DEALING WITH CONFLICT:
Bringing your issues to the table
Think about a time when you had an argument with a close friend or family member. Or imagine a team meeting when a conversation with a co-worker escalated to raised voices. What is your thinking about these conflicts? Do you view these exchanges positively or negatively?

Many of us view conflict as a negative situation where there is always a winner and a loser. It is something that we wish to avoid at all costs and struggle to see any value in. What is the nature of conflict that creates such off-putting views? Is conflict inherently bad, or is there an alternate way to look at conflict and, therefore develop a positive approach to address it?
In this training, we will explore dealing with conflict in the workplace.

At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:
• Better understand the nature of conflict
• Become more aware of your own conflict handling style
• Develop skills to effectively address conflict situations
Here are two definitions of conflict:

• Dynamic process reflecting the interaction of two or more parties who have differences that **could** negatively affect productivity, quality, service, morale or working relationships

• Any situation in which your concerns or desires differ from those of another person

Everyday in offices, retail stores, hospitals, and any number of other workplaces, people are having conflicts with co-workers. If you work with at least one other person, it is safe to say that you have disagreements and face difficulties at times. It's normal, natural and nothing to fear. Contrary to what you may believe, conflict is not inherently all bad. When handled properly, conflict can actually create positive changes in the workplace. As we shift our thinking, conflict becomes less about having to avoid uncomfortable conversations and more about exploring different perspectives people may have on the same topic, project, issue. It allows us to become aware that a problem exists, requires creativity to find best solutions and allows us to gain understanding of what is important to individuals.
“Look at the photo. What do you see?”
Did you see the old woman?
Or the young girl?
These two perspectives can be used in describing how groups of people with different preferences can work together effectively to manage conflict and frequently produce better results.

In the picture above, you may sometimes see a young girl, sometimes an old woman. You have to shift your perception back and forth to see each. If you look towards the left, you see the profile of the young girl. If you look towards the right and the middle, you see the old woman.

The picture shows the difference between accuracy and completeness. If one person says, “this is a picture of an old woman”, he/she is accurate. If another person says, “this is a picture of a young girl”, he/she is also accurate.

Both are accurate, but neither is completely correct, neither is describing the entire whole. It is the incompleteness combined with the conviction of being right about the perception that it the source of the problem. These people could argue continuously and both would be right. In order to end the argument, each must shift his or her perception to see the other view. Neither person should be asked to contradict or deny their view. The solution is to see that you can see both, not just either/or. Each is asked to expand their view with a second view which is also true. It is not an either/or situation, it is a both/and situation – a duality to be managed. This is called both/and thinking.

Also notice that you cannot see both images at the same time. In order to see one, you have to ‘let go’ of the other. Though you can shuttle quickly back and forth, to see the old woman requires that you ‘let go’ of the young girl.
Why Consider The Views Of Others?

- Others see it differently and they may also have an accurate picture
- In order to expand your thinking
- If you can see his/her point of view, he/she is more likely to accept an invitation to see yours

Why should we consider the perspective of others and look past our own views?

• Others see it differently and they may also have an accurate picture – they may have added information to bring to the discussion that will help provide a more complete picture.
• In order to expand your thinking
• If you can see his/her point of view, he/she is more likely to accept an invitation to see yours
There are three kinds of variables involved in the conflict situation:
- Issues
- Personal Styles
- Resolution Strategies
• Issues: the issues are the focus of the conflict. They are what it is all about. Whether the conflict is over what house to buy (spousal disagreement), a work order to drill a well (engineer-finance disagreement), or a public disciplinary action (boss-subordinate disagreement), there is always an issue at the center of the conflict. According to a 2008 Study of workplace conflict, personality clashes were cited as the #1 cause of conflict.

• Personal Styles: The people variable highlights the fact that different people approach conflict in different ways. Therefore, we are concerned with the conflict styles and how people behave when there is a conflict situation. Some people retreat (passive), some attack (aggressive), and some try to mediate (compromisers). How the individuals involved deal with conflict is key to how the situation unfolds and is resolved.

• Resolution Strategies: There are many ways to manage conflict. This variable focuses on which of these strategies the people involved choose and the extent to which that strategy works in a given situation.
This is your chance to think about how you normally approach conflict and other ways you might respond to conflict.

You may have already completed this prior to beginning this training. Take a few moments to review your results. Keep these responses in mind as we continue through the presentation.
Now that you have considered your pattern of response to conflict, let’s look at how we approach conflict.

The manner in which you respond to conflict is related to whether a person is high or low on Assertiveness and Cooperativeness.

- **Assertiveness** involves a person’s ability or willingness to express his or her concerns. A person who is high in assertiveness is willing and able to pursue an exploration of differences; a person who is low tends to keep things to him or herself.

- **Cooperativeness** involves the extent to which a person attempts to satisfy the other person’s concerns. A person is high in cooperation if satisfying others is very important; a person who is low does not attempt to fulfill the needs of others.

They are five conflicting handling styles:
Avoiding
Accommodating
Competing
Collaborating
Compromising

Each style have behavioral characteristics.
• **Avoiding** is unassertive and uncooperative. He or she does not address the conflict by denying there is a problem or avoiding it all costs.

• **Accommodating** is unassertive and cooperative. An individual neglects his or her own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person.

• **Competing** is assertive and uncooperative. In this “I win/You Lose” style, a person pursues his or her own concerns at the other person’s expense.

• **Collaborating** is both assertive and cooperative. An individual attempts to work with the other person to find a solution that fully satisfies the concerns of both. This is the “Win/Win” situation.

• The middle road is **compromise**. This strategy is used to obtain an outcome that is neither too aggressive nor detracts from the relationship. When compromising, the goal is to find a suitable, mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties; it’s a “Give a little; get a little situation.”
So let’s take a look back at the Personal Style Check-In Worksheet.

Which techniques do you most often use?
What other conflict style would you like to develop further?
Review the following scenario:
Stella, a new manager, has set a goal to improve cleanliness of the cafeteria. The school has a long-term and beloved custodian. The custodian believes that he does an excellent job with cleanliness. However, the principal and the manager agree that the custodian does not do a thorough job cleaning the floors. The custodian takes personally even the slightest criticism of his work.

Using what you’ve learned about the five conflict handling styles…

1. Which one of the techniques that you indicated you utilize often, would you use in this situation?
2. Using what you’ve learned today, which conflict handling style do you think will be most effective in this situation?

- Look at your Personal Conflict Style Check-in Worksheet. Which one of the techniques that you indicated you utilize often, would you use in this situation?
- Using what you’ve learned today, which conflict handling style do you think will be most effective in this situation?
Once you have decided to address the conflict, what are some steps to use to increase your chances of negotiating a “Win/Win” situation?

- **Assess the situation.** What is the issue of the conflict? Personality differences, communication style? Define the problem.
- **Meet the difficult behavior head-on.** Discuss the topic in a professional but direct way. It is important to remember to separate the problem from the person. Address the specific behavior.
- **Stay calm and objective.** This will allow an open exchange to take place and not put the other person on the defensive.
- **Be Direct** about the impact of the person’s behavior on your working relationship. Acknowledge any role you played in the situation.
- Remember that this is a **two-way conversation** where you seek input from the other person. Agree on the solution and any follow-up conversations, if necessary.
- As you seek a resolution, remain flexible and open.
• **You have choices.** Unresolved conflict can lead to employee turnover, absenteeism and frustration. All five conflict handling styles are available to you. One style does not fit all situations. You can move conflicts in different directions by choosing a different style.

• **Take a moment.** If you find yourself reacting quickly in a conflict situation, you may be operating out of old habits. Pause to consider which style would be most beneficial in this particular situation.

• **Practice, practice, practice!** Dealing with conflict requires that you practice new techniques.

**Dealing with conflict does not have to result in a win-lose situation. It can be an opportunity to expand your thinking and the thinking of others.**
THANK YOU!!!!!!
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