

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS & BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES CENTRE

ia BPG

INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS & BEST PRACTICE
GUIDELINES CENTRE

MANAGING AND MITIGATING CONFLICT IN HEALTH-CARE TEAMS

Managing and Mitigating Conflict in Health-care teams: Speaker



Althea Stewart-Pyne, RN MHsC

Program Manager
Healthy Work Environment

Session Objectives

- Learn about interpersonal conflict in the workplace
- Understand how to prevent and manage conflict in the workplace
- Learn about de-escalation strategies
- Understand how conflict impacts health & well being

Systematic Review Findings

- Conflict is prevalent in health-care organizations
- Appropriate conflict management is integral in obtaining positive outcomes from conflict
- Thematic analysis revealed several common themes with four categories: (1) interventions; (2) individual characteristics; (3) contextual factors; and (4) interpersonal factors.

When you hear the word “conflict”



Understanding Conflict

1. What is Conflict
2. Antecedents of Conflict
3. Outcomes of Conflict
4. Responding to Conflict



What is Conflict?



Conflict

- A disagreement between two or more individuals or groups...
(Almost, 2006)
- May include differences of ideas, perceptions, desires, needs, goals, and responsibilities
(RNAO, 2013)
- Inevitable and global
(RNAO, 2012)
- Not inherently negative, can be an opportunity for growth, learning, and change
(Almost, 2006)

Antecedents of Conflict

- **Individual Characteristics**
 - Value differences
 - Demographics
- **Interpersonal Factors**
 - Lack of trust
 - Injustice or disrespect
 - Inadequate or poor communication
- **Organizational Factors**
 - Interdependence

(Almost, 2006; RNAO 2012)

Conflict is not...



- Bullying
- Workplace violence
- Harassment
- Ostracism



Disagreement

- Disagreement is the key cognitive component in conflict and occurs when there is a divergence of values, needs, opinions, or goals between individuals. However, disagreement **by itself is not conflict.**

Core process of conflict

The core process of conflict is **the behaviour** where individuals oppose or interfere with another's interests or goals.

(Barki & Hartwick 2004),



"Now that you learned how to handle difficult students, you will have to learn how to handle difficult colleagues."

Types of Conflict

Intra-group conflict: these occur (within) between individual members of the same group (team, family, nurses, physicians) (Jehn, K. A. (1995).

- *Example: A patient care unit that is divided over whether nurses should leave the unit for their breaks is experiencing an intra-group conflict.*

Types of Conflict

Intergroup conflicts: these occur **between groups**. A conflict between two care providers, each representing a different classification

(Eliot R. Smith/Diane M.Mackie, *Social Psychology*(2007) p. 515

e.g. (Nurses, Physiotherapists, Physicians), would be an example of intergroup conflict.

Intrapersonal Conflict

An individual is in an intrapersonal conflict,

- if he or she has difficulty making a decision because of uncertainty,
- if he or she is pushed or pulled in opposite directions (RNAO, 2012).
- *(The need to be at home for family reasons, and the contractual need to be at work).*

Interpersonal conflict

is defined as:

*“a dynamic process that occurs between interdependent individuals and/or groups as they experience **negative emotional** reactions to perceived **disagreements** and **interference** with the attainment of their goals.”*

(Barki & Hartwick, 2004)

Interpersonal Conflict

- This type of conflict occurs between 2 or more individuals. They can be arguments, differences of opinion or physical altercations. (RNAO, 2012).
- (*Personal needs conflict, Nurse A wants to use the computer to chart, but Nurse B wants to use the computer to research a topic...their needs cause conflict*)

10 second break

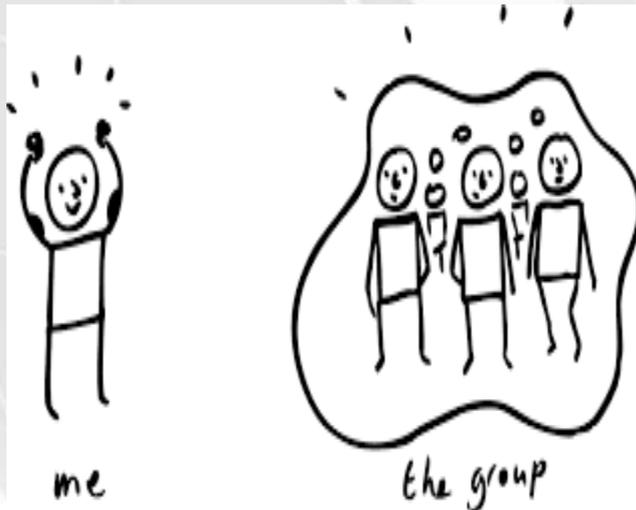
**PATIENT: THE PROBLEM IS THAT
OBESITY RUNS IN OUR FAMILY.
DOCTOR: No, THE PROBLEM IS
THAT
NO ONE RUNS IN YOUR FAMILY.**



Types of Interpersonal Conflict



Antecedents of Conflict



Antecedents of interpersonal conflict

Most frequently identified antecedents include:

- lack of emotional intelligence,
- personality traits,
- various aspects of the job and work environment,
- role ambiguity,
- role of the manager,
- lack of support among colleagues, and
- poor communication.

(Almost, Wolff, Stewart-Pyne, McCormick, Strachan, D'Souza, 2016; RNAO, 2012)

Individual characteristics

- Value differences
- Demographic dissimilarity

(Almost, 2006; Hyrkäs & Dende, 2009; Rodwell & Demir, 2012; Pines et al., 2011; RNAO, 2012)



Interpersonal Factors

- Lack of trust
- Interpersonal Justice: respect and dignity
- Inadequate or poor communication
- Interactional Justice
- Informational Justice
 - Providing each other with information and rationale as to decisions



Organizational Antecedent Factors



Organizational conflict

- Interdependence
- Changes due to restructuring



Sources of Conflict

- Other staff
- Managers
- Manager's Leadership Style
- Individual's Cultural or Ethnic Background
- Members
- Visitors
- Volunteers

(RNAO, 2012).

OUTCOMES OF CONFLICT

What happens when conflict is
resolved effectively?
What happens when it is not?



Consequences of Conflict

Individual Level:

- Job stress
- Job dissatisfaction
- Absenteeism
- Intent to leave
- Increased grievances
- Psychosomatic complaints (e.g. headaches)
- Negative emotions (anger, frustration)



Consequences of Conflict

Negative Interpersonal Relationships:

- Negative perception of others
- Hostility
- Avoidance

Positive Interpersonal Relationships:

- Stronger relationships
- Team Cohesiveness

(RNAO 2012)

10 sec humour break



Instead of the John I call my
bathroom the Jim!
That way it sounds better when I
say I go to the Jim first thing
every morning!!!

Defense Mechanisms

- Aggression
- Displacement
- Compensation
- Compromise
- Withdrawal
- Fixation



Responding to Conflict



- How do you respond to conflict?
- What's the 'best' way of responding to conflict?
- Are you comfortable responding to conflict?

Managing Conflict at work

- Identify the issue (s)
- what is the real problem?
- Is your perception of the problem different than the other person (s) involved?
- Allow the other person to express their concern
- Accept responsibility if you are at fault and reframe emotions
- Apologize for your part in the conflict

(RNO, 2012)

Managing Conflict

- Use open, honest and transparent communication
- Provide constructive and supportive feedback
- Handle the conflict sooner rather than later
- Invite the other person to talk about the situation in an undisturbed location (let the other person speak without interruption)

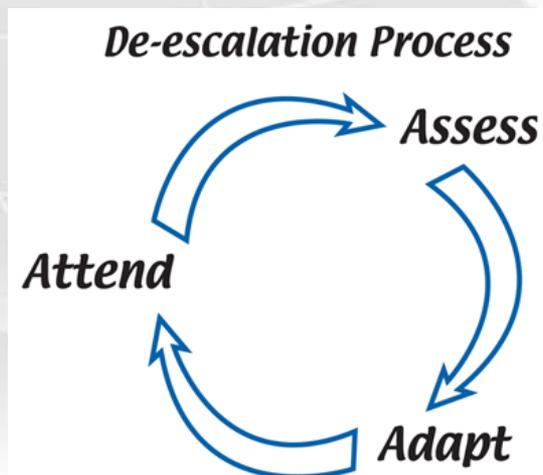
De-escalation

- Assume a calm, firm stance – stand or sit tall, shoulders back, hands quiet and give the person your full attention
- Speak in a clear voice but calmly and at a normal volume
- Acknowledge feelings and paraphrase what the person is saying
- Do not interrupt or try to problem-solve until the person has calmed down

De-escalation

- Listen, reflect on what you hear the person saying
- Pay attention to tone...avoid sounding patronizing or sarcastic
- Once the person is calm, ask what they want to have happen and how they might approach finding a solution

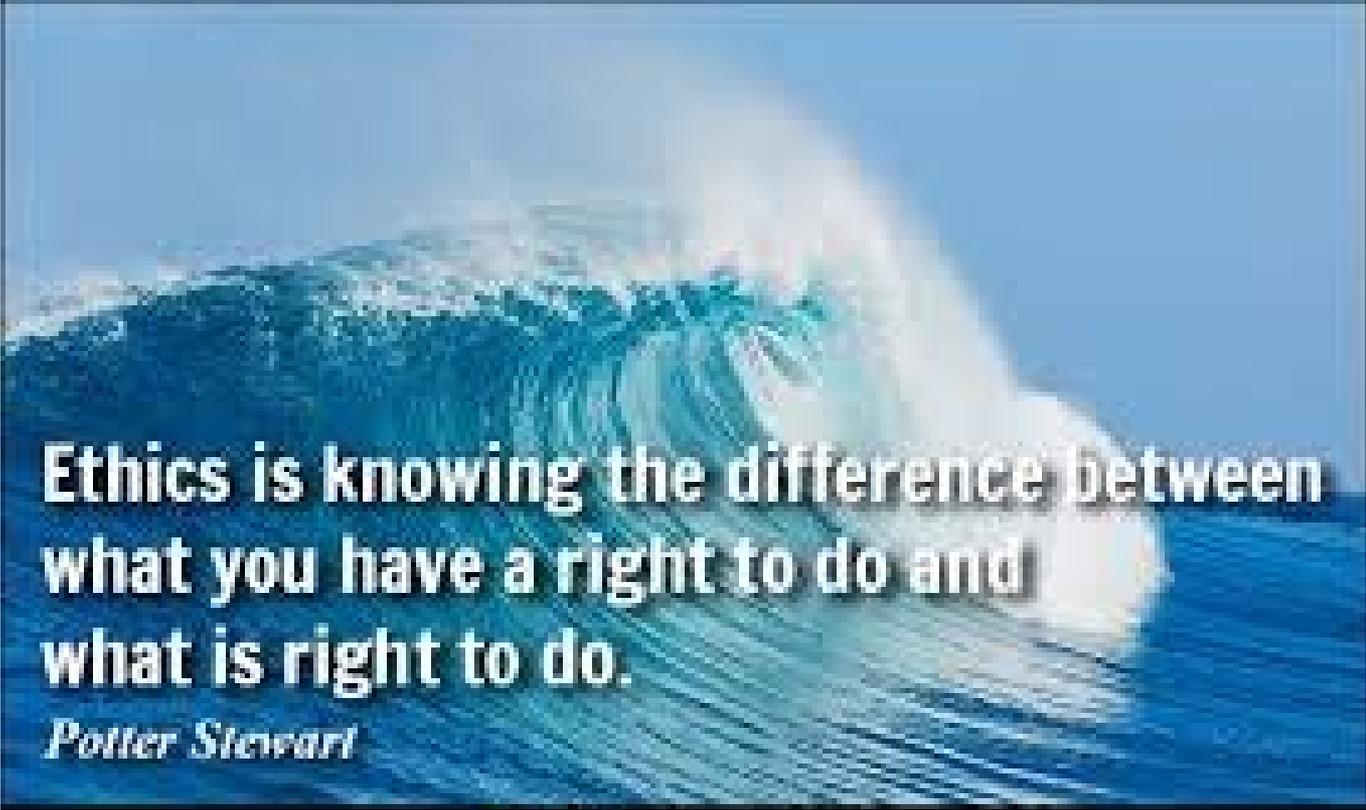
(RNAO 2012)



Influencing Practice

- All practitioners, leaders and managers should be aware of the antecedents of interpersonal conflict
- Enact policies ensuring strategies and interventions are developed and implemented to support healthcare teams
- All individuals in organizations should learn effective conflict management skills, develop awareness and understand conflict through formal processes

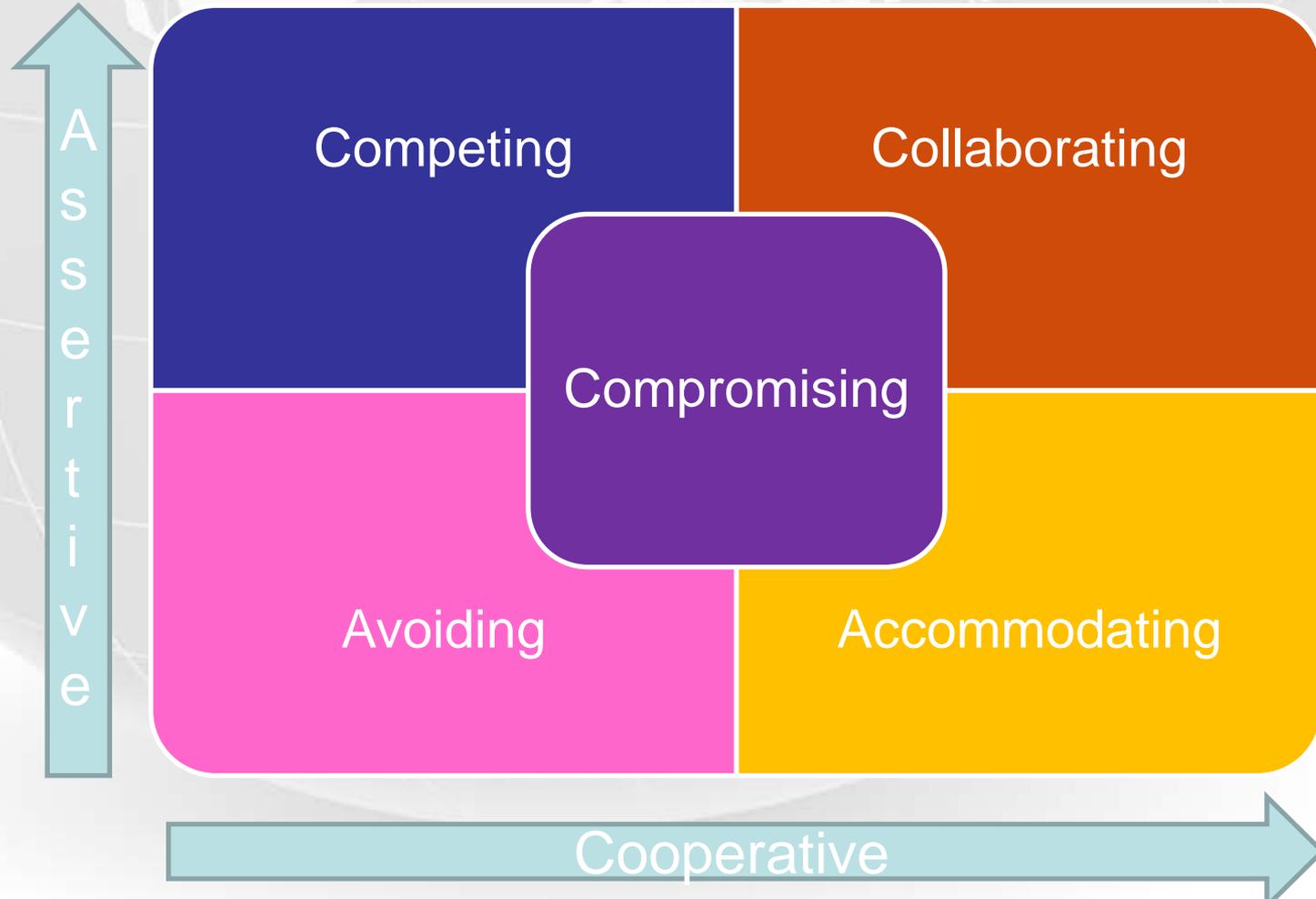
(Almost, Wolff, Stewart-Pyne, McCormick, Strachan, D'Souza, 2016; RNAO, 2012)



**Ethics is knowing the difference between
what you have a right to do and
what is right to do.**

Potter Stewart

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument ©



Conflict Response Strategies

Accommodating

- You put the other person/group ahead of your own needs, even to your own detriment
- Maintains relationships
- Can breed resentment when overused
- Effective when the other person/group offers a better solution than your own

Avoiding

- The action of inaction
- You are not pursuing your own needs, nor are you helping the other person/group to meet their own
- Effective for trivial issues, or as an interim solution while emotions settle down
- Postpones meaningful resolution

Conflict Response Strategies

Compromising

- Each person/group gives up something to meet the other half-way
- The middle ground
- Effective for when both goals are equally important
- May lead to dissatisfaction

Competing

- A very assertive approach, when your goals or needs come ahead of those around you
- Authoritarian approach
- Effective for emergencies or when a quick decision is needed
- May lead to hostility or resentment

Conflict Response Strategies

Collaboration

- Working together to achieve both goals mutually
- The “Win-Win”
- Requires high levels of trust and respect, and can also be very time consuming to pursue
- Resource intensive
- Fosters healthy relationships





The most effective conflict management strategy is to be able to utilize all of the styles depending on the scenario.

WHICH STYLE ARE YOU?

ACTIVITY FROM
[HTTP://IREM.ORG/FILE%20LIBRARY/CHAPTERSERVICES/CONFLICTMANAGEMENTWS/ACTIVITYCONFLICTMANAGEMENTS
TYLESASSESSMENT.PDF](http://irem.org/file%20library/chapterservices/conflictmanagementws/activityconflictmanagementsylesassessment.pdf)

Managing & Mitigating Conflict

Individual Recommendations

- Self-Reflective Practice
 - What happened, how did that make you feel, what you would you do differently in the future
- Utilizing Counselling/Support Services as needed
 - Employee Assistance Programs
- Pursuing Education on Conflict & Conflict Resolution
 - Organizational Initiatives, Workshops, Conferences
- Demonstrating Accountability & Commitment
 - Leading by example
- Participation in HWE Initiatives & Decision Making

(RNAO 2012)

Managing & Mitigating Conflict

Individual Recommendations

- Communicating Clearly & Respectfully
 - A variety of communication tools exist, such as Crucial Conversations
- Fostering Trust
 - Keep commitments to yourself and to others
- Role Clarity
 - What is your role on your team? What are the roles of your team members?
- Professionalism
- Empathetic Listening & Responses
- Acknowledging Fault
 - This is not the same as taking blame for a situation, but rather acknowledging your part in the conflict

(RNAO 2012)

Communication Strategies

- Use standard cues or shared language
- Observe and acknowledge what you are seeing
- Reflect on what you hear, re-phrase
- Be genuine
- Be mindful and aware
- Remain objective
- Utilize “I” statements, avoid placing blame
- Get creative
- Practice!



Self-reflection

- Do you know what the other person (group) wants?
- Have you written the other person (group off)?
- Are your emotions getting in the way?
- Has the conflict become personal?
- Is this conflict consuming all of your energy?
- *Picture the win-win situation*



General Strategies for Managing Conflict

- Step 1: Raise self-esteem
- Step 2: Stay issue-centered
- Step 3: Increase tolerance
- Step 4: Keep your perspective
- Step 5: Keep assertive

Conflict reducers

- Attentive listening
- Assertiveness
- Respectful tolerance
- Issue focus
- Positive expectations
- Wide perspective



Summary

- **Conflict is Inevitable** ... personal and team/organizational
- Conflict is Greater with groups with **diverse views, norms, culture, experience, maturity, and values**
- Conflict consumes a large amount of **energy and contributes to professional/occupational stress**
- Goal ... ***conflict management strategies***
 - Turn the energy into **productive action**
 - Strengthen communication: words, tone of voice, facial expression and body language

Summary

- **Identify the problem**
- **maintain relationships**
- **minimize cost**
- **set a precedent**
- **reach agreement quickly and efficiently**
- **achieve a fair, reasonable, wise and durable result ...**

You made it!



Questions?

THANK YOU!

References

- Almost, J. (2006). Conflict within nursing work environments: concept analysis. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 53(4), 444-453.
- Almost, J., Doran, D. M., Hall, L. M., & Laschinger, H. K. S. (2010). Antecedents and consequences of intra-group conflict among nurses. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 18(8), 981-992.
- Brown, J., Lewis, L., Ellis, K., Stewart, M., Freeman, T. R., & Kasperski, M. J. (2011). Conflict on interprofessional primary health care teams – can it be resolved?. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 25(1), 4-10.
- Cortese, C.G., Colombo, L., & Ghislieri, C. (2010). Determinants of nurses' job satisfaction: the role of work-family conflict, job demand, emotional charge and social support. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 18(1), 35-43.
- Eliot R. Smith/Diane M. Mackie, *Social Psychology*(2007).
- Greer, L. L., Saygi, O., Aaldering, H., & de Dreu, C. K. W. (2012). Conflict in medical teams: opportunity or danger?. *Medical Evaluation*, 46(10), 935-942.
- Hyrkäs, K. & Dende, D. (2009). Persepectives on nursing job satisfaction, the work environment and burnout. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 17(3), 237-268.
- IREM Conflict Management Styles Assessment (2015). Retrieved from: <http://irem.org/File%20Library/ChapterServices/ConflictManagementWS/ActivityConflictManagementStylesAssessment.pdf>
- Janss, R., Rispens, S., Segers, M., & Jehn, K.A. (2012). What is happening under the surface?. Power, conflict and the performance of medical teams. *Medical Education*, 46(9), 838-849.
- Jehn, K. A. (1995). A multimethod examination of the benefits and detriments of intragroup conflict. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40, 256-282. doi:10.2307/2393638
- Morrison, J. (2008). The relationship between emotional intelligence competencies and preferred conflict-handling styles. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 16(8), 974-983.
- Pines, E. W., Rauschhuber, M. L., Norgan, G. H., Cook, J. D., Canchola, L., Richardson, C., & Jones, M. E. (2011). Stress resiliency, psychological empowerment and conflict management styles among baccalaureate nursing students. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 68(7), 1482-1493.
- Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (2012). *Managing and Mitigating Conflict in Health-care Teams*. Toronto, Canada: Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario.
- Rogers, D., Lignard, L., Boehler, M. L., Espin, S., Klingensmith, M., Mellinger J. D., & Schindler, N. (2011). Teaching operating room conflict management to surgeons: clarifying the optimal approach. *Medical Education*, 45(9), 939-945.
- Sources of Insight. 5 Conflict Management Styles at a Glance. (2015). Retrieved from: <http://sourcesofinsight.com/conflict-management-styles-55-at-a-glance/>

For more information...
www.RNAO.ca

www.RNAO.ca/bpg

- Access the Guidelines for free
- Get more details regarding our various implementation resources:
<http://rnao.ca/bpg/implementation-resources>

Contact:

Althea Stewart-Pyne- astewart-pyne@RNAO.ca