
TTI DNA[®]

Conflict Management

*A session from
Rx Online*

Conflict Management

Understanding, addressing and resolving conflict constructively.

Why is this skill important?

Everyone knows that there are many occasions on which you must be able to be objective and non-emotional during difficult discussions. We all have experienced controversy and arguments in the workplace. But anyone who has supervised employees or managed a workgroup knows that even more difficult is addressing and resolving conflict constructively.

Personal conflict can lead to frustration and loss of efficiency. A person who has not developed skills in Conflict Management doesn't know how to find ways to promote positive outcomes and minimize negative outcomes.

On the other hand, a person who has developed his capacity in Conflict Management can usually resolve a dispute or a conflict by listening to and providing opportunities to meet the needs of all parties and adequately addressing interests so that each party is satisfied with the outcome.

Conflict practitioners talk about finding the win-win outcome for parties involved, versus the win-lose dynamic found in most conflicts.

What skills are associated with Conflict Management?

Someone who has mastered skills associated with Conflict Management:

- Readily identifies and addresses issues, concerns or conflicts.
- Recognizes opportunities for positive outcomes in conflict situations.
- Reads situations quickly and accurately to pinpoint critical issues.
- Listens to gain understanding of an issue from different perspectives.
- Diffuses tension and effectively handles emotional situations.
- Assists people in adversarial positions to identify common interests.
- Strives to settle differences equitably.
- Settles differences without damaging relationships.

How do you develop your own skills in Conflict Management?

- Active listening is a key element in Conflict Management. While someone else is talking, don't be thinking about your own viewpoint. Instead, focus on what the person is saying without immediately becoming defensive or judgmental.
- If tensions get high in an important discussion, suggest that you meet at a later time when the disagreeing parties have had time to cool off.
- Don't try to solve problems or end arguments for someone else. Your goal is to help others work through difficult situations themselves in a calm and dignified manner.
- Do help define the problem issues.
- If you find yourself in a disagreement, search hard for a common goal on which you agree with the other person.
- Focus on the common goal and try to design an outcome that includes some things you want and some things the other person wants.
- Handle conflict as a situation for collaborative resolution. Treat all participants in the conflict with respect and work together to resolve the situation.
- Don't try to win arguments. Try to see each disagreement as an opportunity to attain mutual satisfaction, even if it is in a slightly different way than what you had imagined.
- If you absolutely can't find a solution working in collaboration with another person, seek an unbiased third party to help you resolve your conflict.
- Discussing the underlying reasons behind a disagreement enables you to understand the real causes of the problem. Bring those issues to the forefront by asking about them directly.
- Summarize what others are saying in a disagreement to ensure you understand the true issues. Ask if your interpretation is correct and seek to state all disagreements clearly.
- When conflict has reached the point of resolution, make sure that the solution has specific action steps. Ensure that attainable action steps are assigned to specific individuals and arrange for a follow-up meeting once the action steps have been completed.
- If absolutely no compromise agreement can be made, prepare yourself to find a different way to reach your goals or re-define your plans based on what you have learned.
- Ensure that each person is allowed to be heard. Try to emphasize the importance of listening to what each person has to say.
- Seek areas of agreement among the participants in the discussion and use those areas of agreement as jumping off points for further progress.
- Work with the participants to brainstorm possible solutions to the problem.

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Activities

Activity 1: Listening

Practice your listening skills. In the next meeting or gathering you attend, be conscious of what other people are saying. Try not to think about your own reactions to whatever is being said. Rather, hear what others say and try to understand why they take the position(s) they do.

As if you are taking meeting minutes, summarize in brief statements what people are saying. Don't write exactly what they are saying, but encapsulate it in a phrase or two. After the meeting is over, review your notes and see how much you can interpret about the perspectives of each of the active participants in the meeting.

Activity 2: Workplace Conflict

Have you recently experienced a conflict in the workplace? Think about that conflict and try to answer the following questions about it:

1. What caused the conflict?

2. What occurred during the situation?

3. How was the conflict resolved? Was it resolved satisfactorily for everyone? Who resolved it?

4. What was your reaction to the conflict? Did you let someone else win? Did you act as a mediator? Were you aggressive about promoting your point of view?

Over the next couple of weeks, discover how you react in new conflict situations. Ask the questions above about each new situation and record your observations about the conflict in your notebook or planner.

Activity 3: Improving Your Technique

Based on what you observe of your own behavior, make some resolutions about changing your behavior to make your Conflict Management style more constructive. In the space below, list ideas for improving your Conflict Management skills:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____