

Managing Conflict

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choosing change 



Workshop overview

- Exploring our **experiences of conflict**
- **What happens to us** when we are in conflict situations
- How we can **manage ourselves**
- How we can **manage other people**
- Formal approaches to **conflict resolution**

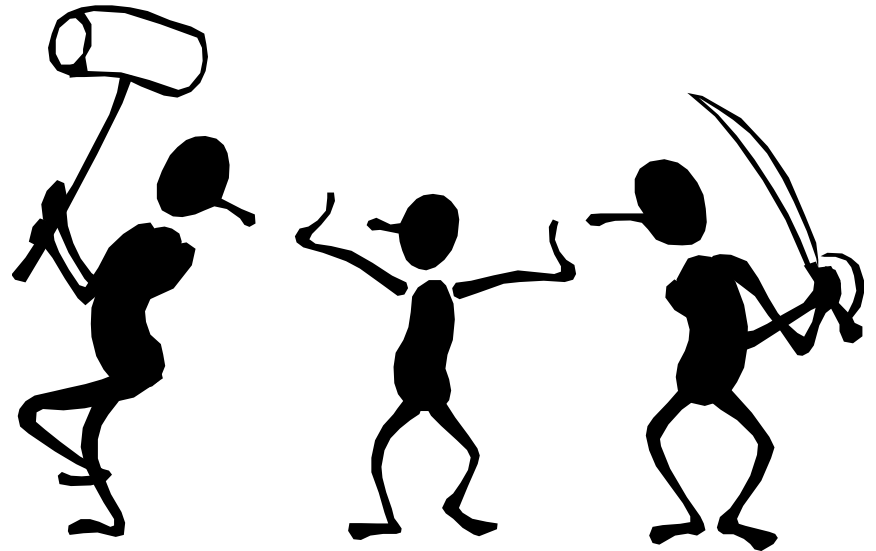
What is conflict?

‘A conflict is a situation in which two or more people want something which they see as being attainable by one or the other, but not both.’

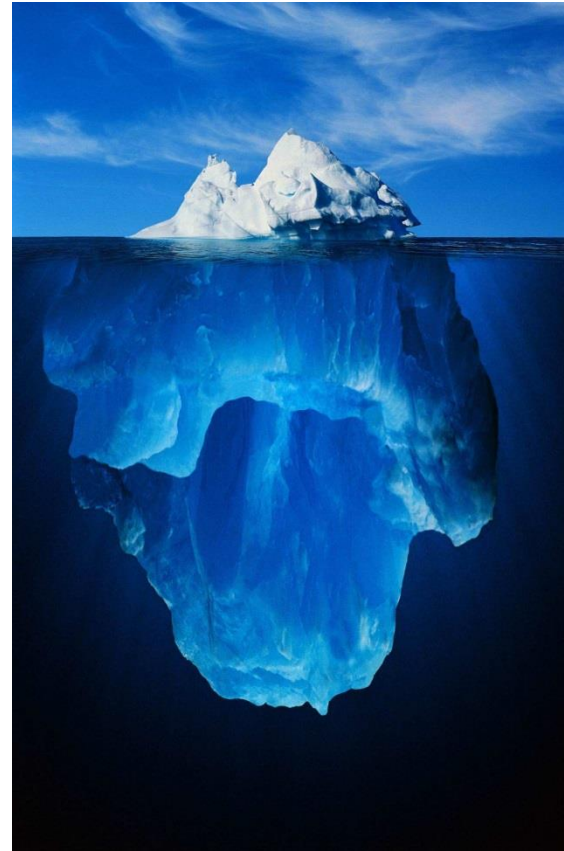


Experiences of conflict

Please consider
your own
experiences of
conflict, and ask....



- What was the **trigger**?
- What was the **underlying cause**?



- What **helped**?

- What made it **worse**?



Typical causes of conflict

- Genuine **differences of interest** or competition over scarce resources
- **Threats** (e.g. to safety, self-respect or dignity, sense of control)
- **Anger** (e.g. stress, tiredness, alcohol, hormonal changes; emotional 'default' position)
- False **assumptions** (jumping to conclusions)
- **Incompatible beliefs** & belief systems

How we react to everyday experiences

Sensory experience



Unfamiliar
or linked to
'danger'



Threat →
Action needed?



Familiar /
safe



Carry on
as normal

The emotional brain

Any 'threat' is processed **first** by the emotional brain

The emotional brain can **switch off** the thinking brain and lock us in a **trance** state



Responses to threat



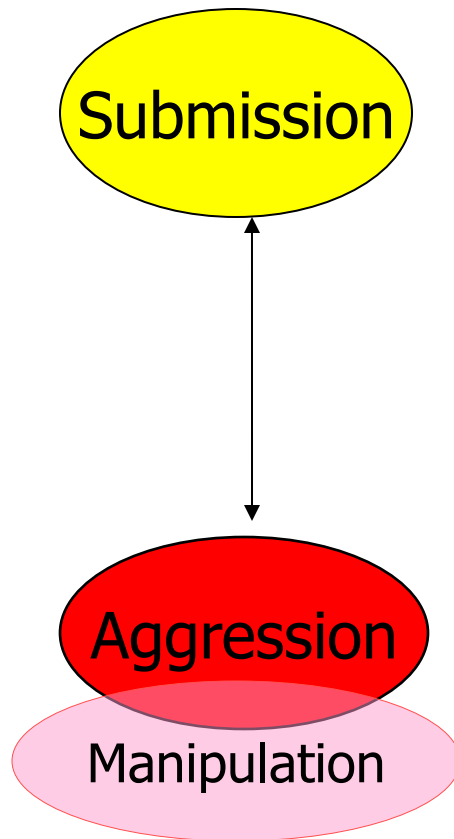
Fight or flight

- A **natural human response** to threat
- Activates a chain of **physical events**
- **Prevents rational thinking** - the emotional brain takes over ⇒ black and white thinking
- Level of response, in the modern world, is often **inappropriate** to the level of threat
- Can **spiral out of control**

Managing yourself

- Notice the early warning signs: what are *your* 'triggers'?
- Learn to **calm** yourself – deep breaths, bodily awareness, helpful self-talk
- Give yourself **mental / emotional space**
- Be **curious** about the other person(s)
- **Withdraw** if anger (or guilt / fear) is taking hold

Approaching conflict assertively



- You win / I lose → Flight
→ Guilt / Fear
- I win / You lose → Fight
→ Anger / Blame
- I win / You lose but don't notice (I wish!)
- **I win / You win = Best possible outcome for both of us (reasoned)**

Key assertiveness techniques

- Be clear what you want
- Keep it short and simple
- Acknowledge the other person
- ‘Own’ what you say
- If you need to, repeat it but without escalation

“I’d like you to turn down the music because I find it hard to think. I know you like music, but I’d appreciate it if you could play it quietly or use headphones. What do you say?”

Making requests assertively

DO

- Be direct
- Say “I” (*I’d like..., Please could you..*)
- Keep it brief
- Give a genuine reason (if needed)
- Be prepared to listen to them

DON’T

- Apologise
- Justify yourself unnecessarily
- Blame them as a person
- Sell it with flattery
- Trade on ‘friendship’ to get their agreement

Dealing with angry / emotional people



Calming



Communicating



Agreeing a way forward

Calming other people

- Build rapport – get on their level
 - Reflective listening & checking understanding
 - ‘Yes sets’
 - Avoid confrontational body language
 - Apologise *if appropriate*
 - Switch on their thinking brain!
- ...But leave if you sense danger

The LEAPS process

*To turn round attacking,
negative, blaming
behaviour:*

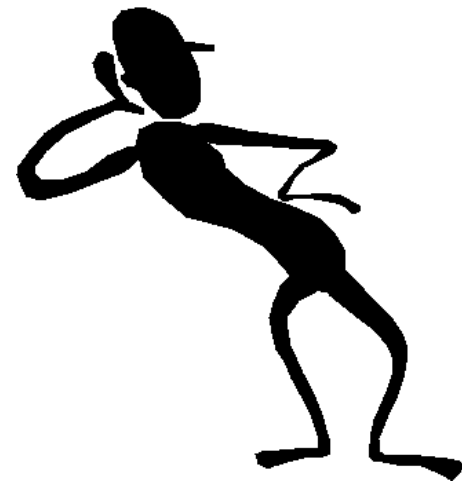
Listen

Empathise

Ask

Paraphrase

Summarise



Exercise

Please note one issue, problem or complaint that you or someone else feels angry or frustrated about

In pairs, take turns to talk through the issues, with the listener practising the LEAPS method (as far as possible...)

Formal ways of resolving disagreement and conflict

- Arbitration
- Negotiation
- Mediation



Mediation & negotiation techniques

- Separating **interests** from **positions**
- Conflict **mapping**

