

**Navigating Conflict**  
*With Lowered Stress*

Presented by:  
Sandy Brown, LCSW, LMSW, SAP  
The Employer's Resource, LLC

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**ER** Plan for this Program

- › Characteristics of Conflict
- › Typical Responses to Conflict
- › Dimensions of Conflict
- › Effective Ways to Handle Conflict

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**ER** Three Principles of Conflict

- 1** Knowing who you are interacting with
- 2** Knowing what you are trying to achieve
- 3** Knowing where you are at the moment of interaction (the situation)

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**ER** When Conflict is Productive



- › When it is a symptom of discontent or stagnation
- › When it facilitates improvement
- › When it produces gains, innovations and new ideas
- › When it fosters unity
- › When it creates awareness

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**ER** When Conflict is Not Productive



- When issues multiply and the main point is lost
- When it becomes heated – people react more than respond
- When there are accusations, or verbal or physical threats
- When specifics are replaced by generalizations – i.e. “always” and “never” statements
- When concern for self turns to retaliation or desperation
- When the number of parties involved increases

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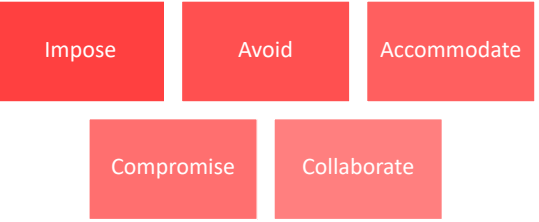
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**ER** Responses to Conflict



Impose      Avoid      Accommodate

Compromise      Collaborate

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**ER** **Personal Attitudes Toward Conflict**



- Conflict is uncomfortable and needs to be avoided
- Conflict is about matching wits
- Conflict **MUST** be resolved, and **ALL** conflicts can be resolved
- Conflict can be healthy or destructive

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**ER** **In Conflict – Know Yourself**

Think of a recent conflict you've had ...

- What was the topic and who was the conflict with?
- What caused you to react? What was said/done?
- How did it make you feel?
- What behaviors did you exhibit?
- What did you say?
- How did it end?

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**ER** **Types of Conflict**

<p><b>Cognitive – Use this type</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Disagreement about ideas and approaches</li> <li>› Issue focused, not personal</li> <li>› Characteristic of high performing groups</li> <li>› Use of Emotional Intelligence skills</li> </ul>	<p><b>Affective – Do not use this type</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Personal antagonism fueled by differences of opinion</li> <li>› Destructive to group performance and cohesion</li> <li>› Behaviors and communication fueled by emotion, not logic</li> </ul>
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**ER** **How Do We Keep Conflict Cognitive?**



- ✓ Make the approach
- ✓ Share perspectives
- ✓ Build understanding
- ✓ Agree on solutions
- ✓ Plan next steps

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**ER** **Step 1 – Make the Approach**

- › **Reflect** before you begin
- › **Invite** the other party to a conversation
- › **Be clear** about your intentions
- › **State your goal** - a positive resolution

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**ER** **When to Address Conflict**

- › Does the issue bother you when you go home that evening?
- › Does the issue come back to your mind when you see that person again?
- › Are you talking to someone else about the issue/person?
- › Are you gathering documentation/evidence about the issue?

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**ER** **Step 2 – Share Perspectives**

- › **Ask** for the other person’s perspective
- › **Paraphrase** what you hear
- › **Acknowledge** your contribution
- › **Describe** your perspective

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**ER** **Breaking the Conflict Cycle**

Use “I” Statements



- Speaking Behind a Glass Wall
- Goal is to minimize defensive responses from the other person
- Use Direct/Indirect communication strategically

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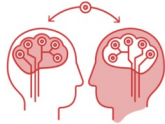
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**ER** **Breaking the Conflict Cycle**

Use Reflective Listening



- Paraphrase what the other person is saying – simply repeat it back
- Listening does not mean ‘agreement’ – but allows the other person to feel HEARD and can open the discussion to sharing ideas – not just each person focusing on making their point

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**ER** **Responding to Reactive Behavior**

- Sympathy
  - › Express concern, don't probe, stay on track
- Denial
  - › Focus on solution and agree on a path forward
- Minimizing
  - › Point out the impact and reiterate your goal
- Anger
  - › Remain calm, do not defend/explain yourself if it is off topic

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**ER** **Step 3 – Build Understanding**

- › **D**iscuss one issue at a time
- › **C**larify assumptions
- › **E**xplore interests and feelings

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**ER** **Breaking the Conflict Cycle**

Identify Common Ground or a Common Goal

- “Begin with the End in Mind”
- Start discussion with focus on where you agree

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**ER** **Breaking the Conflict Cycle**

Get Curious about Others' Ideas

- Avoid shooting down the other person's idea or jumping to defend your own position/opinion
- Ask questions about their thoughts – seek to get more information
- Opens exchange and minimizes arguments

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**ER** **Step 4 – Agree on Solutions**

- › **Reality test** – Is this doable?
- › **Durability test** – Is this durable?
- › **Interest test** – Does this meet all parties' interests?

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**Binary Trap – Gradients of Agreement**

- Easier to think in terms of black/white, right/wrong
- Grey areas are more complex
  - Require more thought, listening, and compromise.

*"If you think there are only two options, you're wrong.  
Think harder."*

- Identify where you agree and strategize around where you differ

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**FR** **Step 5 – Plan Next Steps**

- › Jointly create **action plan**
- › What needs to happen?
- › Who needs to do what? By when?
- › How will interaction take place if problems occur?

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**FR** **Tips for Handling Conflict**

- Avoid power struggles
- It is much harder to compete sitting next to someone than across a table
- Encourage equal participation – don't ramble
- Separate fact from opinion
- Avoid exaggerations
- Know yourself – are you projecting?

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**POTENTIAL WARNING SIGNS OF ESCALATION**

- Difficult to re-direct
- Emotional reaction
- Clenching fists, tightening jaw
- A sudden change in body language or tone
- The other person starts pacing or fidgeting
- A change in the type of eye contact.
- Intimidating stance: chest protruding forward, arms away from body.



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**ER De-Escalating Me!**

- › You are in charge of how you react! Be positive - you can do this.
- › De-escalate yourself first (take a deep breath).
- › Recognize that the other party is “venting”.
- Don’t take the bait – choose to de-escalate the situation instead.
- Manage yourself — be patient, put your own ego on hold.
- Use an escape clause if needed – “Let me think about it and get back to you”

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**ER De-Escalating Them!**

- › Use Active Listening – Paraphrase what they are saying
- › Ask Open-Ended Questions
- › Use Empathy – “I can understand why you feel that way.”
- › Own What you Need to Own – this builds respect and trust
- › Be Brief, Slow Down, Calm Tone of Voice – be sincere, not mocking
- › Maintain Calm Non-Verbal Behavior – facial expressions, body language

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### At Work...

- › Challenge Yourself to Not Avoid Conflict
- › Do a Self-Assessment – Are you Ready to Resolve the Issue?
- › Address Conflict:
  - I Statements
  - Common Ground
  - Active Listening
- › Allow for Gradients of Agreement
- › Try to Diffuse Yours and/or the Other Person's Anger
- › Seek Resources to Help

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*Thank you for your attention.*

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**RESOURCE**

913-205-2705  
[www.theemployersresource.com](http://www.theemployersresource.com)



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