

Are All Hands on Deck?

Tips for Effectively Dealing with Conflict

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WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

At the end of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Understand how conflicts can be of value
2. Identify how you typically respond when in conflict
3. Implement simple, practical solutions for dealing with conflict

WHAT IS CONFLICT?

Conflict is defined as:

1. A state of open, often prolonged fighting; a battle or war.
2. A state of disharmony between incompatible or antithetical persons, ideas, or interests; a clash

It is often the emotional element that escalates a simple difference of opinion into a full blown conflict. We dig in. We want to win. We want to be right. Or sometimes, we just want to avoid the conflict altogether.

Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing. Differing perspectives can be very beneficial. It is how the differences get expressed that is the problem. It is often how we behave in the conflict and not the issue itself that causes us to act our worst. Things are often said or done in the heat of the moment which not only prevents us from resolving the issue, but those actions may cause damage to the relationship.



CONFLICT STYLE

Fight or Flight?

Human beings are not biologically programmed to be our best when in conflict. Our natural instinct when we feel threatened is fight or flight. When under stress, the blood flows away from our brain and into our extremities. This is sometimes referred to as the reptilian brain.



A program called Crucial Conversations by VitalSmarts, Inc. has a Style Under Stress assessment that helps you identify how you typically respond in a conflict situation.

Let's see what your style is!

STYLE UNDER STRESS

- T F 1. At times I avoid situations that might bring me into contact with people I'm having problems with.
- T F 2. I have put off returning phone calls or e-mails because I simply didn't want to deal with the person who sent them.
- T F 3. Sometimes when people bring up a touch or awkward issue I try to change the subject.
- T F 4. When it comes to dealing with awkward or stressful subjects, sometimes I hold back rather than give my full and candid opinion.
- T F 5. Rather than tell people exactly what I think, sometimes I rely on jokes, sarcasm, or snide remarks to let them know I'm frustrated.
- T F 6. When I've got something tough to bring up, sometimes I offer weak or insincere compliments to soften the blow.
- T F 7. In order to get my point across, I sometimes exaggerate my side of the argument.
- T F 8. If I seem to be losing control of a conversation, I might cut people off or change the subject in order to bring it back to where I think it should be.
- T F 9. When others make points that seem stupid to me, I sometimes let them know it without holding back at all.
- T F 10. When I'm stunned by a comment, sometimes I say things that others might take as forceful or attacking – comments such as "Give me a break!" or "That's ridiculous!"
- T F 11. Sometimes when things get heated I move from arguing against others' points to saying things that might hurt them personally.
- T F 12. If I really get into a heated discussion, I'm sometimes tough on the other person. In fact, he or she might feel a bit insulted or hurt.

SCORING

If you responded “True” to the questions indicated, check the box.

Silence or Flight

Violence or Fight

<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 12
Total:	Total:

The higher the score in either category the more likely you are to use that style fairly frequently.



DEALING WITH CONFLICT

Tip #1: Recognize when you are in “Fight or Flight” mode

Think of a time when you were in a conflict. How did you feel in that moment – Physically? Mentally? Emotionally? Record your responses below.

*	*
*	*
*	*
*	*
*	*
*	*

Now pair up with 1 or 2 people sitting near you and discuss how you feel when in conflict.

Tip #2: Get A Hold of your Emotions

Tip #3: Listen

DEALING WITH CONFLICT (CONTINUED)

Tip #4: Ask Questions and Confirm Understanding

Tip #5: Pay Attention to Body Language

Tip #6: Don't Limit Your Options

Tip #7: Understand that there may be more at issue than just the issue.

Tip #8: Formalize the Solution

“Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors.” --African Proverb



ACTION PLAN

Answer the questions below to develop your plan to more effectively deal with conflict in the workplace:

1. I recognize that I sometimes create conflict when I

2. When in conflict, I typically respond by

3. One thing that I can do to better manage conflict is

4. One benefit I will realize by better dealing with conflict is
