Resolving Conflict Creatively

Sources of Conflict

- Miscommunication and misinformation
- Real or perceived difference in needs and priorities
- Real or perceived difference in values, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and culture

What's Your Style?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assertive</th>
<th>Unassertive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I compete: Try to win with my own solution.</td>
<td>I avoid conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I compromise; Find middle ground.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I collaborate; Seek a better solution.</td>
<td>I accommodate others to keep the peace.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cooperative

Uncooperative

Notes:
How to Fully Listen

- Pay attention
  - Look at the speaker directly.
  - Put aside distracting thoughts. Don't mentally prepare a rebuttal!
  - Avoid being distracted by environmental factors.
  - "Listen" to the speaker's body language.
  - Refrain from side conversations when listening in a group setting.

- Show that you are listening
  - Nod occasionally.
  - Smile and use other facial expressions.
  - Note your posture and make sure it is open and inviting.
  - Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments like yes, and uh huh.

- Provide feedback
  - Reflect what has been said by paraphrasing. "What I'm hearing is." and "Sounds like you are saying." are great ways to reflect back.
  - Ask questions to clarify certain points. "What do you mean when you say." "Is this what you mean?"
  - Summarize the speaker's comments periodically.

- Defer judgment
  - Allow the speaker to finish.
  - Don't interrupt with counter arguments.

Strategies for Dealing with Conflict

1. Agree on a mutually acceptable time and place to meet
2. State the problem as you see it and list your concerns
3. Let the other person have his/her say
4. Listen and ask questions
5. Stick to the issue at hand
6. Seek common ground
7. Brainstorm solutions that allow everyone to win
8. Request behavior changes only
9. Agree to the best way to resolve the conflict and a timetable for implementing it
10. If the discussion breaks down, try meeting again and/or bring in a third party to help
Learning Check #1

You’re enjoying lunch with some co-workers and the conversation turns to education. A newer co-worker explains that she has joined with her sister to home-school their children. Her sister stays home and home-schools her two children and your co-worker’s son. Your co-worker explains the benefits to everyone at the table with much enthusiasm. She makes a comment about the poor state of schools in the district and that the teachers aren’t qualified. This causes the hair on the back of your neck to stand up because your spouse was just promoted to assistant principal in one of those schools.

Notes:

Learning Check #2

You are at an important board meeting, when one of your team members takes all the credit for an idea that you proposed several times. Your boss is very impressed with this creative approach to a long-standing issue for the company. After the meeting, you really want to say something to your team member, but aren’t sure how to handle it. This team member has done some things in the past that have bothered you as well, but you’ve never confronted him. You’re afraid if you decide to challenge him on the latest issue that you will re-hash all the past issues as well.

Notes: