

Module title	Building Community Leadership Capacity
Unit title	Handling Conflict
Time needed to complete unit	60 Minutes
Why is this important to know?	Conflict is inevitable and occurs daily. Leaders must know how to handle and manage conflicts when they arise in groups. How individuals respond to conflict situations depends upon their cultural background and understanding of conflict. There is no way to cover all cultures but an overview of several diverse groups will be provided along with some strategies for conflict management from an American perspective.
Objectives/Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To discuss how conflict is neither positive or negative • To present strategies for addressing conflict when it arises • To provide an overview of how different cultures address and view conflict
How to use this information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing with colleagues who are working with immigrant populations or groups whose first language is not English • Reviewing some basic elements of how conflicts are addressed within American culture and sharing how other cultures relate to and address conflicts.
Supporting materials <i>(handouts, Power Points, activities, etc.)</i>	<p>Handouts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict Myths and Facts • Conflict Styles • Culture and Conflict • Scenarios • STOP-Conflict Management Process <p>Presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin by allowing participants to get to know each other or to reconnect by having them discuss what the word conflict means to them. • Introduce the “Conflict Myths and Facts” handout and discuss each myth and fact. Ask participants if the myths and facts correspond to their cultural beliefs. • Discuss conflict escalation and how if left unaddressed conflict can be very destructive. • Ask participants to write down (or discuss in

	<p>pairs) a conflict that they have observed or have been a part of and ask them to identify how the conflict escalated and or was resolved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the conflict management styles handout and have participants identify their preferred style. Make sure that they understand that there is no wrong answer.• Review the handout on cultural differences and conflict.• Review the scenarios and use the questions to initiate discussion on how the conflict could have been avoided or how it could be addressed based on the "Conflict and Cultural Differences" handout. This can be done as a large group or in small groups with groups reporting out.• Review the STOP Handout and discuss strategies for resolving conflict
Additional resources, web links	

Conflict Myths and Facts

Myth 1--- All conflict is bad.

Fact--- Conflict opens the door for many possibilities, improved decision-making and enhanced problem solving.

Myth 2-- Having conflict means you are not responsible and are a poor communicator.

Fact-- Since conflict is a natural part of life and happens all of the time, everyone has conflict. How you deal with conflict can play a role in how people perceive you when communicating.

Myth 3-- Conflict means that you do not care about the situation

Fact-- People generally defend and fight for what deeply concerns them; why else would they be upset?

Myth 4-- Conflict, if left alone, will take care of itself.

Fact-- Conflict can and will escalate without proper attention and can lead to irreparable damage to relationships.

Myth 5-- Conflict must be resolved immediately.

Fact-- A quick resolution is not always possible, or desirable; if you take the time to cool down before engaging the person involved in the conflict you have a better chance of communicating effectively.

Conflict Styles

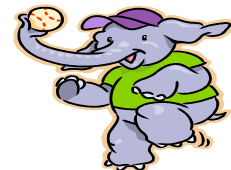
Avoiding-This style tends to be an unassertive or indirect one. Conflict avoidance often results in people refusing to address conflicts when they occur. Avoiders like to have other people make decisions for them. Often other's interests are put before theirs. Many people simply just choose their battles.



Accommodating-This style is usually indirect. Often when this style is used, one person is putting another's needs before his or her own because the relationship is important. Accommodators tend to place a very high value on relationships.



Collaborative-Assertive and cooperative. This style takes into consideration the concerns of all involved and takes the time to achieve a win/win situation. All involved are able to save face



Competing-Often used when a quick decision has to be made where the relationship does not carry high importance. People who compete can be viewed as uncooperative and aggressive.



Conflict and Culture

African American	Latino	Asian American	Native American	European American
Direct	Indirect	Indirect	Indirect	Direct
Emotionally Expressive	Diplomacy and tact	Not emotionally expressive	Not emotionally expressive	Frankness and directness
Collectivist	Collectivist	Collectivist	Collectivist	Individualist
Interpersonal	Feelings are important	Giving face and saving face is important		Impersonal
Confrontational	Accommodating	Non-challenging		Non-challenging

Collectivist	Individualist
Betterment of the group	Self advancement
Saving face	Individual responsibility
Restraint of personal emotions and opinions	Display personal opinions and emotions
African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans*	European Americans*
Tend to use more accommodating and or avoiding styles	Tend to use competitive conflict style
Looks for opportunities to save face for both parties	Saving face for self
Low Context Communication	High Context Communication
Explicit and direct	Indirect/find the meaning
Tend to be linear	Tend to be cyclical
Speaker delivers clear message	Non-verbal important
More personally expressive	Decoding is necessary
Conveyance of thoughts feelings and opinions	Often ambiguous/listener must read between the lines
	History, social context, and roles important

*These cultural groups generally display these beliefs but it must be noted that not all European Americans are individualists nor are all African Americans collectivist. Each group also demonstrates these traits on a continuum.

Ting-Toomey. 1999.

Scenario One

Ms. Williams, a young African American, is the assistant manager of the Java Joe Coffee house and is training a new employee, Mr. Cloudwalker, a Native American senior citizen.

Ms. Williams: Mr. Cloudwalker, we need to talk about a few issues we've been having with your performance. Customers have complained that they have a hard time hearing you repeat their orders at the checkout. You'll need to speak up so they can hear you better. [Mr. Cloudwalker is unhappy in his job and/or he doesn't know what he's doing]

Mr. Cloudwalker: I'm sorry. I'll try to speak up. [Ms. Williams doesn't need to shout at me. She's always so loud in dealing with everyone.]

Ms. Williams: And, if they need something at their table, it's hard for them to make eye contact with you to let them know. It's hard for all of us to communicate with you staring at the ground all the time. Is there a problem? [Why won't he look at me when I'm speaking to him? Is he trying to hide something? I've heard that a lot of Native American can't be trusted.]

Mr. Cloudwalker: (staring at the floor) I'm sorry you're not happy with me. I'll try to work on these things. [Why is she so rude in staring at me all the time? I can't stand it! I'm doing my job the best that I can. She seems very pushy. I've heard this about African Americans. I'm old enough to be her grandfather! Doesn't she think I know how to pour coffee? Maybe I should look for a new job.]

Discussion questions

What strikes you as the main problems in this scenario?

Who is responsible for the impasse?

What culturally relevant values does Ms. Williams assume to be "normal" or "universal"? Mr. Cloudwalker?

What stereotypes does Ms. Williams project onto Mr. Cloudwalker? And vice versa?

Name one thing each player can do to improve their communication patterns.

Scenario Two

Mr. Miller, a European American Farmer, has a small agribusiness stand where he sells his products. He employs a recent Dominican immigrant, Elba Rodriguez.

Mr. Miller: I need to talk to you about your job performance. Elba, your lunch hour was over at 1pm. It's almost 1:30. [Mr. Miller assumes that Elba is lazy and doesn't value her job.]

Elba: It's only a few minutes after 1pm. I was having lunch with my sister. I don't see what the big deal is. [Elba feels Mr. Miller is being overly critical. It is only a few minutes after 1pm and she has come back from having an in-depth conversation with her sister.]

Mr. Miller: It's the third time we've talked about this. It's very important for you to be back on time from your breaks. The next time they'll be consequences. [She always has an excuse about being with someone in her family. She told me this job was important to her, but she doesn't act like it - she's always making excuses. I get the feeling she underestimates the seriousness of this issue. If it happens again, I'll have to let her go.]

Elba: There's never anyone in the store at this time anyway, but I'll try to do better. [Mr. Miller is over reacting. Everyone in this store is too excited about being exactly on time.]

Discussion Questions

What strikes you as the main problems in this scenario?

Who is responsible for the impasse?

What culturally relevant values does Mr. Miller assume to be "normal" or "universal"? Ms. Rodriguez?

What stereotypes does Mr. Miller project onto Ms Rodriguez? And vice versa?

Name one thing each player can do to improve their communication patterns.

Scenario Three

Mr. Youn Kim, a new Asian supervisor, is speaking with his employee, Shelley Campbell, a young European American.

Mr. Kim: Ms. Campbell, I'd like to talk to you about this project where I know you're the senior member of the team. I'd like to see more detail in the background section, and more illustrative graphs in the solution section. [Mr. Kim assumes that she will pass on the information to the appropriate people in the group to complete the task]

Ms. Campbell. Oh, hi Youn. How's it going? Oh, the background section is Jones' part and the solution section belongs to O'Malley. You should send them an email and I'm sure they'll fix it. [Why is he telling me this when it is clearly not my area? I'm not the lead on this project.]

Mr. Kim: I'm sure you'll be having more discussions in the near future about this project. [Why would she tell me to send an email when I already told her the message to pass on to her team? She's terribly informal. She needs to learn to address me properly as Mr. Kim. I had no idea before I came to this company that Americans had such disrespect for their superiors]

Ms. Campbell: So you're going to send the email? [Why does he always have to be so vague? He never answers my questions. Does he think I can read his mind?]

Mr. Kim: No. Please see that the message gets to the appropriate persons. [Does she not realize that I am both her superior and her elder? How did a person with her attitude ever remain at a company for so long?]

Discussion Questions

What strikes you as the main problems in this scenario?

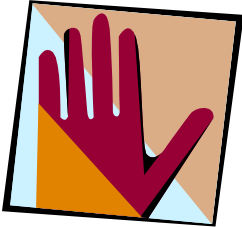
Who is responsible for the impasse?

What culturally relevant values does Mr. Kim assume to be "normal" or "universal"? Ms Campbell?

What stereotypes does Mr. Kim project onto Ms. Campbell? And vice versa?

Name one thing each player can do to improve their communication patterns.

4 Step Conflict Management Process



S- Stop talking and listen

T- Talk calmly about what the issues are and identify feelings. Use active listening skills to make sure there is an understanding of what the conflict is.

O- Be open to what the other person has to say and his/her feelings and begin to discuss options for resolution.

P- Proceed to acting on the suggestions for resolution.

Developed by Kathy Lechman and Karen Brown 1999.