
Slide 1



**Effectively Navigating
Workplace Conflict**
1 Hour Skill Building Workshop

Presentation by:
MHN Training & Development

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Participant Handbook

Slide 2

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Learning Objectives

- Discover the role that needs, values, and beliefs play in creating conflict
- Understand the elements of productive conflicts

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Conflict is Inevitable

- Conflict arises due to:
 - Differing work habits, styles, values, beliefs, preferences, personalities
 - Interdependence
 - Competition
 - Ineffective communication
 - Stressors
 - *What else?*

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The Benefits of Learning to Deal with Conflict

- Dealing with conflict effectively allows us to:
 - Advocate for ourselves, our beliefs, ideas, and opinions
 - Develop and maintain positive and productive working relationships
 - Contribute towards creative, workable and effective ideas and solutions, for our teams, organizations and customers
 - What else?

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When Does Conflict Arise?

- As human beings, we are:
 - Attached to our own beliefs and values
 - Driven by our own wants (desires) and needs
- Conflict can arise when:
 - We perceive that our beliefs, values, and needs are being challenged, threatened or disregarded
- We may not be conscious of our underlying attachments, motivations, traumas
 - Or their connection to our reactions

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Universal Human Needs in the Workplace

	I need...
<i>I matter</i>	I need to feel that my organization has a worthwhile purpose, and to understand how my work relates to it.
<i>I belong</i>	I need to feel part of the team/organization.
<i>I'm enabled</i>	I need easy access to the tools, information, and processes to do my work. I need clarity on how to find help, get work done, and make decisions.
<i>I contribute</i>	I need to have my accomplishments recognized. I need to know that my teammates appreciate and value my contributions.
<i>I'm respected</i>	I need to feel respected. My organization must provide an environment of trust where information can be confidently and appropriately shared.

Adapted from: Palmer, Brad. "The Five Human Needs in Every Workplace". Jostle. <http://blog.jostle.me/blog/the-five-human-needs-in-every-workplace/>
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Developing Self-Awareness

- Be curious about *your* reactions
 - What beliefs, values, needs, or desires may feel challenged or disregarded?
 - Does it feel as if a trigger may have been activated?
 - Try not to judge yourself, just notice

- Consider logic (rational thinking)
 - "Do I know for a fact, that the **belief** I'm holding is true?"
 - "If I act on my impulses, will I regret it?"

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Seek to Understand Others/the Situation

- Be aware of the assumptions/stories/beliefs you have about the person/situation
 - Be curious. What might *their* beliefs, values, needs, desires be?
- Consider logic (rational thinking)
 - “Do I know for a fact, that the **assumption, story, belief**, I have about the other person/situation is *true*?”
- How might your answers inform *how* you respond?
 - Pause, take a breath
 - Share your interpretation and seek clarification
 - Consider the importance of the issue
 - *What else?*

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Managing Strong Emotions ‘In the Moment’

- Take a time out and/or remove yourself from the situation
- Take some deep breaths
- Have self-compassion
- Remind yourself, “I have choice in how I respond”
 - “I am the master of my emotions”
 - “I can experience thoughts, emotions and impulses **without** acting on them”
- Continue deep breathing and walk/move if that is helpful

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When Someone Else is Upset or Angry

- Remain patient and respectful
- Use a calming voice
- Use good listening skills and be empathetic
- Maintain boundaries
- Seek refuge if concerned about your safety

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Conflict Goes Best When...

- Conflict gets *worse* when people:
 - Allow their emotional responses to take over
 - Criticize
 - Don't listen or try to understand
 - Shut down
- Conflict goes *best* when people:
 - Consider their response *before* responding
 - Are respectful
 - Listen to understand
 - Are willing to engage and deal with the issue at hand

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Elements that Support Productive Conflict

- When working through an issue with someone:
 - Be direct, honest, respectful
 - Include your feelings, and interests
 - Be curious about the other person's perspective
 - Listen actively, acknowledge, clarify
 - Identify and call out common ground
- Brainstorm possible solutions (address interests)
- Try to reach agreement

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Elements that Support Productive Conflict *cont.*

- Address the issue sooner rather than later
- Keep the end in mind
- Use neutral language and “I” statements
- Let go of “positioning”

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Elements that Support Productive Conflict *cont.*

- Remember the STAND model:
 - **S** = State the issue
 - **T** = Talk about the impact of the issue
 - **A** = Acknowledge the other's point of view
 - **N** = Negotiate a mutual resolution
 - **D** = Decide what each person is willing to do

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Different Styles for Different Situations

When in conflict, when might it be:

- Important to assert yourself?
- Helpful to be less assertive?
- A good idea to compromise?
- Wise to avoid engaging?

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Summary

- Understand your own beliefs/needs/interests
- Be curious about other person's beliefs/needs/interests
- Ask yourself, "am I using productive conflict practices?"
- Practice helps!

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Resources

Books on Conflict Resolution:

- Crucial Accountability by Kerry Patterson and Joseph Grenny
- Why Are We Yelling? by Buster Benson
- Difficult Conversations by Douglas Stone and Bruce Patton
- Fierce Conversations by Susan Scott
- Getting to Yes Getting to Yes by Roger Fisher, William L. Ury, Bruce Patton

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Handout A: How to Work Through Your Emotional Triggers

To work through and heal your emotional triggers, you must begin to compassionately examine and shift any beliefs that you've carried around from your family or society. Those beliefs will be different for every person, but examples might be, "I am not smart enough," or even, "I'm too sensitive."

You need to begin gently addressing the parts of yourself that feel flawed, such as doubts about your body image or your worthiness to find a partner. When you heal the initial trauma or false belief, you set yourself emotionally free. Then you won't become as easily triggered or drained in the future.

Your initial trauma or false belief is related to a hot button issue for you. For instance, if you have unresolved anger at your father, you may soak up other people's anger at their fathers. Or your fear of chronic illness may even make you susceptible to absorbing the symptoms of others' chronic illnesses! You are more prone to take on the emotional or physical pain that you haven't worked out in yourself. The more you heal issues that trigger you, the less likely you'll be to absorb emotions from others. You might sense them, but they won't cut as deeply or drain you.

Here are five strategies adapted from the book, *The Empath's Survival Guide*, that may be helpful to start healing your emotional triggers.

1. Identify your top 3 emotional triggers.

In your journal, identify your top three emotional triggers which cause you to be most upset and thrown off balance than any others. For instance, when someone criticizes your weight or appearance? Or if you don't earn a certain income? Or perhaps you feel unlovable and undeserving of a healthy relationship? Write these down to clarify the aspects of yourself that you need to heal.

Do any of these situations trigger you? Identifying your triggers is the first step to healing from them.

- Someone yelling at you.
- Someone rejecting you.
- Someone leaving you (or the threat that they will).
- Helplessness over painful situations.
- Someone discounting or ignoring you.
- Someone being unavailable to you.
- Someone giving you a disapproving look.
- Someone blaming or shaming you.
- Someone being judgmental or critical of you.
- Someone being too busy to make time for you.
- Someone not appearing to be happy to see you.

- Someone coming on to you sexually in a needy way.
- Someone trying to control you.
- Someone being needy or trying to smother you.
- Bullying you
- What else?

2. Track the trigger's origin.

Once you know your triggers, you can consider their origin. What they might relate to from your childhood experiences.

Journal about where these triggers originated. For example, did your parents say that you were “too fat” or unattractive? Did a teacher tell you that you didn’t have what it took to succeed in school? Or were you neglected by your family, so you grew up feeling unlovable? Knowing where your triggers come from allows you to know yourself better. It may be painful to revisit old memories, so do so gently. Remind yourself that this process is all part of the healing process.

3. Know how you respond

When triggered, you may either withdraw emotionally and simply feel hurt or angry — or even respond in an aggressive way that you will probably regret later. We’ve all been there. Your reaction is so intense because you’re defending against an extremely painful feeling that has surfaced.

What do you do to manage the painful feelings that are triggered? Do you face your triggers head-on or attempt to avoid the pain? Some typical responses are listed below.

If you get angry for instance, acknowledge that anger is not bad. It is deeply embedded into our evolutionary code. It is how we fend off dangers and threats to our wellbeing. The next time you feel yourself getting angry, understand that trying to simply avoid it won’t help. Find a way instead to release or disarm your anger in a healthy, self-respecting way. Try telling yourself, *“What I am feeling is natural, but it doesn’t serve me.”* Accepting your reaction – rather than fighting it – will calm you down and free you to focus on problem solving.

“Emotions have a purpose and good information that can be helpful. But reacting emotionally may not take us where we want to go.” Don Miguel Ruiz

If we are unaware of your triggers, it is common to avoid dealing with them. Do any of these avoidance techniques relate to you?

- I get angry.
- I get needy.
- I comply. I become a people-pleaser.
- I shutdown and withdraw from the other person.

- I blame someone else for my pain.
- I turn to an addiction – food, drugs, alcohol, sex, porn, shopping, work gambling and so on.

If you do relate to any of these responses, how do you feel about them? You'll probably realize that the pain doesn't go away just because you try to avoid it, and you may even end up in more pain.

3. Reprogram negative beliefs.

Start with one trigger that has the least emotional charge and begin to compassionately reprogram it. Stand in front of a mirror and tell yourself, “This is not reality.” What’s actually true is, “I am lovable, capable, and smart.” Then slowly and deeply breathe. As you breathe, say aloud the same statement three times as a mantra in a tone that conveys you mean what you’re saying. This will help you substitute the negative belief with a positive, more realistic one. Call to mind your positive mantra whenever negative thoughts creep in.

4. Act as-if.

At the start of the healing process, you might need to act “as-if” when you haven’t fully integrated a new positive belief. That’s okay. For instance, simply saying to someone, “I disagree. I fully deserve this great job” (even when you don’t fully believe that) paves the way for a deeper belief later on. Or “I’m proud of my sensitivities. Please do not put them down.” Sometimes you need to practice a more enlightened behavior for it to sink in and become real.

5. Work with a therapist or coach.

Consider getting the help of a clinician to deal with your wounds.

It’s often useful to seek guidance to help you find the root of the trigger and process the feelings involved. You may feel tremendous rage or sadness that your family never believed in you, so you never learned to believe in yourself. Expressing and releasing the feelings allows you to heal the trigger and move on to embrace your true power.

- Healing your triggers is liberating because you won’t be thrown off or drained by people’s inappropriate comments. They may still be annoying, but they won’t have the power to zap you. The more you heal your emotional triggers, the more emotionally free you will be.
- Only *you* can heal your triggers, so take a little time to go inside and make sure to be patient, kind and compassionate.
- You don’t want to be frequently triggered. No one does. It’s exhausting and painful, especially for highly sensitive and empathic people.

- Your emotional triggers are wounds that need to heal. These beliefs are based on fears — and they are not reality. Let me repeat that: they do *not* reflect your real worth.
- Any critique that brings forth old hurts cuts extra deep, but just being aware that something is a hot button issue for you is the first step to owning it, and eventually healing it.
- It can be challenging to identify what exactly our triggers are, but this process of getting to know and understand them can help us heal and learn how to cope better in response.

Some content adapted from:

- <https://introvertdear.com/news/strategies-hsps-empaths-heal-emotional-triggers/>

Handout B: Key Elements of Productive Conflict

- When working through an issue with someone:
 - Include your feelings, and interests
 - Have you ever experienced a situation where someone gives in or grants you what you want on a practical or logical level, but you feel upset and emotional? This can happen when our emotional needs haven't been met. Perhaps we didn't share how we were feeling. That we were hurt, disappointed, frustrated, etc. Or perhaps we did but those feelings weren't acknowledged. Addressing logic *and* emotions are essential, in dealing with conflict effectively.
 - Additionally...
 - Communicate your interests, what matters to you. This prevents the other person from having to guess at what is important to you. If we understand one another's interests, it's easier to move into problem solving.
 - Be direct, clear, and respectful
 - Speak directly to the person or people that you are in disagreement/conflict with (versus gossiping about them).
 - Stay focused on the specific issue at hand. Avoid bringing in past issues/hurts/frustrations.
 - Be respectful. Listen, acknowledge. Refrain from using threatening, patronizing, condescending or shaming language/behaviors.
 - Be curious about the other person's perspective
 - We covered this on slide 7. It's easy to get caught up on details or one thing you don't like. Instead, be curious about the person's perspective. Where are they coming from? What are their needs, interests, feelings, and values?
 - Listen actively, acknowledge, clarify
 - Listen actively, and to understand. Acknowledge what you heard whether you like it or not. Seek clarity (paraphrase, ask questions to ensure you understand).
 - Often, we're not listening, but instead, are busy making our own internal counter argument. Challenge yourself in making a sincere effort to understand the other person.
 - Look beneath the surface for additional or hidden meaning. Listen for what's not being said and consider what you might learn from the person's body language.

- Identify and call out common ground
 - Look for elements that you do agree with, shared interests and common ground. “We both care about the project” or “we both want this event to go smoothly”. Common ground can help create bridges.
- Brainstorm possible solutions (address interests)
- With an understanding of one another’s interests, discuss possible agreements/compromises
Agreement is not always possible. There are times when agreeing to disagree is what is necessary.

Handout C: Applying the Key Elements of Productive Conflict

The following scenario illustrates how these elements of positive conflict can be applied. In this case, to *prevent* a conflict.

Scenario

Your manager assigns a task to you and a colleague. You were already feeling overwhelmed and stressed *before* the assignment was given. Your colleague doesn't know this.

You say to your colleague: How about we meet at the end of the week to make a plan? From the shocked expression on your colleague's face, you know they don't like the idea.

Your colleague: I don't want to wait. I want to start now.

You immediately feel even more stressed and want to say: it's not all about what *you* want. You take a breath and pause.

What might you say to your colleague instead, that could be constructive? Tip: reference the points on slide 12.

A possible response:

You: I suggested the end of the week because I'm stressed out and overwhelmed with deadlines right through Thursday. What were you thinking?

What points on the slide 12 does this statement include?

This statement includes feelings and interests. It's direct, honest, and respectful. And demonstrates curiosity about the other person's perspective. With your colleague's response, you heard *what* they want, but they didn't say why they *feel* that way, or what their *interest* is.

How might you re-work the colleague's initial statement, "I don't want to wait. I want to start now" to include their interests?

A possible response:

Colleague: "I would like to get started so that we have plenty of time and can avoid pressures of last-minute work. I'm supposed to start on a big project next week."

Do you hear anything in common in each statement?

A possible response:

Neither like stress? Both trying to manage their time effectively? Both want to minimize stress?

After your colleague said: “I would like to get started so that we have plenty of time and can avoid pressures of last-minute work. I’m supposed to start on a big project next week”, *how might you respond in a way that acknowledges what they said and calls out common ground.?*

A possible response:

You: I get it that you have a big project coming and want to be ready for that. And it sounds like neither of us likes being stressed out.

What is the colleague’s interest? Or another word that fits here is need. What is their need?

A possible response:

The need is to start on the task now, in order to have time for next week’s project.

Moving into brainstorming, what might you say next?

Possible response:

You: Let’s figure this out. Maybe we break it into halves. You start, get your half done this week and I tackle my half next week. What do you think?

And if an agreement is reached, it’s important to repeat back your understanding of the agreement. In some cases, it can be helpful to write up and share the notes with one another via email.

Handout D: “I” Messages

Assertive communication includes the use of “I” messages.

An “I” message is a tool for assertively expressing one’s beliefs and feelings about someone’s behavior or actions, without coming across as judging the other person.

It promotes a willingness to exchange information, find a solution and to seek a constructive change in the situation.

“I” statements are generally expressed as a sentence beginning with the word “I”.

And include the following:

1. How one thinks/feels (is impacted by the behavior)
2. Description of specific behavior

“I think or feel X (my reaction), when you do Y (behavior)”

Example: “I feel anxious when you lean your body against my desk.”

“I” statements can be effective, as they include:

3. A **request** to change the behavior (think in advance – what is my desired outcome?)

It might sound like:

“It would be helpful to me if you could do Z instead.” And, “Would that work for you? What do you need?”

Example: “I feel anxious when you lean your body against my desk. I need more physical space. I would be helpful to me if you would sit in the chair or lean against the bookcase. Can you do that?”

...and/or

4. What the **consequence** will be if the behavior continues

It might sound like:

“If this behavior continues, Z will happen.”

Example: “I’ve asked you before not to lean against my desk. If you’re unable to do that, we can meet in the staff lounge or the conference room, but not at my desk.”

“I” Message Activities:

1. Convert “You” messages into “I” messages

“You” Messages

- “You were late again with that report, and I’ve told you about that before. I’m really upset.”
- “You were rude to Mary in the meeting again today. This is the third time this has happened!”
- “You’ve been told that procedure 5 times and you’re still doing it the wrong way!”

2. Write your own “I” Messages

Consider something that you want to say to someone that has been bothering you. Perhaps you’ve already spoken to them about it and the conversation was not productive. Write down what you want to say as an “I” Message. Include all 4 steps if all 4 are relevant.

Note: Start with the end in mind. What is your intent? What is your desired outcome?