Welcome

“The best way to persuade people is with your ears—by listening to them.”

Dean Rusk

“We boil at different degrees.”

Benjamin Franklin

“Most people do not listen with the intent to understand: they listen with the intent to reply.”

Stephen Covey

“Peace is not the absence of conflict but the presence of alternatives for responding to conflict.”

Dorothy Thompson
Conflict

Any situation in which people have apparently incompatible goals, interests, principles or feelings
Objectives

Understanding constructive and destructive responses to conflict

What are your **hot buttons**?

A few helpful skills to consider

Some tips to consider

About e-mail

Services Available
## Some Consequences of Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits if handled well</th>
<th>Costs if handled poorly</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stimulates creativity &amp; problem solving</td>
<td>Produces poor quality of decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fosters teamwork &amp; improves social relationships</td>
<td>Poisons relationships with misunderstanding &amp; distrust</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourages listening</td>
<td>Causes anger, fear, hurt &amp; embarrassment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides a way to express emotions which can clear the air and relieve tension</td>
<td>Detrimental to building lasting relationships</td>
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Our Approach

To focus explicitly on specific behavioral responses to conflict, and how they might be changed

To start with the assumption that conflict is inevitable; it cannot, nor should it, be completely avoided

The goal of successful conflict management is not its elimination, but to reduce its harmful effects and maximize its useful ones
Path of Conflict

Precipitating Event and/or Hot Buttons

Initiate Conflict

Constructive Responses
Behaviors which keep
conflict to a minimum

- Task-Focused Conflict
  (Cognitive)
  - Focus on task and problem solving
  - Positive effect
  - Tension decreases
  - Group functioning improves

CONFLICT DE-ESCALATES

Destructive Responses
Behaviors which escalate
or prolong conflict

- Person-Focused Conflict
  (Affective)
  - Focused on personal
  - Negative emotions (anger, frustration)
  - Tension increases
  - Group functioning decreases

CONFLICT ESCALATES
About Hot Buttons

People or situations which may irritate you enough to provoke conflict by producing destructive responses

The “hotter” the hot button, the more likely it is to produce:

- Strong negative emotions
- Feelings of personal provocation
- Automatic and impulsive responding
- Increased tension
Typical Outcomes of Constructive Responses

- Win-win solutions
- Open & honest communication of feelings
- Both parties’ needs are met
- Non-judgmental actions
- Not sticking adamantly to one position
- Actively resolving conflict (not allowing conflict to continue)
- Thoughtful responses (not impulsive)
- Team performance improves
Typical Outcomes of Destructive Responses

- Feelings of anger and frustration
- Judgmental actions
- Getting even and keeping score
- Other party does not have needs met
- Closed channels of communication
- Refusing to deal with issues
- Decreased self-confidence
- Tasks not completed
- Team performance decreases
## Conflict Response Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructive</th>
<th>Destructive</th>
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<tr>
<td>Perspective Taking</td>
<td>Winning at All Costs</td>
</tr>
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<td>Creating Solutions</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Demeaning Others</td>
</tr>
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<td>Reaching Out</td>
<td>Retaliating</td>
</tr>
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<td>Reflective Thinking</td>
<td>Avoiding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delay Responding</td>
<td>Yielding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting</td>
<td>Hiding Emotions</td>
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<td>Self Criticizing</td>
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Active Constructive Responses

Those in which the individual takes some overt action in response to the conflict or provocation, and as a result there is a beneficial effect on the course of conflict.

- **Perspective Taking** - Putting yourself in the other person’s position and trying to understand that person’s point of view.

- **Creating Solutions** - Brainstorming with the other person, asking questions, and trying to create solutions to the problem.

- **Expressing Emotions** - Talking honestly with the other person and expressing your thoughts and feelings.

- **Reaching Out** - Reaching out to the other person, making the first move, and trying to make amends.
Passive Constructive Responses

Those in which the individual responds to the precipitating event in a less active way—in fact, some passive responses consist largely of the decision to refrain from some act—and as a result there is a beneficial effect on the course of the conflict.

- **Reflective Thinking** - Analyzing the situation, weighing the pros and cons, and thinking about the best response.
- **Delay Responding** - Waiting things out, letting matters settle down, or taking a “time out” when emotions are running high.
- **Adapting** - Staying flexible, and trying to make the best of the situation.
Active Destructive Responses

Those in which the individual takes some overt action in response to the conflict or provocation, but which has a negative, destructive effect on the course of conflict.

- **Winning at All Costs** - Arguing vigorously for your own position and trying to win at all costs.
- **Displaying Anger** - Expressing anger, raising your voice, and using harsh, angry words.
- **Demeaning Others** - Laughing at the other person, ridiculing the other’s ideas, and using sarcasm.
- **Retaliating** - Obstructing the other person, retaliating against the other, and trying to get revenge.
Passive Destructive Responses

Those in which the individual responds to the precipitating event in a less active way, or fails to act in some way.

- **Avoiding** - Avoiding or ignoring the other person, and acting distant and aloof.

- **Yielding** - Giving in to the other person in order to avoid further conflict.

- **Hiding Emotions** - Concealing your true emotions even though feeling upset.

- **Self-Criticizing** - Replaying the incident over in your mind, and criticizing yourself for not handling it better.
Hot Buttons

The 9 behaviors you see in others which cause the greatest degree of irritation to you

- Unreliable
- Unappreciative
- Micro-managing
- Abrasive
- Hostile
- Overly analytical
- Aloof
- Self-centered
- Untrustworthy
Skills for Addressing A Conflict

- Recognizing Power
- Appreciating Differences
  - individual, cultural & experiences with institutions. Social justice
- Reaching Out
- Listening - Attentive Listening
  - including acknowledging & reframing
- Brainstorming Options & Evaluating Options
- Agreement - format?
Reaching Out: The Ask

- Set a time and place to talk
- Frame issue statement - as business problem vs. as personal problem
- “I.....You”
- If objection - acknowledge objection; use the mention of the objection to describe some benefit of meeting
- Ask again!
Plan the context - face to face; enough time; no distractions

- “I will set aside my authority”
- “I would like to be as productive as I can be and as you want me to be...issues preventing me from doing that”
- “This could be a little different for both of us.”
About Listening

- Understanding what being said vs. “countering” it

- Look for deeper meaning & context
  - understanding their personal narrative

- ID what people think and feel

- Listen for positive comments

- What’s not being said and when?
The Listening Cycle

 Premiership

 Invite

 Attend
• Maintain eye contact vs. note taking
• Nod & show open body language

 Acknowledge
• Other’s experience
• Others thoughts and feelings
• Acknowledging vs. agreeing
Listening Cycle (cont’d)

Summarize

- Periodically paraphrase content you heard
- Invite again - “tell me more”, “anything else?”
- Summarize when the person has completed their comments
About Asking Questions

- Evaluative /Reactive
  - Agreement /disagreement
  - “Don’t you think....?”
  - “Why did you do.....?”
- Explorative
Explorative Questions - Samples

- Who was there?
- When did you do that?
- What do you think is going on?
- How are you feeling about your workload?
- How did what I said make you feel?
- What would you like to see happen?

Avoid Asking Why?
- implies blame / seeks justification
Attentive Listening

- Attentive Listening - pulling it all together
  - Inviting
  - Attending
  - Acknowledging - especially thought & feelings
  - Summarizing
  - Inviting Again
  - Summarizing Again
  - Asking Good Questions Along The Way
Moving Ahead

- Brainstorm a set of options
- Each person’s needs / wants
- Consider the needs and wants of others?
- Evaluate
- Does it help?
- Can I do it? (authority)
- Is there someone else who might be impacted who we need to consider?
Tips - When Conflict Appears

- Choose your battles;
- Remember that problems seldom exist at the level they’re discussed. People are less likely to be arguing about the actual disagreement versus a deeper conflict;
- Focus on the problem, not the person;
- Suggest experiments rather than solutions;
A Few More Tips -

- Share **negative** emotions only in person or on the phone.
- E-mails, voicemail and notes are impersonal and risky.
Some Thoughts On Using Email

- **Deficient**: lacks modulation, nonverbal cues, and feedback that helps explain what you mean;
- **Persistent**: causes greater harm than speech because of permanence.
- **Inflammatory**: aggravates tensions rather than building collaboration;
- **Not private**: it can be
  - Forwarded to unintended others;
  - Addressed to the wrong person;
  - Accessed;
  - Subpoenaed
- **Hint**: use email for only for **positive** messages; use face-to-face for **negative** messages.
The Mediation Process

- CRPM meets with each person (intake)
- CRPM selects mediators and provides them with an orientation
- Mediation is scheduled
- Mediation is convened
- Agreement reached or impasse declared
  - sharing & enforcement
How The Mediation Process Works

- Orient parties to the process.
- Gathering “story” from each person
- Mediators “frame” the issues /problem
- Each party id’s & develop options
- Parties evaluate the options
- Clarify any agreement reached by both parties. Confirm the Agreement reached by the parties.
VT and Virginia EDR MOU

VT’s mediators resource EDR mediations in western and southwest Virginia

college / university HR officers or mediation program coordinators

EDR (Richmond)
Other CR Services

- Individual “Skill Building” (Coaching)
  - Conflict Dynamics Profile - individual or 360°
  - Center for Conflicts Dynamics (CCL affiliate)
  - *becoming a Conflict Competent Leader* *(book)*
  - *Building Conflict Competent Teams* *(book)*

- Workshops (3 to 7 hours)
Review of Objectives

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Discussion & Questions