

CONFLICT? Of Course We Have Conflicts!

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Session Objectives:

Conflict is an unavoidable consequence of human interaction. In personal and work settings, individuals have found it helpful to understand the consistent responses they have to conflicts. Participants in this session will:

- Explore common approaches to conflict situations;
- Identify their own typical responses; and
- Apply their learnings to working and communicating productively



Productive Conflict

- Is a discovery and learning tool
- Is a stimulant to work harder
- Can be an instrument of change
- Is morale builder if dealt with well

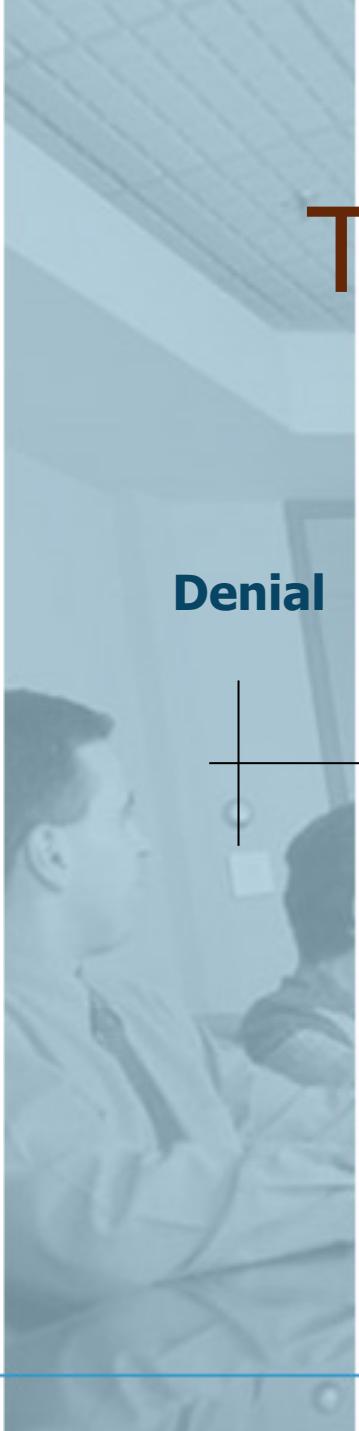


Unproductive Conflict

- Shifts the focus from results to “personalities”
- Often sidetracks a department or company
- Promotes “taking sides” and increases “bad” stress
- Diminishes trust and morale
- Erodes the quality of services and products

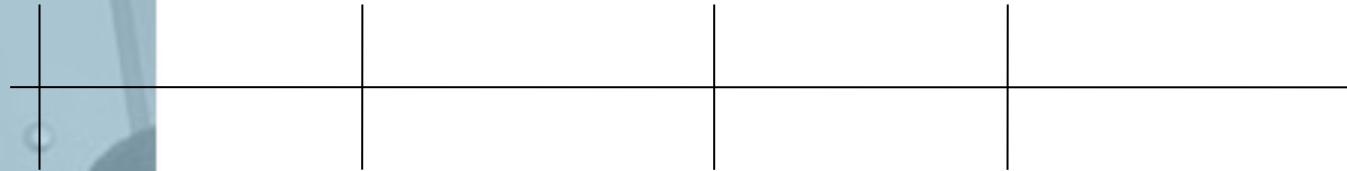
The most challenging part of learning to manage conflict is to develop an “early sorting system” that helps the manager identify and intervene in conflicts that are likely to become unproductive

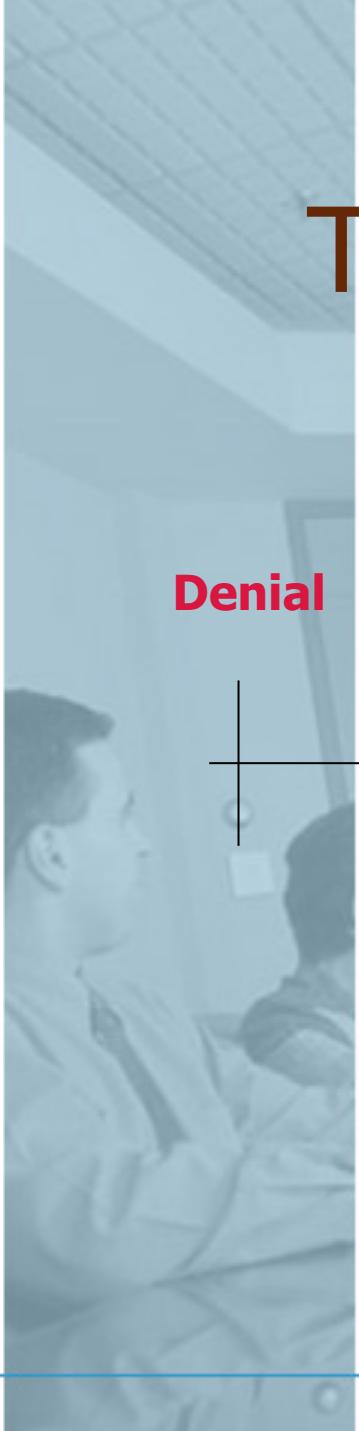




The Conflict Continuum

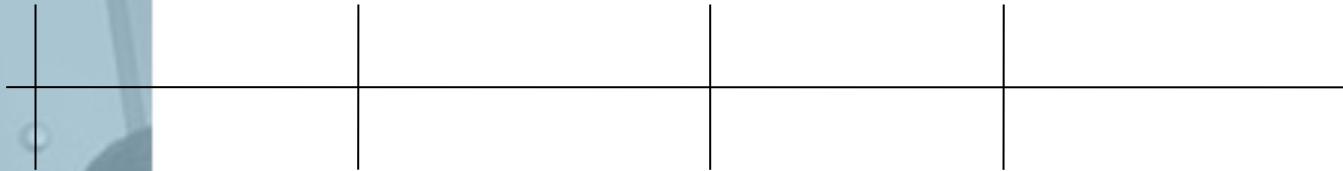
Denial Harmonizing Negotiating Engaging Hostility





The Conflict Continuum

Denial **Harmonizing** **Negotiating** **Engaging** **Hostility**



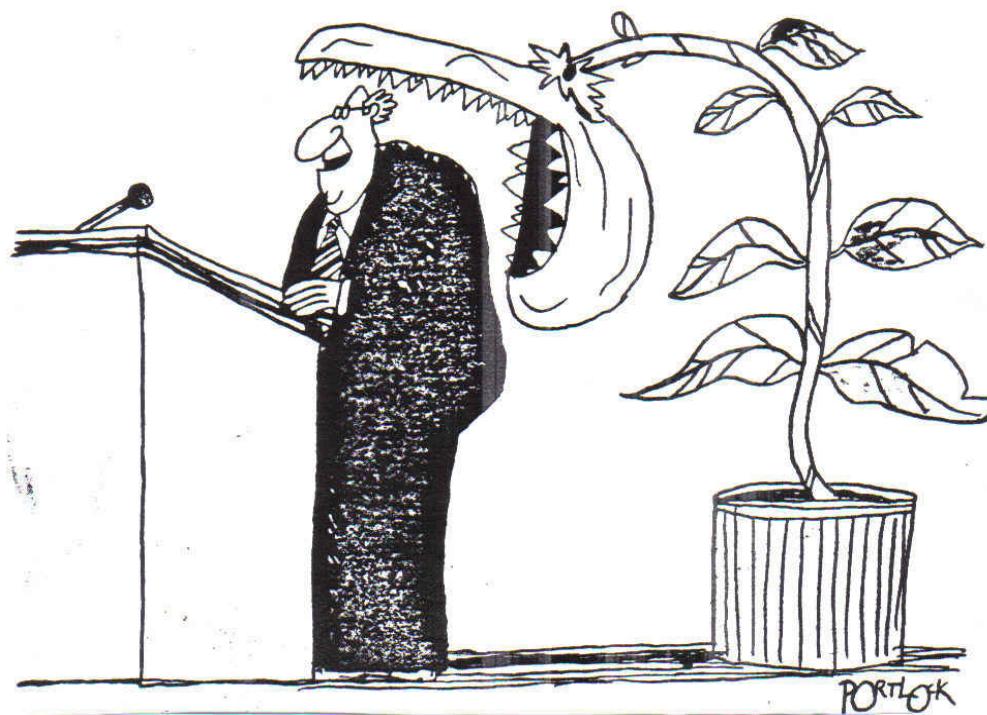
Denial



© Mary Chambers, 1983.

"You are coming to church this morning, aren't you?"

Hostility



*"I'd like to thank the board for this lovely plant
after our disagreement this week."*



Three Productive Conflict Responses

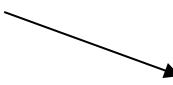
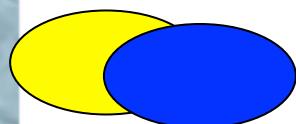
Harmonizing

Negotiating

Engaging

Harmonizers

Harmonizers work to preserve the relationship that exists between the parties involved in a conflict. People are more important than issues. They want open conflict to end in order for relationships to be preserved. The strength and quality of past relationships and experiences are the basis for dealing with conflict. Conflicts can be rendered less powerful by extended reflection, discussion and recitation of history. In their attempts to minimize conflicts and preserve relationships, Harmonizers often drive conflict underground.



PROBLEM

Harmonizers

Pro: Relationships important to maintain

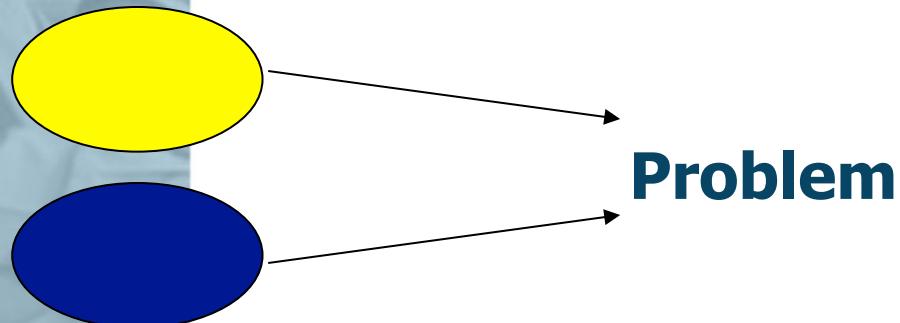
Con: Conflict can be ignored and driven underground



"I DON'T KNOW WHY EVERYONE CRITICIZES OUR COMMITTEE. WE HAVEN'T DONE A THING!"

Negotiators

Negotiators attempt to resolve present conflicts by rational, objective methods. They work for compromise by defining the issues, setting rules for debate, and by encouraging concessions. They often want to reduce the “terms” of the resolution to writing. For Negotiators, conflict is a nuisance that gets in the way of task accomplishment. They competently work to focus on the here-and-now and its resources for addressing the conflict. Both Negotiators and their efforts often seem impersonal and dispassionate.



Negotiators

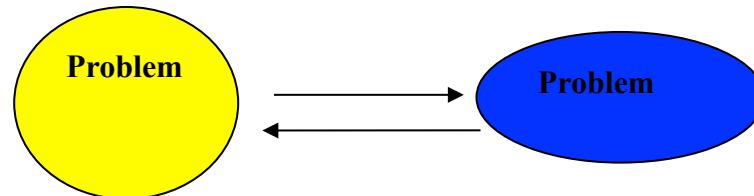
PRO: When need to gather more data
CON: Need more immediate resolution



"Frankly, it does bother me that our doctrinal statements and church discipline are issued in a loose-leaf binder!"

Engagers

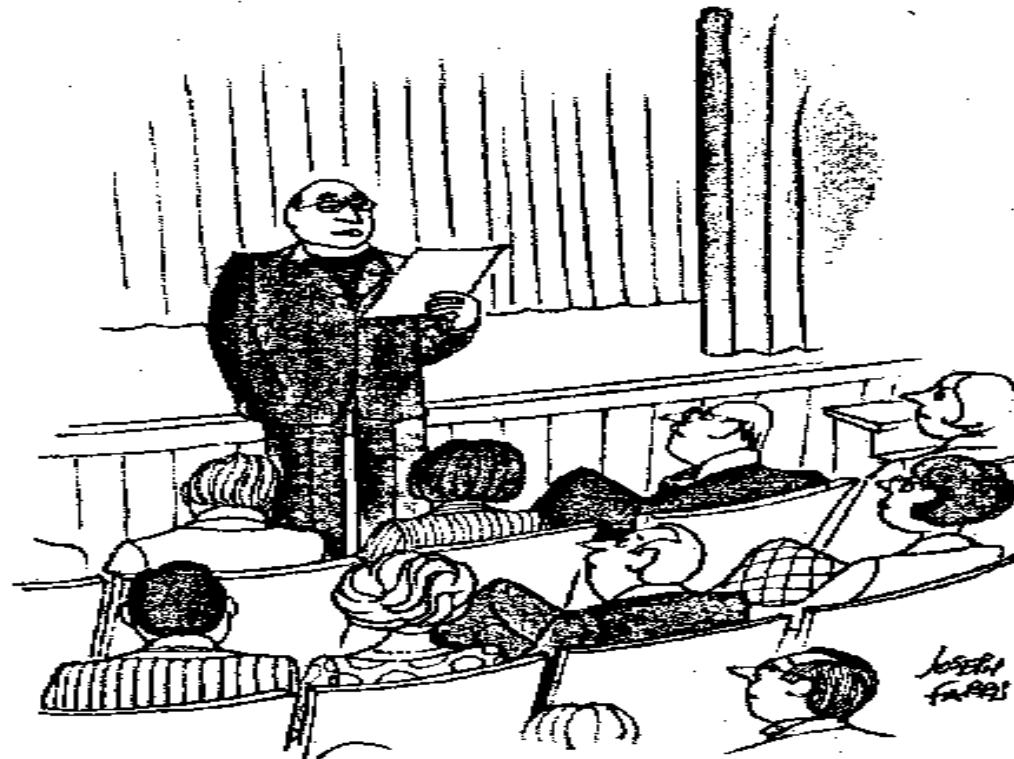
Engagers assume that the best way to resolve a conflict is to confront directly both individuals and their issues. They find the solution to the present conflict in a vision of the future. Through face-to-face encounters, Engagers discover who is on their team, aligned around their vision of the future, as well as who is not. Whatever is wrong, irritating, and divisive will be resolved as we move into tomorrow. For Engagers, conflict is an accepted and stimulating part of life and work.



Engagers

Pro: Effective when immediate resolution is needed

Con: Can increase conflict



"This recommendation comes as a recommendation of the personnel committee, the finance committee, as the board of deacons. The church staff has approved it unanimously. We also feel it is the will of God. Is there any discussion?"



Application Lesson

- Most people rely upon one of these as their primary response
- A second response is used as a “back-up” when the primary one does not work
- Very few people are able to sustain all three responses effectively and consistently



Switching From Primary to Secondary Response

- Most people have a consistent behavioral response to conflict that can be both felt internally and observed externally when their primary conflict response is not working (the “tension signal”).
- Examples:
 - Feeling of tension in stomach
 - Change in rate of pulse and breathing
 - Feeling of confusion
 - Change in facial/neck color
 - Voice changes pitch or a quiver is noted
 - Feelings of aggression
 - Feeling that you want to withdrawal from others



Understanding My Conflict Responses

1. Based on my understanding of conflict styles, my **primary** style for dealing with conflict is that of _____.
2. My **secondary** or “back up” style - the one that I use when the primary is not working - seems to be that of _____.



Group Discussion

In a group with other people who share your primary style, discuss these questions. You will be given newsprint to post your responses.

- 1. **What are the advantages of your primary style?**
(Please leave secondary responses out of this discussion.)
- 2. **In what situations or circumstances would your primary style be most appropriate?**
- 3. **What internal or external signals can you identify which help you switch from your primary to your secondary style? [Individuals in your group may not all switch to the same secondary style, but the signals may be similar.]**



How Do I Apply What I Have Learned About My Response to Conflict?

- Know your PRIMARY response to conflict
- Start observing the responses of others (co-workers, clients, significant others)
- When you feel your “tension signal” -- FLEX your response to the one that is more apt to help resolve the conflict



Harmonizing is appropriate:

- When high morale is priority
- When relationships outweigh the issues
- When individuals must maintain positive relationships in the presence of conflict which they do not have the resources to resolve
- When individuals are in stressful situations over which they have limited control



Negotiating is appropriate:

- When a problem is more technical/objective
- When policies, rules, and procedures already exist
- When facts and data need to be gathered and you have time to do so
- When temporary solutions are a “stepping stone” to longer term solutions
- As a productive and neutral “back-up” response



Engaging is appropriate:

- When speed counts in order to save lives, organizations, market advantage
- When there is high price for failure
- When both parties are of equal psychological strength and conviction
- When one or two individuals need to turn a situation around
- When the greater good is at risk



The Revell's Thirty Years of Learnings about Conflict

1. Conflict is an unavoidable consequence of human interaction.
2. Skilled, experienced leaders/managers learn to anticipate potentially unproductive conflicts and intervene early.
3. Skilled, experienced leaders/managers are able to let employees work through productive conflicts without inappropriately intervening or taking sides.



The Revell's Thirty Years of Learnings about Conflict

4. Leaders/managers who have developed their skills at flexing between engaging, negotiating, and harmonizing are the best conflict managers.
5. Teams that are highly effective have developed skills to deal with conflict in functional, constructive and routine ways.



The Revell's Thirty Years of Learnings about Conflict

6. Almost all conflicts are better understood and managed by several people than by one person acting alone.
7. Change, no matter how well prepared for, breeds conflict.
8. To be effective, any resolution of conflict must be “**our** plan” not “my plan.”



The Revell's Thirty Years of Learnings about Conflict

9. Real or perceived imbalances in power nearly always breed conflict.
10. Employees who are “people pleasers”, (especially if less mature or not self aware) are likely sources of petty conflicts (due to their inconsistent often unclear communication).
11. It is helpful to take a “time-out” from a situation before trying to resolve it.



The Revell's Thirty Years of Learnings about Conflict

12. People bring their positive and negative experiences and values from childhood about conflict to the workplace. As they mature, they are able to understand the differences between those and the conflicts experienced in the workplace.



The Revell's Thirty Years of Learnings about Conflict

13. Managers cannot “fix” an individual employee’s intrapsychic conflict in the workplace. They can only protect the workplace from the negative impacts of the employee’s behavior. (This is good reason to have an EAP.)
14. Not all conflicts can be resolved, but almost all can be managed.



Review

- Know your primary response to conflict
- Pause when it is not working
- Listen to the other person carefully
- Flex your response as appropriate
- All three styles are useful and productive in the correct setting
- Conflict resolution often requires a combination of responses

Thank You

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Presenter's Bios

Roger A. Revell, MBA

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Roger A. Revell has nearly twenty years of experience as a leader/manager. Until his consulting career began in 1984, he was responsible for the work of up to four hundred people. Revell has a master of business administration (MBA), and has been a senior officer of a Fortune 500 company. He brings clarity to clients around issues of leadership, organizational change, performance management, and planning. In recent years, working with CEOs, he has done extensive projects regarding mergers, acquisitions, divestitures and the creation of strategic partnerships. Clients regularly comment on his expertise at working with change and conflict, and in helping them learn to deal effectively with these and other workplace issues.



Kathy Revell, RN, MS, CPHQ, NCAC II

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Kathy Revell has had more than thirty-five (35) years experience in the healthcare industry, twenty-five (25) of which were in the psychiatric and chemical dependency field. She has held clinical and management positions in both inpatient and outpatient settings where she also did individual and family counseling. In addition, she has over thirteen (13) years of experience in the managed mental health care industry including product and network development, provider contracting and education, utilization management, appeals processes, case management design, reimbursement issues and quality improvement. Her managed care experience included multiple product design and operations including PPO, HMO, self-insured, and specialty products. She has been vice president of clinical operations for a mental health Medicaid HMO. In addition to being a registered nurse and nationally certified substance abuse counselor (NCAC II), she is a certified professional in healthcare quality (CPHQ). A published author, she holds a bachelor's degree in nursing and a master's degree in human relations and business. Ms. Revell's consulting specialties include organizational assessment and change, interpersonal communication, provider contracting, policy and procedure development, managed care case management design, and healthcare quality improvement.