

COMMUNICATION PART 4

Hello again—time for the leader to pay attention to handling conflict resolution.

Rose Johnson, the author of “What Causes Employee Conflict in the Workplace,” suggests four causes of workplace conflict. These are:

1. Different communication styles or no communication: An example might be that one employee could inaccurately communicate (or non-verbally infer) work behaviors and outcomes.
2. Personality clashes: An example might be one person’s direct communication style. In contrast, another person is quiet and feels that a direct communication method is rude or non-empathetic in difficult situations.
3. Different values: An example might be where some people value kindness and humanistic behavior, while others might appreciate getting a job done. Money and promotions are often the only part of someone’s value system.
4. Workplace Competition: An example might be that some situations are naturally more competitive than others.

Because conflict is a natural part of working with people, facilities/organizations should have a conflict resolution policy that involves a time and place for communication. This sharing process allows for consideration of another person’s information and feelings. Consensus and conflict management are more likely to occur due to sharing ideas and concerns.

Competition in the workplace often (not always) causes people to act in ways that undermine other employees and their work responsibilities. Examples might be slighting remarks, misspelling of names, accidentally sending a derogatory email to the wrong person, complaining behind another person’s back, making false statements, etc. Now, when this happens (as an astute leader), remember the reflection technique—that is, state (only) the behavior you see or hear. Do not state your feelings or report the comments in a manner that reflects your opinions or emotions. Then, let the other person verbally give you the meaning of their behavior, thereby drawing judgment on their behavior. If the reflection is consistent when such “things” occur, the involved employee will usually pay more attention next time to behave in such a manner. You see—being confronted about negative behavior and having to account for personal behavior is an uncomfortable situation –Oh well—shall we say they deserve it!?

Silence is a pure state that allows a person to do some personal reflection and contemplation. It is probably the most difficult legitimate listening technique most leaders use. Why do most of us think that verbal communication says it all when silence, at the appropriate time, can mean so very much!?! It encourages possible internal integration and re-sorting thoughts to perplexing ideas and opinions.

As a leader, silence requires you to feel the same personal inner quiet you are allowing the other person. Sometimes, being there with NO words to say will say the most. Your presence can be as comforting as any words(s) could ever be. The human presence without any conversation speaks for itself—no comments are required. It is a SIMPLE, SUPPORTIVE WAY TO MAKE THINGS BETTER.

Arguing--Please don't do it! It is time wasted and emotionally draining. No response is better than an argumentative answer. If you wait, better decisions occur when arguing is not involved. The other person will learn that there will be no communication when arguing occurs. Remain calm, like saying, "I hear (or see) that you are upset. I am sorry! When we can talk about it without arguing, I am here to listen and participate in the conversation." Yes, this means you must be in personal control of YOUR emotions. Well—someone has to be the bigger and better person—let it be YOU!

Carolyn Taylor, Ed.D. M.N. R.N.