Conflict Resolution Techniques

CONFLICT RESOLUTION requires a multidisciplinary approach. Why? Root causes and underlying issues may be in disciplines separate from the discipline in which the actual symptom appears. Therefore, facilitators must be creative, wise, and diplomatic.

CONFLICT:
RESOLVED ○
CONTINUED ○

Objective:

☑ Explain conflict resolution, its applications, and resolution strategies.

Key Terms:

arbitration
compromise
creative peace-building
diplomacy

forcing
mediation
negotiation
problem solving

smoothing
withdrawal

Conflict Is Inevitable

Conflicts, struggles, and personal issues between employees, community members, and family members are expected. But how and when it is addressed makes the difference between destructive and productive outcomes. Conflicts seem to find their way into all aspects of life.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND ITS APPLICATIONS

Conflict resolution is the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of social conflict. A range of conflict resolution methods and procedures exist. Some common methods are negotiation, mediation, arbitration, diplomacy, and creative peace-building.

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Negotiation

Negotiation is a dialogue between two or more parties, with the intention of coming to an understanding, resolving a difference, or reaching a compromise.

Mediation

In law, **mediation** is a form of alternative dispute resolution or a way of resolving disputes between parties with concrete effects. Typically, a third party called "the mediator" assists the parties to negotiate a settlement. Mediation has a structure, timetable, and dynamics that other negotiation lacks.

Arbitration

Arbitration, similar to mediation, is dispute resolution in which the neutral third-party has the power to make a decision after hearing all the facts. This is the most common form of conflict resolution used in workplace disputes between labor and management or with commercial ventures.

Diplomacy

Diplomacy is the art and practice of conducting negotiations to settle an issue or dispute between nations, representatives of groups, or states. It usually refers to international diplomacy and the conduct of international relations.

Creative Peace-Building

Creative peace-building is a name for creative therapies used to create peace within individuals, groups, and societies. These therapies are used with many demographic groups and in various situations. It can be used curatively and preventively.

Other Forms

Counseling, peer mediation, prayer, and many other forms exist.

TERMS AND SETTINGS

The term "conflict resolution" may be used interchangeably with "dispute resolution," at least where arbitration and litigation processes are involved. Also, conflict resolution techniques are

FIGURE 1. Conflict resolution techniques are applicable in many social settings, including business, family, and community.

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applicable in many social settings, including business, family, and community. A person may be called to facilitate a conflict between parties, or he or she may be a party to a conflict. Conflict exists everywhere.

Business

Business is ripe with conflicts. Some primary examples of where conflict can occur in business and where conflict resolution techniques would be applicable are contracts, securities, banking, partnerships (creation and dissolution), insurance, real estate, unions, defects, human resources, and the educational setting. See http://www.soencouragement.org/conflict-resolution.htm.

Family Life

Family life is another area of potential strife and conflict and thus an appropriate place for conflict resolution techniques. Some example areas are divorce (ADR: arbitration or mediation), truancy, probate issues, elder care, harassment, and college roommate issues. See http://www.nova.edu/studentmediation/forms/conflict_resolution_strategies.pdf.

Community Engagements

Community engagements can be another area that fosters conflict and where resolution techniques are applicable. Some example areas are property disputes, neighbor issues, small claim issues, and landlord-tenant issues. Conflict can occur in any setting, so it is vital that everyone learn basic conflict-resolution strategies.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES

Now human conflict resolution "requires a variety of substantive domains to search for ways to create peace and justice" (Menkel-Meadow). Conflict resolution requires a multidisciplinary approach. Root causes and underlying issues may be in disciplines separate from the discipline in which the actual symptom appears. Facilitators must be creative, wise, and diplomatic. They may use one of five common conflict-resolution techniques.

FIGURE 2. Conflicts occur in the workplace, so conflict-resolution strategies are essential.

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Problem Solving

Problem solving is the use of logical thinking to understand an issue. It is imperative that the viewpoint of all conflicting parties is understood. Each party collaboratively tries to explore possible win-win solutions.

Compromise

Compromise is a settlement or the art of reaching an agreement by each of the conflicting parties giving something. Therefore, both parties do not get exactly what they want. This technique is the preferred method when the relationship between the parties is more important than the outcome. (Some view this technique as a lose-lose solution.)

Forcing

Forcing is using authority or power to decide the outcome of a conflict regardless of the opinion of participants. This win-lose technique can lead to low morale and ownership of the solution. It is useful when conflict must be resolved in a very short period.

Smoothing

Smoothing is a conflict resolution technique that involves playing down the issue. The key focus is on the positive. This is not a recommended technique.

Withdrawal

Withdrawal is anti-conflict resolution. **Withdrawal** is the act of avoiding the problem. It is only useful when there is a heated situation and one or more of the parties need some time to gain perspective or deal with their emotions.

CONFLICT-RESOLUTION TIPS

When dealing with conflict, it may be helpful to keep some conflict-resolution techniques in mind. Establish some ground rules for meetings, behavior expectations, and timelines. Remain neutral (if playing the role of the facilitator). Do not force outcomes; let the parties arrive at the solution. Encourage better comprehension of the issues via questioning. If you are a party to a conflict, attempt to understand the issue from the other person's view. Actively listen!

WORKPLACE ISSUES

Conflict in the workplace can be destructive to teamwork and production. When conflict is managed incorrectly, the team's mission can be threatened. Remember to maintain a positive approach to conflict resolution. Discussions must be civil and non-confrontational. The focus should be on issues rather than on individuals. Individuals will have to manage their emotions and behavior. The following website presents conflict styles, the interest-based relational approach, and the conflict resolution process: http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_81.htm

Summary:

Conflicts, struggles, and personal issues between employees, community members, and family members are expected. But how and when it is addressed makes the difference between destructive and productive outcomes. Conflicts seem to find their way into all aspects of life.

Conflict resolution is the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of social conflict. A range of conflict resolution methods and procedures exist. Some common methods are negotiation, mediation, arbitration, diplomacy, creative peace-building, counseling, peer mediation, prayer, and more. Conflict-resolution techniques are applicable in many social settings, including business, family, and community.

Five common conflict-resolution techniques are problem solving, compromise, forcing, smoothing, and withdrawal. When dealing with conflict, establish ground rules; remain neutral; do not force outcomes; and actively listen.

Checking Your Knowledge:

1. Explain the five conflict-resolution techniques presented.
2. Define four conflict resolution tips.

3. Explain the types of conflict-resolution methods that exist.

4. Explain why a conflict facilitator must be neutral.

5. Explain why conflict resolution is multidimensional in nature.

Expanding Your Knowledge:

Research mediation and arbitration training programs to better understand program specialties and course topics. Create a chart showing the similarities and differences. Share your findings with your classmates.

Web Links:

Conflict Resolution
http://www.helpguide.org/mental/eq8_conflict_resolution.htm

Techniques for Conflict Resolution
http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/world/july-dec09/techniques_for_conflict_resolution.pdf

Conflict Resolution Techniques
http://www.ealewisconsulting.com/Conflict_Resolution.htm

Stress Management
http://stress.about.com/od/relationships/a/conflict_res.htm

Conflict Resolution
http://www.acresolution.org/

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