# Conflict Management:
# Managing Team Conflict

**Participant Workbook**

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# Introduction

## Objectives:

- Learn the role of leaders in recognizing destructive conflict and determining whether and when to intervene
- Understand the common causes and triggers of conflict and how people typically approach conflict
- Determine how to use coaching and mediation to defuse conflict before it becomes harmful and destructive

# Conflict Management

*What is your definition of conflict management? Use the space provided here to capture your thoughts.*

## What is Conflict Management?

Conflict management (often referred to as conflict resolution) describes the way we manage incompatible actions with others, where others can be a person or a group.

Effective conflict management is about benefiting from conflict, not avoiding it, or shutting it down.

***When could workplace conflict be healthy? Use the space provided here to capture your thoughts.***

## Cost of Workplace Conflict

- Financial loss
- Work disruptions
- Decreased productivity
- Project failure
- Absenteeism
- Turnover
- Termination
- Stress

## Common Catalysts for Team Conflict

- Negative work environment
- Resource competition
- Change
- Emotion
- Misunderstandings and biases

- Poorly communicated expectations
- Lack of trust
- Inconsistent performance measurement and rewards
- Favoritism
- Badly structured processes and governance
- Personality differences

## Conflict Triggers

*"When we experience 'road rage' on a crowded freeway, it's not because we're sociopathic monsters. It's because the temporary condition of being behind the wheel in a car, surrounded by rude impatient drivers, triggers a change in our otherwise placid demeanor. We've unwittingly placed ourselves in an environment of impatience, competitiveness, and hostility—and it alters us."*

**Marshall Goldsmith, Triggers**

***Please review the following graph, which comes from Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman's book: Thinking Fast and Slow:***
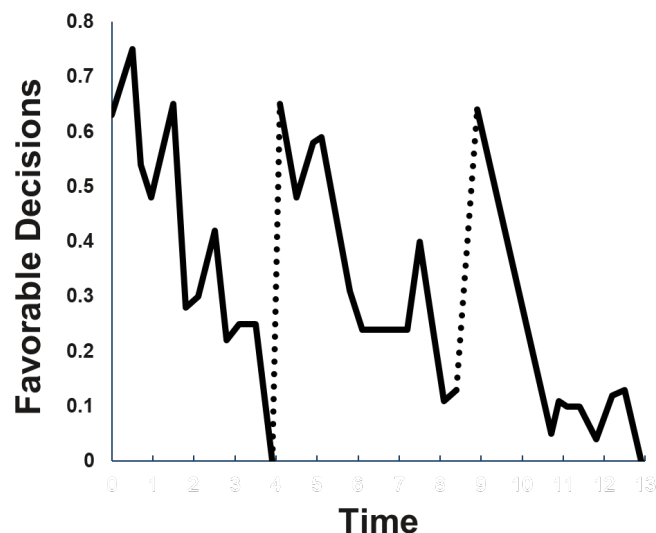
*It tracks the decisions made by parole board judges throughout a typical day. The horizontal axis tracks hours from early morning to early evening. The vertical access tracks the likelihood of a favorable decision where the judges grant parole. The dotted lines represent breaks taken by the judges throughout the day.*

*What do you think this data tells us about decision-making and agreeableness relative to time of day?*

# Conditions for Productive Conflict

## Create Conditions for Productive Conflict:

- Build strong communications
- Emphasize relationships
- Facilitate trust-building and mutual respect
- Be transparent
- Develop shared values
- Lead by example
- Clarify expectations
- Make rewards fair and consistent

## Should You Intervene?

- Is behavior affecting others' ability to do their job?
- Is performance suffering?
- Could this conflict negatively affect team productivity, partner relationships, or customers?

# Conflict Assessment Worksheet

| Criteria | Rating |
|---|---|
| **Emotions:** *Your feelings and those of others involved in the situation.* <br><br> (1 = Low levels of emotion; 5 = intense or high levels of emotion) | 1  2  3  4  5 |
| **Trust:** *Confidence in those involved in the situation.* <br><br> (1 = Good, strong trust between people; 5 = Poor or no trust) | 1  2  3  4  5 |
| **History:** *The background of the conflict.* <br><br> (1 = Little or no prior history of conflict between those involved; 5 = long or substantial history of conflict) | 1  2  3  4  5 |
| **Power:** *The distribution of control, influence, or authority in the relationship.* <br><br> (1 = Equality of power; fair and balanced; 5 = great imbalance; high inequality) | 1  2  3  4  5 |
| **Total score:** | |

**Interpretation:**

A score of **4-6** indicates you can probably safely handle this situation on your own; **7-13** indicates you should probably seek some third party assistance; **14-20** indicates you should probably not attempt to resolve the conflict without some professional intervention.

*Think of a current workplace conflict you are facing. Now assess the situation using the guide above. What was your result? Will you intervene? Use the space provided to record your thoughts.*

# Conflict Coaching

Where a conflict impacts the work, productivity, customer relationships or threatens to create a toxic environment, leaders should step in as coaches and:

- Give objective guidance
- Be of neutral assistance
- Be non-judgmental

*Imagine you're a supervisor. You have a team of fifteen. Your section of the building has a closed office, a meeting room, and twelve cubicles.*

*There is one thermostat in the main area with the twelve cubicles. The closed room and the meeting room each have their own thermostat.*

*Your team is constantly in conflict over the temperature. One turns it down and a few minutes later, another turns it up. A few have taken to working in the meeting room, which causes scheduling problems. No one is happy and it has begun to impact performance.*

*As the leader, what do you do?*

*Use the space provided here to capture your thoughts.*

# Conflict Resolution

- Ask the parties to resolve it
- If necessary, schedule a meeting
- Referee a discussion

- Encourage ideas
- Arrive at a mutually satisfactory resolution

# Conflict Mediation

- Make it voluntary and confidential
- Diagnose the situation and context
- Intervene as early as possible
- Remain neutral
- Facilitate, don't advise
- Use mediation techniques

## Common Triggers During Mediation

- Disrespect
- Exclusion
- Status
- Integrity
- Blame
- Taking it personally
- Fatigue

*In order to complete a special project successfully, it is essential that two of your most senior and skilled team members collaborate closely, share knowledge, and align their efforts.*

*Each was on the team before you joined as manager. They have never gotten along. Both are exceptional performers with unique skillsets needed for the project.*

*Imagining these two people working side-by-side, sharing ideas, and integrating their work to achieve a goal feels impossible, but the need is vital and urgent.*

*As the leader, what do you do? Coach? Mediate? Both?*

*Use the space provided here to capture your thoughts.*

## Resolving Team Conflict

**Proven Practices in Defusing Conflict**

- Acknowledge the conflict

- Plan your intervention

- Get your facts straight

- Think through your options

- Reframe the conflict

- Manage the resolution

*"The most effective agreements are generally those that have been carefully constructed rather than imposed."* – Unknown

# Summary

- Effective leaders help their teams through disagreements.

- Conflict in teams is inevitable, but leaders can take steps to avoid or defuse it.

- Leaders should use conflict coaching to reduce disputes, prevent them from escalating, and to prepare parties for conflict mediation.

- Look for the root causes of conflicts and assess them before jumping to conflict mediation as the answer. Sometimes, the disputants can and should work it out on their own.

- In mediation, use proven techniques to get to mutually satisfactory resolutions.

- Ask for help when your interventions don't lead to resolution.

# Final Reflection

- How can you apply these Conflict Management techniques at work?
- What is the most important tip you will share with a co-worker?

***Use the space provided to capture your response.***

# Contact Information

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- NAVFACHQTotalForceDevelopment@navy.mil

# Development Resources

**Career Compass Resource Center:** An online source of information that provides NAVFAC civilian employees access to professional growth and development opportunities.

- https://www.navfac.navy.mil/ccrc

To access more content specific to the **Conflict Management** competency:

- https://www.navfac.navy.mil/Conflict-Management

**Career Compass Catalog:** an online tool which provides you with information to help you take ownership of your professional development. It identifies options to assist in planning and creating a successful career path within NAVFAC.

- https://www.navfac.navy.mil/ccc

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