

UNIT 10

LECTURE 12

Construction Conflict

CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT GUIDELINES

Following are some ways to constructively resolve conflict:

- **Agree upon a common goal of resolving the conflict so everyone wins—look for common ground.**
- **Demonstrate respect for the other person.**
- **Be open with your thoughts and feelings.**
- **Don't attack or blame the other person.**
- **Listen to the other person with an open mind.**
- **Value differences in viewpoint.**
- **Identify and understand your own and others' conflict styles.**

Conflict Styles

Everyone has a conflict style. Understanding our own and others' styles is helpful in understanding and resolving conflict.

Avoidance

The *Avoider* would rather not address conflict at all, and is most comfortable ignoring or delaying issues and repressing his or her own feelings and needs. This is a "lose lose" style, because the conflict goes unaddressed and teamwork and productivity are usually negatively affected.

Competition

The *Competitor* tries to win the conflict at all costs, usually at the expense of the other person. This is a "win lose" style, in which one person may get what he or she wants, while the other person loses. While this style produces short-term victories, in the end it damages productivity because it hurts people's relationships.

Adaptation

The *Adaptor* is most comfortable giving in to the other person's needs, sacrificing his or her own goals. This is a "lose win" style, which appears cooperative but can be detrimental in the long run because it does not produce a win for all parties.

Cooperation

The *Cooperator* tries to find a solution that meets everyone's needs. In cooperation, the issues are fully explored, everyone states their needs, and people work together to find creative solutions in which everyone benefits. This is a "win win" style.

Avoidance

UNIT 10

EXERCISE 12

Construction Conflict

Objectives The objectives of this activity are to provide people with a method for constructively handling conflict (which often goes unaddressed in diversity situations) and to help people become more aware of their own conflict style and strategies.

Time• 30 minutes

Materials•

- Constructive Conflict—Handout
- Handout, Constructive Conflict—Case Studies
- Blank flipchart

Procedure Tell the group that conflict sometimes arises around diversity issues; but more often, we avoid conflict issues. They go unaddressed, but remain a sore spot which affects people's teamwork and productivity. Ask participants:

1. Why do people avoid conflict?
2. What are the sources of conflict?
3. What are the positive aspects of conflict?
4. What would make it easier to address conflict?
5. How would you want someone to address a conflict with you?
6. How can we demonstrate that we value someone, even though we have a conflict with them?
7. How do we usually respond when someone has a conflict with us and approaches us about it?
8. How could we make it easier for the person who initiates a conflict discussion with us?

Chart the responses to questions 5,6,7, and 8 on a flipchart.

Give participants the handouts. Constructive Conflict—Handout and Constructive Conflict—Case Studies. Tell them that everyone has a conflict style, that affects how they behave in conflict situations. Give them a minute to read the handouts. Divide people into triads. Assign a case study to each triad, and tell them to spend 5 minutes role playing the case studies with the third person acting as an observer. Tell them to take a minute to prepare, remembering the ideas on the flipchart and handout. Tell the observer to

Constructive Conflict-Case Studies

Case 1 **WHO STAYS AND WHO GOES?**

Pat and Joe work on the same team. It's been a long day. It's almost quitting time, but work still needs to be done to make the big deadline tomorrow. One person is going to have to work late. Joe needs to leave right on time because of daycare issues. Joe has no one else who can pick up the baby. Pat doesn't have a specific commitment, but has worked late the last three nights. How do they resolve the conflict of who stays and who goes?

Case 2 **WHAT'S So FUNNY?**

Terry and Chris work on the same team, but don't socialize much during breaks or lunch time. Terry hangs out with the Spanish-speaking group and Chris is part of the group who speaks Tagalog. Terry has been getting really irritated because every day at lunch, as Terry goes past Chris's group, it seems like they all laugh and then talk very fast in Tagalog. Terry mentioned it once to Chris, but Chris said that they weren't talking about Terry at all, that it was just Terry's imagination. In fact, Chris said the same thing about Terry's group—that they all laughed and talked very loudly in Spanish when Chris passed them at the water cooler once. Today was the last straw. Chris's group burst into laughter just as Terry walked in the lunch room. Terry has to say something to Chris.

Case 3 **BRIDGING THE GAP**

Carol and Jean usually work well together, even though there is a 40-year difference in their ages. One day, Carol brings in an article about Generation X and starts going on and on about how selfish "these youngsters" are and how they want to "have it all without paying the price." Jean starts to get upset, and says that when people get old, they start to get set in their ways—all you ever hear about is "the good old days" and how the world is "going to pot" with these younger generations. The conversation escalates into a full-fledged conflict. How do they resolve it?

Case 4 **PROFESSIONAL COURTESY**

Bobby and Jan are both part of the team that provides service to their customer, Ajax. Bobby is in sales and Jan is in technical services. They are both very dedicated to serving the customer, but Bobby feels the customer relationship is most important while Jan thinks product excellence is more important. In a meeting last week, Jan said that it was fine and dandy that Bobby "spent all his time shmoozing," while Jan "worked like a dog" making sure they had a quality product. Bobby responded that all the "technical types" should just "stay in their little corner, away from my customers" because they "might scare them away" with their poor interpersonal skills. Now, when Bobby has to call and ask Jan for

UNIT 10

EXERCISE 13

Active Listening to Resolving Conflict

Introduction:

This is a skills-building exercise. Active listening skills are central to effective communication, which in turn is essential for prejudice reduction activities.

This exercise describes, models and provides an opportunity for participants to practice the skills of *active listening*, i.e., focusing on speakers, helping them better understand what they are feeling and experiencing and thus helping them solve their own problems. Using these skills will empower both the speaker and the listener. The participants will practice and as a result learn better listening skills to be more effective communicators and lessen misunderstandings.

Time:

45 minutes.

Materials:

- Flipchart
 - Markers
 - Active Listening Handout
1. Introduce active listening by asking participants to briefly brainstorm what they think active listening is. Write their answers on a flipchart. Then ask why they think it is part of this workshop. It is the most important part of effective communication, because a person who has been listened to is likely to feel respected and more likely to listen in return. People who truly listen are the problem solvers. Caution that active listening is a skill to be used when helping another person or when a conflict has arisen and is not meant to be used in all conversations.
 2. Pass out the listening handout. Define the four parts to active listening: body language (including SOLER), encouragers, questions (open-ended and clarifiers), and restatement (rephrasing, reflecting and summarization).
 3. Demonstrate the four skills by using active listening in a one-on-one conversation with a participant. First, use poor active listening skills by looking away, crossing arms and legs, carrying on side conversations and nervously fidgeting. Ask the speaker how he or she felt and then what was wrong with your demonstration. Then use good active listening skills and have the participants say which skill you are using every time you use one.

4. Divide the group into pairs. Each pair chooses an A and a B person. Begin with A. Instruct the group that A is to talk for 5 minutes on a subject you will give them or on any topic of their own choosing. Some participants need to be given a topic and others prefer to choose their own. This is to be a conversation, not a monologue. The participant who is listening will use as many of the active listening skills as she or he can.
5. At the end of 5 minutes, call time and give the following instructions:
 - For speakers:* Give listener feedback on what encouraged your partner to talk and get more in touch with his/her feelings.
 - Both the listener and the speaker share which active listening skills were used.
6. Reverse roles and repeat the process with a different topic. If more practice is desired, have the group form new pairs and repeat.

Debrief:

1. What was the exercise like—easy, challenging, etc.?
2. What did you learn?
3. How will this affect you after the workshop?
4. How can you use these skills?"

Facilitator's Notes:

Some participants may not be focused and have difficulty practicing the skills. Walking around during the practice and monitoring what is occurring usually is enough. This is an experiential exercise bringing into play the visual, auditory and tactile components of the learning process. Participants will have fun and learn valuable skills in a non-threatening modality, skills that can be used immediately at work, home or play. Active listening is the foundation of problem solving whether conciliation, negotiation, arbitration or meditation.

HANDOUT

Listening

On Listening

When I ask you to listen to me and you start by giving me advice, you have not done what I've asked.

When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way, you are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have to do something to solve my problem, you have failed me, strange as it may seem.

Listen! All I ask is that you listen, not talk or do ...just hear me.

When you do something for me that I can and need to do for myself, you contribute to my fear and inadequacy.

And I can do for myself. I'm not helpless. Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.

But when you accept as simple fact that I do feel what I feel, no matter how irrational, then I can quit trying to convince you and get about the business of understanding what's behind this irrational feeling. And when that's clear, the answers are obvious and I don't need advice.

Irrational feelings make sense when we understand what's behind them.

Perhaps that's why prayer works, sometimes, for some people ... because God is mute, and He or She doesn't give advice or try to fix things. God just listens and lets you work it out yourself.

So, please listen and just hear me. And if you want to talk, wait a minute for your turn, and I'll listen to you.

SOURCE: Shuford, Active Listening. By Ralph Houghton (Friends Journal, October 1. 1984).

HANDOUT

Active Listening Skills

- Body Language:** Use **SOLER:**
 - Squarely face the speaker.
 - Use an **O**pen posture without crossing legs or arms.
 - Lean toward the speaker when sitting and stand at an appropriate distance when standing.
 - Use good **E**ye contact.
 - Use a **R**elaxed posture without nervous gestures and facial expressions that indicate interest. Look interested and be interested!
- Encouragers:** Smile, nod or say something like, "Tell me more about that."
- Questions:** Ask *open-ended questions*, which can't be answered simply by yes or no. "What was your relationship like?" "Tell me what happened."
Ask *clarifying questions* to check out if what you heard is what the speaker meant or to get specific information, such as, "What time did you leave?" or "Do you mean that____?"
- Restatement: Rephrase** by repeating what the speaker said, only in your own words.
Reflect back the speaker's feelings, such as, "I'd bet you're glad that happened" or "You seem angry."
- Summarize *what has been said*.
- Things to Avoid:** Giving advice, distracting comments, judging, interrupting, changing the subject or bringing your own experience into the conversation. To avoid giving advice, use the preceding listening skills to help the speaker explore his/her feelings such as:
 - "Tell me more about your relationship."
 - "What would happen if you confronted her?"
 - "What do you want the outcome to be?"
 - "What do you feel are your realistic options now?"
 - "It sounds like you are really angry and hurt right now."

SOURCE: Shuford, Active listening.

Skills for Managing Diverse People:

Making a List

Introduction: Managers often ask, when managing diverse employees, "What am I supposed to do differently?" It is a legitimate question and deserves an answer.

Skills or Competencies: A beginning list of "Skills for Managing Diverse People" was published in the January 1993 issue of *Cultural Diversity at Work* newsletter. The list was developed collaboratively with managers, readers, workshop participants and the editors of the publication.

Setting the Stage: This list can be used to help managers and supervisors answer the question, "What am I supposed to do differently?" It identifies the skills according to seven categories. Managers and supervisors can see areas in which they may need to add skills to their repertoires. The skills list may be used as part of an exercise during a workshop or as an activity during a special staff meeting. The skills list should follow the awareness or knowledge base that establishes the differences among people. It is more appropriate to use on the second day of a diversity awareness workshop or as a follow-up after a workshop.

Time: Steps 1-5: 90 minutes.

Step 6: 60-80 minutes.

Materials: Skills for Managing Diverse People handout.

Directions:

1. *Introduction:* Use information from preceding paragraphs and relate to the groups own needs. (5 minutes)
2. *Brainstorm:* Ask managers and supervisors to build on their own experience first. As unique individuals, what management skills are used by their bosses that they appreciate and see as effective? Have the group (or smaller groups) brainstorm a list and chart it. (15 minutes)
3. *Small group analysis:* After the members of the group (or groups) have written their lists, hand out the prepared list, Skills for Managing Diverse People. Have the groups compare and contrast their lists with this list, and prepare to explain to members of the other group(s) where the lists are similar and different. (30 minutes)
4. *Discussion period:* Ask each group to briefly explain how their list was similar to and/or different from the prepared list. Lead a discussion about any patterns that surface in the areas of similarities and differences. Explain the following:
I noticed that the groups who mentioned listening skills didn't include the idea that listening behaviors might vary. Is this one area where we assume that everyone listens like we do? What are some of the listening behaviors that we assume are universal? If a person does not maintain eye contact with you during a conversation, how could you adapt your behavior to that person so that you could be effective?

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