Understanding & Managing Conflict
3 Types of Group Conflict

- Interpersonal
- Intragroup
- Intergroup
Key Features of Destructive Conflict

- Conflict spiraling
- Autistic hostility
- Perceptual distortion
  - Ultimate attribution error
  - Mirror image
  - Self-fulfilling prophecies
- Metaconflict
- Competitive goal structure (zero-sum)
Key Features of Constructive Conflict

- Motivates positive change
- Promotes trust, effective decision-making, equitable resource distributions, justice
- People behave respectfully, cooperatively, & rationally
- Differentiation
- Analytic Empathy
- Integrative Solutions (win-win) Both sides explain underlying motives and interests; seek creative solutions integrating these interests
Interpersonal Conflict

- Between 2 group members
- Can interfere with cohesion and productivity.
- Escalated by
  - Criticism and contempt
  - Defensiveness
  - Stonewalling
On a piece of paper, write down an unresolved interpersonal conflict

- Which features of destructive conflict characterize your conflict?
- Has the conflict been escalated by:
  - Criticism and contempt?
  - Defensiveness?
  - Stonewalling?
Resolving Interpersonal Conflicts

- Avoid criticism/contempt
- Give stonewallers time to respond
- Deescalate by apologizing
- Restate other’s position to prove listening
- Use integrative bargaining and constructive confrontation
- Seek mediation if needed
Constructive Confrontation

- Involves clarifying and exploring the issues, the needs of the participants, and their feelings.
- It’s time when: you’re avoiding the other person, the relationship has deteriorated, you’re having trouble working together.
Planning & Tact make truth-telling possible

- Prepare: What responsibility do I have for the conflict and how can I acknowledge it?
Prepare

- How am I going to frame it in a way that won’t create defensiveness?
- Consider person’s self-concept
- Allow them to save face
- Avoid blaming “you” statements
Begin

- Start out by validating person & relationship
- Present as mutual problem to be solved and use integrative bargaining
- Use constructive controversy
- If they get defensive, don’t take the bait and counterattack, instead reassure
Group Activity: 30 minutes

- Spend a few minutes writing out a script for a constructive confrontation with the person you described previously.
- Briefly share your situation with your group and role-play your constructive confrontation with your group.
- Your team members should provide feedback about your wording and paralanguage.
Conflict Resolution Styles
Dual-concern Model

5 styles vary based on concern for own vs. other’s outcomes
Accommodators

- Sacrifice own goals for others
- High in concern for others and low in concern for self
Avoiders

- Willing to let conflicts go unresolved or let others take care of them
- Low in concern for self and others
Compromisers

- Make concessions if other will
- Intermediate levels of concern for self and others
Collaborators

- Integrate needs of both parties; maximize interests of both
- High in concern for self and others
Competitors

- Maximize own outcomes at expense of others
- High concern for self and low concern for others
Johnson’s conflict style typology

- Advantages and disadvantages depend on whether the goal is to achieve your goals, maintain a good relationship, or both.
- Different styles appropriate/inappropriate depending on the relationship.
Shark: achieve their goals at expense of relationship
Turtles: give up their goals and the relationship by avoiding the person and the issue
Teddy Bears: give up their goals to maintain the relationship
Fox: give up part of his/her goals and part of the relationship to reach an agreement
Owl: negotiates to find a solution that meets both parties’ needs and keeps the relationship positive
Culture & Gender

- People from collectivist cultures generally less confrontational, more avoidant, more accommodating.
- No significant gender differences; when found only 5%.
Conflict Style Questionnaire

Fill out your questionnaire and discuss the adv and disadvantages of your style with your group. Do you need to consider changes in your style?
Intragroup Conflict: Conflict involving 3 or more group members

- Usually short-lived but can spiral if group does not use constructive controversy.
- Often arise from disagreements about what/how to do or interpersonal conflicts.
- Harm multiple member relationships
- Entangle most of the group
- Turn into intergroup conflicts if group splits into factions
Solutions

- Introduce norms of constructive controversy
- Mediation
  - Skilled mediators seek integrative (win-win) solutions.
  - 3-stage process: setting the stage, problem solving, achieving a workable agreement.
  - Mediators should be neutral; personal relationships often result in triangulation.
- Resist temptation to enmesh other members in your interpersonal conflict
Intragroup Case Studies: Group Activity
Intergroup Conflict
Group Activity
Intergroup Conflicts

- Conflicts between groups.
- Perceptual distortion, ultimate attribution error, enemy imagery, autistic hostility aggravated by self-segregation, and spiraling typical
- Competition over scarce resources often cause (realistic conflict)
- Social identities (us vs. them; good vs. evil) play big role.
Intergroup Conflict Resolution

- Sometimes conflicting parties are not motivated until they reach “stalemate.”
- Mediation with integrative bargaining.
- Contact under the following conditions can reduce enemy perceptions and create cooperative climate where difference can be resolved:
  - equal status
  - superordinate goals
  - personal acquaintance
  - social support.
GRIT: Graduated Reciprocated Intitiatives in Tension Reduction

- Party A announces intention to make conciliatory gesture, makes gesture, provides Party B with opportunity to reciprocate.

- Each side takes turns making increasingly cooperative gestures.
Group Activity

- How could GRIT be used by the United States to reduce tensions with Iran?