Conflict resolution training

A one-day course

Security Management Service
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Introduction

In 2004, the NHS Counter Fraud and Security Management Service were asked to provide training to raise awareness of conflict resolution techniques for all frontline National Health Service staff. As a result of the success of the programme, it is now also delivered to many other public and private sector organisations. The training is a one-day course and we hope that you will learn something from today that will assist you in your workplace wherever that may be in dealing with clients, visitors, the general public and colleagues.

Aims and objectives

The aim of this course is to recognise different aspects of conflict that delegates may encounter and to understand and be aware of different methods of resolving such conflicts.

At the end of this course, delegates will be able to:

- describe common causes of conflict
- describe the two forms of communication
- give examples of how communication can break down
- explain three examples of communication models that can assist in conflict resolution
- describe patterns of behaviour they may encounter during different interactions
- give examples of the different warning and danger signs
- give examples of impact factors
- describe the use of distance when dealing with conflict
- explain the use of ‘reasonable force’ as it applies to conflict resolution
- describe different methods for dealing with possible conflict situations.

This workbook has been designed to complement and assist with today’s course. The following symbols have been used throughout:

- Written work
- Valuable information
What is conflict?

As we go through today’s course, we will frequently refer to the word “conflict”. Conflict has many guises, and people have a range of perceptions about what the word means. Before we can begin to resolve conflict, we need to know what conflict actually is.

What does the word conflict mean to you?

In the space below, describe one personal experience that you considered to be a verbal confrontation with another person.

♦ This does not have to be an experience that took place at work; it might have occurred while you were shopping, socialising, etc.
In 1971, American psychologist Albert Mehrabian published his most famous but often misquoted research on communication. This research, which is still relevant today, emphasised the importance of non-verbal communication, referring to the signals that we give another person and the way we interpret the signals given by them.

We do not have to be experts in body language to 'get the picture' and it is worth remembering that while we may form an impression of someone before they even speak, they are also forming a first impression of us.

**What examples of non-verbal communication can you think of?**
On these pages you will see six pictures of people who are demonstrating non-verbal communication, (NVC’s). These may not give the same messages as the verbal statements.

“Everything is fine!”

“If you really want me to!”

“I am paying attention!”
Remember: your body language can present a picture that is different from what is actually being said or what is intended to be said.
Cultural awareness

It is widely accepted that the UK is now a multicultural society. Employees in all industries are aware of the challenge of dealing with a wide range of individuals of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds who use their services.

Changes in racial composition, increased mobility of cultures, and the ageing population are all factors that now affect how services need to be delivered.

People have varying expectations of the service an organisation can provide. There are many factors that affect these expectations – including language barriers, differing gestures, body language, modesty, religion, fear, anxiety and a lack of knowledge and understanding.

Therefore, to provide an effective and inclusive service in today’s society, employees need to develop an awareness and appreciation of diversity. They should be able to recognise their own cultural norms and understand the viewpoint of others. This will enable them to tailor their communication to meet the needs of any given individual, and so maximise their service.

Think about your area of work and consider the cultural and diversity issues that might affect you when trying to communicate with people.

Notes
Verbal communication, Transactional analysis

In the 1950s, a great deal of research was carried out by psychoanalysts, one of whom was Eric Berne. He developed a theory that claimed we all have three basic ego states making up our personality. He stated that each time we interact with people, our ego states affect the way we act, interact or react in any situation. The ego states govern our personality and behavioural patterns. Having the skill to recognise these different ego states in others may help you to respond appropriately when defusing conflict situations.

The three ego states are shown below:

It is important to note that this theory is not about the relationship between a parent and their child, but about the way in which people of all ages adopt certain behaviours (ego states) when interacting with others.

Notes

The chart on the next page gives some examples of the comments and behaviours that are typical of people in each ego state.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EGO STATE</th>
<th>TYPICAL WORDS &amp; PHRASES</th>
<th>TYPICAL BEHAVIOUR/EXPRESSIONS</th>
<th>TYPICAL ATTITUDES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRITICAL PARENT</td>
<td>Disgraceful Ought to Always</td>
<td>Furrowed brow Pointing finger</td>
<td>Condescending Judgemental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURTURING PARENT</td>
<td>Well done</td>
<td>Benevolent smile Pat on the back</td>
<td>Caring Permissive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADAPTED CHILD</td>
<td>Please can I? I'll try harder</td>
<td>Vigorous head nodding Whiny voice</td>
<td>Compliant Defiant Complaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FREE CHILD</td>
<td>I feel great!</td>
<td>Uninhibited Laughing with someone</td>
<td>Curious Fun-loving Spontaneous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CRITICAL PARENTS** display disciplinarian behaviour and make statements that are critical of others, such as:
- Don’t do that again!
- How many times do I have to tell you?
- Don’t slouch — what sort of image do you think that portrays?

**NURTURING PARENTS** display teaching, caring, supportive, loving and consoling behaviour and commonly use statements such as:
- Don’t worry, we can work it out.
- Let me help you with that.
- Come with me and let’s have a cup of tea.
The **ADULT** ego state is characterised by factual, mature, logical and rational behaviour. It is the state that offers least or, even, no conflict. Adults make statements such as:

- You are right, I have spelt that wrongly - thank you.
- Can we try to avoid any misunderstanding?
- I think this might work; what do you think?

An **ADAPTED CHILD** may display behaviours that they have learned and can be manipulative and play on a person’s emotions. They will use statements such as:

- Why me? It’s always me! It’s not fair.
- If you loved me, you would do it.
- Okay! I will throw it away if you don’t like it.

The **FREE CHILD** state is characterised by loving behaviour that is instinctive, spontaneous and emotional. Free children make statements such as:

- Yahoo! I’ve won, I’ve won!
- Oh brilliant! Just what I wanted.
- Let’s party!

Notes
Below, you will see a table with statements in one column. As directed by the trainer, fill in the ego state that you think best fits each statement – nurturing parent, critical parent, adult, adapted child or free child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>EGO STATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Look, I’ve done this hundreds of times. Now you go and do it!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 How do you think your first presentation went?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Did you see the match last night? What a fantastic win. Only seconds left and a goal! Brilliant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Do you realise that I called you over an hour ago? Where have you been all this time?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Look, I know I made a mess of that report, but please give me a chance to do it again – I know I could do it better next time. Please!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 I’m not sure I understand. Would you explain it to me again, please?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Don’t worry, never mind. It wasn’t really that bad.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Why aren’t you working? It looks bad if you’re just sitting around. Haven’t you got anything better to do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 You’re right. I have written it down incorrectly. Thanks for pointing it out to me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Remember: the most effective place to resolve a conflict is within the adult ego state. Mutual understanding is crucial to the success of conflict resolution.*
Breakdown in communication

Below is a simple diagram of a model of communication. It has a receiver who ‘receives’ messages (whether verbal or non-verbal) and a transmitter, the sender of these messages.

As we have already discussed, there are different ways in which we can communicate, but there can be interference. In the box, write down as many forms of interference, which might prevent the message from getting through.
Some examples of causes of breakdowns in communication could include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>language differences</th>
<th>confused state</th>
<th>stereotyping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>background noise</td>
<td>cultural differences</td>
<td>jargon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weather conditions</td>
<td>too loud</td>
<td>emotional state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stress</td>
<td>too quiet</td>
<td>triggers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alcohol</td>
<td>anger</td>
<td>NVC not matching verbal content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The list is not exhaustive and different situations may present differing problems in communicating effectively.

It is essential that we are aware of and recognise the causes of breakdowns in communication. However, it is not enough simply to recognise them; we need to think about ways of preventing them. On the following pages, we will look at some communication models that can help you to communicate effectively.
Communication models

The PEACE model has been designed to help you structure your communication into an easily remembered format. If used effectively, it can help to prevent communication breakdowns before they become a problem.

P
E
A
C
E
The objectives state, ‘explain three examples of communication models that can assist in conflict resolution.’ Two models are given in the workbook PEACE and 5 Step. At this point include a third communication model of your choice.
Another model that can help to resolve a difficult situation, or one in which a person refuses to comply with a request, is the 5-step appeal. This is a method of communication that, when used effectively, can de-escalate conflict.

Step 1  Ethical appeal

Step 2  Reasoned appeal

Step 3  Personal appeal

Step 4  Practical appeal

Step 5  Action
Attitude and behavioural cycle
(Sometimes known as Betaris Box)

The attitude and behavioural cycle demonstrates the behaviour that people from all backgrounds may exhibit when interacting with others.

It is a cycle of behaviour that can escalate out of control. If your attitude or emotions towards another are hostile, this will be displayed in your behaviour. This, in turn, will affect the attitude or emotions of the individual you are dealing with, which, in turn, will affect their behaviour, and so on.

It will be your responsibility to recognise this cycle and break it if it is escalating out of control. This must be done before you can move on. While you can manage your own behaviour, the communication models you have just seen may help you to influence the attitude and behaviour of the other person.
Patterns of behaviour

We all have the potential in today’s stressful world to behave a little like a volcano – our behaviour becoming more explosive as we become stressed or affected by the situations around us. Patterns of behaviour help us to recognise how a person’s behaviour may escalate during a conflict situation. Recognising these patterns can help us to react before a situation becomes dangerous.

Although someone may progress through these stages in the order shown above, certain factors, including drugs, alcohol and a person’s mental health, could cause them to jump between stages without warning. Always remember to consider your own personal safety before attempting to deal with another person’s behaviour.
Warning and danger signs

Having looked at how we communicate, we will now look at the signs and signals that other people may display when they become agitated during a potential conflict situation. When we consider conflict resolution, we must be able to recognise when the conflict is about to escalate.

The left-hand column of the table below shows some of the warning signs. They indicate that the person is getting angry and that they feel they have to exert their presence verbally. If you can recognise these and use the models we have discussed already, you may be able to prevent the onset of danger signs.

**Danger** signs are the body’s natural reactions to the possibility of physical contact. If you are witnessing danger signs, the best option may be to withdraw and seek assistance from your colleagues, security staff or the Police.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warning signs</th>
<th>Danger signs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct, prolonged eye contact</td>
<td>Fists clench and unclench</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facial colour may darken</td>
<td>Facial colour may become paler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head is back</td>
<td>Lips tighten over teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject stands tall</td>
<td>Head drops to protect throat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject kicks the ground</td>
<td>Eyebrows droop to protect eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large movements close to people</td>
<td>Hands rise above the waist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breathing rate accelerates</td>
<td>Shoulders tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour may stop/start abruptly</td>
<td>Stance moves from square to sideways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stare is now at intended target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lowering of body to launch forward</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes
Impact factors

Impact factors are the considerations we must identify when dealing with any conflict—like carrying out a mini risk assessment of the situation we are in.

You must assess your impact factors and include what you consider the other person’s impact factors to be.

For example:

The person you are talking to is tall, appears fit and healthy and is well-built. He is becoming agitated and louder. You are much shorter, lighter in build and have a wrist injury. You have knowledge of martial arts. If the situation became physical, could you deal with it? Are you the best person to deal with this man?

Now consider that this person is on crutches with a plaster cast on his arm and leg. Have the impact factors changed? Could you now deal with this person?

Now consider your own working environment; what other impact factors can you think of?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People</th>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex – Age – Size – Build</td>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>Excessive noise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Knowledge</td>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>Safe exits/layout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill – boxing/martial arts</td>
<td>Potential weapons</td>
<td>Public or private premises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(objects that could be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>used to cause injury)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental state</td>
<td>Offensive weapons</td>
<td>Being in a position of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(deliberately made to</td>
<td>disadvantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cause injury)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers present</td>
<td>Items of value</td>
<td>Slip/trip hazards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiredness or exhaustion</td>
<td>Time of day</td>
<td>Imminent danger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(physical or mental)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Distances

Distance should not be overlooked. Distance can give us time to think and then react. We naturally allow certain people closer; we often give others a wide berth. However, at work, we may not have that luxury; often, caring for someone means invading their personal space and it is important to remember this can make them feel uncomfortable or anxious.

We have to understand what safe distances are and how they can help with conflict resolution.

**INTIMATE ZONE**
(less than 18 inches)
Close family/partners

**PERSONAL ZONE**
(18 inches to 4 feet)
People we know

**SOCIAL ZONE**
(4 feet to 12 feet)
Most other people
Reactionary gap

Having looked at the distances we are familiar with, we must now look at the distance we should adopt when dealing with conflict. This distance is known as the *reactionary gap*.

The *reactionary gap* is the distance between the extremities of your reach and the extremities of your opponent’s reach; their reach includes any weapons they may have!
What can we do if communication will not work?

We have looked at the way we communicate with others and how this can influence their behaviour and help to de-escalate a conflict situation. Transactional analysis showed us how our ego state can affect what we are trying to say, and we have considered the factors that can cause a breakdown in communication. Different models of communication have been provided that can act as tools to assist in conflict resolution and we have also covered the behaviours people can exhibit that help us to make decisions about our actions.

Whilst dealing with other people, we must be continually alert to what is going on around us. A situation can change very rapidly. A simple strategy for coping with conflict situations includes the following actions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Be aware</th>
<th>Be alert; constantly observe what is going on around you.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assess</td>
<td>Acknowledge that situations can change rapidly and will call for regular assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan</td>
<td>Prepare for unforeseen circumstances.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We recognise that there will be some situations that we will not be able to resolve and that there may be times when the other person’s behaviour may become threatening, abusive or even violent.

When responding to these challenges, our first consideration should be our own safety and, in doing so, we have to decide between ‘Flight’ and ‘Fight’.
Flight or fight

The flight or fight response is the body’s natural reaction to a potentially dangerous situation. Our brains have an in-built system for preparing the body when threatened, readying it for running away or fighting.

This response to anything that is perceived as a threat or potential threat begins in certain primitive parts of the brain, which send a message to the adrenal glands. These begin a process which releases a number of hormones, including adrenaline, whose purpose is to prepare the body for vigorous emergency action.

Flight

Flight should be your preferred option, and is the safer. Never stay in a situation in which you feel uncomfortable; remember, even if your job role means that you work with a duty of care, this duty of care starts with you.

If flight is not possible, compliance might be the safer option. Remember, property is not worth being physically attacked for. When it comes to physical attack, always leave a way out wherever possible.

Fight

Unfortunately, fight might be the only viable option. If it is, you should be aware of the limitations and legal requirements; the following laws are relevant if you have to protect yourself physically:
Common law

Common law recognises that there are many circumstances in which one person may use force upon another without committing a crime (e.g. sporting contests). Included in common law is a person’s right to protect themselves from attack and to act in the defence of others.

If no more force is used than is reasonable to repel the attack, such force is not unlawful and no crime is committed. Furthermore, a person about to be attacked does not have to wait for his or her assailant to strike the first blow. Certain circumstances may justify you making the first strike.

These laws are interpreted according to the following guidelines:

- minimum use of force
- proportionality of force used
- seriousness of evil to be prevented
- right of self defence.

Section 3, Criminal Law Act 1967

‘A person may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances in the prevention of crime, or in effecting or assisting in the lawful arrest of offenders or suspected offenders or persons unlawfully at large.’

The key word in this legislation is ‘reasonable’ and the issue of reasonableness is a question of fact to be decided in each individual case.

Remember: going too far is a criminal offence.

Notes
# Knowledge check

1. Non-verbal communication is a key element of how we communicate, but what percentage of our message does it form?

| Percentage | 7% | 38% | 55% | 93% |

2. Which of the following could lead to a breakdown in communication?

- Stress
- Cultural differences
- Alcohol
- All of these

3. What does the ‘L’ in the LEAPS communication model stand for?

- Look
- Leave
- Listen
- Learn

4. My attitude affects my...

- Diet
- Timekeeping
- Behaviour
- Driving

5. The three ego states in transactional analysis are Parent, _______, Child

- Carer
- Mature
- Grown-up
- Adult

6. Which of the following best illustrates passive resistance (one of the established patterns of behaviour) by a potential aggressor?

- Getting up and leaving
- Drawing a knife
- Lashing out with arms
- Sitting in a chair and refusing to move

7. Generally, a person who is getting angry and becoming a threat to you will display which of the following?

- Warning signs
- Warning and danger signs
- No signs at all

8. Issues we should identify when in a potential conflict situation are known as what?

- Important factors
- Critical issues
- Key points
- Impact factors

9. You are approached by a member of the public who is described as follows: Male, six feet tall, well-built with very short hair. He is coming down the stairs holding a can of beer. He begins to shout and swear at you. What should you consider before you decide on your course of action?

- His gender
- His physical appearance
- The beer can
- His position on the stairs
- His attitude towards you
- His hair style
- All of these

10. To defend yourself, the law states that you can use force as is _________ in the circumstances.

- Logical
- Equitable
- Reasonable
- Proper
Now go back to the front of the workbook. Consider what you wrote about the incident involving a verbal confrontation with another person. Having considered the skills and knowledge you have gained today, which would you apply to the situation? What might you have done differently?

Notes

Conclusion

We have learnt how to:

* describe common causes of conflict
* describe the two forms of communication
* give examples of how communication can break down
* explain three examples of communication models that can assist in conflict resolution
* describe patterns of behaviour we may encounter during different interactions
* give examples of the different warning and danger signs
* give examples of impact factors
* describe the use of distance when dealing with conflict
* explain the use of ‘reasonable force’ as it applies to conflict resolution
* describe different methods for dealing with possible conflict situations.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your participation. We hope that you will benefit from what we have discussed.

conflictresolution@cfsms.nhs.uk

Again, thank you for your participation.