Improving Our Behavior in Conflicts

Becoming A Conflict Competent Leader by Craig Runde

And

Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What matters Most

Conflict

Any situation in which people have apparently incompatible goals, interests, values, principles or feelings

3 Basic Causes of Conflict

» Differences
» Misunderstandings
» Disagreements
Some Sources of Conflict

- Doing Something Different
- Different Worldview of Generations
- Different Leadership Styles
- Different Values and Beliefs
- Different Priorities or Goals

Jesus’ Life and Ministry Produced Conflict

- With his family
- With his disciples
- With authorities
- With other religious people
- With other Jews

The Earliest Churches had Conflict

- The Church in Acts—what does it take to belong?
- The Church in Corinth—Immorality and Class conflict
- The Church in Galatia—division between Jew and Gentile Christians
- The Church in Philippi—righteousness based on the law, false teachings
In Alive, Dynamic Organizations and Relationships Conflict is Inevitable!!

CDP Approach
- To look at specific behavioral responses to conflict, and how they might be changed
- To examine the way conflicts unfold over time
- Acknowledge that conflict is inevitable; it cannot, nor should it, be completely avoided
- Our goal of successful conflict management is not to eliminate conflict, but to reduce its harmful effects and maximize its benefits

Cognitive Conflict (Task-Oriented)
- Focuses on ideas, not personalities
- Can occur during times of creativity and productivity
- Affect is neutral, or positive
- Emotion is unrelated, or positively related, to group functioning
Affective Conflict (Personal)
- Focuses on people, not ideas
- Can occur at any time
- Affect is negative
- Negatively related to group functioning
- Can escalate rapidly

CDP Hot Buttons
*People or situations which may irritate you enough to provoke conflict by producing destructive responses*

- The “hotter” the hot button, the more likely it is to produce:
  - Strong negative emotions
  - Feelings of personal provocation
  - Automatic and impulsive responding
  - Increased tension

Path of Conflict

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Precipitating Event and/or Hot Buttons</th>
<th>Initiate Conflict</th>
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<td>Constructive Responses</td>
<td>Destructive Responses</td>
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<td>Beliefs which keep conflict to a minimum</td>
<td>Behaviors which escalate or prolong conflict</td>
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- **Task-Focused Conflict (Cognitive)**
  - Focus on task and problem solving
  - Positive effect
  - Tension decreases
  - Group functioning improves

- **Person-Focused Conflict (Affective)**
  - Focused on personal
  - Negative emotions (anger, frustration)
  - Tension increases
  - Group functioning decreases

CONFLICT DE-ESCALATES
CONFLICT ESCALATES
Constructive Responses

**Behaviors which research has demonstrated to be highly effective in keeping the harmful effects of conflict to a minimum**

Constructive responses emphasize:
- Task-completion and focus on problem-solving
- Creative problem-solving & focus on exchange of ideas
- Expression of positive emotions & optimism
- Not provoking the other person

**Typical Outcomes of Constructive Responses**
- Win-win solutions
- Open & honest communication of feelings
- Both parties’ needs are met
- Non-judgmental actions
- Not sticking adamantly to one position
- Actively resolving conflict (not allowing conflict to continue)
- Thoughtful responses (not impulsive)
- Team performance improves

Destructive Responses

**Behaviors which research has demonstrated to escalate or prolong conflict**

Destructive responses emphasize:
- Displaying negative emotions
- Trying to win, no matter what
- Lack of respect for the other person
- Avoiding conflict rather than facing it
Typical Outcomes of Destructive Responses

- Feelings of anger and frustration
- Judgmental actions
- Getting even and keeping score
- Other party does not have needs met
- Closed channels of communication
- Refusing to deal with issues
- Decreased self-confidence
- Tasks not completed
- Team performance decreases

Active and Passive Responses to Conflict

Research has further demonstrated the usefulness of classifying conflict-related responses into two additional categories.

Active
- Behaviors which involve overt responses, taking action, or making an effort. Outcome can be either constructive or destructive.

Passive
- Behaviors which involve withholding a response, not taking action, or not making an effort. Outcome can be either constructive or destructive.

Conflict Response Categories

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<th>Constructive</th>
<th>Destructive</th>
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<td>Perspective Taking</td>
<td>Winning at All Costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creating Solutions</td>
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<td>Expressing Emotions</td>
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<td>Delay Responding</td>
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<td>Adapting</td>
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<td>Constructive Conflict Behaviors</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ACTIVE CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Perspective Taking (PT)</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Imagines what the other person is thinking and feeling</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Tries to understand how things look from that person’s perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creating Solutions (CS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Attempts to generate creative solutions</td>
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<td>– Brainstorms with the other person to create new ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PASSIVE CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflective Thinking (RT)</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Analyzes the situation to determine the best course of action</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Reflects on the best way to proceed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delay Responding (DR)</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Delays responding until the situation has settled down</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Lets things calm down before proceeding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adapting (AD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Tries to stay flexible and optimistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Tries to just make the best of the situation</td>
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### Destructive Conflict Behaviors

#### ACTIVE DESTRUCTIVE RESPONSES

**Winning at All Costs (WI)**
- Argues vigorously for his/her own position
- Tries to win at all costs

**Displaying Anger (DA)**
- Raises his/her own voice
- Uses harsh, angry words

#### Demeaning Other (DO)
- Rolls his/her eyes when the other person speaks
- Is sarcastic towards that person

#### Retaliating (RE)
- Tries to get even
- Passively obstructs the other person

#### PASSIVE DESTRUCTIVE RESPONSES

**Avoiding (AV)**
- Acts distant and aloof toward that person
- Keeps as much distance as possible from that person

**Yielding (YL)**
- Lets the other person have his/her way in order to avoid further conflict
- Gives in to the other person just to make life easier all the way round
**Destructive Conflict Behaviors**

**Hiding Emotions (HE)**
- Hides his/her true feelings
- Feels upset but doesn’t show it

**Self-Criticizing (SC)**
- Is critical of himself/herself for not handling the conflict better
- Replays the incident over and over in his/her mind

**CDP Hot Buttons**

situations/people causing the greatest degree of potential irritation
- Unreliable
- Unappreciative
- Micro-managing
- Abrasive
- Hostile
- Overly analytical
- Aloof
- Self-centered
- Untrustworthy
- Untrustworthy

**Analyze the Conflict**

- \( \begin{align*} \text{Is the Conflict a problem to be solved, an issue?} \end{align*} \)
- \( \begin{align*} \text{Is it focused on interpersonal relationships, how you feel about a person or situation?} \end{align*} \)
- \( \begin{align*} \text{Different kinds of Conflict require different strategies.} \end{align*} \)
Ask Yourself Helpful Questions

- To whom does this problem belong?
- Is there something I can or should do?
- What precedent do I want to set?
- How does it affect other people?
- How can I build leadership capacity in others?
- Is this a battle I need to fight?

Use Healthy Meeting Practices

- Send out Agendas Minutes, and Reports prior to the Meeting
- Avoid Surprises and Withholding Information—give folks time to think and digest before making a decision.
- Have Discussion Ground Rules and Abide by them
- Chair correctly summarizes what’s been expressed.

Rely on God’s Promises

- In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust: I will not be afraid. What can mortals do to me?
  »Psalm 56:4