

HELPFUL HINTS FOR SMALL GROUP PARTICIPATION

CONFLICT*

Conflict is a natural part of our interactions with others, whether it be discussions in small groups, working with other professionals in a clinic, serving on academic committees, or even in your daily interactions with family and friends. Conflict need not result in anger, blame, and hurt feelings. Understanding how to identify, manage, and resolve conflict can actually enable you to strengthen your relationship with others while creatively promoting positive changes and improving productivity.

The following lists identify possible sources of conflict and suggestions for resolving conflict.

Sources of Conflict:

- Personal differences in perceptions, expectations, values, and beliefs
- Information deficiency, misinformation, or misrepresentation
- Role incompatibility with respect to goals and responsibilities
- Environmental stress, such as resource scarcity and uncertainty

Resolving Conflict:

- See the problem from the other point of view.
Seek to understand and express the needs and concerns of the other party as well as or even better than they can themselves.
- Identify the key interests and concerns (not positions) involved.
- Separate the people from the positions. Minimize personality differences.
- Establish superordinate goals. What do both parties share? What common goals provide a context for the discussions?
- Seek reliable background information. Establish agreement on observational data.
- Determine what results would constitute a fully acceptable solution.
- Identify possible new options to achieve those results.

Consider a recent source of conflict in your life.

What issues led to the conflict?

What skills helped you deal with it effectively?

or

What skills might have helped you deal with the conflict more effectively?

* Adapted from:

Covey, S.R. (1989). The 7 habits of highly effective people. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Lemieux-Charles, Louise, Physicians in health care management: Managing conflict through negotiation. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*; 151(8),1994.