

**Interpersonal Conflict
By Interactive Measurement Group at
The University of Nevada, Las Vegas**

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Interpersonal Conflict

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What is interpersonal conflict?

Interpersonal conflict is a situation in which one or both people in the relationship are having difficulty working or living with each other. It can happen in all types of relationships, personal and professional.

1. There are five types of conflict styles:
 - a. Placating/Accommodation- happens when one person ignores oneself
 - b. Blaming/Competition- happens when one person ignores the other person
 - c. Computing: occurs when you ignore yourself, the other individual and the context (place) of the situation
 - d. Distracting/avoiding: is when one ignores all elements of the conflict, self, other, place, and topic.
 - e. Interpersonal: occurs when all elements are addressed in a conflict. The most successful way.

What causes this type of conflict?

Interpersonal conflict occurs when there is a difference in needs and goals, or competition for scarce resources. It can also occur with an outside source interfering with achieving one's goals. Conflict is often signaled by negative feelings. (Hurt, anger, confusion)

When faced with conflict one must know how to address the situation. If the benefits of confrontation outweigh the cost of confronting the problem, then there are appropriate ways to approach the situation.

What are the different ways to resolve interpersonal conflict?

Some different ways to resolve conflict are: avoid/deny, blaming, power, manipulation.

1. AVOID/DENY : pretending the situation does not exist, this can cause much bigger problems down the road if problems are not identified and diffused when they arise
2. BLAMING : not taking any responsibility for the conflict, getting mad at the other party
3. POWER : when one party uses their power or influence to win
4. MANIPULATION : when one party manipulates the situation
5. COMMUNICATION!!!

Steps in Productive Problem Solving:

See article in workshop folder

According to Dr. Ron Fisher there are steps involved in productive conflict resolution:

1. Contracting: Setting up a time to discuss the problem. One person lets the other know the difficulty they are having and wants to set up a time and place to meet.
 - a. Negotiating: make sure that both people involved are okay with meeting at stated time and date. Sometimes people need a little time to cool off before addressing a situation.
2. Defining the problem and diagnosis: Making sure that both parties understand clearly what the conflict was about.
3. Problem solving: coming up with ways to prevent the same conflict from occur.
4. Closure: evaluate the solution and make sure that both parties agree upon it.

How to use Effective Communication:

Many conflicts are caused by a lack of communication. Sometimes even when communication is present in a conflict, if not used properly misunderstandings occur. Here are some examples to communicate effectively to help eliminate some of those issues.

1. Provisionalism: Allow the other person to talk and simply agree with them, this will help you to see their point of view. By validating the other person's point of view you are helping to resolve some of the conflict.
2. Empathy: This is when you try to put yourself into the other person's shoes. An example of this is paraphrasing the other person's argument and acknowledging how the other person feels.
3. Exploration: Asking questions that encourages the other person to explain their position or why they feel the way they do.
4. Using "I" Statements: By using statements that start off with "I feel" you are discouraging the other person from getting defensive.
5. Stroking: This consists of saying nice things to the other person. This can foster goodwill and show that you don't dislike the person but that you are simply unhappy with a certain aspect of that person.

Conclusion:

Conflict can be annoying and at times may be counterproductive. However, it is healthy and normal. If resolved in a proper manner, it can help all parties involved grow and learn from the mishap.

Group Activity:

The activity will take about 30 minutes.

With a partner, go through the following conflicts in a step by step manner explaining how you would resolve the conflict. In this exercise, identify the problem, the facts of the situation,

and the beliefs the two people in conflict have about the issue at hand. Then write down all the possible solutions to the problem explaining the consequences and benefits of each option. Finally, choose the course of action you would have taken in that situation and why you picked that solution.

Situation 1:

You and your partner have been working on a project together for the past couple of weeks. As the project comes to a close, you ask your partner to edit the final draft and submit it before the deadline. Your partner agrees to the task and says they will get it done. After the due date, you find out that your partner did not edit or turn in the assignment. How would you handle the situation?

Situation 2:

You run into some difficulty on an assignment and send an e-mail to a lab member asking for some assistance. The lab member replies to your e-mail saying that they can't help you with that particular assignment. Normally that wouldn't bother you, but the language in the e-mail seemed extremely negative and condescending. How would you respond to the e-mail?

Situation 3:

As a leader for a group project, you break up the work required among your partners. As time progresses your partners don't do the work in a timely manner and often waste time or argue about who is doing what. The due date is fast approaching. How would you handle the situation and ensure everyone shares the load?

References

Fisher, R., Resolving interpersonal conflict. The American University. 2000.
http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/full_text_search/AllCRCDocs/ictext.htm