



ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH, INC

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CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES

Developed by Anita Foeman, Ph.D. and Nate Terrell, LCSW

ACCEPTANCE - Acceptance of status quo.

Advantages - Often easier and less taxing in the short run than more engaging strategies.

Disadvantages – May provide others with tacit approval for their behavior, attitudes, etc. Rarely leads to conflict resolution.

AVOIDANCE - Avoidance of conflict situation.

Advantages - Can be self-protective. Usually takes less energy than other strategies.

Disadvantages - Often creates interpersonal distance since relevant issues are not addressed. Upset feelings may build up and create depression and/or destructive outbursts.

DENIAL - Conflict situation is denied. Denial is often used when the person has something to gain from the conflict not being resolved.

Advantages - Individuals in denial protect themselves from having to take any responsibility for the conflict situation.

Disadvantages - Individuals in denial often force others to “up the ante” in their efforts to resolve the conflict. Denial may appear benign, but it is actually passive-aggressive.

DETACHMENT – One detaches from the conflict situation.

Advantages - Often leads to inner peace and a sense of freedom from being controlled by other people or external events.

Disadvantages - Hard to accomplish when the stakes are high. May be misunderstood as acquiescence or acceptance of the status quo.

INTERNAL DIALOGUE - An internal self-examination of the thoughts, beliefs, or reactions which cause one to feel conflict.

Advantages - Effective way for one to evaluate his/her part in a conflict situation and to take appropriate responsibility.

Disadvantages - May cause one to own too much responsibility for the conflict situation.

SOCRATIC APPROACH - Use of questioning style to learn more about another or expose inconsistencies in her/his logic.

Advantages - A non-threatening way to gather information. Can help others gain insight and understanding. Focus on intent to learn can be disarming for others.

Disadvantages - May be perceived as manipulative if not done with a sense of good will.

META-COMMUNICATION - Focus on communication and/or relationship process rather than content.

Advantages - Stimulates discussion of underlying communication and/or relationship dynamics. Usually disarms others and forces them to examine their behaviors.

Disadvantages - May be viewed as a diversionary tactic.

BLAMING/DEFENDING - Individuals only defend themselves and/or blame others for the conflict situation.

Advantages - Allows one to express their point of view without having to take any responsibility for the conflict situation.

Disadvantages - People who primarily defend themselves and/or blame others do not allow themselves to experience the humility and/or growth that comes from being able to own up to their own part. May force others to "up the ante."

MAKING AMENDS - Individuals take responsibility for their part in the conflict situation and do or say something to make amends such as apologize.

Advantages - Generally creates an increased sense of goodwill between or among participants in conflict situation and often opens up a path for dialogue and subsequent conflict resolution.

Disadvantages - When people encounter hostility or blame when they attempt to make amends, they are usually left feeling vulnerable, angry, etc. As a result, they may retreat and utilize more protective strategies such as avoidance.

DIALOGUE - Process of give and take which allows each side to be raised and the validity of points to be collaboratively examined within a context of trust and mutual desire for conflict resolution.

Advantages - Promotes mutual understanding, intimacy and conflict resolution.

Disadvantages - Emotionally risky, especially in situations where the other person is trying to gain an unfair advantage.

NEGOTIATION - Participants give up some of what they want in order to reach a compromise acceptable to all.

Advantages - Often the only way for deadlocked parties to achieve conflict resolution

Disadvantages - Participants may be intimidated into giving up more than they wanted.

CONFRONTATION - Expression of one point of view with little or no regard for those of others.

Advantages - One point of view is clearly expressed which usually provides cathartic release.

Disadvantages - Can create a win-lose situation and increase the intensity of conflict and subsequent risk for participants.

ANNIHILATION – The entire context for the conflict is destroyed.

Advantages - Point is clearly made. May result in significant catharsis for the person doing the annihilating.

Disadvantages - Very risky and dangerous. Generally creates a lose-lose situation. Usually leaves the perpetrator even worse off than before.

