

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Geoff Glassock AM
Rotary Club of Springwood





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UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT

In any situation involving more than one person, conflict can arise. The causes of conflict range from philosophical differences and divergent goals to power imbalances. They can be seemingly trivial things like 'who is going to thank the speaker?' or more serious issues like 'differences over how we should spend the money raised by the club'.

Unmanaged or poorly managed conflicts generate a breakdown in trust and tension in the club. Conflict left to fester is a recipe for disaster and can lead to people leaving the club.

This session is not about trying to avoid conflict, it is developing the skills to **manage** and hopefully **resolve** it.



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Levels of Conflict

Perhaps nothing is said yet. Things don't feel right. It may be difficult to identify what the problem is. Do you feel uncomfortable about a situation, but not quite sure why?

Discomforts

Here a short, sharp exchange occurs without any lasting internal reaction. Has something occurred between you and someone else that has left you upset, irritated or with a result you didn't want?

Incidents

Here motives and facts are often confused or misperceived. Do your thoughts keep returning frequently to the problem?

Misunderstandings

Here relationships are weighed down by negative attitudes and fixed opinions. Has the way you feel about and regard the other person significantly changed for the worse? Is the relationship a source of constant worry and concern?

Tension

Behaviour is affected, normal functioning becomes difficult, extreme gestures are contemplated or executed. Are you dealing with a major event like a possible rupture in a relationship, leaving a job, violence?

Crisis

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Discomfort: Perhaps nothing said yet but things don't feel right, feel uncomfortable about a situation

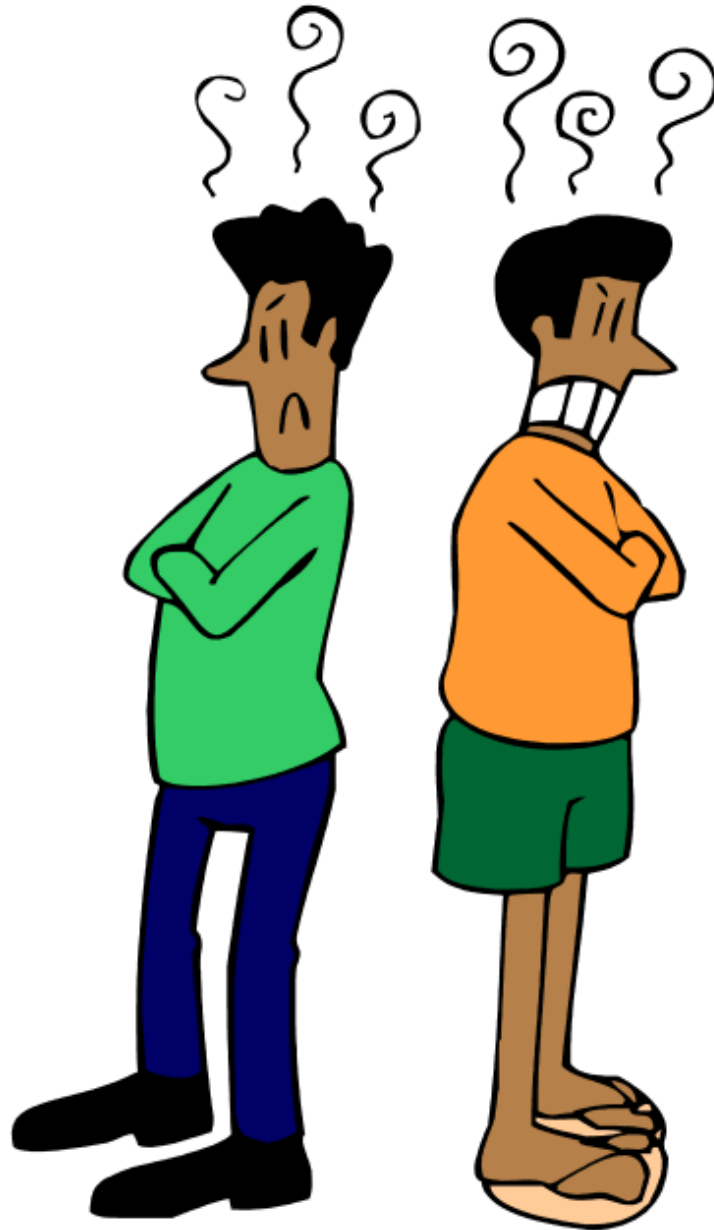
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Tension: Here relationships are weighed down by negative attitudes and fixed opinions. Has the way you feel about and regard the other person significantly changed for the worse?

Crisis: Behaviour is affected, normal functioning becomes difficult, extreme gestures are contemplated or executed. Are you dealing with a major event like a possible rupture in a relationship, leaving the club or violence?





Fight, Flight, Flow

FIGHT: Aggressive Behaviour (I win/You lose)

Expressing your feelings, needs and ideas at the expense of others; standing up for your rights but ignoring the rights of others; trying to dominate, even humiliate others.

- Hostile and self-defeating.
- Results in anger, self-righteousness, possible guilt later.

Belief: You don't matter.

Payoff: Vents anger and achieves goals in the short term.

Problem: Alienation from others; feelings of frustration, bitterness and isolation.

FLIGHT: Passive Behaviour (I lose/You win)

Not expressing your own feelings, needs, ideas; ignoring your own rights; allowing others to infringe upon them.

- Inhibited and self-denying.
- Results in anxiety, disappointment, anger and resentment.

Belief: I don't matter.

Payoff: Avoids unpleasant situations.

Problem: Needs are not met; anger builds up; feelings arise of low self-worth.

FLOW: Assertive Behaviour (I win/You win)

Expressing your feelings, needs and ideas. Standing up for your legitimate rights in ways that do not violate the rights of others.

- Expressive and self-enhancing.
- Results in confidence, self-esteem.

Belief: We matter.

Payoff: Achieves goals mostly. If this does not occur, there are feelings of self-worth which result from being straight forward. Self-confidence improves and relationships become open and honest.

Problem: Distancing of self from others who feel discomfort in open relationships, who have difficulty expressing needs or who wish to dominate.



“Aren’t you glad we had this meeting
to resolve our conflict?”

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Handling Difficult Emotions in Others

If we react to others defensively by attacking or withdrawing, conflict often increases. If, instead, we respond appropriately, we can help to bring the emotions to a level at which the issue can be dealt with more constructively.

Try the following:

Receive

Listen and say nothing for the moment.
Give the other person room to discharge emotions.
Respect the other person's communication of feelings.

Notice

Observe your own reaction.

Centre

Tune into yourself. Breathe deeply.

Listen again

Ask yourself what you are picking up from the communication. Separate feelings from content. Strain out what is valid and let at least some abuse pass you by.

Reflect back

Reflect both feelings and content.
"Let me check with you if..."
"Is what you are saying...?"

Clarify and Explore

What are the other person's needs and concerns?
Explore what is behind the words being used.
Ask questions to shift the focus from anger to exploring the issues.

Repeat the cycle

Ensure that both feelings and facts are mutually understood.

Move

Acknowledge needs and concerns.
Consider the next step e.g. develop options, make an "I" statement, take time out.





Accepting Our Emotions

All emotions are acceptable and valuable. There is no emotion we should not feel. They are all part of what it is to be a human being. The challenge is to find appropriate ways of expressing them.

EMOTIONS THAT ARE SOMETIMES DIFFICULT FOR US TO HANDLE

- Anger:** When mobilised and appropriately expressed, anger is a fire for change and a way of letting others know their behaviour is unacceptable to us. Look for the hurt that is sometimes underneath.
"I need change. I need to communicate this."
- Resentment:** Resentment is an export job blaming others for how we feel or for the situation we're in. It is immobilised anger. Look for what could help it to shift.
"I need to take responsibility for how I really feel and to change this situation."
- Hurt:** Hurt tells us that our needs are not being met, or that our self-esteem has been wounded. Often it deepens our relationship if we can communicate our hurt without resentment.
"I need to be close. I need to be healed."
- Fear:** Fear warns us that we need to proceed with caution, to seek help, to get more information, and to separate fantasy from reality.
"I need to take care. I need help."
- Guilt:** Guilt comes about when we act or feel something different to what we expected of ourselves. It indicates there is the possibility for a better response.
"I need to make amends or do things differently next time."
- Regret:** Regret is a huge feeling that can encompass pain and sorrow. It is the acknowledgement of the unfulfilled potential of a situation. It is often the last emotion before we let go of the "if only" and reach a place of acceptance.
"I need to acknowledge my pain and accept it without denial."





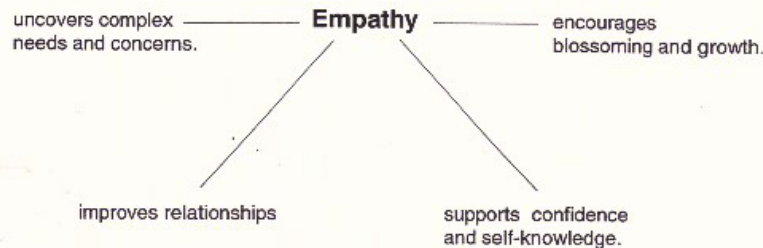
Create Empathy

Listen with your head and your heart.

Empathy is sensing another's feelings and attitudes as if we had experienced them ourselves. It is our willingness to enter another's world, and being able to communicate to that person our sensitivity to them. It is not blind sentimentality; it always retains some objectivity and distance. We do not lose our own identity, though we discover our common humanity.

Create empathy by:

- taking seriously others' needs and concerns
- valuing feelings and attitudes
- respecting others' privacy, experience and values
- listening actively
- encouraging further elaboration and clarification
- using open body language and a warm vocal tone
- reserving judgement and blame
- displaying interest in what others communicate
- withholding unsought advice
- supporting others' attempts to find a solution
- making affirming statements and gestures.



TEN STRATEGIES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- When angry, separate yourself from the situation and take time to cool down.
- Attack the problem **NOT** the person.
- Communicate your feelings assertively **NOT** aggressively. Express them without blaming
- Focus on the issue. **NOT** your position about the issue.
- Accept and respect that individual opinions may differ, don't try and force compliance, work to develop a common agreement.
- Do not review the situation as a competition, where one has to win and one has to lose. Work towards a solution where both parties can have some of their needs met.



- Focus on areas of common interest and agreement, instead of areas of disagreement and opposition.
- **NEVER** jump to conclusions or make assumptions about what another person is feeling or thinking.
- Listen without interrupting; ask for feedback if needed to assure a clear understanding of the issue.
- Remember, when only one person's needs are satisfied in a conflict, it is **NOT** resolved and will continue to fester.
- Forget the past and stay in the present
- Build 'power with' **NOT** 'power over' others.
- Thank the person for listening.
- (from the Statewide Wellness Program, Wholistic Stress Council Inc)



- “Ultimate power is the ability to produce the results you desire most and create value for others in the process.
- Power is the ability to change your life, to shape your perceptions, to make things work for you and not against you.
- Real power is shared not imposed.
- It’s the ability to define human needs and to fulfil them – both your needs and the needs of the people you care about.
- It’s the ability to direct your own personal kingdom – your own thought processes, your own behaviour – so you produce the precise results you desire”.



THANK YOU
GLASSOCK@BIGPOND.NET.AU
LIFE CHANGE MANAGEMENT
0408 436 676

