

Our first webinar on the subject of conflict deals with the concept of **accountability** and what it means for those involved in a conflict, as well as those indirectly affected.



Deciding Whether to Get Involved

Sometimes the issue is one that concerns us, but is not in our circle of control. Questions that can help us determine whether to get involved in a conflict resolution situation include:

1. Is this my issue?
2. If I get the outcome I want, what difference will it make?
3. What are possible consequences of this issue?
4. How will I feel if I avoid this conflict?
5. Is this conflict affecting the workplace?



Helpful Roles in Conflict

In every department we have individuals who are outstanding at different roles in conflict situations. They may be the person who calms us down or who is able to stay objective and represent all sides of the conflict. Here are

some of the roles that you maybe able to provide, even if you're not directly involved in the conflict.

- Listener—the one who lets us vent without judging
- Neutralizer—uses team language to help remove the win-lose mindset
- Analyst—asks the questions to determine the root of the problem
- Mediator—objectively facilitates the discussion between the parties
- Innovator—uses creative thinking to present additional options that haven't yet been considered



Individual Accountability

There are questions we can ask to help determine if we're helping calm the conflict in our team, or if we're actually making it worse.

- Have I recognized and acknowledged my part in the conflict?
- Have I blamed others for something that I had fault in?
- Have I made excuses instead of accepting responsibility?
- Have I truly tried to see it from the other's perspective?
- Is there a deeper issue than the conflict at hand?



Moving from Blame to Accountability

In order to move from blame to accepting responsibility, we often need to consider how we word our messages. Following are some common negative statements that occur during conflict situations and how we could reword them to make them more focused on solutions than blame.

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- Blame Statement: Who made this mistake?
 - Replacement: Did something in our process cause this problem?
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- Blame Statement: What did you do?
 - Replacement: What happened here?
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- Blame Statement: I'm not to blame.
 - Replacement: Here's what happened.
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- Blame Statement: It wasn't my mistake.
 - Replacement: What can we learn from what happened here?

We added a great new feature this month that allowed guests to chat directly with each other during the webinar.

Here are some of the outstanding comments we received:



The Mindset of Conflict

I was taught a long time ago that if you treat others the way you want to be treated, you can avoid some conflict. If conflict cannot be avoided, you can usually de-escalate the situation.



Conflict as Growth

The only way to grow is through struggle. Conflict is struggle; if we see it as an opportunity for growth, we will find progress and hopefully common ground. Make sure that all parties are coming into the conversation with that growth-oriented mindset to ensure it's a pleasant conversation.



Think

We can avoid a lot of conflict by "THINK"ing before speaking: Is it True? Is it Helpful? Is it Inspiring? Is it Necessary? Is it Kind?



Take a Pause

For those of us who are on the more defensive side, we can count to five before responding to take the edge off that initial response.



Stress Tools

Some tools were suggested to help with conflict-induced stress.

- Bubble wrap: Think a positive thought after each pop. There is even a bubble wrap toy that you can pop and use over and over!
- Bottles of bubbles: Use blowing bubbles, breathing exercises, or other simple actions after a conflict discussion. These can act as a reset button before stepping into other roles.
- Consider the circle of concern versus the circle of control. In other words, accepting what is not in your control and letting it go, even though we are concerned.



Language of Teamwork

Multiple participants echoed the idea that "I" statements help avoid the feeling of assigning blame.

A great idea was to practice difficult discussions before you hold them. Sometimes just saying your words out loud helps you draft a more constructive conversation.



Introducing the Conflict

Anytime I approach someone with a conflict, I keep in mind that they have no idea what I'm about to discuss. They are usually surprised there is an issue, so I give a minute for everything to "marinate."



After the Conflict

After a conflict discussion, consider approaching the person to let them know that you are open to continuing the discussion. This lets them know it is "safe" to approach you and come together for a solution.



Benefit of the Doubt


A wonderful tenet: You are required to give another person the kindest explanation for their behavior you can. For example, if someone cuts you off in traffic, you have to think they have a personal emergency.

In fact, this idea echoes the popular author Brené Brown: Be generous with self and others by assuming best intentions. Brené's podcast (*Unlocking Us*) was noted as a great resource for communication issues.



Question & Answer

One person asked how to handle it when a person keeps interrupting and talking over you.

A possible solution would be to set ground rules before a conflict discussion. For example: You talk and I listen. I talk and you listen. And if we accidentally jump in, a simple hand gesture can remind us to wait our turn. Handling discussions in writing can also be a useful way to ensure all parties are heard.  *Keep on Learning!*