Interpersonal Skills and Conflict Management
Interpersonal Skills
Mr. Bernard is a senior manager with the ABC agency. He holds weekly individual supervision meetings with his team.

During these meetings, he remains behind his desk, frequently checks his emails and responds to personal calls. Mr. Bernard is often interrupted by his colleagues during the individual supervision.

His direct reports feels that he is disrespectful and does not value their time.

When this was brought to his attention by his team members, he dismissed their concern by stating that he was simply multi-tasking. The staff feels like he just doesn’t get it.
Recently, you and three or four other members of your group have been increasingly aware of personal disagreements and unspoken resentments among the people with whom you work.

There is no official procedure to handle such problems, and you realize that, not only is productivity (personal and collective) suffering, but that everyone appears to be unhappy in general with the declining working conditions these problems have created.

You feel the same way and would like to do something to improve the situation.

Considering the fact that these three or four other individuals are also aware of the problem, what can you do?
A fellow worker, Alice, has been reporting to the boss the progress of your group in such a way that it appears that she is the central force and the "idea person" in the group. This is not true since her contributions have been about equal to the others.

The other group members don't know she has been advancing her position in the organization at the expense of others (and maybe even making others look unproductive).

You know what Alice is doing. Alice is slightly above you in rank, and you like her and work well with her. You feel, however, that her easy and regular access to the boss and inaccurate reporting of the group's progress will ultimately undermine the others in the group.
Interpersonal Skills

- Develop awareness of, and honesty with, self and others
- Develop and maintain meaningful relationships with healthy boundaries
- Navigate unpleasant interpersonal experiences
Interpersonal skills are the skills we use every day when we communicate and interact with other people, both individually and in groups.

People with strong interpersonal skills are often more successful in both their professional and personal lives.
Interpersonal skills include a wide variety of skills, though many are centered around communication, such as listening, questioning and understanding body language.

They also include the skills and attributes associated with emotional intelligence, or being able to understand and manage your own and others’ emotions.
What are Interpersonal Skills?

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Communication Skills, which in turn covers:

Verbal Communication – what we say and how we say it;

Non-Verbal Communication – what we communicate without words, for example through body language, or tone of voice; and

Listening Skills – how we interpret both the verbal and non-verbal messages sent by others
Emotional intelligence – being able to understand and manage your own and others’ emotions
• **Team-working** – being able to work with others in groups and teams, both formal and informal.

• **Negotiation, persuasion and influencing skills** – working with others to find a mutually agreeable (Win/Win) outcome. This may be considered a subset of communication, but it is often treated separately.

• **Conflict resolution and mediation** – working with others to resolve interpersonal conflict and disagreements in a positive way, which again may be considered a subset of communication.

• **Problem solving and decision-making** – working with others to identify, define and solve problems, which includes making decisions about the best course of action
How to Improve Interpersonal Skills

1. Be Happy
2. Consider Coworkers Feelings
3. Become an Active Listener
4. Ask Questions
5. Practice Active Participation
6. Include and Respect Everyone
7. Act as a Moderator
8. Think Before Speaking
9. Avoid Frequent Negativity
My words came out fine!
They were processed incorrectly
by your brain!!!
Interpersonal Skills

- Listening
- Language & Communication
- Questioning
- Conflict Handling
- Using Feedback
Barriers

- Physical
- Cultural
- Language
- Perceptual
- Interpersonal
- Gender
- Emotional
Effective Cross-Cultural Communication

• Cross-cultural communication is about dealing with people from other cultures in a way that minimizes misunderstandings and maximizes your potential to create strong cross cultural relationships

• TIPS:
  • Know yourself, your culture, your audience
  • Be open to new ideas and appreciate cultural differences
  • Build trust through interactions
  • Avoid using difficult idioms
  • Pay attention to body language
  • Be a learner
Why is she trying to shake my hand?

Why is he bowing?
Conflict Management
We’ve all been in Conflict
Julia just finished a certification appointment for Maria, a participant who has cerebral palsy. Maria has some difficulty speaking and uses a wheelchair for mobility. As they head towards the door, Maria says something to Julia.

Julia replies, “I’m sorry, I didn’t understand what you said.”

Maria repeats her comment.

Julia looks confused and says, “One more time please?“

Maria repeats her comment in a louder voice.

Looking a bit flustered, Julia says, “Okay, well, maybe we can talk about that next time.”

Julia reaches for the door and says, “Let me get that for you.” Maria, at the same moment, angrily pushes the button for the automatic door and rolls away.

Julia walks back to her office feeling embarrassed and that she is no good at working with disabled participants.
Conflict Resolution: Case Study

A WIC clinic in a diverse area employs several bilingual staff. There is a group of staff who speak Hmong, and they often converse in their native language at work. Kelly, an employee who doesn’t speak their language, feels self-conscious and sometimes wonders if they are talking about him. He frequently complains to his friend at work about other staff not speaking English.

One day Kelly walks into a meeting room and several staff are already there, speaking in Hmong. Kelly walks in and say, Hello. “The other staff say “Hello” back and then resume their conversation, which Kelly does not understand, Kelly rolls his eyes and sits down on the other side of the room to wait for the meeting to start.
What is Conflict?
Conflict Management

Conflict management is the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspects of conflict.

The aim of conflict management is to enhance learning and group outcomes, including effectiveness or performance in an organizational setting. Properly managed conflict can improve group outcomes.
Strategy One: Accommodating

The accommodating strategy essentially entails giving the opposing side what it wants. The use of accommodation often occurs when one of the parties wishes to keep the peace or perceives the issue as minor. For example, a business that requires formal dress may institute a "casual Friday" policy as a low-stakes means of keeping the peace with the rank and file. Employees who use accommodation as a primary conflict management strategy, however, may keep track and develop resentment.
Strategy Two: Avoiding

The avoidance strategy seeks to put off conflict indefinitely. By delaying or ignoring the conflict, the avoider hopes the problem resolves itself without a confrontation. Those who actively avoid conflict frequently have low esteem or hold a position of low power. In some circumstances, avoiding can serve as a profitable conflict management strategy, such as after the dismissal of a popular but unproductive employee. The hiring of a more productive replacement for the position soothes much of the conflict.
Strategy Three: Collaborating

Collaboration works by integrating ideas set out by multiple people. The object is to find a creative solution acceptable to everyone. Collaboration, though useful, calls for a significant time commitment not appropriate to all conflicts. For example, a business owner should work collaboratively with the manager to establish policies, but collaborative decision-making regarding office supplies wastes time better spent on other activities.
Strategy Four: Compromising

The compromising strategy typically calls for both sides of a conflict to give up elements of their position in order to establish an acceptable, if not agreeable, solution. This strategy prevails most often in conflicts where the parties hold approximately equivalent power. Business owners frequently employ compromise during contract negotiations with other businesses when each party stands to lose something valuable, such as a customer or necessary service.
Strategy Five: Competing

Competition operates as a zero-sum game, in which one side wins and the other loses. Highly assertive personalities often fall back on competition as a conflict management strategy. The competitive strategy works best in a limited number of conflicts, such as emergency situations. In general, business owners benefit from holding the competitive strategy in reserve for crisis situations and decisions that generate ill-will, such as pay cuts or layoffs.
5 Strategies
Whatever the cause, here are 5 strategies you can adopt to deal with conflict – from “The Magic of Conflict” by Thomas F Crum

• **Avoiding** – This can be effective when the issue is relatively unimportant and the risks of surfacing it outweigh the benefits of resolving it.

• **Accommodating** – Useful when the issue is far more important to others than to you. However it isn’t appropriate when your input and/or commitment is required and you can’t give it.

• **Forcing** – Good for when quick, decisive, action is called for or you need to implement an unpopular decision – but only if commitment isn’t needed.

• **Compromising** – Although giving everyone some of what they want isn't likely to lead to a satisfactory outcome, compromising can work when the goals are mutually exclusive

• **Collaborating** – When time isn’t an issue, working through difficult feelings and different perspectives can lead to a much better solution and stronger commitment to that solution
CONFLICT HANDLING INTENTIONS

High

Accommodating
(Friendly Helper)

Collaborating
(Problem Solver)

Compromising
(Maneuvering Conciliator)

Avoiding
(Impersonal Complier)

Competitive
(Tough Battler)

Low

Concern for Others
(Cooperativeness)

Concern for Self
(Assertiveness)

Low

High
Five Conflict Management Strategies

Identify the opportunity. Shift the lens through which you view conflict.

Build a culture that encourages giving and receiving feedback.

Be proactive, but resist jumping to conclusions.

Do not use e-mail for conflict. If e-mail is your go-to to manage conflict,...

Engage productively using storytelling
Why is conflict management important?

Conflict Management is very important because it is always wise to prevent a fight at the first place rather than facing its negative consequences. Stress disappears, people feel motivated, happy and the world definitely becomes a much better place to stay as a result of conflict management.
Lia and Jason both work in Human Resources. Jason was hired a few months ago and Lia has been with the company for eight years.

Jason, while being a proficient worker, tends to wait until the last minute to get his work done. Lia works more steadily and keeps on top of her work daily.

Lia complains that she feels she has to worry now about his work and her own. And, because they rely on each other for certain tasks, she is uncomfortable with waiting until an hour or so before a deadline when they are forced to collaborate.

Because of the conflict, Jason is missing more work and you suspect it’s because he wants to avoid Lia and her wrath.
William has to do a presentation at work. There is one member that always makes sarcastic off-topic comments after his presentations that the other employees always laugh at. William feels the comments are meant to undermine his authority. The sarcastic coworker has lower rank than William, but is not a subordinate and in another department altogether.
1. Which of the following are most often associated with successful interpersonal skills?

- Workplace violence
- Leadership
- Problem solving
- B and C
- None of the above
2. The Program Administrator for the Shelter monitoring unit is preparing the summer vacation request list for his four program analysts. He notices that 3 of the 4 program analysts have overlapping vacation requests which may leave the unit short of staff. The program administrator stated that “this will resolve itself because we are all reasonable people. I am not worried.” This response can best be associated with which component of conflict management:

- Accommodating
- Compromising
- Avoidance
- Collaborating
3. Which of the following is NOT usually associated with interpersonal skills?

- a) Problem Solving
- b) Leadership
- c) Influence
- d) Researching policies and procedures
4. For effective cross-cultural communication, your language should be

• a) vague so that your message can be interpreted in many ways.
• b) guided by your cultural humility
• c) unfamiliar to your audience so you can capture their attention through your body language
• d) uninfluenced by your intended purpose
5. Improving one’s tolerance of other cultures requires

• a) relying on stereotypes
• b) obtaining a book or reading article on individual cultures since behavior is identical
• c) Observe body language and words to say will come to you.
• d) practicing empathy
6. A basic strategy for achieving cross-cultural understanding is to

a) hire people from different cultures
b) ignore differences in cultural customs
c) respect others in the workplace
d) establish a ranking of preferred cultures and prioritize your understanding of these cultures ONLY
7. A diverse workplace should include the following:

a) all members of the workforce except top management
b) men as well as women
c) everyone in an organization
d) members of all groups that have been discriminated in the past.
8. A recommended technique for overcoming cross-cultural communication barriers would be to

a) use the same nonverbal communication signals from one culture to another
b) make extensive use of idioms and figures of speech
c) be sensitive to differences in non verbal communication
c) Use complicated language and facial expressions to make your point easily understood
9. Which of the following is one of the most effective anger management techniques?

a) Think before you speak
b) Get some exercise
c) Respond rather that react
d) Use humor
Learning better ways to communicate is a useful technique for anger management

a) True
b) False