Definition of Conflict

• Denotative: An EXPRESSED struggle between two or more interdependent parties

Conflict has gotten a bum wrap

• Connotative Definition:
  • A fight, an argument, differences, violence, clashes, abuse, aggression, the same appeal as a trip to the dentist.

Have we ever defined it as: strengthening, growth producing, energizing, exciting?

Conflict in college and at home

• Studies of college student’s diaries concluded that:
  • They take part in about seven arguments per week
  • Most have argued with the other person before
  • Most have argued about the same topic again and again

Does your personality add to conflict in relationships

• Type A personalities: like to win, highly competitive, goal oriented, high energy and always in a hurry
• Type B personalities: calmer, less irritable about events around them.
Myths about Conflict

A fight indicates a bad relationship
Conflict hurts interpersonal relationships
Conflict reveals our negative selves

Why Conflict?

• Expressed Struggle
• Perceived Incompatible Goals
• Perceived Scarce Resources
• Interdependence
• Interference from the other

Some Conflict Styles

• Avoiding and withdrawing “It isn’t a problem. I am going for a ride”
• Accommodating “I do not want to fight about this. Have it your way”
• Forcing “You do not know what you are doing. Do it right—my way”
• Negotiating “I will do it this time if you will…”
• Compromise “I will give up this if you will…”
• Collaboration “We both can gain with a win/win answer”

What is your style of conflict management—do you use different styles with different people or situations?

• High Concern for others:
  Accommodating (Lose/Win) Your Way
  Avoiding (Lose/Lose) No Way

High Concern for self:
  Forcing (Win/lose) My Way
  Compromising (Partial win/win) Half Way

High Concern for us (Win/win) Our Way
Collaborating
What are your responses to conflict?

- Nonassertive---Say nothing
- Directly aggressive---Accuse
- Passive Aggressive---Complain to another
- Indirect Response---Drop hints
- Assertive Response---Confront

Do you have conflict rituals that work?

- When a couple fights, one leaves. The other gives in and the other returns with a happy reunion. Soon they fight again
- A child whines and fusses to get something. The parents say no and give in because it is easier. The child whines again
- A huge fight over keeping the apartment clean. One sulks for several days and then picks up without admitting to being wrong. The apartment gets dirty again.

How are you going to manage your conflicts?

- Do you want to manage them so that something positive can develop?
- Do you want to back off and give in to the other person?
- Do you want to control and win at the expense of another?
- Do you want to look at conflict as problems that can be solved together?

How much work and time go into Win/Win Collaboration

- Identify the problem and unmet needs
- Make a date for discussing the issue
- Describe the problem and needs
- Seek verification that partner understands
- Actively listen by paraphrasing, giving feedback, perception checking, nonverbal agreeing
- Consider partner's point of view
- Collaborate to find a solution to best extent
- Plan follow-up to check on progress and modify solution if necessary
Some questions to think about

- Can the win/win approach always be used in every situation?
- Can the win/win approach be too elaborate and detailed to use all the time?
- Is it possible to change others if they do not know about or use collaboration?

A thought: At least you have behaved honorably with best of intentions—raised your self-respect

Your response to conflict

- The situation: Three weeks ago your friend borrowed a sweater from you, your favorite sweater, promising to return it soon. You have not seen it since and the friend hasn’t mentioned it.
- The responses: Nonassertive, Aggressive, Passive Aggressive, Indirect Communication (drop a hint), Assertive Response
- The Probable Outcomes

Another Conflict Situation

- A fan behind you at a ballgame toots a loud horn every time the home team makes any progress. The noise is spoiling your enjoyment of the game.

  Nonassertive, Aggressive, Passive Aggressive, Indirect Communication, Assertive response

Last Look at Conflict Management

- Be Assertive rather than aggressive in your actions
- Talk instead of using force
- Engage in the conflict
- Take responsibility for your feelings
- Stay focused on the present (no gunny sacking)
- Use win/win skills
- If all else fails, cook dinner and light candles