Communication Skills and Conflict Resolution

Caring for our Elders:
Fourth Annual Community Conference

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Presented by
Bonnie Brewer and Cyndy Martin
CONFLICT ...

Is defined as a disagreement. A clash of opposing ideas, interests. (American Heritage Dictionary)

Is a **natural, normal, and inevitable** consequence of human interaction.

Is **Neutral**.

Is an **opportunity** for:

- increased understanding
- improved relationships
- the creation of innovative solutions
- growth
- change

Involves:

- the **issue**
- the **relationship**

Conflict results from:

- Differences in values, interests, agendas or goals
- Competition for resources (time, money, possessions)
- Unmet needs
- Need or desire for power or control
- Poorly defined responsibilities
- Resistance to change
- **POOR COMMUNICATION**
### Conflict Myths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth</th>
<th>Reality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict is bad and should be avoided.</td>
<td>Conflict is a way to learn something new or come up with a better solution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If people disagree with me or criticizes me, it means they don’t like me.</td>
<td>People can disagree and still be friends and respect each other.</td>
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<td>There is only one way to solve our problem--my way!</td>
<td>There may be several ways to resolve our problem.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I need to meet your arguments with more forceful arguments.</td>
<td>I can respond to you with an increased effort to understand your point of view.</td>
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<td>Admitting I’m wrong makes me look weak.</td>
<td>Others respect the courage it takes to admit a mistake.</td>
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<tr>
<td>People will take advantage of me if I ever give in to them.</td>
<td>Making compromises demonstrates respect for others and helps build trust.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If one of us wins, the other has to lose.</td>
<td>A good solution is good for both of us.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It’s necessary to establish fault or guilt before a solution can be found.</td>
<td>Solutions can be found without establishing fault or guilt.</td>
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Conflict Management Styles

- Competitive
- Avoidant
- Compromising
- Collaborative
- Accommodating
# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

## COMPETITIVE (FIGHT)
- My way or no way
- Aggressive
- Coerce, fight
- Unwilling to listen
- Power

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<tr>
<td>Hurts relationship</td>
<td>If quick action is required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impedes cooperation</td>
<td>Need to stick to principle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little or no communication</td>
<td>Safety or health of child is threatened</td>
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<tr>
<td>At least one person is not satisfied</td>
<td>Must obey the law/court order</td>
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## AVOIDANT (FLIGHT)
- Unwilling to talk
- Avoids issue
- Denies

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict continues to build</td>
<td>Need cooling-off period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resentment builds</td>
<td>Decision not needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive-aggressive</td>
<td>Need more information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually satisfies no one’s concerns</td>
<td>Time will resolve issue</td>
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### ACCOMMODATING

**Giving in**

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<tr>
<td>Conflict remains unresolved</td>
<td>Can avoid an argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resentment builds</td>
<td>You don’t care about the issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattern of “taking advantage” can occur</td>
<td>If you are wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of self-respect</td>
<td>Helps maintain harmony</td>
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### COMPROMISING

**Win some, lose some**

**Middle ground**

**Splitting the difference**

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<tr>
<td>Have to give up something</td>
<td>Everyone gets something</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limits creativity</td>
<td>May be best possible solution when goals are mutually exclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromises principles</td>
<td>Time or resources are limited</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Preserves relationship</td>
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**PROBLEM-SOLVING (COLLABORATIVE)**

- Requires cooperation, communication and problem-solving.
- Explores common ground
- Searches for strengths in other’s position
- Win-Win

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<tr>
<td>More complicated</td>
<td>More creative solutions result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More time-consuming</td>
<td>Benefits everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires willingness and ability to</td>
<td>Strengthens relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cooperate</td>
<td>Builds trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can be “transformative”</td>
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Active Listening

Active listening is a way of listening with the intent to understand not only what the other person is saying but also the feelings underlying what the other is expressing.

It conveys
- Respect for the other person
- Understanding of that person's point of view
- Helps improve communication

Active Listening to discover the other person's perspective

Show understanding nonverbally:
- Eye contact
- Nodding

Restate, paraphrase, summarize facts and feelings

Watch for nonverbal cues from speaker

Listen for both content and emotional issues

Set aside own values and opinions

Think in the other person’s place

Do not give advise - suggest solutions - criticize

Do not tell your own - story - problems - feelings
IT’S THE WAY YOU SAY IT--

❖ Tell the other person how it affects you.

Examples:
“I can't work when the music is playing so loudly.”
“I get frustrated when you keep interrupting me.”
“I feel embarrassed when you correct me in front of the patients.

❖ Ask the other person to do it differently next time.

Examples:
“Could you please close the door more quietly when you come in?”
“If you don’t like something I’ve done, would you mind telling me so in private?”
“Could you give me more notice before you change our meeting time?”

❖ Find something positive to say first; then say what you want to be different.

Examples:
“I like the way you cleaned the kitchen without my asking. Could you also wipe off the counters?”
“Thank you for helping me. I’d appreciate it if you could work in the other room so it doesn’t disturb me when I’m concentrating.

❖ Describe the problem. Ask for suggestions on how to solve it.

Example:
“It seems like we have a problem with deciding what’s best for Mary. Do you have any ideas on how to solve this problem?”
Activity
It’s the way you say it—

Change the following statements so they are more respectful:

1. Your co-worker is making a lot of noise.
   
   **Wrong way:** “You are always making too much noise. Can you just be quiet for a change?”
   
   **Right way:**

2. Your co-worker keeps telling you how to do your work.
   
   **Wrong way:** Stop telling me what to do! I’m perfectly capable of doing my job on my own.”
   
   **Right way:**

3. A family member (or co-worker) doesn’t clean up the kitchen after getting something to eat.
   
   **Wrong way:** “This room is a mess. I’m tired of cleaning up after you all the time.”
   
   **Right way:**

4. There is a problem in the workplace with staff members arguing in front of patients.
   
   **Wrong way:** “You are all acting like a bunch of children!”
   
   **Right way:**

5. Your friend complains all the time and you get tired of listening to her.
   
   **Wrong way:** “I’m fed up with your constant complaining.”
   
   **Right way:**
Tools for Conflict Resolution

Listen, think, then respond.

Look for common ground. When you disagree, agree first. Disagree second.

Attack the problem, not the person: It is not me against you; it is you and me against the problem.

Make sure you agree on what the problem really is.

Stick to the subject.

Speak respectfully, using a calm voice.

Be open to new ideas. Think outside the box.

Monitor your tone of voice.

Take responsibility for your actions. Apologize when appropriate.

Graciously accept an apology when it is given. Learn to forgive and forget.

Use collaborative problem-solving, respecting interests of both sides.
Barriers to Effective Communication

- Not listening
- Interrupting
- Advising
- Judging
- Reassuring/Minimizing
- Name-calling
- Threats
- Cruel humor/sarcasm
- Interpreting other’s behavior
- Blaming
- Making excuses
- Bringing up the past
- Getting even

- Saying
  “You should…”
  “You always…”
  “You never…”
MEDIATION

In mediation, a neutral third party, the mediator, guides a process to help the family reach consensus on decisions regarding eldercare.

Mediation is voluntary. Any person involved in the mediation can stop the process at any time.

All parties agree to the process.

All parties generally meet together with the mediator. There may be times when they meet individually with the mediator.

Mediators go through a process of listening to all present, identifying issues, considering possibilities, and helping the parties come to mutually agreeable solutions.

All present have a chance to be heard.

Parties are in control of any decision-making. The mediators do not give advice, decide who is right or wrong, or make any decisions themselves.

The Mediation Center of Charlottesville

SCHEDULE: To schedule mediation, call The Mediation Center. An appointment can usually be made within 2 to 3 weeks.

FEES: The Mediation Center offers a sliding fee scale based on income of the parties.

Contact Information: Phone: 434-977-2926  
E-mail: mcc@mediationcville.org  
Website: www.mediationcville.org

ADDRESS: 1422 SACHEM PL., SUITE 2, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22901