

For the workplace

Notes to Instructors

Familiarize yourself with the film *Elbow Room/Distances* and the study guide before viewing it with workshop participants.

Materials needed

- formatted “ Cost of conflict quiz” and “Conflict map” below for distribution to workshop participants
- Flip charts, markers, monitor, VCR, film, “*Elbow Room/Distances*”

The cost of conflict

Before viewing the film, explain to the group that poorly managed conflict in the workplace can not only cause damaged relationships, it can directly influence the bottom line. Test the group’s knowledge of the impact of work place conflict with the quiz below.

- What percentage of job stress is attributed to personal conflict?
a) 40 per cent b) 60 per cent or c) 75 per cent.
- Currently, it is not considered cost effective to litigate disputes if the amount at stake is over a) 100,000 b) 500,000 or c) 1 million dollars
- What percentage of departing employees list interpersonal conflict as the cause of their leaving? a) 45 per cent b) 65 per cent c) 85 per cent?
- Destructive conflict at work adversely effects
a) productivity b) direct costs c) staff continuity d) all of the above
- Approximately what percentage of a manager’s time is currently spent in dealing with conflict? a) 10 per cent b) 20 per cent c) 25 per cent

Answers: 1.c), 2.c), 3.c), 4d), 5 c)

Discuss results

Any surprises? Do the statistics above match your experience?

Causes of conflict in the workplace

Ask group to draw on their experience to identify primary causes for conflict at work. List them on a flip chart. They may include:

- Communication failure
- Personality clashes
- Substandard performance
- Differences over style and method
- Unclear role definition
- Competition for limited resources

Suggest that work place and other social conflict is caused by *a real or perceived* incompatibility of **goals**, (wants or positions) and **values** (beliefs) and can become complicated if a person’s **identity** (self concept, language, culture, rights) are seen to be in jeopardy and in need of defense.

Goals versus Interests

Suggest that interest based conflict resolution attempts to unravel and meet each party’s **underlying interests**, even when goals seem incompatible. Write two columns on flip chart paper: “GOALS” and “INTERESTS”. Under GOALS write, “WANTS/POSITIONS” and under INTERESTS write, “UNDERLYING NEEDS” Explain that interests differ from goals in that they are not “wants” but underlying “needs” such as recognition, security, justice and *that even when goals are not compatible, interests may be compatible and achievable for both parties.*

Additional information on conflict resolution in the work place is available at www.nfb.ca

Mapping conflict

Explain that analysing or mapping a conflict can help begin to resolve it. Ask participants to think of a past or current conflict in which they were one of the **primary** parties involved.. Ask them to analyze the differences and similarities with the other person or persons with whom they are in conflict by completing the boxes below. See if they can come up with” win win” options where both party’s interests are taken into account..

Values I believe _____ /he/she believes _____ **Goals (Positions)** I want _____ / he/she wants _____ **Identity(culture)** I am defending my right to _____ She/He is defending her right to _____ **Issues-** list incidents or “flashpoints” of the conflict _____ **Interests** (underlying needs, i.e. security, recognition, justice) My interests include: _____ his /her interests include: _____ **Win win Options** List possible ways that underlying interests/needs of both parties can be met _____

Responses to conflict

View the film and observe four responses to conflict. What are they?

- Avoidance-internalizing conflict (by crying)
- Confrontation-externalizing conflict(by expressing anger/violence)
- Avoidance-humor**Note: humor sometimes can be a powerful way to resolve conflict, but NOT if is used as an avoidance strategy*
- Win-Win Negotiation-articulating the needs and interests of both parties and arriving at a mutually satisfactory solution

What about you?

Explain to the group that their responses to conflict may vary according to the situation or they may have a typical response or “conflict style” that they use in almost every situation. Are they generally an avoider, confronter or negotiator?

Workplace role-plays

Try to use win win negotiation skills to resolve the following conflicts:

- Six months ago you received a promotion in mid-sized company and the other candidate for the position is now on your team. You respect the person’s abilities in certain areas, but you are uncomfortable with their disrespect for your deadlines. Although this has not become a serious problem, you have had to delay production on certain items and your supervisor has criticized you for this.
- You are the Artistic Director of small but thriving theatre company and lately, the Business manager has met with two prominent actors and all but promised them roles in your next season’s productions. One of the actors is not used to stage work, and although he is popular on television, does not meet the standards you require.
- You are a receptionist in a busy office at high school with many people to respond to including: parents, students, teachers, administrators. Recently, a new principal has been hired who considers you his personal assistant. Previous principals have not required that you respond to their email and voice mail messages and you cannot find the time to do this and complete the rest of your work.

A CLASSROOM discussion guide is on the reverse side of this sheet.

ELBOW ROOM GUIDE

For the classroom

Notes to classroom teacher

After viewing the film, *Elbow Room/Distances*, it is advisable to view and show the other films in the NFB “Showpeace” series to give children a more comprehensive look at conflict. For more information about conflict resolution resources for elementary schools, go to www.nfb.ca

Materials you will need:

Chalk board/chalk or flip chart/markers
VCR, monitor, film, *Elbow Room/Distances*

Sharing space

Before viewing the film, ask children to think of situations where they had to “share space” with someone else and it turned into a conflict or a fight. Write down “SPACE WARS” on the flip chart and ask the children think of times when they have been involved in a space conflict. List their answers on the chalk board or flip chart. Ask the children when faced with the space conflict if they responded by:

1. CRYING
2. FIGHTING
3. TRYING TO JOKE ABOUT IT

Ask if any of those responses helped solve the conflict.

View the film *Elbow Room/Distances* and observe that adults often react much the same way in conflict with equally poor results BUT children and adults can learn to solve conflicts by following the steps to conflict solving below:

1. State clearly what you need or expect
2. Listen carefully to what the other person needs or expects
3. Think together of at least 3 or 4 ways that everyone can get (most of) what they need
4. Choose the best option and act on it!

Role-play

1. You and your sibling share a bedroom and you think they are too neat and they think you are too messy. They are always complaining about your clothes not being put away, when you leave them on the chair and you are tired of the nagging. Use the steps above to talk to your sibling.
2. You are working beside a classmate who hums softly while she works. No one else seems to hear it, but you find it very difficult to concentrate on your work. Use the steps above to talk to your classmate.
3. You are on a crowded city bus and an adult with a large brief case sits beside you. They are not aware that the brief case is half on your lap; you are uncomfortable and wish that they would remove it. Use the steps above to talk to the adult.

This is a two-sided guide

A WORKPLACE discussion guide is on the reverse side of this sheet.