

HANDOUT: CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Preparation for conversations to resolve conflict

- Before the conversation: prepare
 - Why do you want to talk to the person?
 - How are you currently feeling and what are your goals for the conversation?
 - Ask when would be a good time: Eg. "Ich möchte gerne mit Ihnen über [...] sprechen. Ich schätze wir brauchen ca [...] Minuten. Wann hätten Sie Zeit?"
- During the conversation: act
 - Start by acknowledging and showing understanding for the other person's position. Eg. "Vielen Dank dass Sie sich in Anbetracht Ihrer vielen Arbeit Zeit fuer das Gespräch genommen haben."
 - Describe what you observed. Eg "In den letzten [...] ist es mehrfach vorgekommen, dass Sie mich unterbrochen haben." Don't say "Immer unterbrechen Sie mich."
 - Say how you feel about it and what consequences you see. Eg "Ich bin unzufrieden damit, dass ich nicht so zu Wort komme, wie ich möchte."
 - Say why it matters to you. Eg "Es geht mir um [...]."
 - Formulate a concrete question or request. Eg "Wie können wir sicherstellen, dass ich beim nächsten Meeting ausreden kann?"
- After the conversation: implement and move forward
 - Give feedback and follow up on the conversation.

Respectful Communication

- Be prepared to listen to the other person (active listening)
- Accept that the other person may have a different point of view
- Think before you speak
- Take responsibility for your position (I statements)
- Say things in a way that the other person can hear it without becoming defensive
- Avoid inflammatory language
- Manage your emotions
- Watch for body language and tone of voice

I-statements

I-statements begin with the word “I” and state directly to someone how you feel about something, why you feel that way, and what you want. I-statements are less threatening and send clearer messages than “you” statements.

Structure of I-statements:

I feel (state your emotion)

when ... (describe specific situation as neutral and objective as possible)

because ... (state effect on your life)

and I want ... (state the action you want to take)

Active listening

Active listening is a set of techniques designed to help you hear and understand what someone else is saying and help the speaker express him/herself clearly.

Active listening focuses on both facts and feelings, reduces tension and defensiveness, and allows conflicts to be resolved more effectively.

Skill	Definition	Purpose
Encourage	To show verbal or nonverbal signs of interest	To encourage the person to continue talking
Question	To ask the speaker questions	To gather more information To check out the accuracy of what you have heard
Restate	To repeat in your words the main facts and issues	To show you have heard and understood To check the meaning and interpretations of what you have heard
Reflect	To feed back the emotional part of the message	To show you understand the feelings behind what is being expressed To help the person evaluate and understand his/her own feelings
Summarize	To make a brief but complete statement that captures the essence of the speaker's perspective	To pull together the important issues and feelings
Validate	To acknowledge a person's worth, efforts, and feelings	To recognize the value of the speaker's issues and feelings To show appreciation for the speaker's efforts at communication

Best Practices for Effective Conflict Management

As individual:

- Address conflict early
- Address conflict directly with persons involved
- Communicate with respect
- Seek to learn and understand the other point of view
- Address perceptions and assumptions
- Listen to understand interests of other party, not just their position
- Focus on issue, not person
- Agree where you can find common ground
- Agree to disagree if necessary
- Focus on present and future
- Put past behind you

As colleague or co-worker:

- Encourage in conflict to address each other early and directly
- Encourage to focus on common interests
- Do not be drawn into conflicts which you are not a party
- Do not take sides
- Do not escalate it by giving it undue attention
- Treat all parties involved with respect

As supervisor:

- Practice conflict management skills, encourage others to do as well
- Manage environment to support conflict resolution
- Be aware / alert to:
 - Effects of power differences
 - Worries about retaliation
- Assist in facilitating conflict management so it does not interfere with productivity and well-being
- Consider confidentiality

Best Practices for Effective Conflict Management

- 1) Know Thyself and take care of yourself
 - a. Understand your biases, triggers
 - b. Create a personally affirming environment
- 2) Clarify personal needs threatened by the conflict
 - a. Needs can be substantive, procedural, psychological,
 - b. Identify “desired outcomes”
- 3) Identify a safe place for negotiation
 - a. Privacy, neutral space, appropriate time, ...
 - b. Role of support people
- 4) Take a listening stance into the interaction
 - a. Seek to understand
 - b. Use active listening tools (eg restate in your words what the other party said)
- 5) Assert your needs clearly and specifically
 - a. Use I-messages
- 6) Approach problem-solving with flexibility
 - a. Generate options (defer judgment, be open to “tangent” problems, clarify criteria for decision making, ...
- 7) Manage impasse with calm, patience, and respect
 - a. Clarify feeling
 - b. Focus on underlying needs/interests/concerns
 - c. Take a structured break, if needed
- 8) Build an agreement that works
 - a. Implement and evaluate
 - b. Live and learn
- 9) Know your resources