

Conflict

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Resilience Empowerment Compassion



What is Conflict?

Conflict is a disagreement of ideas between two or more people. It can be expressed or unexpressed.

Some Facts about Conflict

- How someone responds to conflict is a choice.
- People can often resolve their own conflicts.
- Conflict is a normal part of our personal and professional relationships.
- Conflict can improve relationships and promote effective teamwork and problem-solving.
- Personal motivation and commitment can increase through conflict.
- If handled inappropriately, conflict can result in a dysfunctional workplace.
- Not acknowledging conflict in the workplace can create a sense of false harmony, which in turn can inhibit performance.
- Expressing our ideas, even when they might lead to conflict, helps to keep us enthusiastic about our work.
- Promoting debate in your workplace benefits your organization by ensuring that a range of ideas are presented and considered.

Conflict and Stress

Unresolved or inappropriately managed conflict can lead to increased stress.

Symptoms can include:

- physical illness
- absenteeism
- decreased motivation and engagement
- reduced quality in performance and decision making
- employee turnover
- work/goal sabotage & delays
- increased workplace tension
- disrespect and a risk of workplace violence

Options for Resolving Workplace Conflict

1. Resolve the conflict yourself.
 - Reflect on the situation or issue.
 - Ensure that you are calm prior to approaching the person with whom you have a conflict.
 - Let that person know that you would like to discuss the issue at a mutually convenient time.
 - Separate assumptions and judgments from facts.
 - Clearly and respectfully state the issue and if possible, offer possible solutions.
 - Listen carefully to the other person's perspective.
 - Take responsibility for your part in the situation.
 - Negotiate solutions for moving toward resolution.

2. Discuss the situation with your supervisor, human resource representative, union representative, Respectful Workplace advisor or an Employee Assistance Program counselor, to receive assistance in resolving the conflict.

Always try to:

- preserve the esteem and dignity of the other
- value ideas and opinions that are different from your own
- express your ideas in a respectful way
- listen carefully to others and remain open to broadening your viewpoint
- accept working styles different than your own
- recognize others' strengths
- give feedback without being judgmental
- focus on the conflict issue itself, not the personality of the other
- involve only as many people as necessary as you resolve your conflict

We Can Help.

The Employee Assistance Program can:

- assist people to sort through workplace conflict and develop action plans for resolution
- assess and provide options to deal with the impact of workplace and/or personal conflict
- act as a third party facilitator or mediator to assist two or more people resolve workplace and/or personal conflict
- coach management on how to help resolve conflict between employees

- assess workplaces to identify potential barriers preventing healthy conflict that builds trust, commitment, and innovation

Resources

Organizations and Websites

- Organizational and Staff Development (training catalogue): www.manitoba.ca/csc/osd
- Mediation Services/Resolution Skills Center: 204-925-3410
- M.G.E.U.: 204-982-6438
- Respectful Workplace advisor: 204-945-5501
- Manitoba Civil Service Commission: Respectful Workplace Policy manitoba.ca/csc/policyman/respect.html

Suggested Readings

- Conflict Management: A Communication Skills Approach. Deborah Borisoff
- How to Deal with Difficult People. Donald H. Weiss
- Letting Go of Anger. Ron Potter-Efron & Pat Potter Efron
- On Conflict & Consensus. Lawrence & Amy Rothstein
- Getting to Yes. Roger Fisher & William Ury
- Management Skills for Everyday Life. Paula J. Caproni

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