

Navigating Team Conflict

What to Do When Frustration is Directed at You

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My Life's Passion

Helping individuals understand and work well across differences



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How I Work with Organizations and Institutions



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SPECIALIZED WORKSHOPS IN

**WORKPLACE
INCLUSION**

**CULTURAL
DIFFERENCES**

Agenda

- Understanding Conflict
- Traits of an Effective Facilitator
- How to React When the Conflict Is Directed at You
- Applying Your Learning: *Conversation between a Frustrated Staff Member and a Supervisor*
- Closing | Key Takeaways | Q&A



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Understanding Conflict



Nature of Conflict

- Disagreement between or among individuals in an interpersonal relationship.
- Usually perceived as a negative phenomenon – it produces negative feelings.
- Inevitable – part of human nature.
- Ideally, those involved would find a mutually satisfying outcome.



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How I Approach Conflict

In a **Conflict Situation** I Tend to:

1. Remove myself from the situation.
2. Give in to maintain the relationship.
3. Find a workable solution, even though it may not be the best solution.
4. Keep defending my position until my goal is achieved.
5. Keep working until both of us get what we want.

1. Avoider

- Would rather not address the conflict at all.
- More comfortable ignoring or delaying issues, even repressing their own feelings and needs.
- Considered a **lose-lose style** because the conflict goes unaddressed.
- In the end, teamwork and productivity are negatively impacted.

2) Accommodator

- More comfortable giving in to the other person's needs, sacrificing their own goals.
- Considered a ***lose-win style***.
- Appears cooperative but can be detrimental in the long run because it does not produce a win for all parties.

3) Compromiser

- The goal is to find a quick solution.
- They know they can't get all, but at least, they win some.
- Considered a ***semi-win/semi-lose style.***
- Go-to approach for situations “*when all else fails.*”

4) Competitor

- Try to win the argument at all costs – usually at the expense of the other person.
- Considered a ***win-lose style*** – one person gets what they want while the other loses.
- Tends to produce short-term victories.
- In the end, it damages productivity because it hurts people's relationships.

5) Cooperator

- Try to find a solution that meets everyone's needs.
- This is a *win-win style*.
- The issues are fully explored, and everyone states their needs.
- ***People work together to find creative solutions, so everyone benefits.***

Please Note

Depending on the situation, individuals can adopt different conflict resolution styles even if they have a preferred approach.

Context is Key

- A **compromising style** might be better when a **QUICK RESOLUTION** is necessary.
- In situations where one party has more authority, adopting an **accommodating** style might foster goodwill or de-escalate tension.
- If preserving the relationship is the primary goal, you might prioritize an **accommodating or avoiding style** over competition.

Traits of an Effective Facilitator



1) Self-Awareness



You need to understand:

- How you approach conflict.
- The values and attitudes you are bringing to the situation.
- How the cultural orientation of those involved will impact how they handle the conflict.

For Some Groups, Conflict

- Is damaging to social face and harmony and should be avoided as much as possible.
- When dealt with, it needs to be done discreetly.
- In the US, the goal of conflict management is to solve the problem.
- For other groups, conflict resolution is a **face negotiation** strategy.

2) Good Observational Skills



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- What is the individual's current state of mind?
- What is not being said?
- **It is very important to pay attention to the nonverbal messages being communicated.**

3) Distinguish Between **Intent** and **Impact**



- Yes, you (or someone else) may have been offended.
- It is important to consider: *Was that the speaker's intent?*
- **Keep in mind that many people are not aware their comments are offensive.**

4) Listen and Respond Compassionately



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- Even when someone has an adversarial or defensive posture.
- **Always respond in a way that builds community and invites a dialogue.**

5) Understand the Perspective of the “Other”



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- How did they get to their current situation?
- How does their past affect who they are today?
- What have they experienced?
- **Remember! You are not seeing the entire video. You only see snippets, and there is a lot that is missing.**

6) Stay in the Situation



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You need emotional intelligence to stay in the situation even if you are scared, angry, or hurt.

Of these six traits, which one would be more challenging for you? How can you get better at it?

1. Self-awareness
2. Using your observational skills
3. Remembering the difference between **intent** and **impact**
4. Responding compassionately
5. Recognizing the perspective of the “other”
6. Staying in the situation



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Helping Individuals Process the Situation



Observational Questions

- *What I heard you say was....*

Questions about
what you observed

- *What I just heard is that.....*

Reflective Questions



Questions to help individuals reflect/share their situation

- *What hurt you about what happened?*
- *How did it affect you when it happened?*
- *How did it feel?*
- *How does it affect you now? In the workplace? In your relationship?*

CTA Questions



Questions about what needs to happen for the situation to be resolved

- If you could say something to **Mary**, what would you say?
- If you could tell **Mary** what you need to be able to **move forward with this project**, what would you say?



How to Respond Calmly When Conflict Comes Your Way

Strategies for an Effective Resolution

1. Take Several Deep Breaths



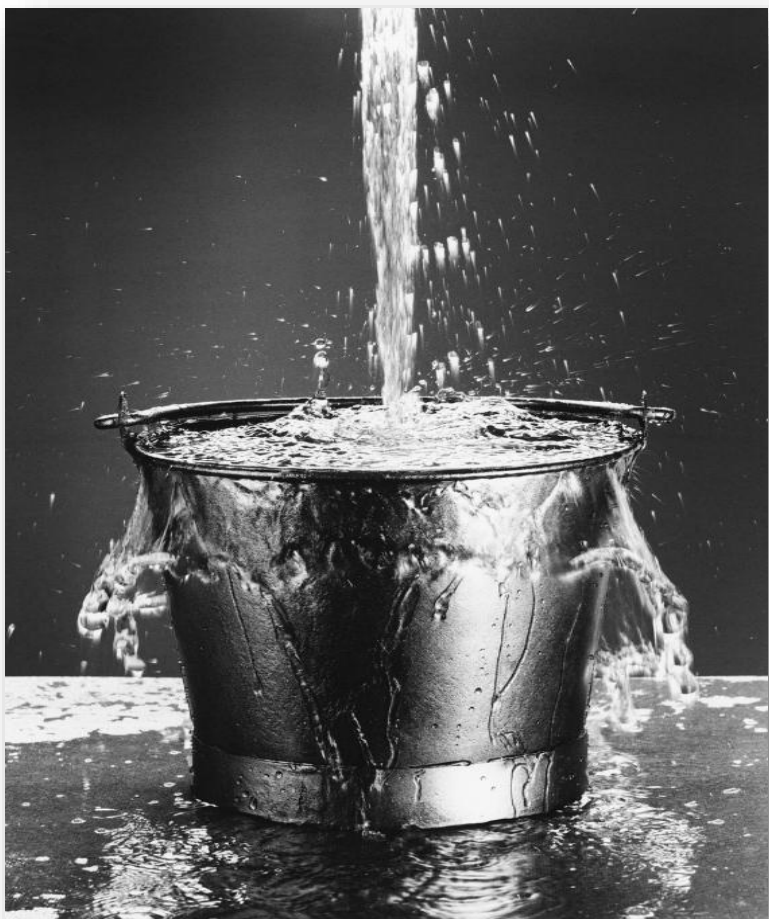
- Why is this important?
- While you are inhaling, nothing is coming out of your mouth.
- Your first job is to center yourself and get ready for what will likely be a difficult conversation.

2. Remind Yourself: *This is Not About Me*



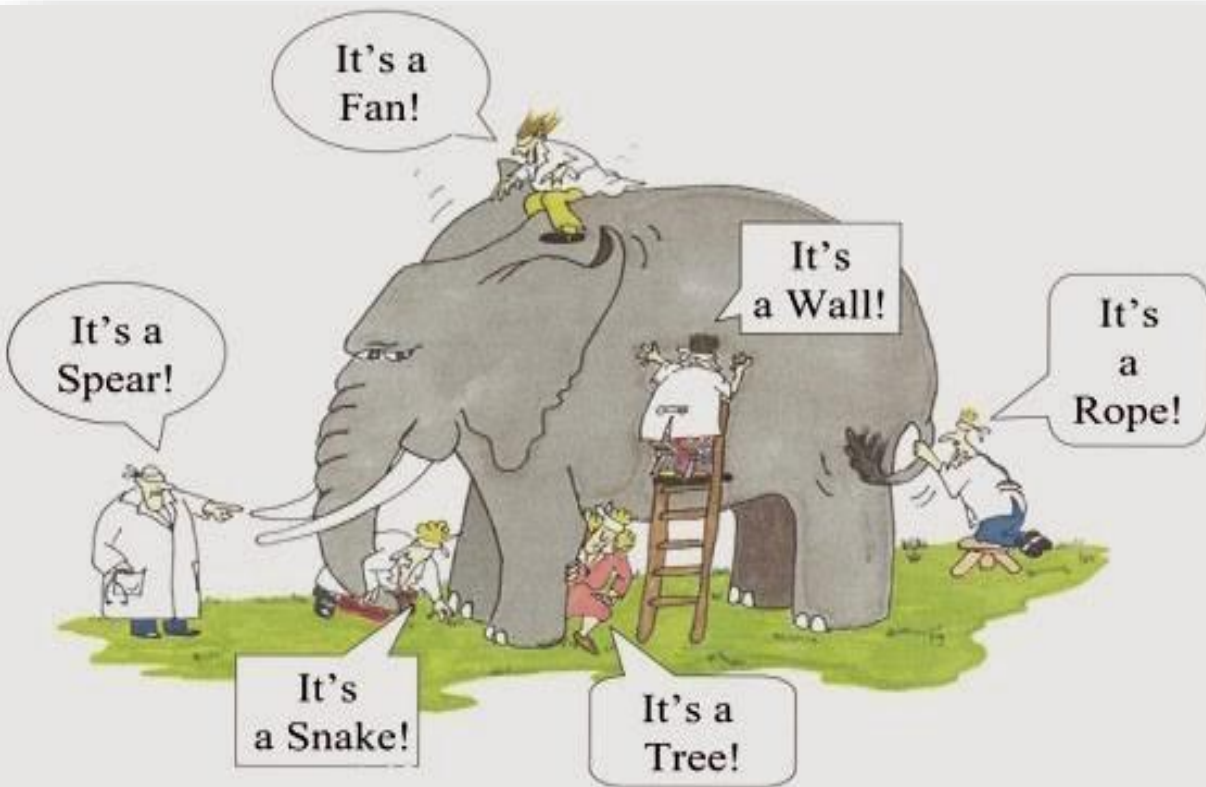
- Unless you did something, either intentionally or unintentionally, to provoke that individual's reaction.
- If that is the case—apologize and take steps to remedy the situation.
- Getting defensive accomplishes nothing.

3. Understand You May Be Experiencing the **Last-Drop-In-The-Bucket Syndrome**



- The moment you are witnessing is the moment they have reached their limit. They have had enough!
- **Remember! Before the water spills over, a lot of water has gone into the bucket.**
- ***This has likely been going on for a while.***

4. Think of the Blind Men and the Elephant Parable



- Ancient Buddhist parable.
- Recounts the experience of blind-folded individuals trying to determine the nature of an elephant.
- They are each feeling different parts of the elephant and thinking they have the answer.
- ***Remember: You only understand your reality and not somebody else's.***

5. Get Out of **Debate** Mode And Get Ready to **Dialogue**

- In this country, the most common form of communication between people who disagree is a **DEBATE**.
- In a **debate**, your goal is to prove that the other person is wrong and that you are right.
- When you do that, you are simply trying to **win the argument** by proving the other person is wrong.
- How can you say the individual is wrong when you don't know their reality?
- A **DIALOGUE** is not about winning. It is about working together to find a common understanding.
- **It is only when individuals share their part of the picture with you that you are able to understand their reality more completely.**

6. Follow the Principles of Facilitating Difficult Conversations



- Listen attentively to figure out what they need; learn what has led to their current predicament.
- Figure out what needs to happen for the situation to get resolved.
- Respond compassionately.
- Stay in the situation even if you are scared, hurt, or angry, etc.

7. Take Steps to Address the Inequities That Still Exist – In Your Organization and Beyond



There needs to be more than an intellectual commitment to address racism, sexism, homophobia and all other inequities.

Pathway to Facilitating a Difficult Conversation



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Resolution
Referral
Resources





Conversation between a Frustrated Staff Member And Their Supervisor

Group Activity: How Effective Was the Supervisor?

Save My Contact Information





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Slides and Resources



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Biggest Takeaway

Q/A