

RESPONDING TO CONFLICT: WHAT DO WE DO?*

▶ ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

🕒 **Time:** 95 minutes

➔ **Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe the six conflict resolution styles.
- Identify their own ways of dealing with conflict.
- Discuss how different conflict styles can lead to different results.

★ **Training Methods:** Dramatic Reading, Brainstorm, Small Group Activity, Large Group Discussion

✓ **In This Activity You Will...**

Part A

- Ask participants to read aloud each style.
- Discuss the implications of each style with the class. (15 minutes)
- Ask participants to read the skits and ask the class to identify the conflict resolution style that is being used. (15 minutes)

Part B

- Ask participants to describe a recent conflict and then to use the earlier discussion to figure out which style was used and how you might improve the outcome the next time. (30 minutes)

(continued next page)

Instructions

Part A

1. Explain that the purpose of this session is to introduce different styles of dealing with conflict. Remind participants that we are discussing conflict situations at work not regular conversation.
2. Distribute the handout Six Conflict Resolution Styles and review the definition of each style. Explain that one style is not necessarily better than the others. The point is to realize that there are different methods of dealing with conflict and to realize that we can choose the method that is right for the situation.
3. Distribute the handout Conflict Styles Skits. Ask for volunteers to do a dramatic reading of each script. After each reading, ask participants to identify the conflict style being demonstrated. Remind participants to focus on the language to determine the style.
4. When participants have finished their readings, discuss the following questions:
 - Do people talk and listen differently depending on the conflict style they are using?
 - In each style, who has the power and how does he or she use it?
 - How can different conflict styles lead to different results?
 - If you really want to resolve a problem, what are the key points that will help you get there?
5. Ask participants to brainstorm some of the advantages and disadvantages of each style. Which styles do they see most often at work? Why do they think co-workers and clients choose these styles?

* This module comes from the Comprehensive Peer Worker Training, Peer Advanced Competency Training (PACT) Project Harlem Hospital Center, Division of Infectious Diseases, 2008.

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ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY (CONT.)

✓ In This Activity You Will...(cont.)

Part C

- Ask participants in triads to read one conflict situation and to discuss the best and worst way to handle the situation. (20 minutes)
- Report back to the larger group. (15 minutes)

✂ Materials:

- Flipchart - Six Conflict Resolution Styles
- Flipchart- Conflict Discussion Questions
- Handout - Six Conflict Resolution Styles
- Handout - Conflict Styles Skits
- Handout- Conflict Cards (6 sets)
- Trainer Guide - Conflict Styles Skits
- Newsprint - Recent Conflict discussion questions

🕒 Preparation:

- Prepare flipchart
- Prepare handouts
- Focus on “resolution” part of the conflict

Part B

6. Divide the participants into groups of three each. Within each group, give participants 20 minutes to discuss the following topics from the flipchart:
 - Describe a recent conflict situation in which you were involved; the conflict can be personal or professional.
 - Briefly describe how you handled the situation. What conflict style did you use? What are examples of your behaviors that indicate this style?
 - What conflict style(s) might you employ that would help you to better resolve the conflict situation?
7. Ask tables to report on one of the situations from their discussion to the larger group and discuss the conflict styles further. This should take about 10 minutes.

Part C

8. Keep the class in groups of three. Distribute one set of Conflict Cards to each group. Ask the three participants in each group to take turns picking a card and reading it out loud. For each Conflict Card, ask the participant to decide which conflict style would be most effective in dealing with this conflict, and which style would be least effective. Ask them to share the reasons for their choices. The trainer may want to assign cards to each table to reduce the time spent choosing.
9. After each participant has had a turn, ask the group to choose one more example. For each example, ask them to discuss what outcomes might result from using each of the six different conflict styles. Ask the group to agree on the most effective and the least effective conflict style to use in each case. Give students about seven minutes for this discussion. Each group can report and justify their choices.

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▶ TRAINER'S TIPS

Part A:

- For each scenario ask participants what are the results that you want? Does the style prioritize task or relationship?
- Discuss the distinction between personal and private conflict resolution styles – relationship is very important to maintain.

Part B:

- Tell groups not to spend too much time on the story itself but to quickly summarize the situation and discussion.
- May need to spend extra time on the distinction between compromise and collaboration.

Part C:

- Trainees may spend too much time picking a scenario so it helps to assign them (i.e. 1st 3 for group A, etc).

Summary

- If time permits, close exercise by having a “go-round:” participants take turns responding to the statement, “The next time I have a conflict with someone, I would like to...” A participant can opt to pass when it’s his or her turn to speak. After everyone has spoken, you can go back to those who passed to see if they have thought of something they want to contribute.
- **Wrap up the session.**

Sources: Conflict Resolution in the High School by Carol Miller Lieber with Linda Lantieri and Tom Roderick, 1998 and The Conflict Resolution Training Program by Prudence Bowman Kestner and Larry Ray, 2002

* This module is part of the online toolkit Building Blocks to Peer Success. For more information, visit http://www.hdwg.org/peer_center/training_toolkit. This module comes from the Comprehensive Peer Worker Training, Peer Advanced Competency Training (PACT) Project Harlem Hospital Center, Division of Infectious Diseases, 2008.

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SESSION HANDOUT #1 of 3

SIX CONFLICT RESOLUTION STYLES

Directing/Controlling

“My way or hit the highway.”

We do not, cannot, or will not bargain or give in. At times we are standing up for our rights and deeply held beliefs. It can also mean pursuing what we want at the expense of another person. We may also be caught in a power struggle and not see a way to negotiate to get what we want.

Collaborating

“Let’s sit down and work this out.”

We work with others to find mutually satisfying ways to get all of our needs met. We are interested in finding solutions and in maintaining or even improving the relationship. Other people involved are seen as partners rather than adversaries.

Compromising

“Let’s both give a little” or “Something is better than nothing.”

We seek the middle ground. Each party gives up something for a solution that may satisfy our needs only partially.

Accommodating

“Whatever you want is fine” or “It doesn’t matter anyway.”

We yield to another’s point of view, meeting the other person’s needs while denying our own. We may give in to smooth the relationship, or to get our way another time.

Avoiding/Denying

“Let’s skip it” or “Problem? I don’t see a problem.”

We do not address the conflict and withdraw from the situation or behave as though the situation were not happening. We leave it to others to deal with.

Appealing to a Greater Authority or a Third Party

“Help me out here.”

We turn to others whom we perceive as having more power, influence, authority, or wisdom to solve the conflict.

RESPONDING TO CONFLICT: WHAT DO WE DO?

SESSION HANDOUT #2 of 3

CONFLICT STYLES SKITS

Skit # 1

Alex and Jamie are working on a part of a grant proposal that is due tomorrow. Alex has his part ready, but Jamie has arrived at their meeting empty-handed.

Alex: I knew this would happen! You never get stuff in on time. I should have known I couldn't count on you.

Jamie: Look, there's still this afternoon. I can work late if I have to.

Alex: This afternoon? This afternoon is too late! You can't just wait until the last minute. I told you that before. You're so irresponsible.

Jamie: Alex, just listen. I have an outline in my head; I just need to put it all on paper.

Alex: You don't have any idea how to do this proposal. I'd rather do the whole thing myself!

Jamie: Oh, right – how will that make me look? You'd better think twice about edging me out.

Alex: Oh, yeah? Why would I want to work with someone who's bringing me down?

Jamie: Bringing you down? How about all the times I helped you out?

Alex: Oh, please. The kind of help you give I don't need.

Jamie: Maybe you'd better not say things you'll regret later.

Alex: Oh, forget it.

Skit #2

Members of the Holiday Party Planning Committee are meeting to plan next month's employee party.

Sondra: Look, we've just spent an hour arguing about a band. No one likes the same kind of music.

Aimee: I don't think we've looked hard enough.

Thomas: Sure we have. We've gotten at least ten suggestions.

Joanne: Well, it looks to me like we're not going to agree. Why don't we hire a DJ who will play different kinds of music?

Sondra: I guess that would work, but people really wanted a live band.

Thomas: We're running out of time and we've got other decisions to make. Let's just go with a DJ, okay?

Others: Okay, alright...

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SESSION HANDOUT #2 of 3 (cont.)

CONFLICT STYLES SKITS (CONT.)

Skit #3

Carmen walks past Peter in the hallway.

- Peter:** Look at those legs! Hey, you all, clear the way so she can strut her stuff!
- Carmen:** Just because I have a skirt on doesn't give you the right to make a public announcement.
- Peter:** Hey, you're doing the advertising, not me.
- Carmen:** Look, I've asked you before to stop hassling me, and you just keep at it. I want to go to Human Resources about this.
- Peter:** Aw, give me a break. You make such a big deal about everything.
- Carmen:** I'm serious, it really bothers me. And I know for a fact I'm not the only one. I've talked to Sherrie and Kendra and...
- Peter:** Alright, alright. If you want to go to HR, fine. I'll be happy to tell my side of the story.

Skit #4

Lee and Dana are meeting to plan for their organization's monthly seminar on "Emerging Issues in HIV."

- Dana:** So what do you think this month's topic should be? I'm really interested in getting someone in to speak about crystal meth.
- Lee:** That feels played out to me – the topic's gotten so much attention lately. I think we should focus on something that hasn't been addressed as much, like HIV in the elderly.
- Dana:** Well, we don't have many elderly people coming in to our agency – I really don't see it as being as relevant for us as the crystal epidemic.
- Lee:** We may have only a few elderly clients now, but I believe it's the tip of the iceberg. We really need to learn more about their issues so that our agency can be inviting to them and able to deal with them effectively when they do start coming in.
- Dana:** Well, I guess we can do the elderly this month. But I really do want to address the crystal meth issue in one of our upcoming seminars – I have more and more clients coming in who are hooked in to the "Party 'n Play" scene.
- Lee:** It's a deal. So do you know anyone who's an expert in HIV in the elderly?

RESPONDING TO CONFLICT: WHAT DO WE DO?

SESSION HANDOUT #2 of 3 (cont.)

CONFLICT STYLES SKITS (CONT.)

Skit #5

In the women's bathroom:

- Selma:** Did you hear what Alma said about Susan? She said that Susan only got her promotion because she was sleeping with the boss.
- Sharon:** What a load of crap! Susan is a good friend of mine and I know her husband and family very well. Susan got the promotion because she works hard and she does a great job. That rumor is pure fantasy on Alma's part – she's just jealous because she wasn't even considered for the position.
- Selma:** Well, a lot of people are starting to repeat the rumor and they seem to really believe it. Do you think you should tell Susan? I mean, since she's your good friend and all. I sure would want someone to do that for me.
- Sharon:** Hey, I'm not messing with this. The whole thing is just a stupid rumor. I'm staying out of it.

Skit #6

Louise has just walked into the office she shares with Dara.

- Louise:** Dara, it's freezing in here. It's snowing outside and you've got the air conditioner on!
- Dara:** If I didn't put the air on, I'd suffocate. The way the heat blasts out of this radiator, I'm being roasted alive.
- Louise:** Well, I don't know how you can be so hot – I have to wear my coat and gloves in here – are you going through menopause or something?
- Dara:** Very funny, I'm younger than you. Look skinny bones, you must be cold all the time because you don't have any body fat to generate any heat.
- Louise:** Look, it's obvious we're experiencing 2 different climates in here; maybe we could just turn the radiator down.
- Dara:** I tried that, but I can't even reach it – my desk is blocking it.
- Louise:** Hmm, you know we could try moving this furniture around. If we got the building staff to move your desk over by the window, you could get away from that radiator blasting heat out at you.
- Dara:** I thought this office furniture was nailed down. If I did move my desk, that would uncover the radiator so that we would actually be able to regulate the heat for the first time. But what about your desk? If I was over by the window, we'd be right on top of each other.
- Louise:** I can move my desk to the opposite corner, I don't mind.
- Dara:** Great, let's do it. I'll call building services right now and see how soon they can come up.

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SESSION HANDOUT #3 of 3

CONFLICT CARDS

<p>Someone you work with is making fun of another co-worker. You're angry because this co-worker does this stuff all the time.</p>	<p>Your co-worker tells you she has a family emergency and has to leave work early. She has asked you to secretly punch her time card at 5:00.</p>
<p>Your co-worker is always borrowing your office supplies and never returns them.</p>	<p>As you are talking to friends, someone passes by and stops. She thinks you just insulted her.</p>
<p>Your co-worker says he is stressed out and has asked you to help him with his work. This is the third time this has happened.</p>	<p>Your boss is always criticizing you. Your work never seems to be good enough.</p>
<p>You think your boss has been unfair in your yearly evaluation. Your evaluations are never as good as you think they should be.</p>	<p>You and two co-workers have spent 20 minutes arguing about who is responsible for covering Saturday's clinic shift. You've had enough.</p>
<p>The same co-worker wants to start an argument with you again! You know you will both end up yelling at each other.</p>	<p>Your boss is very upset. You were supposed to come in early to help her prepare for a big meeting and you forgot.</p>

RESPONDING TO CONFLICT: WHAT DO WE DO?

SESSION FLIPCHART #1 of 2

SIX CONFLICT RESOLUTION STYLES

Directing/Controlling

“My way or hit the highway.”

Collaborating

“Let’s sit down and work this out.”

Compromising

“Let’s both give a little” or “Something is better than nothing.”

Accommodating

“Whatever you want is fine” or “It doesn’t matter anyway.”

Avoiding/Denying

“Let’s skip it” or “Problem? I don’t see a problem.”

Appealing to a Greater Authority or a Third Party

“Help me out here.”

RESPONDING TO CONFLICT: WHAT DO WE DO?

SESSION FLIPCHART #2 of 2

RECENT CONFLICT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Describe a recent conflict situation in which you were involved; the conflict can be personal or professional.

Briefly describe how you handled the situation. What conflict style did you use? What are examples of your behaviors that indicate this style?

What conflict style(s) might you employ that would help you to better resolve the conflict situation?

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SESSION TRAINER'S GUIDE

CONFLICT STYLES SKITS

- 1 = Direct/Controlling
- 2 = Accommodating
- 3 = Appealing to a Higher Authority
- 4 = Compromising
- 5 = Avoiding/Denying
- 6 = Collaborating