Career Development Workshop #4

Conflict Resolution

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Conflict Resolution

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WHAT IS CONFLICT?

"Conflict is a disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to the needs, interests, or concerns of themselves or others."

(Academic Leadership Support, University of Wisconsin at Madison)
PERCEPTION IS EVERYTHING...

 ✓ Conflict can be *perceived* as a threat to a person's physical or emotional self.
 ✓ Conflict can also be *perceived* as a threat to a person's power or status.
 ✓ Participants in conflicts tend to *respond on the basis of their perceptions of the situation*, rather than taking a more objective view.

HOW IS PERCEPTION SHAPED?

Perception can be shaped by an individual's:

 ✓ Culture, Race, & Ethnicity
 ✓ Gender & Sexuality
 ✓ Knowledge (situational & in general)
 ✓ Impressions of the "Messenger"
 ✓ Past Experience

WHY DO WE AVOID CONFLICT?

 ✓ It's easier to avoid or ignore a situation and hope that it goes away on its own. If you don't confront the issue, does it actually exist?
 ✓ Avoiding conflict can create a less stressful environment.
 ✓ Confronting a situation takes courage!
   o Confrontation forces an individual to take a closer look at his/her own role in the conflict.
   o It will force the confronting-group to examine their own level of participation with the conflict.
WAYS OUR BODIES RESPOND TO CONFLICT

✓ Emotionally
  o Anger
  o Confusion
  o Despair
  o Fear, etc.

✓ Cognitively
  o What are your thoughts/ideas/opinions about the conflict?

✓ Physically
  o Bodily tension
  o Increased Anxiety/Stress
  o Nausea
  o Rapid Heartbeat
  o Shallow Breathing
  o Sweating, etc.

WHAT IS YOUR STYLE OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION?

✓ Avoiding
✓ Competing
✓ Compromising
✓ Integrating/Collaborating
✓ Soothing/Accommodating
AVOIDING
✓ "Maybe if I ignore it, it will go away..."
✓ Creates a false sense of calm.
✓ The conflict remains present.
✓ The conflict may actually **escalate** if avoided.

COMPETING
✓ The most **aggressive** method of conflict resolution.
✓ "My way is the only way that matters. I am right."
✓ Only one winner, with one (or many) losers.
✓ Used to gain control over a situation.

COMPROMISING
✓ A series of **tradeoffs** - you may gain something, but you will lose something else.
✓ V Focus is not on actually solving the conflict, but on **minimizing individual losses**.
✓ V **No common ground** - parties involved will remain shaped by individual perceptions and don't necessarily understand the needs of the other parties.
✓ We often retain a **lack of trust** and avoid risk-taking involved in more collaborative behaviors.
✓ Often feels **dissatisfying**.

INTERGRATING/COLLABORATING
✓ Often called the "win-win" problem solving method.
✓ Individuals working together towards a common goal.
✓ Requires **cooperation** from all parties.
✓ Promotes long-term relationship building.
✓ Takes **everyone’s needs** into account when finding a solution.
✓ Thought to be the most **effective way** to resolve a conflict.
SOOTHING/ACCOMMODATING
✓ The Opposite of the "Competing" approach.
✓ One loser, many winners:
  o An individual (or group) may choose to put their needs aside in order to make everyone else happy.
  o Done to create harmony.
  o Harmony will only last until the next conflict comes along.
  o May create some resentment in the person (or group) who gave up their own goals in order to resolve the conflict.

8 STEPS TOWARDS CONFLICT RESOLUTION
✓ "Know Thyself"
✓ Clarify Your Needs
✓ Identify a Safe Place for Negotiation
  ✓ Listen to Others
  ✓ Assert Your Needs
  ✓ Be Flexible
✓ Managing an Impasse
✓ Reach an Agreement That Works

"KNOW THYSELF"
✓ How do your perceptions affect how you view a conflict?
✓ Be aware of your triggers ("hot buttons")
✓ Take better care of yourself!
  o Improved Eating Habits
  o Daily Exercise
  o Better Sleeping Habits
CLARIFY YOUR NEEDS

✓ **Substantive Needs:** the heart of the conflict...often the problem that we feel needs to be solved.

✓ **Procedural Needs:** the process of addressing these substantive needs (i.e. setting "ground rules")

✓ **Psychological Needs:** fostering a safe environment, one in which people are willing to take the risks involved in honestly communicating their differences, concerns, and potential similarities to one another.

*Note: in any dispute, all three needs are present and must be addressed.*

IDENTIFY A SAFE PLACE FOR NEGOTIATION

A "Safe Place" would consist of the following criteria:

✓ Neutral Space to Meet
✓ Appropriate Time for Discussion
✓ Establish Ground Rules to the Discussion
✓ Use of Mediators
  - Someone neutral to all parties involved.
  - Someone who will be fair and objective.

LISTEN TO OTHERS

✓ Use active listening skills!
✓ Respond appropriately.
  - *Ask questions* to make sure you understand the other person's issues.
  - *Check-in* to make sure you have understood what the other person has said.
  - *Summarize* to make sure that all parties involved are on the same page and are openly communicating with one another.
ASSERT YOUR NEEDS

✓ Stay focused on the ideas and feelings that are truly meaningful to you.
✓ What are your "desired outcomes" from this conflict?
✓ Things to think about:
  o What is now understood to be the actual areas of difference, rather than the perceived differences?
  o Are both people/groups defining the problem in the same way?
  o Are the needs similar, or are there different priorities about the problems that need to be solved?
  o Is there any additional information needed before possible solutions can be explored?

APPROACH PROBLEM SOLVING WITH FLEXIBILITY

✓ Identify issues **clearly** and **concisely**.
✓ **Brainstorm** many possible solutions to the problem, but don't make judgments on them.
✓ **Be open** to going on "tangents" and other problem definitions.
✓ **Clarify the criteria** for decision-making process.
✓ **Summarize** your ideas in **writing**, then **re-state** them to the group.

MANAGING AN IMPASSE- 10 IDEAS

1. Talk about how it feels to be stuck. Put the main issue aside for a moment.
2. Reframe the issue. This may generate new energy to revisit the substantive issue, or put it into proper perspective.
3. Break the problem into smaller and more manageable elements.
4. Re-state the issue. Be sure the other- person knows you are making reasonable efforts to understand his or her point of view.
5. Stay flexible- generate new options.
6. Validate and affirms areas of agreement.
7. Clarify criteria- on what basis are the various options being evaluated or judged?
8. Reaffirm the ground rules.
9. Take a structured break. Be sure people go to the "break" with homework to do about resolving the conflict.
10. Explore other alternatives. This allows for an important reality check before determining not to negotiate further.

**REACH AN AGREEMENT THAT WORKS**

- Is the agreement fair? Do all parties feel that the agreement is fair and reasonable?
- Is the agreement balanced? Does everyone have a stake and role in its implementation?
- Are the action steps realistic? Do the time, energy, skills, and resources exist to follow-through and implement the agreement?
- Is the agreement specific enough to proceed? Does everyone understand what is needed to be done and when it needs to be done?
- Is the agreement future-oriented? In other words, has anyone considered what will be done if conflicts arise in the future?

**CONCLUSIONS**

- Conflict is a disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to the needs, interests, or concerns of themselves or others.
- Conflicts often start because of *miscommunication*.
- Participants in conflicts tend to respond/react on the basis of their perceptions of the situation, rather than an objective view of it.
- *Perception is everything*- be aware of your own biases before engaging in a confrontation.
CONFLICT RESOLUTION- CASE STUDIES

Case #1: There is a conflict between the RN who supervises the oncology program in ambulatory care and the medical assistant who schedules the chemotherapy appointments and who often gives the pre-chemotherapy nausea medication. The issue here is the timing of the medication and the administration of the chemotherapy.

Question: What is the conflict resolution method of choice?

Answer: COLLABORATION. Collaboration should be attempted first since there are significant reasons to invest in this relationship: its quality will affect individuals, the team, and the patients. Both individuals are driven by the mutual goal of the most appropriate and effective patient treatment. It's possible that other personal needs are involved, and compromise may be necessary.

Case #2: Susan was brought up by an abusive, alcoholic mother. When making visits to the home of an alcoholic diabetic patient, she finds herself unable to listen carefully to the concerns of this patient. When she allows herself to be honest, she figures that he's killing himself anyway and that her time is wasted when she tells him to eat right and to take his insulin and medications as ordered. It's a constant argument, with Susan telling him what to do and Mark ignoring her.

Question: What is the conflict resolution method of choice?

Answer: AVOIDANCE. Unless Susan has already embarked on an effective personal counseling journey, it may be best for her to use avoidance and ask someone else to take over his care. Awareness of her inability to deal with the inevitable conflict successfully shows respect for herself and for Mark.

Case #3: Peter, a case manager for total hip patients in a large health care conglomerate, notices that one of the subacute care facilities frequently sends total hip patients back to the ICU on the weekends and holidays. When he attempts to discuss this with the director of that department, she begins to shout about the staffing that is available during those periods.

Question: What is the conflict resolution method of choice?
ANSWER: COLLABORATION. This situation calls for collaboration on the part of Peter, who has legitimate concerns, and the department director, who seems frustrated at her staffing situation. A "win-win" solution will creatively address both individuals' concerns. Their mutual ground at this point is their need to assure patients' welfare.

Additional Sources

The following sources are retrieved from the Ebrary database in the Campus Portal (my.stvincentscollege.edu) under the Library Resource Tab:

Conflict Resolution Toolbox: Models and Maps for Analyzing, Diagnosing, and Resolving Conflict
Furlong, Gary
Pages: 268
Publisher: Wiley
Location: Hoboken, NJ, USA
Date Published: 08/2009

Getting to Resolution: Turning Conflict into Collaboration (2nd Edition)
Levine, Stewart
Pages: 303
Publisher: Berrett-Koehler Publishers
Location: Williston, VT, USA
Date Published: 11/2009

Natural Conflict Resolution
Aureli, Filippo De Waal, Frans B. M.
Pages: 424
Publisher: University of California Press
Location: Ewing, NJ, USA
Date Published: 08/2000

Other Sources: http://insidehrdq.com/ www.humanresources.com,