Conflict Resolution Toolkit

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How can we approach conflict?

These resources are designed to help you to think about different areas of interpersonal conflict and reflect on your approach to conflict.

This worksheet is designed to help you to reflect on the situation at hand in a methodical way, before taking steps to resolve it. In going through this exercise, you will be able to understand the structure and important aspects of your conflict.

What is interpersonal conflict?

The Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC) defines interpersonal conflict as "differences between at least two interdependent parties who perceive or are experiencing:

– Incompatible goals or needs

– Thinking differently about processes or routes to a goal

– Interference in meeting their goals or needs"

> **?**
>
> TIP   Conflict is normal, natural and inevitable. Asking thoughtful questions and listening to what the other person is saying can lead to conflict resolution being an easier process than you expect!

What is collaborative conflict resolution?

A collaborative approach to conflict resolution focuses on maintaining (or improving) the relationship, and on having both parties walk away with their goals/needs being met.

Reminder that conflict is uncomfortable and gets easier with practice!

How can we approach conflict?

Conflict Triangles

For a successful conversation, there are four areas to take into consideration:

TASK (I.E., WHAT CONTENT NEEDS TO BE RESOLVED)

– Think about roles, responsibilities, goals of the work. This often arises through different defintions of what needs to be done.

PROCESS (I.E., HOW WORK GETS DONE)

– Think about the way a task is being done i.e., procedures, how we make decisions and share information, etc.

RELATIONSHIP (I.E., INTERPERSONAL INTERACTIONS)

– Think about how we relate, degree of trust, understanding, reliability, etc. May negatively impact performance – should be immediately addressed.

EMOTION

– Think about how we feel about content, process and relationship.
Depersonalizing the conflict means looking at the issue, and not interpreting people's words and behaviors. This doesn't mean emotions need to be ignored – in fact, acknowledging people's feelings is a valuable tool in conflict resolution.
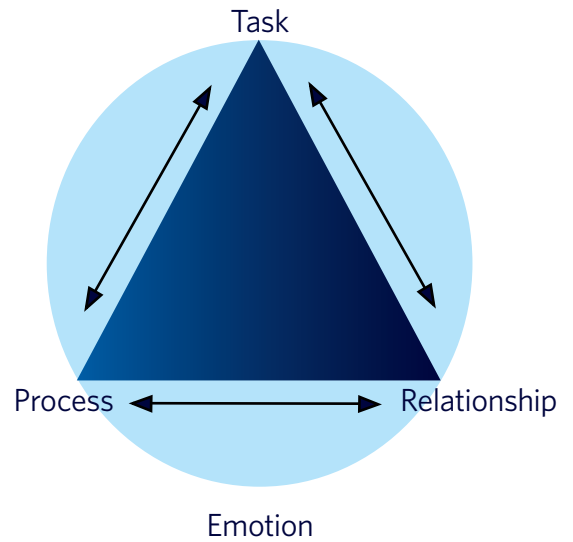
Conflict Triangle Worksheet

Fill in the sections below to understand your positionality in the context of the conflict triangle:
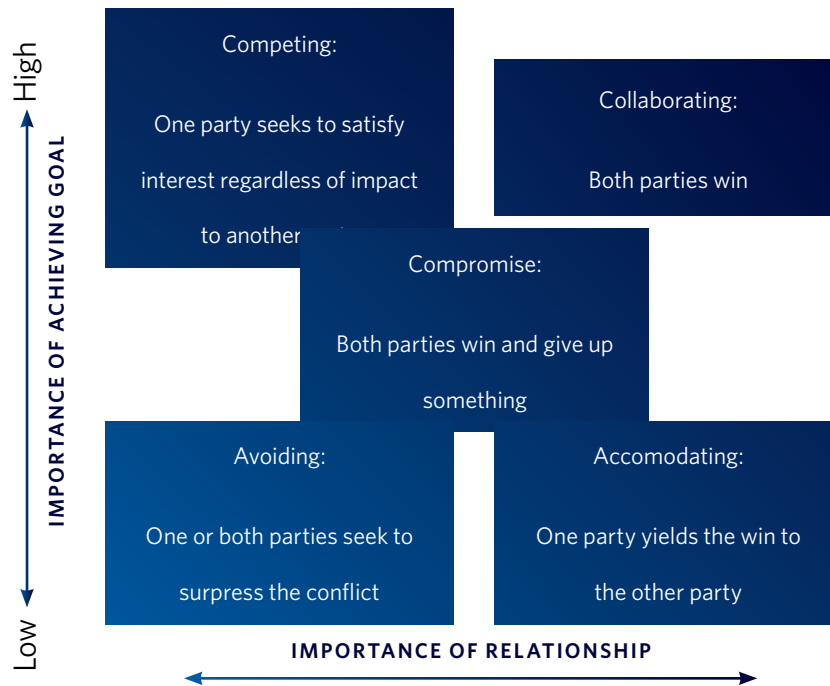
What is the task in this conflict?

What is the process in this conflict?

What is the relationship in this conflict?

What emotions are involved in this conflict? On your end? On the other person's end?

Conflict Styles

A conflict style is a set of behaviors and actions that a person uses to reach a goal or meet a need. Different conflict styles are suitable for different purposes and situations, and may impact how others approach the conflict. While individuals may often have a dominant style (i.e., one they use the most often), each style has its appropriate use.

High

IMPORTANCE OF ACHIEVING GOAL

Low

Competing:

One party seeks to satisfy interest regardless of impact to another

Collaborating:

Both parties win

Compromise:

Both parties win and give up something

Avoiding:

One or both parties seek to surpress the conflict

Accomodating:

One party yields the win to the other party

IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIP

Conflict Styles Worksheet

Take this online inventory to find out your dominant conflict style is. If you think about the current conflict you are in (and how you are currently responding), you may be able to identify what kind of style you are using for this particular conflict.

What is your dominant conflict style?

How could this conflict style be helpful or harmful to a conflict?

Preparing for the Conversation

WHAT'S HAPPENING? (FROM YOUR POINT OF VIEW):

– What is the current conflict/problem?

– Why is it a problem? Why is it my problem?

– What needs to be resolved? What do I want?

– What is important to me regarding this conflict? What are my needs?

BREAKING IT DOWN (WHAT COULD BE HAPPENING BELOW THE SURFACE?)

– What are some beliefs/thoughts/assumptions related to this conflict?

– What do I notice occurring in this conflict? Think about:

  – Verbal and non-verbal cues and communication patterns

  – Cultural pieces like values, beliefs,

  – Your personal reactions or triggers

  – Assumptions, expectations, feelings, fears, concerns, perceptions

  – Power dynamics (i.e., does someone have more of an authority or ability to influence the outcome?)

– What factors make it worse? Better? When do I notice changes in tension or warmth?

– Describe the conflict using descriptive rather than blaming language. Focus on the issue, not the person.

Reflect

FROM YOUR POINT OF VIEW

– What is the current conflict/problem?

– Why is it a problem? Why is it my problem?

– What needs to be resolved? What do I want?

– What is important to me regarding this conflict?

– What are my needs?

FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW

– What do I imagine might be important to the other person regarding this conflict?

– What might be their needs?

REVIEWING OPTIONS:

☐ What are the subject areas/topics that need to be resolved?

☐ What is my readiness to have this conversation? What do you need to feel ready?

☐ What strategies can I use to get ready to face the other person?

☐ What happens if I am unable to have this conversation? What is my back-up plan?

Preparing for the Conversation - Worksheet

Fill in the sections below to understand your conflict using prompting questions from the previous page.

What's happening (from your point of view)?

What could be happening below the surface?

Reflect (from your point of view)

Reflect (from their point of view)

Review possible options

Preparing for the Conversation - Final Checklist

To ensure you've fully thought about everything, here's a final checklist for your reference:

- ☐ Have you clarified your objectives? What do you want to achieve?
- ☐ Have you thought about the other person's perspective?
- ☐ Where/when/how will you bring up this conversation? The time and place may greatly impact how someone responds to your concerns.
- ☐ Are you prepared for addressing all outcomes?
- ☐ Are you emotionally prepared in this time and place?
- ☐ Have you thought about your words? Use non-confrontational language to express your perspective without sounding accusatory.
- ☐ What are the likely solutions for this situation? Go back to the Conflict Styles Worksheet if needed.
- ☐ Are you prepared for feedback?

Opening the Conversation

It is important to give the other person some space and time to prepare for the conversation…Think about how you would react if someone came up to you and dove right into a conflict-related discussion. It is equally important to plan your opening.

DECIDE ON:
- When is a good time to approach the other person to set a time to talk?
- What is a neutral setting for the meeting?
- How will you describe the context for the meeting; what has happened in the recent past?

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL OPENING - TRY TO:
- Acknowledge differences
- Focus on your intention to resolve the differences and come up with a solution together (i.e. collaborate!)

TIP   It's best to have these kinds of conversations in person, or through richer communication formats (i.e., where you can see a person, hear their tone, etc.). If you need to have this conversation online, check out out this site for tips: http://collaborativejourneys.com/resolving-conflict-online-vs-offline-similarities-and-differences/

Opening the Conversation - Worksheet

Fill in the sections below to understand your conflict using prompting questions from the previous section:

When is a good time to approach the other person? Where is a good place?

What are some differences to acknowledge as you open the conversation?

Identifying the Problem

This stage sets the agenda for the conversation by deciding on the scope of what needs to be discussed. It is key to focus on the issue (not the person) when framing the conversation, and reiterating that this will be beneficial to both parties in the future. It is critical to establish an agenda together that considers topics from both sides.

THINK ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:
– How will I state my issue in a neutral, future-focused way?
– How can I ensure that I understand what is important to the other person? How can I pull out their issues in a depersonalized way?

TRY IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM BY:
– Shifting your intention from defending yourself to learning about the other person
– Shifting your attitude from judgment to being curious.
– Shifting the purpose of your disclosure from forcing your viewpoint to informing of your perspective
– Shifting from "the way it is" to a field of possibility
– Shifting from past focused to future focused
– Shifting from blaming to problem solving

Identifying the Problem - Worksheet

Fill in the sections below to understand your conflict using prompting questions from the previous page.

What is important to the other person in this conflict?

What is the issue at hand described in a neutral future-focused way?

Exploring the Problem

During this phase, the focus is on learning each side's perspectives through asking (many) open-ended questions and checking assumptions. Focus on curiosity to learn their perspective and motivations, and don't forget to acknowledge feelings! Gaining an understanding of other's perspectives and motivations (and helping them to understand yours) will help you to identify areas where you can mutually benefit, i.e. find a win-win situation.

Where possible, you need to quantify your experience using numbers to highlight your accomplishments. You may not be able to quantify every accomplishment, but doing so will help prospective employers better understand the scope and scale of your accomplishment. There's a big difference between presenting to a group of 5 students vs. presenting to a class of 50 students.Using quantifiers demonstrates to the employer your level of experience and impact.

TO PREPARE FOR THIS STAGE, WRITE DOWN:
- What is important to you related to the issue?
- How can you share your perspective (i.e., goals, beliefs, concerns, etc.) in a respectful and assertive way?
- How can you find out what is important to the other person? What are 5 questions you will ask to check for clarity and understanding of their motivations and what they are sharing?
- What assumptions do I have? What questions can I ask to check them?
- What do you think is your common ground? How can you check for this (what questions can you ask)?

SOME SUGGESTED QUESTIONS:
- What's important to you?
- When you said [x], what was going through your head? Help me understand what [x] looks like to you
- What's the impact of [x]?
- Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?
- Walk me through [x]
- What did you intend to happen?

Dos and Don'ts

DO
- Express positive statements using the "I" narrative
- Keep positive aspects of the other party in mind and make sure to bring them up
- Accept any wrongdoings you may have on your end and take into account the other perspective
- Take breaks and come back to the feedback with a fresh mind.

DON'T
- Attack their personality or character, or any physical attribute
- Attack their sense of self with intention to insult or abuse
- Victimize yourself to shift the blame
- Withdraw from the conversation to avoid conflict and confrontation for yourself

Exploring the Problem - Worksheet

Fill in the sections below to understand your conflict using prompting questions from the previous page.

What is important to you in this conflict?

What assumptions do you have?

What is your common ground with the other person?

Closing the Conflict

Once you have explored the topic fully, you can move on to brainstorming mutually beneficial solutions. Once there is a list of options, parties can move to deciding on the option that will satisfy the most needs/goals for each of the parties (as discussed in the identifying stage).

Going back to the "Conflict Triangle", think about what needs to be done to resolve each part of the triangle:

TASK (I.E., WHAT CONTENT NEEDS TO BE RESOLVED)
– Confirming the resolution works for all sides. Is it effective?
– Figuring out an action plan and next steps together
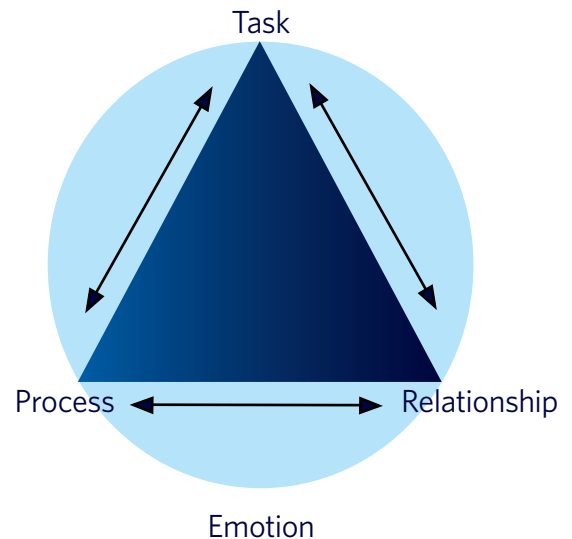
PROCESS (I.E., HOW WORK GETS DONE)
– What needs to be done to ensure this doesn't happen in the future?

RELATIONSHIP (I.E., INTERPERSONAL INTERACTIONS)
– Are any apologies needed?
– Have negative feelings been reconciled?

EMOTION
– Has everyone been able to have their emotions acknowledged?

TIP Sometimes you may have to "hit pause" on the conversation without coming to a positive resolution. In this case. In this case, think about:
– How can we create more trust?
– Do we need a break and need to come back?
– Do we need to agree that this cannot be resolved? If so, what can we do at the moment to look after the relationship (or other parts of the conflict triangle)?

Closing the Conflict - Worksheet

Fill in the sections below to help approach closing your conflict using prompting questions from the previous page.

What is a possible action plan/next steps to take together?

What can be done to ensure this does not happen in the future?

What is your common ground with the other person?

Are any apologies needed? Have negative feelings been reconciled?

Has everyone been able to have their emotions acknowledged?

Closing the conflict - Final Checklist

If you're still feeling unsure about the conversation, go through this list and check whether you're missing something:

- ☐ Have you reflected on the conversation? What worked well and what can be improved?
- ☐ Was it a two-way discussion? Have you acknowledged and responded to other perspectives?
- ☐ Were agreements or next steps discussed?
- ☐ Do you have to send any follow-up communication? Does your team have to update any agreements or code of conduct to reflect the discussion?
- ☐ Are you still feeling frustration or disappointment? Why is that so? What can you do about it?
- ☐ Have you thought about monitoring progress of improvement over time? If needed, have you discussed check-ins with the other person?
- ☐ If you think you could've improved on your end, have you seeked feedback for it? Is there anyone else you can reach out to for comments or an analysis?

Giving Effective Feedback

Offering both informal, day-to-day coaching and feedback, as well as within scheduled meetings, can be a positive way of building rapport and encouraging results. The following are some guidelines for giving effective feedback tailored to UBC engineering and its student groups and design teams.

WHY GIVE FEEDBACK?
– The primary aim of feedback is to facilitate individual growth and development.
– Feedback promotes growth and development by recognizing successes and strengths, while also offering support for areas of improvement and learning.
– Regular, balanced feedback fosters trusting relationships and thus avoid conflict!

BEFORE GIVING FEEDBACK:
– Building trust creates openness to feedback and enhances its perceived value.
– Clearly stating intentions demonstrates respect and value for the recipient.
– Active listening, clarity, empathy, and optimism are essential for effective feedback, fostering an environment conducive to growth and change.

Approaching feedback using the Experience Cube:

The Experience Cube *(From Clear Leadership by Gervase Bushe)* serves as a beneficial framework for orchestrating and navigating feedback conversations. Comprised of four key elements - Observations, Thoughts, Feelings, and Wants - it enables individuals to disentangle their experiences from subjective judgments. By delineating factual observations from personal interpretations, this approach mitigates blame and defensiveness, fostering a more constructive dialogue. By adhering to the principles of the Experience Cube, individuals can engage in feedback exchanges that are both productive and positive.

Observations: Information that is obtained through your five senses (watch, listen, smell, taste, feel - mostly the first two.)

Thoughts: How you perceived the observation, incorporating your own beliefs, expectations, assumptions, judgements, values and principles.

Wants: What is the outcome you're looking for? Phrase the end result only - the way you want it achieved should be independent.

Feelings: How do your thoughts and observations make you feel? This can be both emotional or physiological.

OBSERVATIONS	THOUGHTS
Only Facts	Beliefs, expectations, assumptions

WANTS	FEELINGS
What outcome do you seek?	Sad, mad, glad, scared

You're welcome to use the cube in any order - as long as everything you want to talk about gets covered. Use "I" statements as shown below:
– **I observe:** "I've noticed...", "I saw that...", "I heard you say..."
– **I think:** "I believe that was...", "I think it is...", "My story is..."
– **I want:** "I want to..."; "I need..."; "I wish...", "I hope..."
– **I feel:** "I'm really pleased....", "It concerned me when....", "I appreciate your commitment to....", "It troubled me ...."

Here are some color-coded examples:

"I'm very happy to hear about your contributions to organising the Engineering Career Fair. I think your work pace has greatly improved. I want you to keep this speed up for the upcoming APSC Open House!"

"I see you attending our weekly meetings daily. I think you've been great at maintaining such a regular schedule. However, I noticed you tend to be on your phone quite often while the team lead is giving important updates - this feels very distracting even for others and myself. I hope you understand my sentiment and interact more with our team!"

ADDITIONAL NOTES:
– Feedback should be integrated into a constructive, two-way conversation, fostering mutual engagement and participation.
– Employ appreciative and relevant questions to prompt self-reflection and encourage individuals to identify their own solutions and insights.

This approach maintains engagement and prevents feedback sessions from becoming one-sided lectures.

- Checking for mutual understanding throughout the conversation enhances clarity and ensures that feedback is comprehended effectively.
- Encourage recipients to share their perspectives and interpretations of the feedback to enrich the conversation and promote mutual understanding.
- Emphasize the importance of active listening to demonstrate respect and validation for the recipient's experiences and viewpoints.
- Foster an environment of psychological safety where individuals feel comfortable expressing themselves and receiving feedback openly.

After giving feedback:

After providing feedback, it's important to summarize the points discussed, confirm the commitments/proposals made, and establish a timeframe for follow-up. Restating the commitments and scheduling a check-in at the end of the month ensures clarity on the next steps for both parties. This way, you'll know exactly what needs to be done and can touch base to see how things are progressing.

Planning tips for your conversation:

- **Intention:** What is your intention in bringing this up? What do you hope to achieve by providing it?
- **Observable Facts:** What specific events, behaviors, or actions can you identify that support your comments?
- **Assumptions and Judgments:** What stories and assumptions are you making? What judgments do you have based on your own beliefs, values, and worldview? How can you check these assumptions? What clarifying questions would you need to ask to understand the other perspective?
- **Feelings and Emotions:** What feelings do these thoughts evoke for you? Where do you think those feelings are coming from?
- **Desired Outcome:** What is your ideal outcome? Is it realistic? How can you align your wish with your intention in giving the feedback?

Resources

Still have questions?

You can book an advising appointment with Minoli Navaratnam (minoli.navaratnam@ubc.ca) in APSC Professional Development. We can:

– Review your worksheets or the content of this module.

– Discuss any other questions you may have.