



What is Conflict?

Conflict is a consequence of an environment in which people's wants, needs, and expectations are in contrast to each other. Sometimes, we're in conflict as a direct consequence of someone's behaviour. At other times our conflict can be with an individual's attitudes and expectations. It's important to note that whenever there's an interaction with two or more people, we experience what is known as a "conflict potential".

Characteristics of conflict

Conflict can escalate from a simple misunderstanding to a major power struggle if concerns are not specified and clarified early. As conflict escalates, the concern for oneself increases. At higher levels of conflict, the desire to win, protect interests and "save face" take on an increasing degree of importance. As conflict escalates, emotional factors become more significant than logical points. Well meaning people (doing the right thing) can become harmful to others as the conflict increases.

Types of conflict

It is not uncommon for people to have multiple sources of conflict. Therefore, people with good intentions can become harmful to others as their level of distress increases. The most common types of conflicts include:

▷ **Information Conflicts**, caused by:

- Lack of information
- Making assumptions
- Misinformation
- Different views on what is relevant
- Different interpretations of the information

▷ **Interest Conflicts**, caused by:

- Perceived or actual competition
- Material interests
- Psychological interests

▷ **Structural Conflicts**, caused by:

- Unequal control or ownership
- Unequal power and authority
- Time constraints

▷ **Values Conflicts**, caused by:

- Different criteria for evaluating ideas or behaviours
- Differing beliefs or perceptions
- Exclusive goals which reflect personal values
- Different ways of life, ideology and religion

▷ **Relationship Conflicts**, caused by:

- Clash of differing personalities or behavioural types
- Misperceptions or stereotypes
- Repetitive negative behaviour

BSS can help by:

Providing EAP counselling (individual or couples), Leader Support, and Conflict Resolution sessions to:

- ▷ Identify different sources of conflict.
- ▷ Decide what options can be "lived with", package ideas together, use the 'give/get' principle, use time frames.
- ▷ Defuse and/or reframe objections and address issues of power or influence.
- ▷ Explore ways to "make it work" by considering what are you prepared to do, what assurances are required, what 'fall back' positions are available.
- ▷ Exploring tangible benefits of reaching an agreement.
- ▷ Review the possible consequences of no resolution.



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