
Managing Conflict Through Communication

Staff Development Days

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*Difficult people are the
greatest teachers*

- Pema Chodron



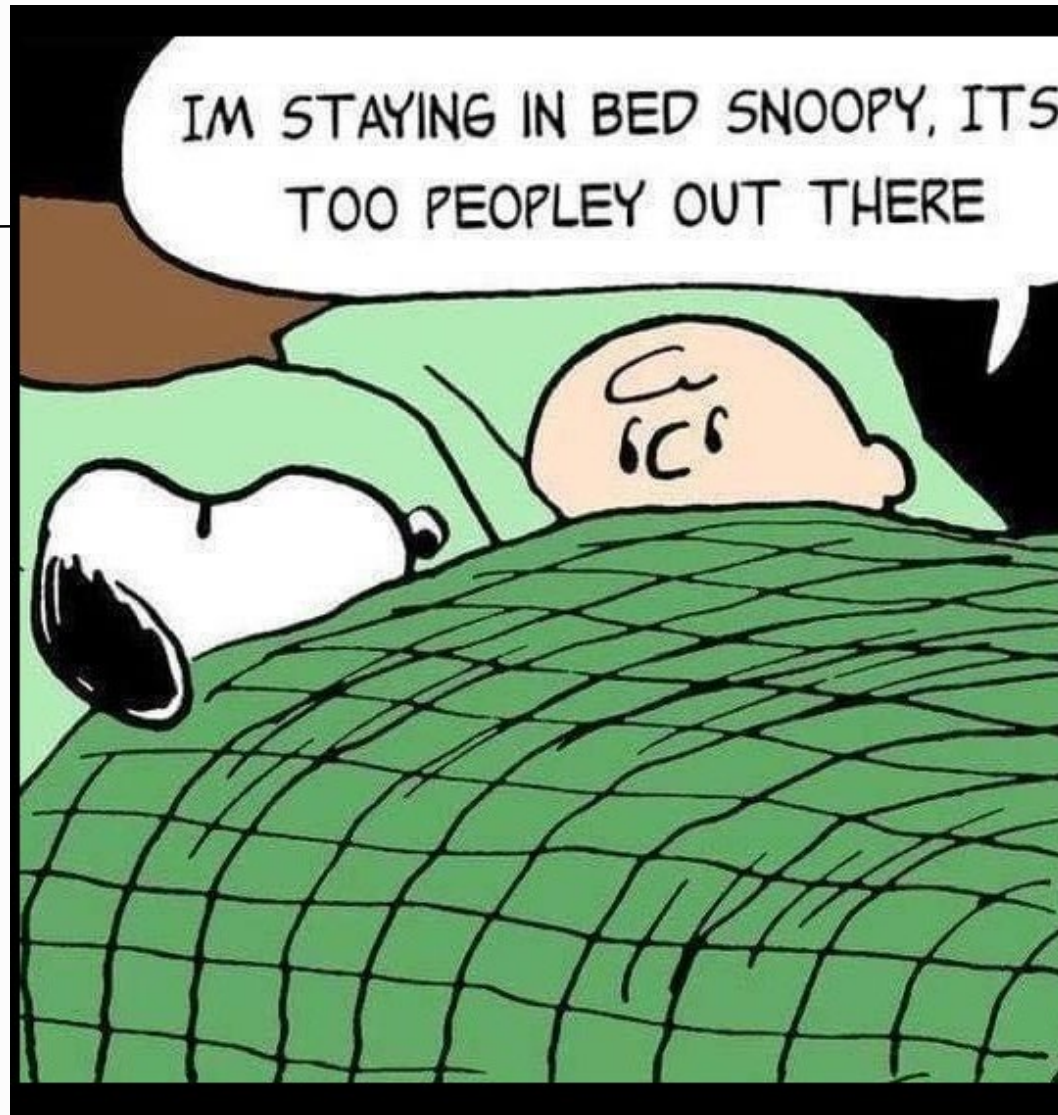
Objectives

- 1) Understand sources of conflict
- 2) Provide framework for having conversations to resolve conflicts
- 3) Identify situations when other people/resources may need to be involved
- 4) Provide you with opportunity to “practice” your approach
- 5) Help create healthier work environment and culture of respectful dialogue



*Why is managing conflict
so hard?*





What causes workplace conflict?



Did You Know

CPP Research Study (2023)

- 85% of employees report experiencing some kind of conflict at work
- 49% of workplace conflict a result of personality clashes/ego
- 35% a result of workplace stress
- 27% observed conflicts escalate into personal attacks

PR Newswire

- 56% office staff blame miscommunication

<https://jobera.com/workplace-conflict-statistics>

Identify Potential Causes of the Behavior

- Generational Differences
- Misunderstanding (lack of communication or lack of transparent communication)
- Perceived (or real) power differentials
- Workload/workplace stress
- External factors
- Unknown



Generational Differences

Generation	Born	Some Characteristics
Baby Boomers	1946 - 1964	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reluctant to retire • Known as workaholics • Prefer face-to-face communication, teamwork, collaboration
Generation X	1965 - 1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not like to be micromanaged • Like to express opinions (even if not asked to) • Prefer to communicate using technology • Prefer informal communications but value professional etiquette
Millennials (Gen Y)	1981 - 1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled at multi-tasking • Like to collaborate • Most likely to voice concerns • Less interested in face-to-face communication; prefer digital communication
Gen Z (Zoomers)	1997 - 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can process lots of information quickly • Expect instant feedback • Not as willing to adjust views • Difficult to keep their attention • Prefer face-to-face communication

<https://www.mdlinx.com/article/from-boomers-to-zoomers-crossing-the-communication-divide-at-work>



Where to Start?

Analyze the Situation

- 1) What is the behavior that is concerning to you? What are they doing or NOT doing?
- 2) What is the impact of the behavior?
- 3) What might their perspective on this issue be?
 - Consider all possible perspectives based on what you know
 - We see and experience the world differently based on our own experiences, values, individual diversity and culture
 - Recognizing that differences exist makes it easier to begin having discussions that help resolve workplace conflicts.

Prepare for the Conversation

1. Describe the situation

“We have been collaborating on this project together for a few weeks now. You’ve missed a few deadlines and I feel I have taken on more than my fair share. We need to figure out how we can fairly share the work and get everything done on time.”

2. Describe the outcome/impact of behavior

“You are very experienced with this program and your contribution is valuable. However, your laid back approach has me worried about getting it all done. I feel like I need to check up on you and we’ve become frustrated at each other. It’s impacting the way we communicate and ultimately it’s affecting the project.”

You may need to reinforce impacts if the employee is resistant to feedback.

Prepare for the Conversation

3. Offer a solution and/or ask them to share/provide feedback

“Perhaps it would be better if we look at the remaining tasks and decide together who should be assigned to each based on our strengths. We can also build in progress meetings to ensure we are meeting deadlines. Do you agree that might help us work together more cohesively?”

4. Close with next steps

“Let’s both commit to prioritizing the tasks and assigning the remaining tasks at our next meeting.”



Prepare for the Conversation

- Create talking points, not a script
- Remove negative emotion – your tone/attitude are critical
 - Preserve the relationship
- Be calm, but assertive as necessary
- Avoid provocative/judgment language (“always” and “never”)



When To Reach Out

- Policy violations may require HR, Equal Opportunity/Title IX or involvement/notification
- Potential discrimination/Title IX violations must be reported to:
 - Janet Koski: Executive Director, EO/Title IX x2420
 - Harger Boal: Title IX Coordinator x2416
- Safety concerns require NMU PD involvement
- Instances of bullying; complex dynamics may require your supervisor



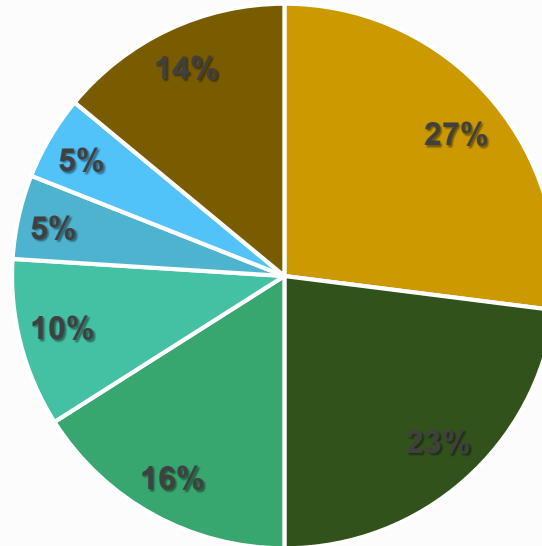
Sideline: Bullying Behavior

Industry

30% of survey respondents have been bullied at work

“Bully-prone industries can be a result of the working conditions, the nature of the people drawn to them or both.”

- Carole Lieberman, forensic psychiatrist



- Workplace Bullying Institute, 2021

■ Health Care ■ Education ■ Public Service ■ Service ■ Manufacturing ■ IT ■ Other



Practice Scenarios

1. Choose one of the three scenarios to practice (or choose a situation more relevant to you). Take a few minutes to prepare your talking points.
2. Choose a partner and practice the conversation.
3. Switch roles so your partner can practice their scenario.
4. Continue with another scenario if you have time.



Debrief

- What went well?
- What would you do differently?
- Is this framework helpful?

Questions/Thoughts

