

Make It Stick

*Activity Pack*

Conflict Resolution

 **Helping lessons learned through training become part of *how we work*.**

**To the Learner Leader…**

This suite of activities has been designed to reinforce the key learning from the **Conflict Resolution** course. The activities have been designed to be led by team leaders or designated trainers and do not require training experience, though for best results we recommend that whoever is leading the activities understands the principles of adult learning and has some experience in leading learning activities.

The suite of activities will provide you with up to six months of learning reinforcement. We recommend that an activity is run each month following the Conflict Resolution course.

When running each activity:

* Ask the group to reflect back on the original course they attended:
  + What takeaways did they have?
  + What have they tried to implement?
  + When revisiting some of these activities for a second time, ask them what additional ideas or thoughts they have in applying the concepts and tools in the activities to their job.

Each activity will take 10-15 minutes to run depending on the size of the group.

There is one activity to a page. Each activity has a brief introduction followed by instructions for the learner leader.

We suggest the following to optimise your learning experience:

* Have the group meet away from their normal workspace
* Make sure mobile devices are switched off so that everyone fully engages
* Make the environment ‘safe’ and encourage everyone to contribute
* Run these activities with everyone standing – try running these outdoors in the fresh air
* Have other team members take the lead and run an activity – this will build confidence and leadership skills
* Don’t be afraid to improvise – the learning needs to be about you and your group so make it meaningful
* When debriefing an activity get the group to reflect on what the activity means for them and what they will do differently or continue to do that underscores the learning points from the activity

**Activities in this pack**

1. Using different conflict management styles
2. Exploring causes of conflict
3. Having clear expectations
4. Restating
5. Having a balanced view
6. Overcoming resistance to meet

**Activity 1: Using different conflict management styles**

**Introduction**

The Thomas Kilmann Instrument (TKI) uses the following descriptors to define five styles of handling conflict:

* Competing - is assertive and uncooperative; pursues his/her own concerns at the other person's expense
* Accommodating - is unassertive and cooperative; neglects his/her own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person
* Avoiding - is unassertive and uncooperative; neither pursues his/her own concerns nor those of the other individual
* Collaborating - is both assertive and cooperative; involves an attempt to work with others to find some solution that fully satisfies their concerns.
* Compromising - is moderate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness; looks for an expedient, mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties

**Instructions**

Ask the group to describe when they would use each style and ask them for an example of when they have done so or when they would do so.

**Competing** – this style is best used when:

* Quick, decisive action is needed in an emergency
* An unpopular course of action needs to be implemented
* You need to protect yourself from people who take advantage of non-competitive behaviours

**Accommodating** – this style is best used when:

* You realise you are wrong and need to either find a better solution, learn from others or show you are reasonable
* The issue is more important to the other person than it is to you
* Preserving harmony and avoiding disruption are especially important

**Avoiding** – this style is best used when:

* An issue is unimportant or other issues are more pressing
* There is no chance of satisfying your concerns
* The costs of confronting a conflict outweigh the benefits of resolving it

**Collaborating** – this style is best used when:

* You need to find an integrative solution
* The objective is to learn and you want to test your assumptions
* You want to merge insights from different perspectives

**Compromising -** this style is best used when:

* Goals are moderately important but not worth the effort or the potential disruption of using more assertive tools
* You want to achieve a temporary settlement
* You need to expedite a solution due to time pressures

**Activity 2: Exploring causes of conflict**

**Introduction**

An important part of resolving conflict is understanding the source of the conflict and attacking it from the root cause or causes. The eight most common causes of conflict are:

* Conflicting needs
* Conflicting styles
* Conflicting perceptions
* Conflicting goals
* Conflicting pressures
* Conflicting roles
* Different personal values
* Unpredictable policies

**Instructions**

Ask each of your team to think of a recent conflict they have either witnessed or been involved in. Ask them to describe the conflict – the behaviour and what was communicated. Then ask them to identify the probable cause (from the list above).

Once the cause is identified, ask the group to state what could be changed about the situation to stop the conflict from reocurring.

**Activity 3: Having clear expectations**

**Introduction**

Clarity is essential to promote understanding and to guide businesses in achieving their objectives. The vaguer the task, instruction or objective, the more issues and conflict will arise.

**Instructions**

Make the following into mini role plays by reproducing the exchange and getting your team members to read out one of two parts. Then discuss how the conflict could arise and what the team member should do to avoid conflict arising in the first place. Use the question in the scenario heading as a prompt.

**Scenario 1 (What should Doug say to his manager?):**

Manager: “Where’s that report I was after?”

Doug: “What report?”

Manager: “The one for the ABC Project.”

Doug: “I haven’t started it.”

Manager: “But I need it today and I thought the urgency in my voice when I asked you for it would have told you that.”

**Scenario 2 (How should Hannah and Dimitri stop this from reoccurring?):**

Hannah: “Hi Dimitri, have you got the latest sales figures for your division? I am doing some data analysis for Jim [Manager] and need your figures so I can complete it.”

Dimitri: “What are you talking about? Jim asked me to do that last week and I was going to ask you for your figures. It is my task so please give me what you have already done so I can include it.”

Hannah: “I have just spent two days on this, so I am not handing you all my work. I am going to talk to Jim.”

**Scenario 3 (What should Miguel say to Petra about this?):**

Petra: “Miguel, I need you to ring Exon Engineering and tell them we can’t meet their order by next week.”

Miguel: “Why did we promise them that?”

Petra: “They are a major client and I want to make sure they think we can supply them no matter what.”

Miguel: “Won’t they get mad at us?”

Petra: “I am sure you can handle it.”

**Activity 4: Restating**

**Introduction**

Restating is a technique used to restate what people are feeling in a way that focuses on the facts of the matter. Restating can calm the situation, validate feelings and assist in getting to the heart of a conflict. There are three key ways of restating:

Reflecting - Conflicts invariably create strong emotions. When you are reflecting emotions, you are acknowledging how another person is feeling – you are not supporting their point of view.

Reframing - Reframing statements are similar to reflective statements however the emphasis is focussed less on emotion and what a party feels is wrong with the other person, and more on what is important to them.

Neutralising - Focusing on the objective content of the statement and not highlighting the emotions expressed.

**Instructions**

Ask the group (and ensure everyone has a turn) to restate the following statements. Also, ask the group for example of recent statements that they had difficulty dealing with, and as a group look at how the person could have responded.

**Reflecting** – ask the group to restate, acknowledging how the person is feeling.

Statement**: “Why do I have to cover for her laziness every time she is late for work?”**

Reflected: “You are finding it difficult to do your work and provide cover at the same time.”

Statement: **“The cost overruns on the project were huge because he is financially incompetent.”**

Reflected: “Your disappointed that the project went over budget.”

**Reframing** – ask the group to restate, focussing on what is important to the person.

Statement: **“She never shares any of her information with me, even though I share with her.”**

Reframed: “It is important that you work cooperatively with each other.”

Statement: **“Why is it that every time there is pressure on the team, he caves and works slower. It’s just not fair, he is not pulling his weight.”**

Reframed: “The team pulling together when the pressure is on is important to you.”

**Neutralising –** ask the group to take the emotional sting out of the statement.

Statement: **“He abused me in front of the other staff.”**

Neutralised: “The conversation that you had was observed by others.”

Statement: **“The email he sent was shouting ‘loser’ at me. How dare he do that!”**

Reframed: “You didn’t agree with the tone of the email.”

**Activity 5: Having a balanced view**

**Introduction**

It is important to be objective and to consider both sides of a conflict. By having empathy for the other person’s point of view, you can gain a greater understanding of why they are in conflict with you (or someone else) and find more options for resolving the conflict.

**Instructions**

Ask for a volunteer to share a conflict they were engaged in or witnessed and get them to go through the following questions in order to see both sides of the conflict. Ideally if the conflict is between two team members, both will have a chance to give their side.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **You** | **The Other Party** |
| Issues – what are the surface issues? |  |  |
| Values – what values are trying to be satisfied? |  |  |
| Hot Buttons – what words, phrases, references or actions may cause an emotional response? |  |  |
| What strengths does each party bring to the issue? |  |  |
| Common ground – where do we agree? |  | |
| Solutions – what solutions may work for both of us? |  | |

In debriefing ask the group what they will do in future in order to gain a greater understanding of conflict from the other side.

**Activity 6: Overcoming resistance to meet**

**Introduction**

If you have taken the initiative to organise a meeting to discuss an issue between yourself and another, you should be prepared for a range of responses from agreeing to meet to complete avoidance. The other person may not see there is an issue or may see the issue but is not willing to resolve it – or anything in between. Regardless of the outcome of your request, you should be sincere in your approach and choose the most appropriate way of communicating.

**Instructions**

As a group discuss how you would deal with each of the following resistance tactics. One person can role play, another can respond.

**Push back** (examples)

* If you have a problem with me, take it up with x.
* I’m not meeting with you until you apologize.
* We don’t need to meet; it’s not my problem.

**Denial** (examples)

* I don’t know what you’re talking about.
* Problem? What problem?
* I don’t even know what we’d talk about.

**Avoidance** (examples)

* Now’s not a good time.
* I’m just too busy.
* Whatever you say — just tell me what you want [and then the person never follows through].

**The lost cause** (examples)

* What’s the point? It isn’t something we can resolve.
* We’ve tried this before. You never listen.
* Why bother? Nothing will change.