negative outcomes
- needs to be resolved

An opportunity for change, growth and problem-solving.



A Definition of Conflict

No single definition of conflict.

It is a complex human response that occurs along a number of dimensions:

1. **Thought** – A belief or understanding that one's own needs, interests, wants or values are inconsistent, if not incompatible, with someone else's. Conflict exists if at least one person believes it to exist.
2. **Emotion** – An emotional reaction (fear, sadness, bitterness, anger or hopelessness) to a situation or interaction that indicates a disagreement of some kind.
3. **Action** – The behaviours (actions we take) to express our feelings, articulate our beliefs, and get our own needs met in a way that has the potential for interfering with someone else's ability to do so.



Four Types of Conflict

1. Intra-Personal Conflicts
 - Conflicts that occur within the individual
 - e.g. Should I take this job or wait for a better one?
2. Inter-Personal Conflicts
 - Conflicts that occur between different persons
 - e.g. Sponsor and newcomer disagree about use of financial support.
3. Intra-Group Conflicts
 - Conflicts between members of a particular group
 - e.g. Group members disagree about who to sponsor.
4. Inter-Group Conflicts
 - Conflicts between different groups
 - e.g. Sponsorship agreement holder and sponsoring group disagree about division of roles.



Causes of Conflict

- Unsatisfied wants
- Limited resources
- Unmet emotional needs
- Different perceptions, assumptions, values
- Lack of information or mis-information
- Competing interests
- Differences in power and authority/powerlessness
- Different perceptions of entitlement
- Ineffective communications
- Time constraints
- Failure to trust
- Different personality styles
- Cultural differences
- External pressures
- Different priorities
- Discrimination, prejudice, racism



Conflict Will Probably, But Not Always, Escalate When:

- Other persons become involved in the dispute and act as “cheerleaders”
- The dispute becomes personalized
- Past hurts and historical injuries are added into the present conflict;
- Emotions escalate and are acted out behaviourally
- There is little interest on either side in maintaining the relationship
- Important needs and interests are not identified and acknowledged
- The parties lack the necessary skills to resolve the conflict
- The disputants are not sensitive to cultural differences between them and engage in cultural stereotyping, racism, prejudice and discrimination



Conflict Will Tend To De-Escalate When:

- The disputants focus on the problem, not each other
- Emotions such as anger, fear and frustration are expressed verbally rather than physically
- The disputants stick to the current issue between them
- Threats are not made
- An ongoing relationship is acknowledged as important to both
- Needs and concerns are disclosed and discussed
- The disputants have some knowledge and skills to resolve conflict
- The disputants are sensitive to and respect each other's race, religion and cultural differences



Newcomer/Sponsor Conflicts

What kinds of interpersonal conflicts have you had as sponsors, with newcomers?

Activity:

- Discuss a recent conflict with a newcomer
- How did you respond?
- What factors led to escalation / de-escalation?



Responses to Conflict

In general, responses to conflict fall into three main categories:

1. Fight
2. Flight
3. Collaboration or Problem-Solving



Fight Responses

- Direct confrontation
- Physical attacks, use of fists and weapons
- Name-calling
- Threats
- Use of verbal “put-downs”
- Blaming the other
- Dredging up past hurts and injuries
- Personalizing the conflict
- Emotional explosions
- Seeking to win – might is right!

Flight Responses

- Conflict avoidance or denial
- Bursts into tears – “don’t hurt me”
- Blames self, not the other
- Doesn’t stand up for one’s own needs and interests
- Scapegoats another person
- Capitulates or gives in
- Intellectualizes, or minimizes the problem
- Walks out and refuses to talk about the problem
- Changes the subject
- Cuts off all communications
- Makes a joke
- Apologizes
- Makes excuses, rationalizes



Collaborative or Problem-Solving Response

- Attempts to understand the nature of the conflict and what it means to the other person
- Seeks to understand, then to be understood
- Looks for creative solutions to the problem that meets the needs of both disputants, i.e. a “win-win” solution
- If no solution is possible, agrees to disagree





Cultural Considerations

- Culture
- Ethnicity
- Cultural Stereotyping
- Ethnocentrism
- Culture Shock



Culture & Conflict Management/Resolution

1. Body Language
2. Topics of Communications
3. Saving Face
4. The Expression of Feelings
5. Directness of Approach in Dealing with Conflict
6. Communications Styles
7. Dress
8. Structures for Conflict Resolution



Power

Power is the ability to get what we want.

Kenneth E. Boulding, Three Faces of Power, 1989

The Oxford English Dictionary defines power as:

- The ability to do or effect something or anything, or to act upon a person or thing;
- The ability to act or affect something strongly; physical or mental strength, might, vigour, energy, force of character, telling force, political or national strength;
- Possession or control or command over others; dominion, rule, government, domination, sway, command, control, influence, authority;
- Legal ability, capacity or authority to act;
- A body of armed men, a fighting force, a host, an army.

All of us have power over others and all of us give power to others.

Picard, 1998



Sources of Power

There are generally two sources of power:

1. Structural Power – the power of the situation
2. Personal Power – the power of the individual



Power and Conflict

Getting in touch with our own power exercise:

- Self-identity
- Ethnic background
- Race
- Nationality
- Culture
- Personal roles
- Characteristics

What power flows from being.....



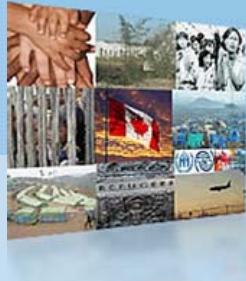
Refugee's Experience of Loss of Power

- Ways in which a newcomer may experience powerlessness....
- The effects of PTSD
- How does this compare with the power of sponsors?

Newcomer/Sponsor Conflict – A Reassessment

1. What have you just learned that may throw new light on the conflict?
2. What role did cultural factors play?
3. What were the sources of power for each side?
4. How did this impact on attempts to resolve conflict?
5. Was power used or abused?
6. How could the less powerful be empowered?
7. How might you have handled the conflict differently?

Thank-you



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www.rstp.ca