

# **Conflict is a Fact of Organizational Life**

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# Presentation Content

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- Section I: Concept of conflict
- Section II: Conflict Continuum
- Section III: Conflict Management Styles
- Section IV: Conflict Management Strategies

# Section I: The Concept of Conflict

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

# Negative View of Conflict

- **Most people think of conflict as negative and hate the tensions it brings**

# Principle of Inevitability

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- **Conflict is inevitable**
- **Conflict is considered to be a normal consequence of everyday social and organizational life.**

# Conflict

- **Chinese character for conflict is made of two symbols:**
  - **danger**
  - **opportunity**

# Positive View of Conflict

- **Brings problems to the table**
- **Assist people to come together and clarify their goals**
- **Assist people to understand each other**

Wilmot and Hocker(2007)

# Why Manage Conflict

- **The only options of staying out of conflict is staying out of relationships and work**
- “ Conflict happens and we should be prepared”**



# Why Manage Conflict in the Workplace?

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

# Why Manage Conflict in the Workplace?

- **Conflict can be costly to the individual and the organization:**
  - **decreased productivity, morale, job satisfaction**
  - **increased turnover and absenteeism**
  - **increased violence**

## **Section II: Conflict Continuum**



**Disagreement---Interpersonal-----Violence**

# Disagreement

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**Arguments:** Exchanges of claims and evidence.

“Agree to disagree”

# 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.**

**Lulofs and Cahn(2000).**

# Conflict Issues

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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**

# Interpersonal Violence

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**Bickering:** Picking at one another with little focus, “yes” or “no” statements

**Verbal Aggression:** personal insults, name calling, profanity

**Physical Aggression:** Escalates into harm to another

**Conflict Games:** One up man ship

# Conflict as a Process

## Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

- **Criticizing**

Defensiveness

Stonewalling

Contempt

Wilmot and Hocker(2007)



# Critical start up

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

# Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

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- **Criticizing**

**Defensiveness**

**Stonewalling**

**Contempt**

**Wilmot and Hocker(2007)**

# 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, defend**

# Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

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- **Criticizing**

**Defensiveness**

**Stonewalling**

**Contempt**

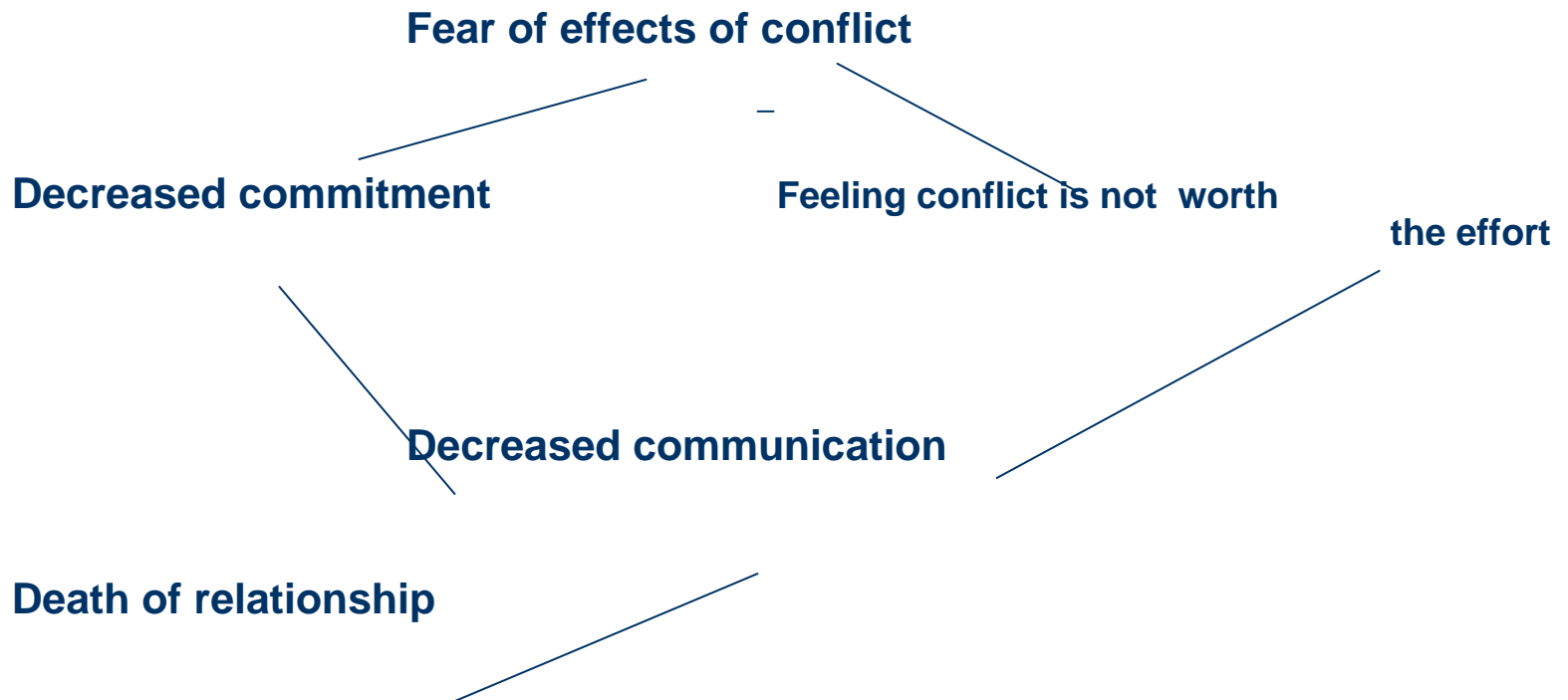
**Wilmot and Hocker(2007)**

# Stonewalling

- Interaction is over
- The person is no longer present “Chilling effect”
- Refusal to engage in a topic no matter how the other person brings it up
- “Holding back” is a less destructive form of stonewalling

# The Chilling Effect

(Cahn and Abigail, 2007)



# Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

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- **Criticizing**

**Defensiveness**

**Stonewalling**

**Contempt**

**Wilmot and Hocker(2007)**

# Contempt

- Any verbal or nonverbal behavior that puts you in a higher place than the other person
- Involves mockery, put downs, and nonverbal expressions of contempt
- **Examples: sarcasm, ridicule, and hostile joking**



# Rates of Violence in Nursing.

- 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

Type	Percentage
Violence in the last 5 shifts	46
Emotional abuse	38
Threat of assault	19
Physical assault	36.4
Verbal sexual harassment	7.5
Sexual assault	0.5-0.8

(Duncan et al,2001)

# Groups Who Abuse

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

(Duncan et al,2001)

## **Section III: Conflict Management Style**

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**It is completely up to you to deal with your fear of conflict and what to do about it.**

# **Self Awareness is the First Step.**

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**Effective conflict management  
begins with knowing yourself/your style**

**Communication skills alone may not  
improve how you handle conflict**

**Your attitude, beliefs and emotional  
reactions may have to be changed**

# A Conflict Memory

- Reflect and come to terms with your **philosophy and experiences of conflict**
- Analyze what you did well, what you did poorly and learn from your mistakes
- Consider the important influences of **families and role models**

# Conflict Management Styles

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

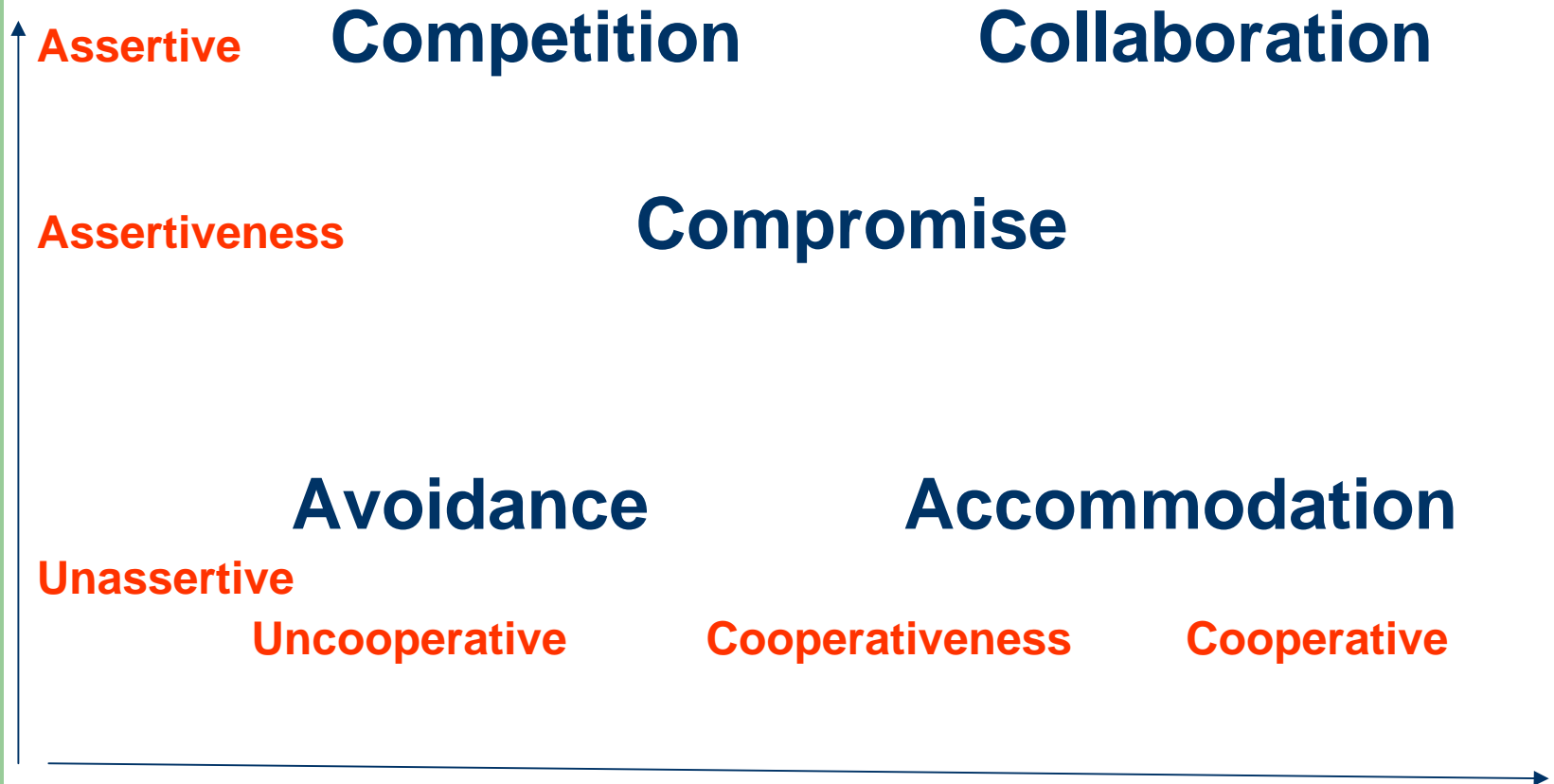
Thomas and Kilman(1974)

# 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**

# Avoiding: Lose-Lose

- **Do not address the conflict**
- **Appropriately used when:**
  - **An issue is trivial**
  - **Potential damage out weights the benefits**
  - **To let people cool down and reduce tensions**

# Avoid – Criticize Loop

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

**Common Among Nurses**

# Avoidance Statements

**“Okay, the next issue is----”**

**“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”**

# Compromising: No Win- No Lost

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- Middle ground or easy way out
- Good litmus test of how you view conflict  
“half full, half empty”

## Competing: Win-Lose

- Pursues own concerns at the expense of others
  - “ Either your with me or your against me”
- Appropriate to be used
  - when quick decisive action is required

# Competing Tactics

- **Threats:** 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**



# 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.

# Style Used by Nurses

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

Valentine, Richardson, Wood & Gidkin(1998)

# Section IV: Strategies

- **Use of I –Statements**
- **S-TLC System**
- **Effective confrontation**
- **Confronting difficult people**
- **Dealing with angry people**
- **Collaboration**
- **Feedback versus criticism**

# Use of “I – Statements”

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

# Examples of I- Statements

## Escaping Responsibility

You're too sarcastic

You make me angry

Anyone with any sense  
at all would not

## Taking Responsibility

I don't like sarcasm

I am angry

I don't understand  
why you would not

# S- TLC

- **Stop:** Control your mental faculties
- **Think:** Think about your goals, wants, needs and those of the other person.
- **Listen:** Truly listen to the other person
- **Communicate:** Decide on how you will respond.

# Effective Confrontation

- **Confrontation is a communication skill**
- **If we don't confront problems as they arise they become bigger and can become destructive/lead to violence**

# Steps to Successful Confrontation

- Prepare **“Self talk is important”**
- Tell the person **“We need to talk”**
- Talk to the person about your problem
- Consider the other person’s point of view
- Make a mutually satisfying agreement
- Set a time limit for reevaluation



# Caution

- **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 and wants

**“ You”** places emphasis on your needs and wants

# 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

**Avoid a “me” versus “you” situation**

- **Ask yourself “How would I feel?”**
- **Ask Yourself “Why are they being difficult?”**

# 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.

# Caution: When Angry

- 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.**

Wilmot and Hocker(2007)

# Responding to an Angry Person

- Know your own responds
- Remember that the anger often comes from an unhappy person: show compassion
- Allow the angry person to talk and let angry feelings flow
- Best chance of success with non verbal listening, react calmly, but with clear meaning

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



# Collaboration : Preferred Strategy

- **Focuses on the concerns of all**
- **Goal is to reach a mutually satisfying solution**
- **Takes time and effort**
- **Is both a style and a strategy**

# Mediation

- Involve a neutral third party

# Feedback versus Criticism

**Feedback** is an essential tool

- Begins with an “I” statement

**Criticism** is generally negative

- Begins with an “you” statement

**“Constructive criticism is an oxymoron”**

# Need to Belief

- **Mutually acceptable solutions are possible**
- **Cooperation is better than competition**
- **That everyone is of equal value**
- **Differences of opinions are valuable**
- **The others are trustworthy**
- **That the other party can choose to cooperate.**

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