

## MANAGING DIFFICULT BEHAVIOUR

SAMPLE

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## WHAT IS CONFLICT

Conflict can be defined as **a difference in view between stakeholders**; this is an objective definition, which does not contain the anger, and emotion that differences in view can evoke.

Where people hold strong views and disagree about the way forward, management action is required. Conflict is a process that can be managed; it requires specific skills - and behaviours that can be learnt.

A conflict continuum, such as the one given below, shows what can occur when the conflict is not resolved in the early stages.

### 1. NERVOUSNESS

- a) Discussion
- b) Debate
- c) Deeds

### 2. NEUROSIS

- a) Fixed images - the enemy
- b) Loss of face - non admittance of fault
- c) Strategies and threats

### 3. COMBAT

- a) Dehumanising
- b) Attack on nerves
- c) No way back

## **THE PRINCIPAL CAUSES OF CONFLICT INCLUDE**

MISUNDERSTANDING & PERSONALITY CLASHES

DIFFERENCES IN GOALS

SUBSTANDARD PERFORMANCE

DISCRIMINATION

DIFFERENCES OVER METHODS TO BE USED

PROBLEMS RELATING TO AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

LACK OF CO-OPERATION

PROBLEMS RELATING TO AREAS OF AUTHORITY

FRUSTRATION

COMPETITION FOR, LIMITED RESOURCES

NON-COMPLIANCE WITH RULES OR POLICIES

## **CONFLICT CAN BE POSITIVE WHEN IT:**

- HELPS OPEN UP A DISCUSSION OF AN ISSUE
- RESULTS IN PROBLEMS BEING SOLVED
- INCREASES THE LEVEL OF INDIVIDUAL INVOLVEMENT AND INTEREST IN AN ISSUE
- IMPROVES COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PEOPLE
- RELEASES EMOTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN STORED UP
- HELPS PEOPLE TO DEVELOP THEIR ABILITIES

## **CONFLICT CAN BE NEGATIVE WHEN IT:**

- DIVERTS PEOPLE FROM DEALING WITH THE REALLY IMPORTANT ISSUES
- CREATES FEELINGS OF DISSATISFACTION AMONG THE PEOPLE INVOLVED
- LEADS TO INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS BECOMING INSULAR AND UNCO-OPERATIVE
- DOES NOT RESULT IN ANY CHANGE & IS LEFT TO FESTER

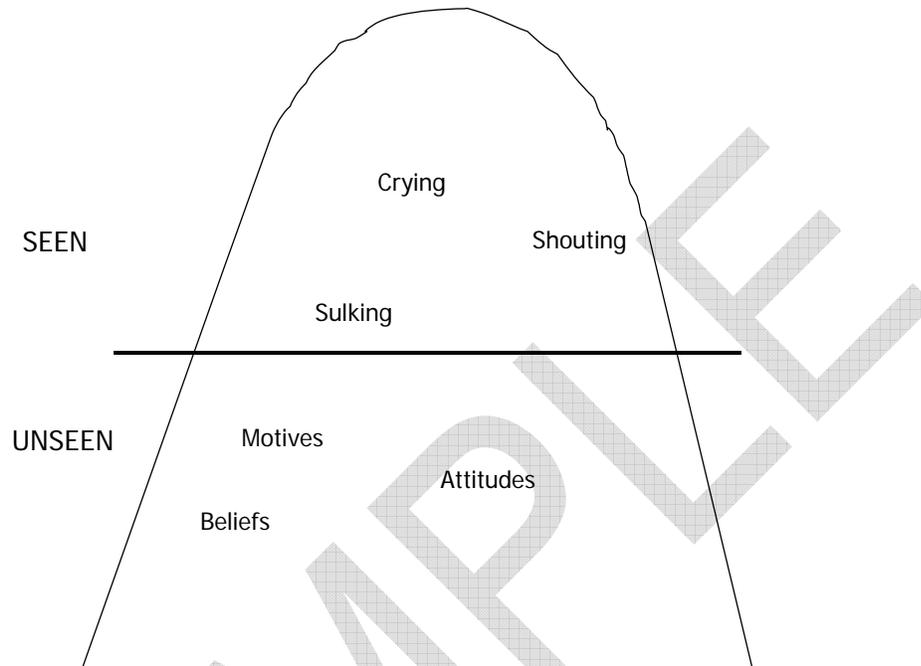
## WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Very few working people work alone ~ for most of us daily interaction with others is part of our existence. These relationships are often crucial to our performance and motivation.

### RELATIONSHIPS

- NOT EASY
- REQUIRE EFFORT
- CHANGE
- NEED TO BE FORGIVING
- RECOGNISE DIVERSITY
- REWARDING

## BEHAVIOUR ICEBERG



When we are observing other people's behaviours, it is easy to make assumptions about why they are behaving in a given way.

This can be misleading - we do not always know what causes behaviour and we could be in danger of stereotyping. Where applicable and practicable, we should check out the reasons as this may provide the impetus for moving forward and understanding the causes of the problem.

## REVIEWING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Think about a situation which you found very difficult to handle and write down your responses to the following.

What was the conflict about?

Why did it arise?

How did it progress?

What behaviours did you display?

What behaviours did they display?

What was the outcome?

How did you feel?

If you could turn the clock back, what could have been done differently, either before during or afterwards

## PREVENTING CONFLICT AT WORK

In all work situations there will be conflicts that should be avoided, if at all possible. There will also be conflicts which will need handling in such a way that they do not get out of control or snowball. Possible approaches to preventing such conflicts include:

1. Recognizing and accepting differences between individuals and groups in terms of values, perceptions, expectations and needs.
2. Being honest with oneself and with others.
3. Allocating sufficient time and energy to really get to know the people you work with on a regular basis, so that you understand their values, beliefs etc.
4. Not automatically assuming you are right and they are wrong.
5. Not feeling defensive if others disagree with your ideas.
6. Listen attentively to what people are saying.
7. Provide suitable ways in which people can express their feelings about things.
8. Try to ensure that people learn from the conflict situations that have been resolved.

## **COPING WITH CRITICISM**

Giving or receiving criticism is one of the most difficult responsibilities that we have. Failure to either give or take can result in poorer performance, closed communication and perhaps an escalation of tension or conflict.

## **GIVING CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM**

As managers or as colleagues it may be necessary to give a person feedback on either their work or their behaviour. This is a task that many of us shy away from as it feels uncomfortable and there maybe a fear of the consequences. However, most people are open to criticism if it is done appropriately. Given below are some of the guidelines.

- Speak to the person in private, not in passing or in the corridor.
- Be specific about the piece of work or behaviour you are referring to - vagueness will only reinforce the feeling of helplessness and negativity.
- Do not attack the person - this is crucial, you should give feedback in an objective way.
- Avoid using aggressive body language or words.
- Offer help where you can and ensure that where possible you give the person some constructive praise.

## RECEIVING CRITICISM

Being on the receiving end of criticism is just as hard as giving it. However, in order for us to move on and develop skills, it is important that we seek it and assist people to give it. In general people only give criticism where they feel it is required, although obviously there may be some exceptions to this. Given below are some guidelines.

- Do not be defensive - and this may be difficult!
- Do not counter criticize or interrupt - let the person have their say
- Listen carefully and try and use assertive body language - keep regular eye contact and make sure that aggressive stances do not take over
- Ask for clarification and summarize, if the person is being vague, try to ask for specific instances.
- Keep an even tone of voice - do not match sarcasm or raise your voice
- Seek agreement on the way forward, ask for help if you need it and where appropriate arrange a further meeting.

## **ASSERTIVENESS**

In the dictionary assertion is defined as being 'the action of stating positively; declaring or claiming'.

Assertion can be often confused with aggression - this can lead to a conflict situation, so it is important that individuals review their behaviour to ensure that they are being assertive rather than aggressive.

### **THE ASSERTIVE PERSON**

The assertive person stands up for his or her rights but does NOT violate the rights of others. The assertive person is honest, open, direct, responsive and an effective listener. The assertive person can solve problems without violating others' rights and remaining calm, clear and in control of their emotions. Assertive behaviour can reduce tension and allow constructive work to be done. When behaving assertively, individuals generally maintain regular eye contact, speak in a calm, firm manner, stand comfortably and use phrases such as "I want..." "I need..." "I understand, however...". An assertive person tries to understand the needs of others and takes account of these.

### **THE AGGRESSIVE PERSON**

The aggressive person denies that others have rights and pursues his or her goals regardless of this and in a destructive manner. The aggressive person will use "I" statements, however these are generally threatening stances; he/she may express opinions as fact; he/she may make requests which sound like orders; give weighted advice and give negative criticism. When behaving aggressively a person may shout, refuse eye contact, and gesticulate pointedly. In short the aggressive person can cause conflict but may not be aware of this, simply because they are so involved in their own goals.

It is not easy to become assertive, as there are times when we all find ourselves angry or upset. However, our behaviour is crucial, if we take the aggressive mode it is likely that any conflict will escalate, but if the assertive mode is taken then the conflict may either be avoided or resolved.

## **ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOUR**

Assertion does not mean operating a win/ lose system of working. In terms of caring for relationships, assertion is an important behaviour stance as it allows the win/ win situation to develop.

Assertive behaviour allows you to:

- Express disagreement without creating unnecessary conflict.
- Co-operate with others in solving problems so that every body is reasonably satisfied with the outcome.
- Develop more confidence in setting goals and taking decisions.
- Cope with criticism (whether valid or not) without becoming defensive, or critical and without feeling guilty.
- Deal with awkward people and awkward situations more effectively.

### **Dissatisfied individuals often complain that:**

- the person did not appear to be interested in their problem.
- refused to accept any responsibility for resolving the difficulty.
- blamed someone else.
- used a sarcastic tone of voice.

These observations of behaviour indicate the use of indirect aggression; people are more likely to respond in a similar manner therefore the situation could spiral.

## THE NEED FOR MEDIATION IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Mediation can be a useful tool for someone who needs to resolve issues between others. It requires the mediator to be objective, assertive and structured.

Mediation is a process which should be:

- **STRUCTURED**
- **SPECIFIC**
- **SAFE**

There are **FIVE** key stages to mediation:

### 1. **Getting started on a positive note**

This means outlining how the session is going to run, being clear that the emphasis will be placed on seeking solutions.

### 2. **Listening time**

Allowing each person to put forward their views uninterrupted, but with space for clarification.

### 3. **Learning to work together**

Trying to bring out common goals, agreeing the nub of the problem.

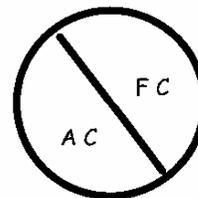
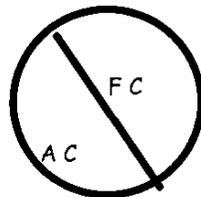
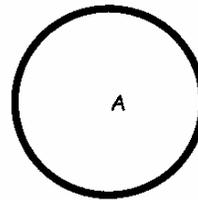
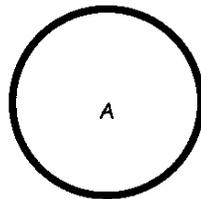
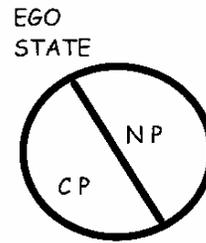
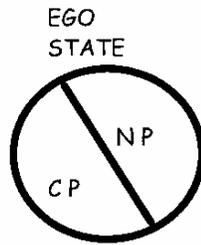
### 4. **Working towards agreements**

Going through options - checking for feasibility.

### 5. **Agreeing measurable actions**

What can be done: confirming actions, agreeing on f all back positions and follow up actions

HANDOUT TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS.



NP = NUTURING PARENT

CP = CRITICAL PARENT.

A = ADULT

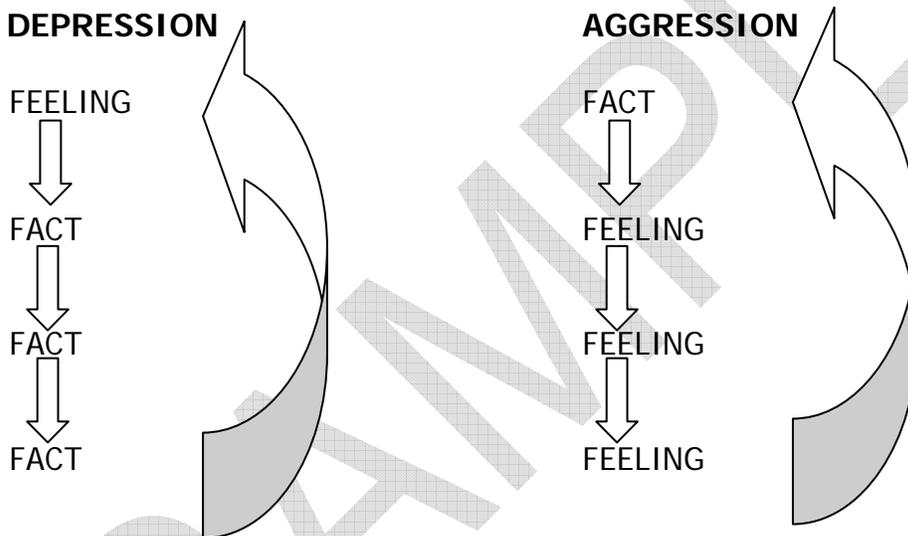
FC = FREE CHILD

AC = ADAPTED CHILD

## TACTICS FOR DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

There are times when we feel that we cannot communicate with a person effectively as their behaviour acts as a barrier for us. It is crucial that our behaviour does not mirror theirs as this may lead to further misunderstanding or indeed aggression.

One way of handling this difficulty is to consider using communication loops, if done properly they can dif fuse a situation and result in a shared understanding of the issues.



## **COMMON STRATEGIES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

There are different strategies that you can adopt depending upon the situation.

### **AVOIDING**

Avoiding is a common response to conflict but it is not a resolution strategy. We all avoid some situations when we cannot find the energy or courage to negotiate. Avoiding leaves the conflict unresolved and it can then spiral out of control. There may be times when avoidance can be a useful tactic - when you feel that the person will simmer down and that it was a one off incident; or where you feel that you need more time to decide how you are going to respond. Where this tactic has been adopted through choice it is often referred to as 'defusing'.

### **ACCOMMODATING**

Accommodating or agreeing is a behaviour that attempts to satisfy the other party at all costs. This strategy uses low concern for your own objectives. It may be useful when the relationship with the other individual is paramount.

### **FORCING**

Forcing is essentially survival of the fittest. Force of power decides the outcome and one party wins and the other loses. It may mean the use of physical, psychological, social or legal sanctions to beat the other party. This strategy is not conducive to long term relationships and can leave you feeling exhausted and angry. Power struggles, however, are sometimes unavoidable.

### **COMPROMISING**

A compromising or sharing strategy aims to resolve conflict by using give and take on both sides. You will need approximately equal power. The success of this strategy depends on whether both parties feel the outcome is fair.