Resolving Conflict: What Is The Problem Anyway?

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What Is The Problem?

“What we hear is an opinion, not a fact. Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth.”

-Marcus Aurelius
Each of us interacts with people every day:

- Faculty
- Staff
- Students
- Patients
- Others in our institutions

We will eventually need to resolve conflict.
“During their lifetimes, every man and woman will stumble across a great opportunity. Sadly, most of them will simply pick themselves up, dust themselves down and carry on as if nothing ever happened.”
— Winston Churchill

- Conflict can be an opportunity
- Without conflict nothing changes: not our minds, not our relationships not our organizations.
What Is Conflict?

* Merriam Webster dictionary says conflict is: “a strong disagreement between people, groups, etc., that results in often angry argument. A difference that prevents agreement between ideas, feelings, etc.”

* In the workplace these “strong disagreements” can be: time consuming, irritating and disruptive.

* BUT can also be an opportunity for growth and improvement.
What Is Your Strategy?

* First Strategy: Avoid the issue complete they are all adults they can fend for themselves.
* Second Strategy: Let someone else deal with it, I am just too busy for this nonsense.
* Third Strategy: Really isn't that what HR is for anyway?
Avoiding Conflict

* Fear is the main culprit

* We fear:
  - Humiliation
  - Anger
  - Embarrassment
  - Negative Emotions
Many people are afraid or not comfortable witnessing anger.

- Timing is everything—wait to intervene.

Fear of not saying what is considered correct.

- Create an intervention strategy and practice.

Fear of failure. Not being able to find a resolution.

- Reframe your negative thoughts to positive.
Intervention Strategy
Remember the “Knows”

* #1 Know the issue.
* #2 Know your “audience”
* #3 Know yourself.
* #4 Know your intervention strategy.
Intervention Strategy #1
Know The Issue

* Be an active listener to each person's version of the event.

* Speak to any witnesses of the event.

* Listen for any underlying issues that might contribute to the situation.

* Do not draw your own conclusion—it’s not about what you think happened.
Intervention Strategy #2
Know Your Audience

* The Tank
* Pushy, loud forceful. Assumes that the end justifies the means.
* These types of people require an assertive response.
* Hold your ground and maintain your self control.
* Allow them peace with honor.
Intervention Strategy #2
Know Your Audience

* The-Know-It-All
  * Know everything there is to know and will not stop for one minute to listen to any different perspective.
  * Avoid the temptation of being a know it all yourself.
  * Be flexible, patient and clever when presenting your information.
  * Think through your intervention strategy before you begin your intervention.
Intervention Strategy #2
Know Your Audience

* **The Grenade**
  * Have a pattern of blowing up and withdrawing.
  * Get their attention before they lose control: call their name, wave your hands.
  * Wait until the person is calm before having any type discussion.
Intervention Strategy #2
Know Your Audience

* The Yes Person
* Says yes to everything but delivers on nothing.
* Are usually very nice people.
* Be honest about what they can do and have them repeat it you.
Be aware of your feelings during the intervention and do not let them get the better of you.

Be aware of any prejudices you may have going into the intervention.

Be aware of any preconceived ideas you have about the issue and check them at the door.
Intervention Strategy #4
Know Your Intervention Strategy

- Timing is everything—do not hurry into the intervention.
- Provide a structure for the intervention—clearly state what behavior will be acceptable and what will not.
- Keep the conversation focused on the issue at hand.
- Be open to the possibility of multiple meetings to get the issue resolved.
Intervention Strategy
Bonus Information

* Carefully choose your words.
* Use words and phrases that are not judgmental.
  EX: Avoid why, **instead** – help me understand . . .
  EX: Avoid should, **instead** – Can we consider. . . .
* Rephrase the issues that arise so that they are not conflictive.
  EX: You made me, **instead** – I feel that . . .
* Clarify what is said for a clear understanding of the issue or request.
  EX: I want respect ask – what does that look like to you?
Conflict often goes unaddressed – many people are simply afraid of the emotions.

Conflict provides opportunity for growth and improvement if we can embrace it as a positive not a negative.

When intervening in a conflict be sure to know:

1. The issue
2. Your audience
3. Yourself
4. Your strategy
Conflict will arise in your organization.
You will be called on to resolve it.
Be prepared not afraid.

“Never let the fear of striking out get in your way.”
-George Herman “Babe” Ruth
Any Questions?

“You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view — until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”
-- Atticus Finch in "To Kill A Mockingbird," by Harper Lee