

White Paper

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Authors:

James S. Rowell, M.S.Ed.
Co-Founder/President

Richard Pierce, Ph.D.
Co-Founder/Executive Director

Solution Focus Areas:

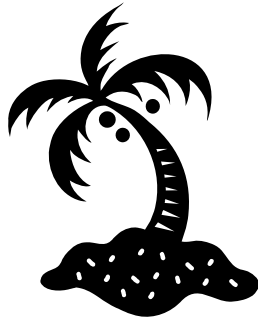
Engagement / Morale
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*For more information, contact Olga
Blouch at 717-512-7531, or
Olga@RisingSunConsultants.com*

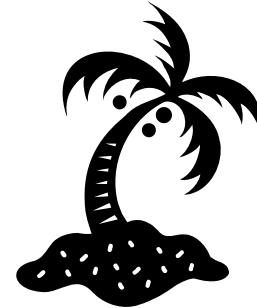
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The Pillars of Conflict Resolution

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Conflict

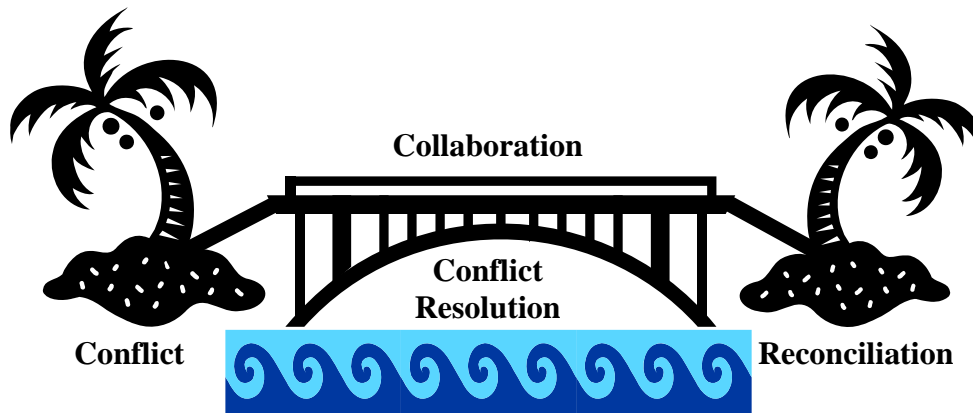


Reconciliation

Picture two islands with nothing but waves in-between them. One island can be called “Conflict” - described as disconnected from others, disharmonious, and dominated by feelings of being misunderstood, hurt, sadness, frustration and anger. The second island is called “Reconciliation” - described as having resolved relationships with others, harmonious, and possessing feelings of contentment, joy, and peace.

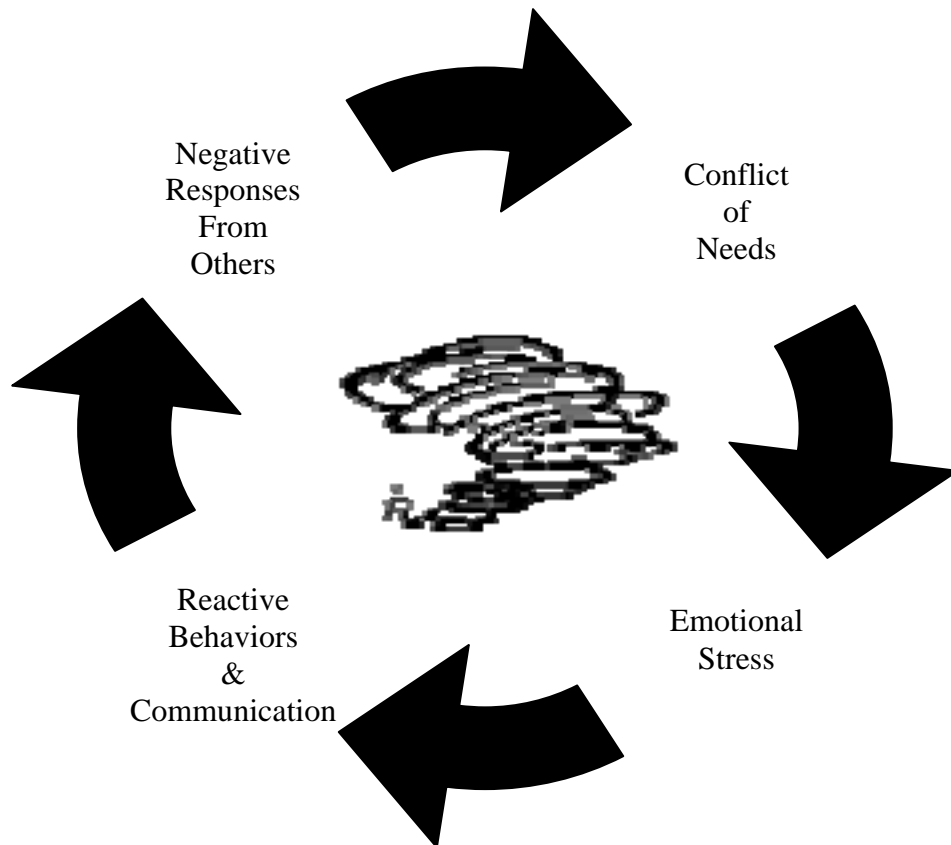
The problem lies with what is in between the two islands - the “Waves”. The Waves can be described as lacking in communication, an unwillingness to listen, misunderstandings, and broken relationships.

So, what is the solution? A bridge called “Collaboration” – building a win-win solution. As with most bridges, Collaboration needs to be held up so that it doesn’t collapse. As such, the bridge of Collaboration is held up by the “Pillars of Conflict Resolution” - Defining the Conflict, Dealing with Feelings, Exploring Options, Selecting a Solution(s), and Developing a Contingency Plan.



The Conflict Cycle

Although described in various forms, most experts agree that in order to effectively address/resolve conflicts, it is important to first understand the various aspects of what is commonly referred to as the “Conflict Cycle:



Conflict of Needs

A stressful incident occurs, needs are not being met which triggers a cycle of irrational beliefs.

Emotional Stress

Conflict of needs often results in negative feelings or sense of loss of control.

Reactive Behavior / Communications

Negative feelings about the conflict and/or the other person, not our rational beliefs, lead to inappropriate behavior and/or communications.

Negative Response from Others

Others pick up on these negative feelings/behaviors and frequently experience and exhibit similar feelings and behaviors.

Develop a Contingency Plan

Have a plan in place for what you will do if the agreed upon solution(s) does not work or another conflict arises.

A Focus on Collaboration

Collaboration can best be thought of as a process of participation by which people work together to address mutual needs. With this definition in mind, a collaborative approach is not necessarily the same thing as a collaborative outcome. In the first case, it is the process, not the outcome, which matters.

When thinking about conflict, the key to collaboration is to explore needs/emotions first, before settling on solutions. A collaborative approach starts by looking for solutions that meet all needs/emotions and then moving backwards, only as far as possible, towards a compromise which meets as many mutual needs/emotions as possible.

The Pillars of Conflict Resolution

In resolving conflict use the following “Pillars” as your foundation:

Define the Conflict

Without interruption, each party should have the opportunity to share their issues and concerns.

Deal with Feelings

Individuals need to have an opportunity to express their feelings. Recognizing the feelings may help in resolving the conflict.

Explore Options

After both individuals have shared, options should be discussed for how to resolve the conflict.

Select a Solution(s)

Select a solution(s) that both individuals feel good about and that meets both individuals' interests or needs.

Develop a Contingency Plan

Have a plan in place for what you will do if the agreed upon solution(s) does not work or another conflict arises.

Summary/Conclusion

It is important to remember that conflict is normal and can be a healthy part of our daily lives. Therefore, conflict in the workplace just seems to be a fact of life. Misunderstandings arising from miscommunication exist as one of the most common workplace problems. Such conflicts typically occur when one person's needs/desires interfere with another person's needs/ desires. These common problems seem to be exacerbated by such everyday variables as differing work styles, age/generational differences, gender, cultural differences, racial differences, etc. In many cases, however, effective conflict resolution skills can make the difference between positive and negative outcomes.