

Conflict is a Fact of Organizational Life

Dr. Gladys Peachey

Agenda

Nature of Conflict

Self Assessment

Self Awareness

Strategies

Ice breaker

- **Give one word that describes how you feel about conflict.**

You are not Alone

- **Most successful people hate conflict and the tension it causes.**
- **It is completely up to you to deal with your fear of conflict and what to do about it.**

Accept that work can not be conflict free

Fear of Conflict

“People expect to experience conflict, but what to get it over with as soon as possible and get back to normal”

Lulofs and Cahn(2000, p.3).

Functions of Conflict in the Workplace

- **Establishes boundaries in relationships.**
- **Strengthens the cohesiveness of groups.**
- **Assists with the clarification of goals.**
- **Builds empathy and understanding**
- **Assist people to understand each other**

Why Study Organizational Conflict ?

- **Change and conflict is the norm in healthcare environments.**
- **20% of nurse manager's time is spent in dealing with conflict (McElhaney,1996).**

Conflict happens and you should be prepared

Negative Impact on Organizations

Conflict can be costly to the individual and the organization as it leads to:

- decreased productivity**
- decreased morale**
- decreased satisfaction**
- increased turnover and absenteeism**
- increased violence**

Positive Impact on Organizations

Conflict can push an organization to higher levels of achievement and quality

Conflict

- Chinese character for conflict is made of two symbols:
 - danger
 - opportunity
- **I Ching** teaches that the wise person in conflict remains clearheaded, inwardly strong, and ready to meet his or her opponent halfway

Conflict Continuum



Disagreement---Interpersonal-----Violence

Disagreement

- Mere disagreements do not affect the relationship.

Arguments: Exchanges of claims and evidence, “Agree to disagree”

Games: Have known rules

Characteristics of Interpersonal Conflict

Perception of seeking different outcomes or different means to same end.

Potential **negative affect on relationship** if not addressed.

Sense of urgency to resolve issue.

Interdependent relationship.

Conflict Issues

Conflict issues are the focal point, the **“trigger”** that people point to when they are asked what the conflict is about.

Two Types: Intangible and tangible

Conflict Climate

- Psychological atmosphere
- Includes bipolar concepts

Power versus equity

Distrust versus trust

Defensive versus supportive behavior

Process View of Conflict

- **Conflict is:**
 - Ongoing**
 - Dynamic**
 - Changeable**
 - Not necessarily predictable**
- **Unfolds and proceeds through stages that may branch off in a variety of directions**

Wilmot and Hocker's Model

- **Criticizing**

Defensiveness

Stonewalling

Contempt



Critical start up

- **Conflict begins with a critical statement**
- **“ you always” “you never”**

DEFENSIVENESS

- **Defensiveness implies that one is warding off an attack**
- **Defensive communication is used to protect oneself against pain, fear, personal responsibility: “ping pong”**
- **Tendency to whine, deflect, attack and defend**

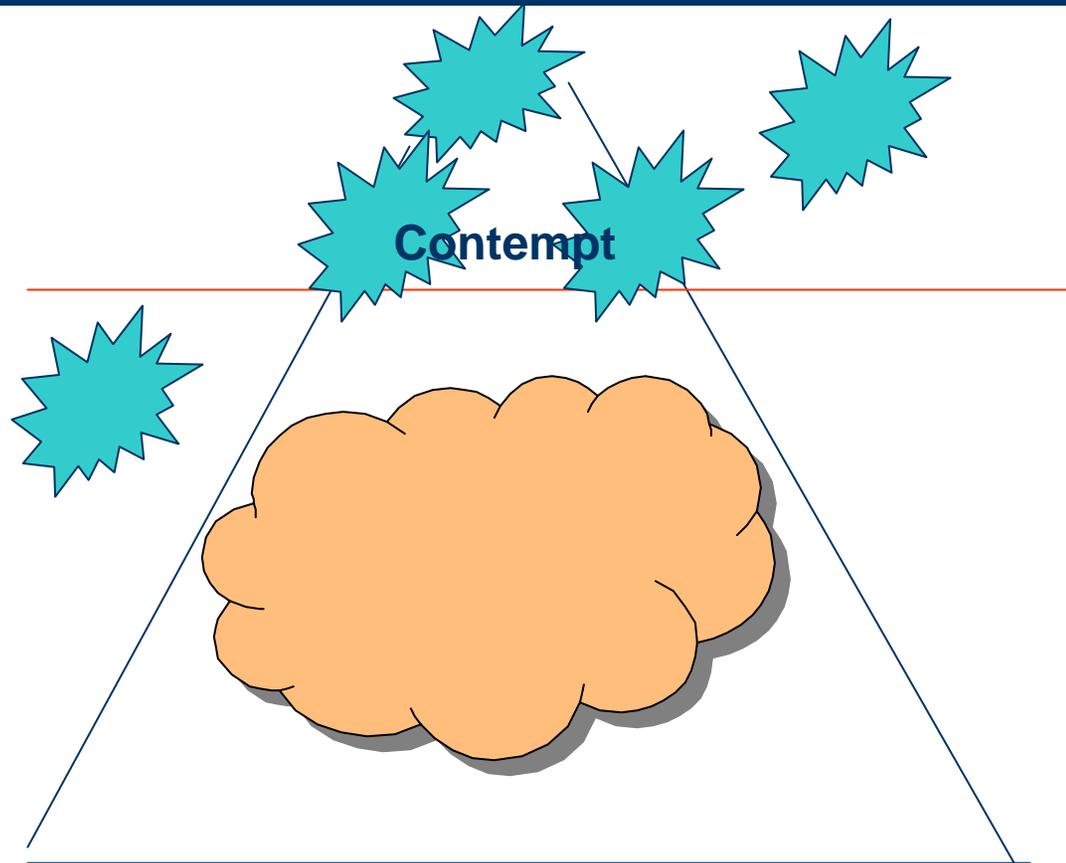
Stonewalling

- **Dance of interaction is over**
- **The person is not longer “there”**
- **Refusal to engage in a topic no matter how the other person brings it up**
- **“Holding back” is a less destructive form of stonewalling**

Contempt

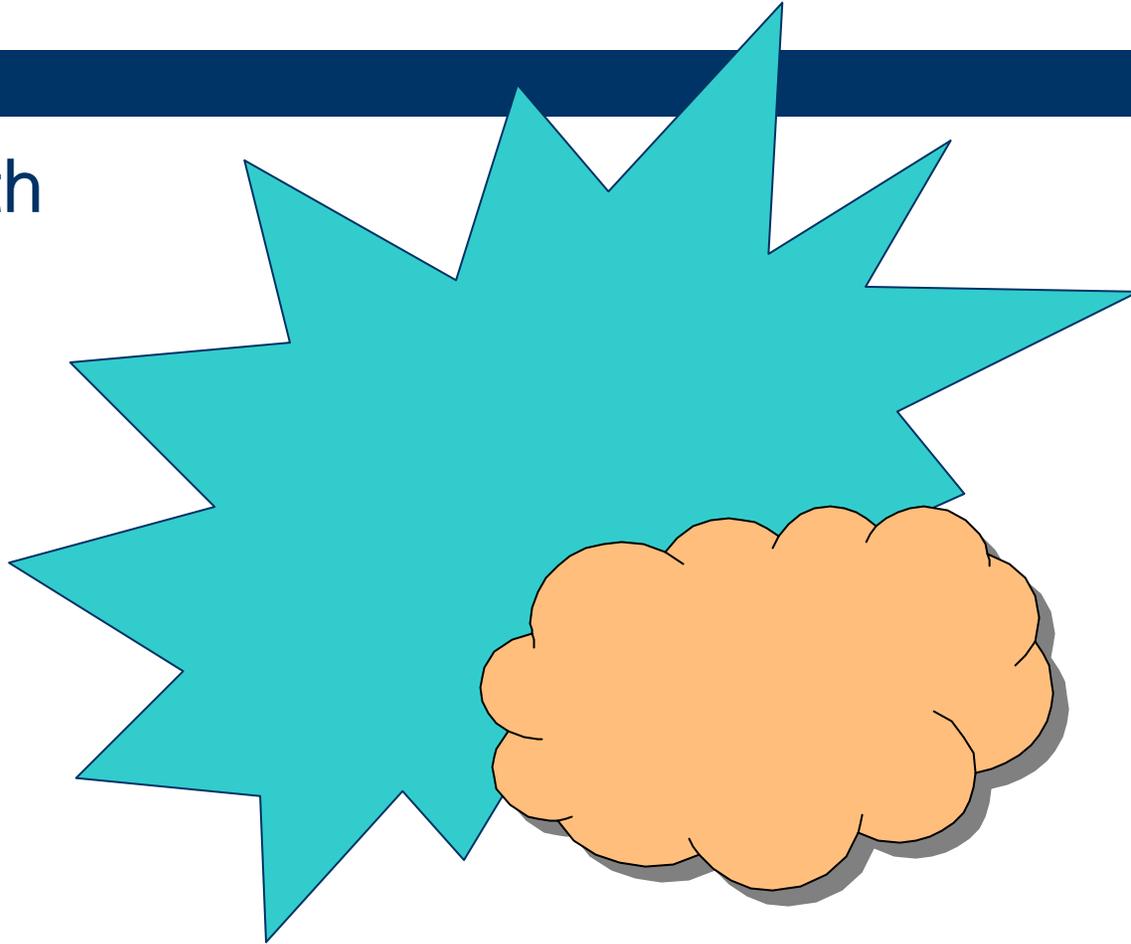
- **Any statement or nonverbal behavior that puts oneself on a higher place than the other person**
- **Involves mockery, put downs, and nonverbal expressions of contempt**
- **Examples include sarcasm, ridicule, and hostile joking**

Conflict Volcano



Immersed in Conflict

- Death



Conflict as a Process

- **Prelude to Conflict:** Participants who have a relationship
- **Triggering Event:** Criticism
- **Initiation Phase:** Conflict is made known to the other
- **Differentiation of Conflict:** Use of constructive strategies
- **Resolution Phase:** Agree to some outcome

Section Two

- **Self Awareness**
- **Assessment of conflict style**

Self Awareness is the First Step.

Know yourself/your style

Understand your attitude and beliefs

Monitor your emotional reactions

Be prepared to change

Self-Awareness

Self

Known

Unknown

Others

Known

Unknown

The “public”
person

Our “blind spots”

Our “hidden
faults”

The
“unconscious
self”

A Conflict Memory

- **Reflect on your own philosophy and experience of conflict**
- **Come to terms with your own life's experiences and learning**
- **Consider the important influences:**
 - Families:** avoidant, collaborative, aggressive
 - Role models:** parent, colleague, teachers

Conflict Metaphors

- Illustrate a personal view of a conflict
- Examples
 - This place is like a zoo**
 - Put a lid on it**
 - She really pushes my buttons**
 - Does anyone know what going on around here**

Caution About Styles: Research Limitations

- **Based on perceptions**
- **Depends on whether one is rating oneself or others**
- **Mixed results related to gender and setting**
- **Ignores the interactive dynamics of conflict situations**

Conflict Management Strategies

- **Accommodating**
- **Avoiding**
- **Compromising**
- **Competing**
- **Collaborating**

Style Used by Nurses

- **Staff Nurses** **Avoidance**
- **Managers** **Compromising/Avoidance**
- **Educators** **Compromising/ Avoidance**

Valentine, Richardson, Wood & Gidkin(1998)

Conflict Management Styles



Conflict Management Styles



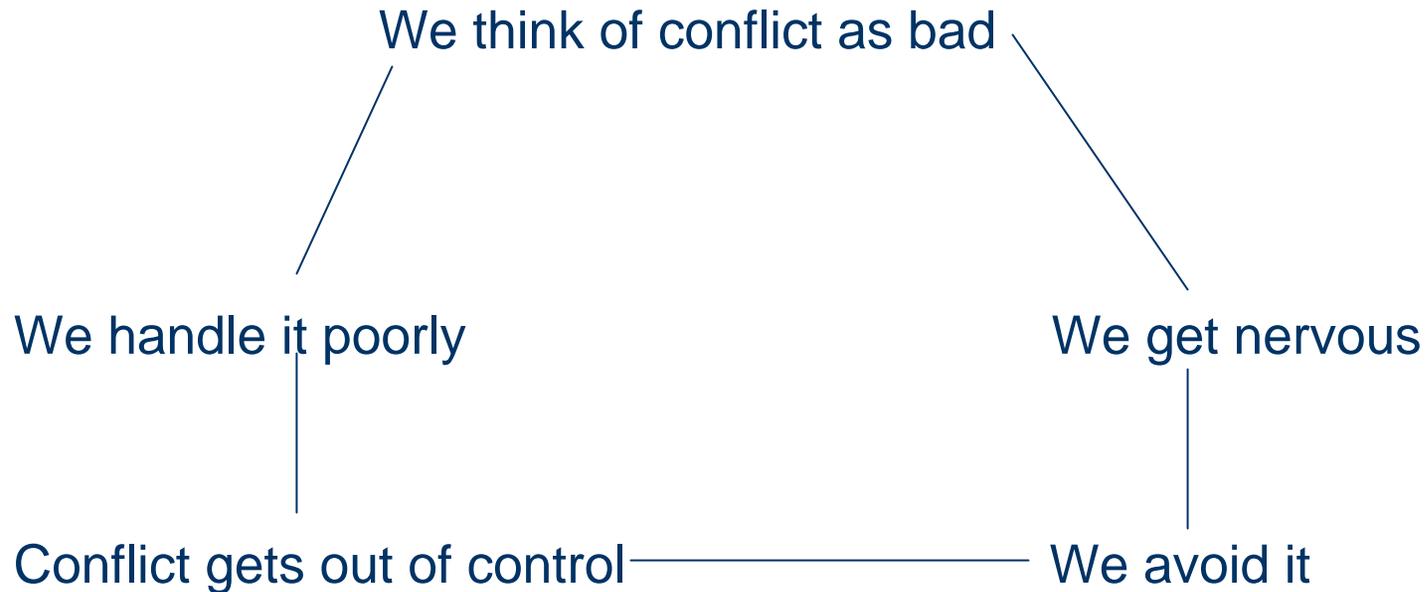
Accommodation: Lose-Win

- **Neglects own concerns to satisfy other's needs**
- **Obeys another person's orders when one would prefer not to**
- **Appropriate to be used when:**
 - **You realize you are wrong**
 - **Minimize your loses**

Avoidance: Lose-Lose

- **Unassertive and uncooperative**
- **Does not address the conflict**
- **Appropriately used when:**
 - **An issue is trivial.**
 - **To let people cool down and reduce tensions to a productive level.**

Conflict Avoidance Cycle



Avoid – Criticize : Common in Professionals

- **You avoid bringing up the issue directly**
- **Spend time talking to others about the issue**
- **Perfect criticism, without taking action**
- **Can ruin people's reputations**

Avoidance Tactics

- **Seduction:** used by lower power persons to charm or trick the other person: e.g. joking, evasive remarks, charming
- **Topic shifts:** “Okay, the next issue is----”
- **Postponement:** emotional content is acknowledged, while the issue is deferred

“Its stupid for you to be upset, we’ll work it out

“Lets all try harder to get along”

“That’s enough complaining lets get back to work”

Competing: Win-Lose

- Pursues own concerns at the expense of others
- “ Standing up for your rights”
“ **Either your with me or your against me**”
- **Appropriate to be used**
 - when quick decisive action is required (emergencies)
 - on important issues when unpopular action is required (cost cutting, discipline)

Competing Tactics

- **Threats:** Bad because they do not work and can be dangerous
 - **Verbal aggression:** teasing, ridicule, profanity
- “ Well I suppose someone with your intelligence would see it that way.”
- **Bullying:** ongoing and persistent badgering, harassment
 - **Violence**

Rates of violence.

- Swedish study calculated a prevalence rate of **29%** for workplace violence and **35%** for threats of violence(Arnetz, et al,1996)
- Canadian research found **33%** of nurse reported experiencing violence in the **last 5 shifts** worked (Grayton, Kasta and Khan,1994)

Incidence of Violence: Recent Canadian Study(Duncan et al,2001)

Type	Percentage
Violence in the last 5 shifts	46
Emotional abuse	38
Threat of assault	19
Physical assault	36.4
Verbal sexual harassment	7.6
Sexual assault	0.5-0.8

Groups Who Abuse (Duncan et al,2001)

Group	Percentage
Patients	35
Patient's family	11.6-12.6
Physicians	13.5- 19.6
Nursing co worker	13
Other	2.6-4.6
Multiple sources	24

Collaboration: Win-Win

- Work together to find a satisfying solution
- Problem solving, can be time consuming
- **Pseudo collaboration:** maintains power imbalance.
 - “ One avoider can frustrate the intentions of four collaborators.”

Appropriately used :

- To find an integrative solution.
- To work through hard feelings.

Compromising: No Win- No Lost

- Objective is to find an **expedient**, mutually acceptable solution which satisfies both parties
- Middle ground or easy way out
- Requires tradeoffs and exchanges
- Good litmus test of how you view conflict “half full, half empty”

Section Three

- Strategies /Interventions

Strategies

- **Face**
- **Use of I –Statements**
- **S-TLC System**
- **Confrontation**
- **Confronting difficult people**
- **Collaboration**

Face

- The impression a person maintains for others
- People's image of themselves
- Fundamental to who we think we are
- Two kinds: **Positive and Autonomous**

Saving Face



Use of “I – Statements”

- **Probably the most important skill in conflict management**
- **I-Statements provide necessary information**
“others cannot read your mind”
- **Reveals your honesty**
- **Reduces defensiveness in others**

Feeling Words to use in “I Statement”

- **Annoyed**
- **Betrayed**
- **Concerned**
- **Frustrated**
- **Irritated**
- **Uneasy**
- **Worried**

Examples of I- Statements

Escaping Responsibility

You're too sarcastic

Nobody likes her

You make me angry

Anyone with any sense
at all would not

Taking Responsibility

I don't like sarcasm

I don't like her

I am angry

I don't understand
why you would not

Components of I- Statements

Feeling Statement Problem Behavior Consequence Goal

**I feel frustrated when I work hard
and get a low grade
on my paper because it
could hurt
my grade in
the course I would like
to review
my paper to
improve**

**I feel annoyed when you are late because I
have to stay
later I need to
pick up
my child**

S-TLC System

- **Stop** Take a time out
- **Think** Avoid taking things personally or jumping to conclusions, think about your options
- **Listen** Rather than justifying yourself and being defensive, really listen to what the other person is saying
- **Communicate** Use I-Statements

Mind Map: Think about your options

What do I need to do to
get holidays when I want

I want to go to France to meet my
husband's family

My husband will be angry if I
can't go

I will work extra

**How do I get the Manager
to agree**

He will say no

I feel like he doesn't understand

How do I use the contract

Some colleagues support
me and will cover for me

Other colleagues what the same time

Listen

- **Stop** what you are doing and give your full attention to the other person
- **Look** at the person
- **Engage** in nonverbal feedback: head nod, lean forward, use "uh-huh"
- **Work on understanding** the other's feelings, not on arguing.

Caution

- When listening to another's feelings sensitivity is important
- Not the time to use the response
 - “ I know exactly how you feel”

It negates the uniqueness of the other's experience/feelings

- “I” places emphasis on my needs, wants, etc.
- “ You” places emphasis on your wants, needs , etc.

Example

If you tell me that you are mad with me because I didn't get the articles I promised you for the session and I respond with, " I know just how you feel, I forgot to bring the copies of the exams last week.

- **Question whose feelings are the focus of attention?**
- **Instead say, _____**

Effective Confrontation

- Confrontation is a **communication skill**
- Calls attention to problems or issues
- Provides time to express feelings, beliefs and wants to each other person

“If we don't confront problems as they arise they become bigger and can eat away at a relationship”

Steps to Successful Confrontation

- **Preparation:** Identify your problem, needs and issues
 - **(Self-talk is important at this stage)**
- Make a **date** to sit down and talk
- **Talk** to the other person about your problem

Steps to Successful Confrontation

- **Consider the other person's point of view: Listen, empathize and respond with understanding**
- **Resolve the problem: Make a mutually satisfying agreement**
- **Follow up on the solution: Set a time limit for reevaluation**

Confronting Difficult People

- **Difficult people are simply those who do not respond to rational attempts at conflict resolution**
- **People who drive us crazy but whom we can't ignore or leave**

Difficult Behavior

- **Always right:** need to prove themselves
- **Bitter:** undermine others, carry a grudge
- **Very negative:** find fault in everything
- **Feel powerless:** maybe a perfectionist.
- **Can't say no,** simmer inside
- **Expert on everything:** need to simplify their world

Confronting Difficult People

- Do not respond in the same aggressive way
- **Use I- Statements**
 - throw them off balance
 - makes it more difficult for them to mistreat you.

Difficult People

- **When all techniques fail:** Remember the difficult person speaks only for the difficult person.
- **Last resort: Walk Away** - This is not wrong if it avoids you losing control and ruining any chance of future resolution.

Responding to an Angry Person

Remember that the anger often comes from an unhappy person: show compassion

- **Allow the angry person to talk and let angry feelings flow**
- **Use non verbal listening, react calmly, but with clear meaning**

“This must be very important, please let me know more”

Responding to Angry Person

- We **think at 450 words** per minutes
- We **speak at 125 words** per minute
- In anger we can add fuel to the fire with unproductive and destructive self talk

Examples: I'm not going to take this anymore, I'm no good, I can't handle this.

Collaboration : Preferred Strategy

- **Focuses on the concerns of all**
- **Adopts the goals of finding mutually satisfying solutions**
- **Takes time and effort**
- **Is both a style and a strategy**

Steps for Collaborative Conflict Resolution

Accept responsibility

Set the stage - prepare

Clarify the problem

Search for common goals

Collaborate in problem-solving

Agree on a plan of action

Other Strategies

- **Negotiations**
- **Mediation**

Feedback versus Criticism

- **Feedback:** Begins with “I” statement
- **Criticism :** Begins with “you” statement
- **Constructive criticism is an oxymoron.**

Conflict Management Mindset

- **Embrace conflict as an opportunity**
- **Take personal responsibility**
- **Reject easy solutions**
- **Recognizes the complexity of conflict situations**
- **Value differences of opinions**

References

- Arnetz, J., Arnetz, B., & Petterson, I. (1996).** Violence in the nursing profession. *Work and Stress*, 10(2), 119-127.
- Cahn, D.D. & Abigail, R.A. (2006)** *Managing Conflict Through Communication*. NY: Pearson.
- Duncan, S.M., Hyndman, K., Estabrooks, C.A., Hesketh, K., Humphrey, C.K., Wong, J.S., Acorn, S., & Giovannetti, P. (2001).** Nurses' experience of violence in Alberta and British Columbia hospitals. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*, 32(4), 57-78.
- Grayton, J., Kasta, W., & Khan, P. (1994).** Verbal and physical abuse of nurses. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Administration*, 94(6), 70-79.

References

Lulofs, R.S. & Cahn, D.D. (2000). *Conflict: From Theory to Action(2nd ed.)*, Toronto, ON: Allyn and Bacon.

Thomas, K.W., & Kilmann, R.H. (2002). *Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument*. Tuxedo, NY: Xicom.

Valentine, E.B., Richardson, S., Wood, M.J., & Godkin, D.M. (1998). Nurse educators' administrative ways of handling conflict. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 14(5), 288-297.

Wilmot, W.W. & Hocker, J.C.(2007) *Interpersonal Conflict*. NY: McGraw Hill

Case scenario

As the an ER nurse you transferred a patient to the ICU. The ICU nurse who receives the patient is angry and openly critical of the care the patient has received to date. What would you do?

Scenario

The manager arrives on floor to follow-up a patient complaint and the responsible nurse, comments:

“Are you here to check-up on me??”

Scenario

- Lisa and Jane are nurses who work together on the same clinical unit. One day they arrive early and review their patient assignment.
- Lisa notices that Jane has one more patient than she does and expresses her unhappiness about the assignment. Lisa talks to everyone about how unfair this is and declines to help Jane.

- Sharon's client Mr. Y is unable to communicate his needs in English and requires a family member to translate. Sharon often finds it difficult to complete the client's assessment due to the family's constant monitoring. After she leaves, Mr. Y home she is paged to return as the wound dressing needs changing again because it is soiled. When Sharon returns, she notes that the discharge from the wound is minimal and does not require changing. The family becomes upset, feeling that Sharon is not properly attending to tier father's needs.,

Scenario

