

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 453 458

CG 030 447

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TITLE Strategies for Resolving Conflicts.
PUB DATE 2000-00-00
NOTE 68p.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - General (020) -- Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Conflict; *Conflict Resolution; Coping; *Elementary Secondary Education; Force Field Analysis; *Group Dynamics; *Interpersonal Relationship; Leadership Styles; *Peer Relationship; Social Problems

ABSTRACT

Conflict is a phenomenon of human relationships that occurs when an individual's needs are not being satisfied. This paper explains why it is crucial to recognize and deal with conflict on different levels of education. Chapter 1 discusses coping with conflict. It describes several management styles (competition; collaboration; avoidance; accommodation; compromise) that can be used in situation-specific instances. Various strategies are presented in Chapter 2 as examples of handling conflict between children. Chapter 3 discusses managing conflict from the inside out. It considers whether students can learn to avoid conflict and provides suggestions for conflict management teams. Modes of conflict are explained in Chapter 4, and the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (1974) is presented as a way to assess students' preferred modes of response. Chapter 5 discusses managing intergroup conflict and the use of Blake, Shepard, and Mouton's theory of intergroup conflict analysis to resolve intergroup conflicts. The Force Field Analysis is explained in Chapter 6 as a method to understand the forces for and against a plan. Chapter 7 presents the task, maintenance, and self-oriented behaviors that are relevant for group success. Throughout the paper are proactive ways for educators, students, and parents to deal with resolving conflict peacefully. (Contains 46 references.) (JDM)

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Strategies for Resolving Conflicts

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Spring 2000

ED 453 458

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Preface

The group that wrote this paper was composed of the following doctoral and specialist degree students in the Department of Leadership and Counselor Education at South Carolina State University. They are: Mamie J. Booker, Bill Bradley, Inez Brown, Jacqueline Davis, Sherrilyn M. Duquette, Andrea Gore, Marcella Heyward-Evans, Joan Vaught Howard, Tasha Lewis, Josephine Mack, Rippin McLeod, Jr., Jaquelyn Williams McNeil, Nancy W. Ragin, Deborah Brewer Robbins, Mable Scott, and Patricia Diane Stewart.

It was made up of graduate students from Augusta, GA; Columbia, Marion County, Myrtle Beach and Orangeburg, SC under the leadership of Dr. Isaiah Reid and Dr. Benjamin Brockington for the Hilton Head Management Seminar 2000. The group would like to express their appreciation to Nancy W. Ragin for her many hours spent coordinating this paper. It would also like to thank Sherrilyn M. Duquette for her work in submitting the paper to Dr. Reid, Dr. Brockington, and Dr. Michel. This group also appreciates the editing committee who helped put the finishing touches on the paper. Sherrilyn M. Duquette, Joan V. Howard, Jacqueline Williams McNeil, Nancy W. Ragin, Deborah Brewer Robins, and Patricia

Diane Stewart were the members of the editing committee.

Schools are in the headlines. Unfortunately, it is not because of increased SAT scores. It is not because America's schools are gaining on other industrialized nations in the fields of science and math. It is because of violence in the schools. Headlines shout of guns, death, injury, youth wasted. Morning news shows describe the incredible stories of young people gone wrong. The most unbelievable part of the tale is that this is happening in schools. Instead of the safe haven that schools used to represent, the perception is one of failure to protect the children.

This paper will examine some of the ways that conflict can be recognized and dealt with on the various levels in education.

Chapter 1: Coping with Conflict

Part 1

Violence is the most highly visible display of conflict and the most widely held belief connoting conflict. Physical aggression toward others may be the end result of conflict, but it does not have to be. Conflict can be resolved peacefully. Relatively small conflicts (disagreements) can be resolved resulting in a better quality of life. To bring about a positive resolution, we need to understand some of the psychology of conflict and the coping mechanisms that people employ to resolve those conflicts.

Conflict is defined as a "process that begins when one of the parties to the interaction perceives that another has frustrated, or is about to frustrate, one of his needs or concerns" (Thomas, as cited in Ross, 1982, p.135).

Humans want to: (1) perceive themselves and (2) be perceived as winning over the next person. When that perception is frustrated, it usually leads to undesirable behaviors, but can also induce positive outcomes. Conflicts can promote positive personal and social changes.

Handling conflict is one of the most important social skills. Individuals learn how to interact with other people from birth. Coping with conflict may

range from instinctual behavior (fight or flight) to a more rational (thinking) behavioral reaction. The actions employed by chance in resolving one conflict may become learned behavior, and be employed in all conflict situations. All conflicts are not the same, and a different mode of coping for each conflict may be appropriate. Optimally, to minimize failure in resolving conflict, one must learn what styles are available, in what situations they are most effectively employed, and how to use them (Ross, 1982, p.135).

Two behavioral dimensions, assertiveness and cooperativeness, are utilized in conflict. Assertiveness is defined as the extent to which an individual concentrates to satisfy his or her own concerns. Cooperativeness is defined as the extent to which an individual pursues efforts to satisfy another person's concerns. These two dimensions interact with each other to produce a continuum of distinctly identifiable styles of coping with conflict.

There are five styles of coping with conflict that are competition, collaboration, avoidance, accommodation, and compromise (Thomas, 1976).

Competition refers to the desire to meet one's own concerns and needs at the expense of another party. War is an example. We tend to

think of competition in terms of a contest where each party engages in conflict with the winner taking all.

Collaboration involves the utmost use of both assertion and cooperation. Collaboration requires more commitment, more time and more energy than other modes. While the cost may be great, the outcome can be rewarding. Steps in collaboration between parties are as follows:

1. Acknowledgment that there is a conflict
2. Identification and acknowledgment of each other's needs
3. Identification of alternative resolutions and consequences
4. Selection of the alternative that accomplishes the goal(s) of both
5. Implementation of the alternative and evaluation of the results.

This is considered to be a win/win situation. For example, if a group of people were marooned on an island, despite initial personal wants and conflicts, the needs of the group would have to be put first. All would have to work together cooperatively in order to survive.

Avoidance does not address the conflict. Both parties may be indifferent to the needs of the other party. Behavior is unassertive and uncooperative from each. In short, they both lose. Avoidance may be effective on a temporary basis to de-escalate a situation. Resolution of an

issue is not reached, basically because neither party openly acknowledges that there is a conflict. On the other hand, one of the parties may have such overwhelming power that it is not possible for the other party to win. In that case, there would be no need to acknowledge the problem. An example of avoidance could be the following scenario: The man and his mother-in-law just cannot stand each other, but choose individually to be civil to each other for the sake of his wife and her daughter. They never liked each other. They miss out on what could have been a carefully built friendship, if they had not avoided the problem.

Ross found that accommodation is characterized by cooperative and unassertive behavior (Ross, 1982, p.137). Unassertive behavior is willfully done and is not to be confused with indifference. The needs of the other party are placed above the needs of one party, even when that party has great concerns and needs. Accommodation may have payoffs later. For example, a mother may have to place the needs of a sick child above her own needs relating to her job. The payoff could be the sick child recovering quickly, the boss determining the employee's ability to prioritize, or the boss recognizing your commitment. The last style of coping with conflict is compromise. It is midway between competition and collaboration and

avoidance and accommodation. Moderation in all things, especially in assertiveness and cooperativeness, may be the best way to describe compromise. Parties expect, explore, and accept a mutually satisfying resolution. Compromise is considered to be a winning resolution to both or all parties. For example, after examining their schedules on Sunday night, a husband and a wife may negotiate and compromise to meeting family obligations.

Coping with Conflict

Part 2

Conflict is a naturally occurring phenomenon in human relationships. People become involved in conflict when they feel challenged and their needs are not being satisfied. Successful resolution or de-escalation of conflict requires facility with different conflict-management styles.

If someone is responsible for finding a solution for a conflict one of the first decisions is to determine which management strategy will efficiently resolve the problem to the benefit of all parties involved. A conflict management style should be situation-specific. A preference for management strategies is established early and typically chosen over other styles that may be more appropriate. To be an effective manager one

should have knowledge of different management styles and know when to use them to be truly effective in resolving conflicts. It is possible that combinations of different management styles may be more appropriate for different types of conflict. Continual use of one style over any of the other management styles may result in a perception of rigidity. The following is a discussion of some of the uses and misuses of different conflict management styles.

Competition

With the competition management style one's own needs and concerns are met at the expense of the other party. Those who use this style to resolve conflicts may find that the other party views them as belligerent and intractable. Competitors express anger and frustration openly and aggressively. The other party may object to being forced into a win-lose situation with someone who uses this management style. However, if you never engage in a competitive manner you may begin to have feelings of powerlessness against others that are competitors.

Collaboration

More than any of the other conflict management strategies, collaboration requires more of a mutual commitment between parties.

Creative solutions to seemingly impossible problems are often found in a collaborative effort. However, many issues do not warrant the expenditure of time and energy required of a collaborative approach. Collaboration is overused if the process is protracted and time spent in finding a resolution to the problem is excessive or other activities go lacking. Also, one party may feel that they are being taken for granted if the commitment to the collaboration is one-sided.

Avoidance

Many wrongly assume that there are no adverse consequences associated with avoiding conflicts, but too much avoidance can also create problems. Decisions that are made unilaterally, if one party withdraws, may not receive adequate support from others. If avoidance is used too often, a person may be viewed as uncooperative. As an interim measure avoidance is useful for gaining additional information that may help facilitate resolution of the problem.

Accommodation

Those who use accommodation to excess often feel that their interests and values are not receiving adequate attention. Users of this management style are often perceived as quiet and unassuming or accommodating.

Often their contributions to resolving conflicts are not given sufficient attention. On the other hand, if accommodation is rarely used one may be viewed as intractable.

Compromise

Compromise encompasses, to some degree, strategies of competition, collaboration, avoidance, and accommodation. It is possible that you can lose sight of your goal by becoming too ensnared in the tactics of compromise. Needs may not be realized if you engage in compromise too frequently. Skills of bargaining and negotiation may not develop to the fullest. A positive feature of compromise is that more issues can be confronted, but the resolution achieved may not be as satisfactory to all parties. A drawback is that both parties in the conflict may realize only partial satisfaction of their needs.

Summary

There is no right or wrong conflict management style. Determining a particular style should be situation-specific, but usually a preference for a certain strategy is established early. Knowledge and skill with different strategies are advisable so results can be found quickly and efficiently.

Chapter 2: Conflict Resolution Strategies

Part 1

Conflict is a daily reality for everyone. Both children and adults will inevitably come into conflict with the needs and values of others. As children, we develop our own preferred approaches for dealing with conflicts. We continue to use them because we lack awareness of alternatives.

Handling Conflict Between Children

What children fight about tends to vary with their age (Carlsson-Paige and Levin 1992). The younger the child, the more likely the argument will be about actions or things: "He took my book," or "She pulled my hair."

As children get older, their conflicts center more broadly on peer relations: "They won't let me in the game," or "He always calls me a bad name." This conflict can be managed by trying to head off a conflict before it escalates. As soon as voices rise, try to become a stabilizing force by getting close to the children involved. Ultimately, people want children to have the skills to resolve the situation on their own, but at first the adult will need to take an active role to help them learn the steps for conflict resolution.

Conflict Resolutions Strategies for Children

Identify the Problem: Children will be more open to discussing solutions if they feel their views are understood. The goal of this stage is to give each child a chance to speak and be heard.

Generate Solutions: If the children cannot come up with a solution, help them by asking questions such as: “What can we do about this?” or “Do either of you have any ideas?”

Agree on the Solution and Implement It: The goal is to arrive at a solution that everyone can live with, so that all those involved feel that their needs have been met.

Evaluate and Share the Results: Once the solution is agreed upon and implemented, it's a good idea to check on how it's working. If it's a particularly good example of problem solving, or you simply want to give the children recognition for their work in resolving a conflict, ask the students to share what happened with other children (Bernard, Bonnie1991).

Encourage Children to Resolve Problems on Their Own: As children acquire the skills to resolve problems, encourage them to work out solutions on their own. For older children, it often defuses the situation if they write down what happened or what they would like to have happen. Check with

the children to see if they have resolved the issues. As children become increasingly able to handle conflicts on their own, the adult's time spent on resolving conflicts is minimized (Dodd, 1973).

As adults, we will continue to deal with conflict. Therefore, it is important that everyone learn conflict resolution strategies. Conflict resolution strategies can be classified into three categories: avoidance, defusion, and confrontation. Avoidance is at one extreme while confrontation is at the other extreme of a continuum. Listed below are the responses to and strategies for dealing with conflict.

Avoidance

Some persons attempt to avoid certain types of conflict situations. These people will repress their emotions and look the other way. However, this strategy will usually leave the individual feeling dissatisfied with the outcome of the situation. Avoiding conflict situations may cause one to have doubts and fears over facing conflict in the future.

Defusion

This strategy is a delaying tactic. It is an effort to allow time for the situation to cool down. This strategy is most effective when a delay is possible. However, this tactic may cause feelings of dissatisfaction, anxiety

about the future, concerns about oneself, and decrease self-esteem.

This strategy focuses on confronting the conflicting issues or persons. Confrontation can be divided into power and negotiation strategies. Power strategies may result in a win/lose situation. Negotiation strategies will offer opportunities for both sides to win. The aim is to resolve the conflict with a compromise that is mutually satisfying. (Stepsis, JA 1974)

Conflict Resolution Strategies

Part 2

Dealing with conflict has become a daily issue with most people. This conflict may occur in every facet of life, whether personal or professional. The ability to resolve conflict successfully is an important social skill. Conflict resolution skills must be learned and practiced.

We develop our preferred approaches to dealing with conflict at an early age. Conflict resolution strategies can be classified into three different categories: avoidance, defusion, and confrontation (Stepsis, 91).

Avoidance occurs when one tries to avoid certain types of conflict situations or avoid conflict situations completely. Those who respond to conflict with avoidance tend to repress emotional reactions. They may look the other way. Moreover, they may withdraw from the situation entirely.

Defusion, a second conflict resolution strategy, is basically a delaying tactic. When a person uses defusion as a conflict resolution strategy, they try to tone down the situation, if only temporarily. They may keep the issues so unclear that confrontation is not likely to occur.

The third conflict resolution strategy is confrontation. Confrontation may be divided into power or negotiation strategies. The least effective of these are power strategies. They include the use of physical force, bribery, and punishment. Power strategies may be effective in determining a "winner." However, they do not necessarily resolve the conflict.

Negotiation is a more effective approach to conflict through confrontation. Both parties may emerge winners if negotiation is successful. Negotiation is an attempt to resolve conflict with a compromise that is satisfying to all parties involved in the conflict. Successful negotiation requires skills that must be learned and practiced. These skills include: the ability to diagnose the nature of the problem; effectiveness in initiating confrontation; the ability to listen and willingness to hear another's point of view; and the ability to make use of problem solving processes in bring about a consensus decision (Stepsis, 92).

The starting point of conflict resolution through negotiation is

diagnosing the nature of the problem. At this point, it is important to decide if the conflict is a values-driven conflict, one that is ideological, a “real” conflict, one that is tangible, or a combination of both. Values-driven conflicts are often more difficult to resolve and may be better simply tolerated. If the conflict is tangible, negotiation is usually an effective approach to resolution.

The second skill in negotiation is initiating confrontation. This does not mean attacking the opposing party. Instead, it is the opportunity for the confronting party to state the problem and its tangible effects.

After confrontation, the person who confronts must be willing to listen to the confrontee’s point of view. The person who confronts must practice reflective, or active, listening, in which listening is accompanied with reflection and clarification. When both parties use reflective listening, negotiation is more likely successful.

The final skill in negotiation is the use of problem solving processes to reach a consensus decision. The steps to problem solving include: clarifying the problem; generating and evaluation possible solutions; deciding together which is the best solution; planning and implementing the solution; and planning for evaluation.

Negotiation is the most effective strategy for resolving conflict. The skills necessary to achieve meaningful negotiation are important and must be practiced.

Chapter 3: Managing Conflict from the Inside Out

Part 1

Can one always avoid conflict? Unfortunately, conflict is a normal part of life and as a result, cannot always be avoided. Conflict exists everywhere: in the home, school, religion, and even in cartoons. Conflict can occur at any time, about anything, with anyone, and can happen anywhere. Conflict can be as small as an argument or as big as a war. It can stimulate and motivate or it can dominate and aggravate all involved. The results of conflict are not always positive. Results can be very negative, even fatal. Conflict can cause one to have a false outlook on life or a brand-new perspective on what you would like the world to be. There has not been one end all design developed to rid us of conflict; nevertheless, when problems arise, it is important to remember that there is some kind of prescription. Numerous scholars have made attempts to put a rapid fix on a very serious issue plaguing school systems, school violence. Although several attempts have been made to briskly remedy the problem of school violence, researchers have concluded that no quick fix will treat school systems overwhelmed by violence. As a result, many analysts have decided to examine the effects that reinforcing and improving students'

conflict management skills will have on improving violence in the schools. When conflict arises, students need to know themselves well enough to know how to handle anger.

It is imperative for students to understand that others will do things that will cause anger to become an active variable in their lives. What others may do, could trigger a reaction that could be misinterpreted and mismanaged that is far from the course of how one would normally react. If students are trained to observe others as well as themselves, they will be able to detect how they feel about what others are saying or doing. They will also know if others are doing things that may trigger anger. Researchers define a “trigger” as an act that sets off anger in another. Some commonly known triggers are: being touched while angry, having a finger pointed in one’s face, talking about someone’s primary caretaker, name calling, being left out, or being treated unfairly. Therefore, in order to minimize conflict, students must be trained to manage anger because “the ability to cope successfully with conflict is among the most important social skills one can acquire.” (Ross, 1982)

Attempts to remedy the problems associated with school violence have not been made until students reach middle or high school. To ensure

the safety of these schools, monitors and security personnel have been hired to police hallways and reinforce school rules. Nevertheless, the problem of violence is evident as early as grammar school. Roger Johnson strongly believes that as early as elementary school, educators must promote an understanding of the nature and desirability of conflicts to students, as well as, problem solving negotiation procedures or conflict management skills. Brendtro and Long found that without conflict management skills and intervention, 40% of childhood bullies eventually become adult felons (Brendtro & Long, 1995). School districts are implementing conflict management programs to aid in the reduction of violence in schools. It is believed that the act of talking, expressing feelings and listening is often enough to bring some resolution to a dispute. Thus, in an effort to teach children how to become conflict managers, Mary Parker Follett suggests that first and foremost problem solving should be viewed as integration of the needs of the bargainers or the students. Additionally, Vygotsky has examined conflict management from a cognitive developmental perspective, and strongly believes that children's own language will serve as a vehicle for their development when sharing problem-solving experiences with others. Conflict management programs

teach peace, nonviolence, anger management, resolutions and more. The ultimate goal is to teach students how to handle conflict in a peaceful manner, especially when unsupervised.

It is time for educators and stakeholders to examine their personal school situations and show a willingness and ability to confront the challenges that are inherent in the change process to bring about a reduction in school violence. (Cooper, Madden and Slavin, 1997)

Educators must make the issue of school violence a high priority and begin reformation at the grass roots level by teaching students early how to work through anger to find a peaceful solution to a problem. This initiative will take much training and a cooperative effort of students, teachers and parents.

A successful conflict management training program will initially assist conflict managers in rationally identifying the problem before it erupts into violence because conflicts that linger usually attract more persons into the conflict and eventually become explosive. Students can be trained to negotiate their feelings or interests when settling a dispute. As identified by Johnson and Johnson in their book, Teaching Students to be Peacemakers, students can learn to work past win-lose situations and work toward win-win

situations. A win-win negotiation happens “when an agreed upon or compromised solution is made to benefit all involved parties. Consequently, a problem solving process is used to reach an agreement that will promote an understanding of the other persons feelings and needs.” (Johnson and Johnson, 1991)

Another alternative to a conflict management program is to have a peer mediation program. Stomfay-Stitz suggests that peer mediation programs empower students to share the responsibility for creating a safe, secure school environment. Mediation involves the assistance of a third party in the resolution of a conflict. Peer mediation is a method by which a friend or peer acts as a mediator and comes to the aid of the persons in dispute. The mediator remains a neutral party as disputants are guided through the conflict negotiation process. “Mediators help their peers summarize the main points of their dispute and puzzle out possible solutions.” (Stomfay-Stitz, 1994)

Before the mediation process begins, disputants agree to allow the mediator to assist while the mediator agrees not to take sides. To begin the mediation proceedings, first, mediation rules are disclosed to the disputants which include: listening to each other without interruption, no name calling

or put-downs, keeping the resolution confidential, etc. Next, they identify the problem and express how they think the other person feels. The mediator assists disputants as they brainstorm at least three possible solutions to solve the dispute. Finally, disputants choose one of the suggested solutions and agree to abide by the solution. One recommendation is the inclusion of a “friend” clause, that is, “without repeating anything said in mediation, teens tell friends the conflict is over, so everyone can move forward without harboring resentments.” (Kowalski, 1998).

There are several types of conflict management programs in existence. Most programs are based on the premise that negotiation and problem solving skills are essential and that reinforcement and improving students’ conflict management skills are necessary. Such training will teach students that using goodwill power when conflicts arise can lead to a better resolution than using negative power. It is important to start training students now, as training takes time and the cooperation of the entire school and community. Students not only need to learn how to handle conflict in an educational setting, but they also need to be able to transfer and apply their training out into the community. In order for students to become effective managers of conflict, it is imperative that they know themselves, become

problem solvers and good decision makers.

Although most schools are safe, violence has found its way inside in our schoolhouses. If we took the time to understand the types of support that research has shown to be effective, we could all try to make our schools a safer environment for our neighborhoods and communities. Dwyer, Osher, and Warger's (1998) guide stated that fewer than 1 percent of all violent deaths of children occur on school grounds, and that a child is far more likely to be killed in the community or at home. Managing conflict and early intervention efforts can reduce violence and troubling behaviors in school or workplace.

Creating safe and productive places requires many preventive measures in place. A school needs to possess certain characteristics in order to have a safe and responsive environment for all. The way schools are structured may determine the amount of conflict generated (Bolton, 1979). We as stakeholders should set as our goal that safe places are established within the institution, where students could learn conflict management (Bolton, 1979). Stevahn, Johnson, Johnson, Green and Laginski (1997) found that when conflict management training was integrated into academic courses, students who received the training scored significantly higher on achievement tests than students who did not.

Training led to reduced tension, enhanced student self-esteem and responsibility, and improved effective problem solving skills (Gross, 1994; Stuart, 1991).

Having students feel safe in their educational environments will allow individuals to feel free to express themselves, expose their conflicts, and learn techniques for managing conflicts. Stakeholders can increase their ability to recognize early warning signs if they establish and maintain a caring, nurturing and supportive learning environment. According to Dwyer, Osher, and Warger (1998) there are many warning signs, such as, social withdrawal, isolation, rejection, academic performance, anger, discipline problems and many more indicators. These warning signs can be used to shape intervention practices.

Students need to be taught how to negotiate their disagreements and so that conflicts will not remain unresolved. The effects of unresolved conflicts can be subtle (Gadlin, 1994). Stevahn, Johnson, Johnson, Green and Laginski (1997) found that when conflict management training was integrated into academic courses, students who received the training scored higher on achievement tests than students who did not. Conflict management programs in elementary and high schools have resulted in less

physical violence, less disruptive behavior, and improved academic performance (Conflict Resolution Education Network, 1998b). Safety is everyone's job. Stakeholders, such as, teachers, administrators, parents, community members, and students all must commit to meeting the challenge that involves safety for all.

Chapter 4: Modes of Conflict

Thomas (1976) defines conflict as the "process which begins when one party perceives that the other has frustrated, or is about to frustrate some concern (needs, wants, and values) of his." (p. 891) Conflict can be made helpful or harmful, depending on how one responds and handles the conflicts. There are two general impulses: (1) Assertive behavior – the desire to satisfy one's personal concern, and (2) Nonassertive behavior – the desire to satisfy other concerns.

The five basic reactions to conflict are: (1) competing, (2) collaborating, (3) compromising, (4) avoiding, and (5) accommodating.

Competing

The competitive style is characterized by a desire to satisfy one's own concerns at the expense of others. Competitive oriented people often act in

an aggressive and uncooperative manner. Win-lose power struggles and attempts to dominate are common.

Collaborating

The collaborative style is characterized by a desire to satisfy both parties' concerns in a dispute. People with a collaborative orientation tend to demonstrate highly assertive and highly cooperative behavior. Collaborative people appreciate mutual benefit, integration, and win-win solutions.

Compromising

The compromising style is an intermediate, "middle-of-the-road" approach to conflict. Compromising people are satisfied if both parties in a dispute achieve moderate, if perhaps incomplete, satisfaction. Each side gives up something in exchange.

Avoiding

People who practice the avoiding style tend to behave as though they were indifferent both to their own concerns and to the concerns of others. The avoiding orientation often is expressed through nonassertive and uncooperative behavior. Avoiders prefer apathy, isolation, and withdrawal to facing conflict.

Accommodating

People who favor the accommodating style are more concerned with pleasing others than with meeting their own needs. They tend to be nonassertive and cooperative. People who practice this style of conflict management sacrifice their needs and desires in order to keep peace and to make others happy (Thomas, 1976).

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument

Thomas and Kilmann (1974) developed the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument to assess people's preferred modes of response to conflict situations. The instrument consists of thirty forced-choice questions. Each question deals with how respondents believe they would behave in conflict situations. The instrument is self-scored and provides immediate feedback to each respondent. The instrument is as follows:

Instructions

Consider situations in which you find your wishes different from those of another person. How do you usually respond to such situations?

On the following pages are several pairs of statements describing possible behavioral responses. For each pair, circle the "A" or "B" statement, which

is most characteristic of your own behavior. In many cases, neither the "A" nor the "B" statement may be very typical of your behavior; in that case, please select the response which you would be more likely to show.

- 1) A. There are times when I let others take responsibility for solving the problem.
B. Rather than negotiate the things on which we disagree, I try to stress those things upon which we both agree.
How typical of you is the situation you selected?
Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical
- 2) A. I try to find a compromise solution.
B. I attempt to deal with all of his and my concerns.
How typical of you is the situation you selected?
Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical
- 3) A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.
B. I might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve our relationship.
How typical of you is the situation you selected?
Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical
- 4) A. I try to find a compromise solution.
B. I sometimes sacrifice my own wishes for the wishes of the other person.
How typical of you is the situation you selected?
Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical
- 5) A. I consistently seek the other's help in working out a

solution.

B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tension.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

6) A. I try to avoid creating unpleasantness for myself.

B. I try to win my position.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

7) A. I try to postpone the issue until I have had some time to think it over.

B. I give up at some point in exchange for others.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

8) A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.

B. I make some effort to get my way.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

9) A. I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.

B. I make some effort to get my way.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

10) A. I am firm in pursuing my goals.

B. I try to find a compromise solution.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

11) A. I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.

B. I might try to soothe the other's feeling and preserve our relationship.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

12) A. I will sometimes avoid taking positions, which would create controversy.

B. I will let him have some of his positions if he lets me have some of mine.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

13) A. I propose a middle ground.

B. I press to get my point made.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

14) A. I tell him my ideas and ask him for his.

B. I try to show him the logic and benefits of my position.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

15) A. I might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve our relationships.

I try to do what is necessary to avoid tensions.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

16) A. I try not to hurt the other's feelings.

B. I try to convince the other person of the merits of my position.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

17) A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.

B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

18) A. If it makes the other person happy, I might let him maintain his views.

B. I will let him have some of his positions if he lets me

have some of mine.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

- 19) A. I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.
 B. I try to postpone the issue until I have had some time to think it over.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

- 20) A. I attempt to immediately work through our differences.
 B. I try to find a fair combination of gains and losses for both of us.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

- 21) A. In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person's wishes.
 B. I always lean toward a direct discussion of the problem.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

- 22) A. I try to find a position that is intermediate between his and mine.
 B. I assert my wishes.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

- 23) A. I am very concerned with satisfying all our wishes. There are times when I let others take responsibility for solving the problem.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

- 24) A. If the other's position seems very important to him, I

would try to meet his wishes.

B. I try to get him to settle for a compromise.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

25) A. I try to show him the logic and benefits of my position.

B. In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person's wishes.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

26) A. I propose a middle ground.

B. I am nearly always concerned with satisfying all our wishes.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

27) - A. I sometimes avoid taking positions that would create controversy.

B. If it makes the other person happy, I might let him maintain his views.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

28) A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.

B. I usually seek the other's help in working out a solution.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

29) A. I propose a middle ground.

B. I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

30) A. I try not to hurt other's feelings.

B. I always share the problem with the other person so that we can work it out.

How typical of you is the situation you selected?

Not At All Typical: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very Typical

In assessing the basic reactions to conflict that students are faced with, violence prevention programs are necessary for learning to take place in schools. One of the best ways to reduce the number of incidents in schools is to implement violence prevention programs so that students can learn to handle their conflicts in a peaceful way.

Community and parent involvement are vital to the success of violence prevention programs in creating a safe school community that believes in and practices nonviolence in resolving differences (Schwartz, 1994).

Students cannot learn non-aggressive ways of interacting with others when their only models, including those in the media use physical force to solve problems (Wallach, 1994). Colvin, Ramsey, & Walker (1995, as cited in Walker, 1995) states that a school-wide violence prevention program can help foster a peaceful, caring student culture. Structure should be created to achieve two aims: to actively teach and reinforce children in highly visible ways for exhibiting basic pro-social behaviors and to consistently and fairly hold children accountable for misbehavior.

In order to make schools orderly and peaceful places in which high quality education can take place, conflicts must be managed constructively without physical or verbal violence.

A peaceful classroom or school results when the values and skills of cooperation, communication, tolerance, positive emotional expression, and conflict resolution are taught and supported throughout the culture of the school. When violence prevention programs are implemented, information and skills find their way quietly into individual classrooms through social studies, English, literature, science, and math curricula, as well as through direct instruction in communication and cooperative problem solving (Girard, 1995).

It is impossible for schools to solve the problems of violence alone. It must be a cooperative task involving parents and community members. If the implementation of violence prevention programs is to meet with any degree of success, parents and community members must be involved, especially since some acts of violence in schools are a spillover from disputes that originate in the community.

In violence prevention programs, new skills are reinforced in various settings (home, school, and community) to promote generalization and the

likelihood that new skills will become well-established parts of the individual repertoire. In addition, research suggests that students who feel strongly connected to family, community, and school are less likely to commit acts of violence (Dusenbury, Falco, Lake, Brannigan, & Bosworth, 1997).

Schools can provide the centerpiece for community efforts to curtail the number of violent incidents that occur in schools and the community.

Successful programs that aim to curb aggressive behavior before it turns violent, promote nonviolent social norms, and increase students skills in dealing with interpersonal relationships as needed to address problems (Haynie, Alexander, & Walters, 1997).

Implementing violence prevention programs will help teachers manage classrooms where students can be productive in a safe learning environment. Students will be able to solve conflicts in a peaceful, nonviolent way. They will also be able to mutually agree on solutions achieved through bargaining, compromising, or finding alternative activities (Wheeler, 1994).

According to Bratlien and Ikram (1994), when violence prevention programs are implemented, students are able to learn safe and effective ways to deal with conflicts. Students are empowered to become responsible

for their own behavior. More time is provided for teaching and learning and less time is wasted on discipline.

In order for community members to be able to help students solve problems peacefully, they must first learn to solve their own conflicts constructively (Schwartz, 1994). Schools offer classes for parents that help them deal with disciplining their children and other family problems that they may encounter. Educating parents will help not only the community, but also the school in making a safe place where students can learn without the threat of violence.

Chapter 5 : Managing Intergroup Conflict

Part 1

Conflict occurs within all social groups at some time. The way that conflict is resolved varies among social groups as much as the conflicting issues themselves. Ever since mankind began to communicate and live in social units, conflict has occurred. Conflict itself is a form of socialization and is necessary in all societies in order to make progress.

In the industrial sector of our society, conflict usually occurs within departments at the same level or different levels over resources or rewards they both think the other is receiving. The parties involved in the conflict usually base their assumptions on one of two factors: their orientation to the conflict, or the importance of the issue involved (Blake, Shepard, and Mouton, 1964). The manner in which the parties resolve the conflict is often determined by the company's grievance procedure policies.

Conflict resolution models have been discussed, implemented, modified, and eliminated by companies throughout the history of industry. Each company generally accepts a policy that meets the needs of their employees and that management feels is equitable. In 1964, Blake, Shepard, and Mouton created an intergroup conflict management model that can still

be observed to some extent in the grievance procedures of today's industry. Their model was based on the concept that all conflict could be described within the boundaries of nine classifications. Within three major classifications exist three orientations which are products of three resolutions, thus creating the nine classification total. These classifications are identified in terms of high payoff that creates a win/lose situation, moderate payoff that creates a withdrawal situation, and low payoff that lets fate take its course. The orientations existing within these orientations are the form that all conflicts generally follow. They are:

1. The clash cannot be avoided and agreement is unattainable.
2. The clash can be avoided because the group can act independently.
3. The clash can be resolved in the context of interdependence.

These orientations are identified in the 1964 research of Blake, Shepard, and Mouton. All conflicts then fall into one of these areas and different types of resolutions are offered for each, therefore, creating a nine-classification model.

Upon reviewing this method of managing interpersonal conflict, it became necessary to see if it was being utilized by any local agencies.

First the grievance policy for Horry County Schools was reviewed. The school district is the largest employer in Horry County with more than 3,000 employees. After looking at the grievance policy, it was clear that Blake, Shepard, and Mouton's creation is being incorporated into the grievance procedures. Horry County Schools implement a three level process. Level 1 being the lowest or low payoff in which the grievant talks to the principal, and they agree not to resolve the issue, to be indifferent or to smooth over the difference. If the grievant does not agree to this, then Level II begins and moves it to the moderate stakes category. At this level, written reports are filed and forwarded to the superintendent. Thus includes mediation by a third party, keeping the conflicting parties apart, and usually offering some compromise. If the grievant still feels the issue is not resolved, then the conflict moves to Level III, the high payoff situation. This is where legal counsel becomes involved and so does the school board. Here we see a winner-take-all attitude appear and one group may leave the conflict, or may resolve the problem. Thus, the intergroup management conflict resolution has been implemented.

Next, a union agreement booklet from AVX, the county's second largest employer was examined. Again, after looking at the grievance

policy, Blake, Shepard, and Mouton's model seemed to be utilized (AFL-CIO, 1998-2001). However, AVX incorporated five levels of grievance instead of the three used by Horry County Schools. It advocates the orientation of low payoff at Level I and Level II, moderate payoff at Levels III & IV and high payoff at Level V. It seems that industry always wants to start with low payoff strategies. They try to mediate and find a compromise if the grievant continues to Level II. Most conflicts in the intergroup appear to be resolved at these first two levels of conflict resolution. However, there are some situations of conflict that do go to Level III and result in a win/lose situation for the grievant or the company when compromise or mediation cannot be achieved (Horry County Schools, 1977).

Conflict does occur in every group situation at some point. It has and will continue to be part of the progress of industry. Without conflict, new methods would not exist, be created, or implemented. The way that conflict is resolved impacts the success or failure of the company. Conflict must be managed and resolutions must be reached in order for the company to be productive. Conflict resolution skills are critical to management in order to avoid win/lose situations. Conflict can be productive or it may destroy a department if left unattended. Success is measured by the attitudes of the

employees. If employees feel that conflicts are handled appropriately and satisfaction is obtained, then production will increase and vice versa. Profit is the industry's goal and successful leadership provides satisfaction. This results in profit for industry. Blake, Shepard, and Mouton created a model that makes intergroup conflict manageable.

Part 2

Conflict between groups is pervasive among the daily aspects of life. Humans are social species, and disagreements are inevitable. Conflicts exist over resources, needs and values/beliefs. Competition, power, politics and a shortage of something are common causes of conflict (Shaw, 1995). For organizations to be effective, it is necessary for intergroup conflicts to be resolved.

Blake, Shepard, and Mouton (1964) developed a theory that analyses intergroup conflict. It is a prediction of the likelihood of resolution. This theory posits nine classifications of conflict resolution.

A group chooses one of the nine methods (classifications) in accordance with their basic assumptions about the conflicts. Groups will base their assumptions about the conflicts according to the importance of the issues involved and their orientation to the conflict. The three levels of conflict

importance and their possible orientations to the conflict account for the nine different classifications (Blake et al., 1964).

The three levels of conflict importance are as follows: 1. high-level payoff conflicts, 2. moderate-stakes and 3. low-pay off conflicts. The three orientations toward a conflict are an unattainable agreement due to an unavoidable clash, an avoidable clash due to independent actions, and resolution in the context of interdependence (Blake et al., 1964). The nine possible ways in which conflict resolution can be achieved are listed in the following matrix.

Resolutions of Intergroup Conflict (Blake et al., 1964)

	Orientation	Levels of Importance		
		High payoffs	Moderate stakes	Low payoffs
1	Clash cannot be avoided and, disagreement is certain.	Fight to the death Winner takes all	Mediation obtained by a third party	Outcome left to fate Agree not to resolve the issue.
2	Clash can be avoided, but disagreement is certain.	Withdrawal. One group leaves the battle.	Groups stay apart and decide independently	Ignore and Indifference
3	Clash exists, but agreement is attainable.	Win-win Problem is solved. Active Solutions	Split the difference and compromise. Middle of the road Solutions	Peaceful coexistence Passive solution

It should be noted that not all conflict is bad, for conflict can be a growth process with many positive outcomes. Conflicts arise within any group of people working, playing or living together. Conflicts occur over differences. It is not the conflict that is the problem, but the manner in which it is dealt.

Blake, Shepard and Mouton's theory of intergroup conflict analysis is one way for business and industry to resolve these intergroup conflicts.

Chapter 6: Force Field Analysis

Force field analysis is a method used to get a whole view of all the forces for or against a plan so that a decision can be made which takes into account all interests. Lewin (1969) borrowed the technique from the physical sciences and offered it as a way to understand problem situations in social science and to effect a change. In effect this is a specialized method of weighing pros and cons. A problem situation exists when there is a difference between the way things are and the way someone wants them to be. The concept of force field analysis is that any situation is the way it is at any given moment because of counterbalancing forces keeping it that way.

Where a plan has been decided on, force field analysis allows you to look at all the forces for or against the plan. It helps you to plan or reduce the impact of the opposing forces, and strengthen and reinforce the supporting forces. Force field analysis (Lewin 1951) is widely used in change management and can be used to help understand most change processes in organizations. In force field analysis, change is characterized as a state of imbalance between driving forces (e.g. new personnel, changing markets, new technology) and restraining forces (e.g. individuals' fear of failure, organizational inertia). To achieve change toward a goal or

vision three steps are required:

- (1) First, an organization has to unfreeze the driving and restraining forces that hold it in a state of quasi-equilibrium.
- (2) Second, an imbalance is introduced to the forces to enable the change to take place. This can be achieved by increasing the drivers, reducing the restraints or both.
- (3) Third, once the change is complete the forces are brought back into quasi-equilibrium and refrozen.

Thomas (1985) explained that although force field analysis has been used in various contexts it was rarely applied to strategy. He also suggested that force field analysis could provide new insights into the evaluation and implementation of corporate strategies. More specifically Maslen and Platts (1994) applied force field analysis to manufacturing strategy. Force field analysis is potentially a powerful technique to help an organization realize a vision.

Once an analysis has been completed, the viability of the project can be determined. Once it has been decided to carry out a project, the chart can help analyze how to push through a project that may be in difficulty.

There are two choices:

(1) To reduce the strength of the forces opposing a project.

(2) To increase the forces pushing a project.

Often the most elegant solution is the first: just trying to force change though may cause its own problems as staff can be annoyed into active opposition to a plan instead of merely not welcoming it. If faced with the task of pushing through the project in the example above, the analysis might suggest a number of points:

By training staff (increase cost by 1) fear of technology could be eliminated (reduce fear by 2)

It would be useful to show staff that change is necessary for business survival (new force in favor, +2)

Staff could be shown that the new machines would introduce variety and interest to their jobs (new force, +1)

Wages could be raised to reflect new productivity (cost +1, loss of overtime -2)

Slightly different machines with filters to eliminate pollution could be

installed (environmental impact -1)

These changes swing the balance from 11:10 (against the plan), to 8:13 (in favor of the plan)

Summary

Force Field Analysis is an effective method of getting a picture of all the forces for and against a plan. It helps to weigh the importance of these factors and assess whether a plan is worth pursuing. When it has been decided to proceed with a plan, carrying out a Force Field Analysis helps identify changes that might be made to improve the plan.

Chapter 7: Task, Maintenance and Self-Oriented Behaviors

Task, maintenance and self-oriented behaviors are relevant behaviors for group success. Behaviors in a group categorically have one of three primary functions: accomplishing a task, improving member relationships, and meeting personal needs. Task oriented behaviors such as initiating, seeking and giving information, clarifying and elaborating, summarizing and consensus taking tend to move a group forward toward accomplishing their task. This is the critical and essential part of the decision making process. The key questions focus on what the group hopes to accomplish and how to make it happen. Research on building teams refers to this process as focusing on a common goal or “the forming stage” (Hirsh, 1997). This involves active sharing and listening among the group members. In TQM, this relates to the brainstorming phase and productive nominal group techniques that help identify problems and possible solutions (Bonstingl, 1992). These are important in helping a group focus on a task. Maintaining a good climate for the task is equally important to the group's production. Harmonizing, gatekeeping, encouraging, compromising and standard setting, and testing are relevant behaviors for maintaining positive group relationships. Successful and productive groups need a balance of

task-oriented and positive group relationships. The task-oriented behaviors keep the group on target and promote the exchange of ideas. The maintenance behaviors attempt to keep open the road to communication, encouragement and praise. A good balance of these behaviors enhances group performance (Hirsh, 1997). Deming recommended both of these in his quality circles and brainstorming techniques (Bostingal, 1992). Again, the common underlying key to maintaining a productive group climate and keeping them on task is empathetic listening. Empathetic listening in building teams employs the importance of active listening among members. Deming stresses "accepting each opinion without judgment" (Bonstingl, 1992). Consensus may be reached only when each member has contributed and listened.

Self-oriented behaviors may be a source of conflict within the group. Emotional behaviors may disturb the functioning of the group unless they are recognized and channeled positively. As Dr. Isaiah Reid says, "Conflict can't always be resolved but it can be brought to manageable levels" (Reid, 2000). Basically, these behaviors reflect emotional needs and address how one fits into the group. This creates conflict and thus "we have a human relations problem not in the cognitive domain" (Reid, 2000). There

may be problems of identity, goals and needs, power, control, influence and intimacy. Self-oriented behaviors produce dependency, resistance, fighting and controlling responses by group members.

Hirsh (1997) refers to it as the “storming and norming phase.”

Robbins (1989) calls it establishing the “pecking order.” A group must pass beyond this stage in order to perform to its potential and move forward in the decision making process (Robbins, 1989).

Blake, Shepard and Mouton (1964) agree that “within all group conflict occurs at some time.” Three orientations are win-lose, withdrawal, and win-win. Win-win offers the solution most advantageous to both groups because it values the opinions of all and no one loses.

Groups may address decision making in several ways. They may not reflect on a proposed course of action at all. They may drift and make no decision or they may follow a leader-made decision. One member may make a self-authorized decision without group input. A handclasp decision may be decided by two or three members of the group. But a human relations decision usually accepts an opinion in order to reduce conflict. A minority or a majority may also formulate a decision. Of all the ways of

making a group decision, consensus is the most encompassing and satisfying because it considers each and every member's input as valuable and stresses the importance of sharing and listening.

Group decision instructions for reaching consensus are clear and concise. Consensus encompasses a creative process and may be a difficult process. It does not mean that all members completely agree on the decision. It simply means that every member accepts the group rankings and the judgment reflects the logic of the group process.

Guidelines for reaching consensus are based on logic and listening. This becomes possible as a group reaches the stage where they are performing well, on course and moving full speed ahead (Wertheim, 2000). Members must listen to each other's logic and accept all ideas or opinions and weigh them carefully. A win-win attitude helps the process move along amicably. It is important that members are sensitive to other members and no one feels they are the loser. This allows for positive "collaboration" and "ownership" in the process by all members (Bonstingl, 1992).

It is just as important in the process that members do not become swayed just to avoid conflict. This happens frequently in group dynamics.

“Group shift” and “Group think” may affect the outcome of the decision making when some may change their minds just to go along and get along (Robbins, 1989). This is best expressed as the “Abilene Paradox” (Harvey, 1992). Managing the agreement process is important especially if an agreement is reached too quickly. Members should each share the reasoning behind the decision to accept solutions easily and logic should be the foundation. Majority voting is not acceptable and does not reflect consensus.

The process cannot be moved forward to reduce conflict by use of any quicker form of bargaining. Members must be convinced of the value of the solution, not pressured socially or rewarded for giving in to another’s view. Everyone’s opinion and ideas are equally involved and conflict is natural but managed through the process by following the guidelines and valuing the diversity and exchange of ideas as objectively as possible. It may seem that the group is repeating cycles after rejecting circles, but this aids the creative process by increasing the flow of information and exchange of ideas in that a broader perspective is gained (Werthiem, 2000). Conflicting opinions may help the group make a more informed decision because they have considered opposing views. When a variety of opinions

are discussed, the group is in a better position to agree on a feasible and acceptable solution (Robbins, 1989).

During the process, several indicators may be observed. It is important to note how members participate during the decision making. Observing members may reveal leaders emerging or some members withdrawing. Members may have ideas or block ideas. It is essential that the group entertain several ideas and that people feel that their views are valued. Ideas and opinions should be clarified. A flow chart is one TQM tool that may help keep the group on target (Bonstingl). It is very important that all members listen and have an opportunity to share their views. The emotional tone of the group also needs to be monitored. An aggressive or hostile environment will not produce the support that members need in order to feel free to contribute. Nonverbal cues can be observed to indicate the tone of the group. Groups that exhibit positive and open nonverbal language also tend to work together better (Hirsh, 1997).

When groups are blocking and members are not meeting their obligations to the group process, measures should be taken to counteract them. Each group member should be an observer to guard against problems and the group should be willing to confront the problems. It is

important not to let “might overcome right” when confronting group conflict and to be aware of barriers to communication, influence and control tactics (Wertheim, 2000). Personal agendas, social loafing, group think, and group shifts are common group diseases that must be deterred for adequate decision making to occur.

Although many factors may influence group decisions effective group members aid the group decision making process by focusing on the task, being an observer, listening, sharing and effectively communicating with others. Brainstorming and valuing each other’s ideas and opinions are the keys to reaching an agreement. Trust and openness should be encouraged and commitment to the group and to developing an adequate solution is paramount.

Conclusion

There are as many ways to resolve conflict as there are conflicts themselves. The approach must be proactive rather than a reactive one when it comes to resolving conflict. Educators, parents, and students ought to learn how to handle conflict and resolve it peacefully. By learning the different types of conflict resolutions, we can develop an arsenal for peace

rather than for violence. The following poem by Robert E. Valett is an excellent example of the important aspects of peaceful conflict resolution.

Peaceful Conflict Resolution

Respect the right to disagree.

Express your real concerns.

Share common goals and interests.

Open yourself to different points of view.

Listen carefully to all proposals.

Understand the major issues involved.

Think about probable consequences.

Imagine several possible alternative solutions.

Offer some reasonable compromises.

Negotiate mutually fair cooperative
agreements.

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