Unit 2 Overview

I. Conflict Resolution
   - Conflict styles

II. Coping with Difficult People
    - Common profiles

III. Coping with Difficult Behaviors

I. Conflict Resolution

Conflict styles: when to use which style

**COMPETING (or FORCING)**
The competing style is used when you need to control the outcome and disagreement is discouraged.

Often appropriate when:
- An emergency is happening
- You are sure you are right and being right is more important than preserving relationships
- The issue is trivial and others do not really care what happens

Often inappropriate when:
- Collaboration or cooperation have not yet been attempted
- Cooperation from others is important
- Used routinely for most issues
- Self-respect of others is diminished

**COLLABORATING**
The collaborating style is used when you want to assert your views but also welcome others’ opinions. Search for a mutual agreement and understanding.

Often appropriate when:
- The issues and relationships are both important
• Cooperation and/or a creative end is important
• Reasonable hope exists to meet all concerns

Often inappropriate when:
• Time is short or there is an emergency
• The issue is unimportant
• The goals of the other person are certainly wrong

**COMPROMISING**
When we compromise we meet another person halfway; we’re willing to give up something in the process.

Often appropriate when:
• Cooperation is important but time or resources are limited
• When finding some solution, even less than the best, is better than a complete stalemate

Often inappropriate when:
• Finding the most creative solution possible is essential
• When you can’t live with the consequences

**AVOIDING**
In the avoiding style, we delay or avoid response or withdraw completely.

Often appropriate when:
• The issue is trivial
• The relationship is insignificant
• Time is short and a decision is not necessary
• You have little power

Often inappropriate when:
• You care about both the relationship and the issues involved
• Used all the time
• Negative feelings may continue
• Others would benefit from sharing information
ACCOMMODATING

In the accommodating style, we give in and let the other person’s view prevail. We acknowledge an error or decide it’s not important enough (“peace at any price”).

Often appropriate when:
• You really don’t care about the issue
• You are powerless and have no wish to block the other person

Often inappropriate when:
• You are likely to hang on to bad feelings
• Used all the time in order to gain acceptance (outcome: depression and lack of self-respect)

Discussion questions:
Have you used any of these conflict management styles in the past?
What was the result?
II. Coping with Difficult People

Common profiles:

*Sherman tank*
- Insensitive to any feelings but their own
- Abusive, abrupt and intimidating
- Strong need to prove to themselves and others that their view of the world is right

Coping tactics
- Arguing or attacking only refuels their energy
- Let them verbally run out of gas
- Sit down and maintain eye contact
- Listen

*Snipers*
- Usually with smiles on their faces take potshots at people with carefully aimed digs, nonplayful teasing
- Attack when they feel threatened

Coping tactics
- Confront them about an indirect attack
- Bring the issue out in the open by asking “What do you mean by that statement?”

*Clams*
- React to any disagreeable situation by closing down
- Respond with a yes, no, a grunt or nothing just when you need their opinions, ideas and perspectives
- Use silence as a weapon

Coping tactics
- Maintain a friendly, open facial expression
- Ask open-ended questions like “Can you tell me how you feel about this?”, “Is there some problem?”
- Be patient
**Negative people**
- Have 100 hundred reasons why things can’t be done
- Skeptical pessimists

**Coping tactics**
- Demonstrate your own realistic optimism
- Explore other solutions and let them say what the worst consequences could be

**Complainers**
- Find fault with everything
- Feel any problem is beyond their control to solve
- Want you to fix things for them

**Coping tactics**
- Do not allow complainers to dwell on the past
- Help them come up with ways to solve the problem
- Work on list of solutions
- Focus on one solution, make a plan and follow up
III. Coping with Difficult Behaviors

Signs that Conflict is Brewing

- Too much strong feeling attached to a minor issue
- Shifting eyes or glaring
- Name-calling and personal attacks
- Implied or expressed threats
- Expressions of panic, desperation or despair
- Needless harping on the same point
- An obvious effort to gather allies and set up opposed camps on an issue
- Use of biting humor and sarcasm

The Most Powerful Question in Conflict Management**

What’s more important? –
To resolve the conflict, or to be the “most right”?*

Extend an Olive Branch**

- Admit something; apologize
- Meet one of their needs
- Give/do something unexpected
- Make a follow-up contact
- Extend another olive branch
IV. Problem solving

*Problem solving requires taking steps to solve a situation.*

**Factors affecting the problem solving process:**
- Past experience related to the problem (how have you handled this problem in the past? Were you successful? Why or why not?)
- Amount of anxiety
  - Letting your emotions control you during conflict and/or problem solving may cause you to make an irrational decision
  - Take time to “cool off” or allow the other person to regroup before discussing the problem or issue
- Amount of resources
  - Internal; yourself and friends or family who have knowledge of a successful solution to the problem

**Individual approach to problem solving**
- Brainstorm and list all your ideas with respect to what could be causing the problem or what the problem could be
- Look for connections
- Identify possible solutions or approaches
- Try the one that seems most beneficial at the moment
- Decide that if this plan does not work, you will try something different

**Stages in solving a problem or conflict**

A. Find out...
1. Who are the parties involved?
2. What are the issues?
3. What background information do you have?
4. Who are the people who can benefit or be injured by the issue?
5. Focus on the problem, not the people
6. Clarify the problem
7. What is the goal?
8. What are the options?

B. Decision making
   1. What will the decision be based on: values, political, emotions, etc.
   2. What are the options?
   3. Make a first decision

C. Making it work and looking back
   1. Develop specific steps
   2. How are these going to be implemented?
   3. Put the plan to action, follow up and evaluate possibly another plan