

Conflict Resolution

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Communication Essential to Good Patient Care

- Majority of errors in healthcare come from communication issues

JCAHO - 2011 Hospital Accreditation
Standards

Conflict is disruptive to communication

Conflict is an Expressed Struggle Between Individuals Over Different Perceptions

- Intrinsic Conflict
 - Task or procedure related
- Extrinsic Conflict
 - Interpersonal
 - Power related

Most Common Workplace Conflicts

- Leadership
 - Styles may cause irritation, confusion, misunderstanding

Most Common Workplace Conflicts

- Interdependence
 - Reliance on others for cooperation, input, output

Most Common Workplace Conflicts

- Cultural
 - Values, practices, traditions, beliefs
 - Variety due to diversity
 - Ethnicity, age, gender, education

Most Common Workplace Conflicts

- Personality
 - Perception about actions
 - Character or motive questions
 - Style

Most Common Workplace Conflicts

- Work style differences
 - Team oriented vs. task oriented
 - Independence vs. dependence
 - Stylistic differences

Most Common Personal Conflicts

- Values
- Emotions
- Needs
- Perceptions
- Feelings

Differences at the Heart of Most Conflicts

- Priorities
 - Resources, time, money
- Perspective
 - Cultural and experience based
- Conflicting assumptions
 - Misinterpreting intentions
 - Differing goals
- Response to challenges
 - Challenging a behavior may be seen as a personal attack
 - Our interpretation of others behavior as directed personally at me

Conflict

- Prevalent for everyone at some time in their life
 - Personal
 - Professional

Conflict Response Styles Vary

- Personality
- Problem solving skills
- Tolerance for discomfort or ambiguity
- Concern about others vs. concern about self

Competitive/Controlling Style

- High concern for self not others
 - A. Only good outcome is getting what you want
 - B. Using power achieves outcome
 - C. Outsmart, out talk, outrank, out maneuver others
 - D. Capitalizes on advantages, manipulates, withholds information

Competitive/Controlling Style

- Pros
 - Asserts position
 - Quick resolution
 - Protects self
- Cons
 - Emphasizes power
 - May damage relationships
 - May exacerbate situation
 - Staff turnover

Avoidance

- Care more about others than self
 - A. Avoids any tense situations
 - B. Avoids controversy
 - C. Avoids raising issues
 - D. Avoids difficult decisions

Avoidance

- Pros
 - Reduces stress of confrontation
 - Saves time
 - Does not "rock the boat"
- Cons
 - Does not change problematic situations
 - May create more conflict later
 - May appear weak to others
 - Lose credibility or respect

Collaboration

- Care about both self and others
 - A. Brings issues forward
 - B. Assumes they are important to both parties
 - C. Searches for solutions that benefit all
 - D. Builds trust
 - E. Makes for clearer communication

Collaboration

- Pros
 - Often better decisions
 - Sets a positive pattern for communication/caring
 - Achieves mutual resolution
 - Strengthens relationships and team
- Cons
 - Time consuming
 - Requires risk and energy
 - Must be open to listen and reflect
 - May make you vulnerable

Accommodation

- Care more about others than self
 - A. Helps others
 - B. Avoids "hurting" others feelings
 - C. Think you might be wrong so it is your issue and problem
 - D. Preserves existing relationships

Accommodation

- Pros
 - Helps others
 - Maintains peace
 - Continues relationships
 - Speedy resolutions
- Cons
 - May mask significant problems
 - May weaken credibility in future
 - Abdicates control

Compromise

- Both self and other driven
 - A. Must give to get
 - B. Finds an intermediate position
 - C. Encourages some back and forth discussion
 - D. Works when there is no consensus

Compromise

- Pros
 - Efficient
 - Pragmatic
 - Low risk to relationship
- Cons
 - May not resolve underlying problem
 - Win-win is not always easy
 - Relationships don't necessarily grow

Conflict Can be Healthy for Team or Organization if it is Handled Well

- 72 % of employees rank "respectful treatment of all employees at all levels as a top factor in job satisfaction"
- Society for Human Resources Management survey

Acknowledging Conflict Exists is Essential

- Saying conflict is not personal or does not exist often does not feel respectful
- Feelings are real and should be recognized

Conflict Tolerances are Variable

- Very significant individual differences in the discomfort people may feel in situations
- Conflict for one is not necessarily conflict for everyone
- All employees need to be heard if they are experiencing conflict

Conflict Avoidance has Consequences

- Everyone has conflicts they avoid

Systemic Conflict Resolution

- Employee conflicts permeate the workplace
 - Staff blame co-workers for mistakes
 - Staff feel inadequate time or resources to do the job
 - Staff feel unappreciated - wages, recognition, promotion, etc.

Systemic Conflict Resolution

- Not all conflict can be resolved
- ALL conflict can be managed

Systemic Conflict Management

- Encourage trust through work culture
 - Welcome dissent without consequences
 - Value diversity
 - Create accountability
 - Recognize good behavior - focus on strengths not just problems
 - Encourage conflict resolution between individuals

Systemic Conflict Resolution Summary

- Conflict is normal and can be productive
- Strong effective teams encourage discussion and differences
- A culture where dissent is allowed
 - Spurs innovation and change
 - Spurs problem solving and better decision making
 - Increases job satisfaction, lowers mistakes and may lessen staff turn over

Conflict Resolution For Individuals

- Don't - A-E-I-O-U
 - A - ambush
 - E - exaggerate
 - I - ignore
 - O - out
 - U - undermine

Don'ts mnemonic **A**

- Ambush
 - Time and place critical to raise issues
- Don't Attack

Don'ts mnemonic E

- Exaggerate
 - Don't overstate importance or impact
 - Don't bring up multiple issues
 - Don't use "always" and "never"
 - Don't "kitchen sink" - bring up the past

Don'ts mnemonic |

- Ignore
 - Don't pretend it's fine when it is not
 - Don't be passive aggressive

Passive Aggressive Behavior

- Procrastinating
- Intentional inefficiency
- "Forgetfulness"
- Complaining and blaming
- Resentfulness/sullenness
- Ambivalence about authority
- Resistance to suggestions or changes - "yes-but"
- Unexpressed hostility and anger

Don'ts mnemonic

- "Out" the conflict
 - Don't involve others in "choosing" sides
 - Don't bad mouth other person
 - Don't present conflict initially in public before you have talked to the other party

Don'ts mnemonic U

- Undermine the process or agreement
 - Don't hold on to upset after discussion
 - Don't keep same behaviors
 - Don't be passive aggressive
 - Don't agree to something you do not mean

Conflict Resolution For Individuals

- DO's - A-E-I-O-U
 - A - Acknowledgement
 - E - Emotional control
 - I - Involvement
 - O - Open-mindedness
 - U - Understanding

DO's mnemonic **A**

- Acknowledge
 - Issues that contribute to the conflict
 - You may have some responsibility and the role you might play
 - There is a conflict

DO's mnemonic E

- Emotional Control
 - Separate the problem from the person
 - Calm yourself down
 - Remain focused and objective

DO's mnemonic |

- Involvement
 - Listen and hear
 - Communicate well and interactively
 - Be present physically and mentally
 - Body language is important

DO's mnemonic

- Open-mindedness
 - Pay attention to what others are saying and feeling
 - Pay attention to how you are feeling and responding
 - Be open and flexible to all suggestions
 - Be creative and/or innovative

DO's mnemonic U

- Understanding
 - Listen to all points of view
 - Recognize others have feelings and perceptions that may be different than yours
 - This is a process and it is not always smooth
 - It takes time and energy

Conflict Resolution - Setting the Stage

- Be calm when you begin
- Agree on a time and place with enough privacy and time for the discussion
- Agree it is about an issue and not a person
- One issue at a time
- Both parties agree maintaining a good relationship is a priority
- Dignity and respect are always expected

Conflict Resolution Steps

1. State the problem

- Identify the event or behavior (not the person)
- Identify your perception of the impact of the behavior or event
- Do not ascribe motives

Conflict Resolution Steps

2. Listen to other person's perceptions and observations

- Do not interrupt
- Do not argue or disagree with their perceptions

Conflict Resolution Steps

3. Restate the problem

- Agree on the impact and those issues you can
- Agree on "facts"
- Acknowledge differing perceptions
- Explain how this conflict impacts you (respectfully)

Conflict Resolution Steps

4. Understand the problem

- Mutual accord
- Pinpoint critical issues
- Arrive at mutual agreement of what those issues are and their impact on everyone

Conflict Resolution Steps

5. Ask for Suggestions/Solutions

- Listen and be open
- Objectively discuss all suggestions
- Offer alternatives if unrealistic solutions or if asked for your solutions

Conflict Resolution Steps

6. Agree on actions to be taken

- Recap solutions/agreement
- Develop concrete plan of action
 - Who, what, where, when, first steps
- Incorporate and celebrate change