50 Activities for Conflict Resolution

Group Learning and Self Development Exercises

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Defining Conflict: Where Do You Stand?

30–35 minutes

PURPOSE:
To help participants understand how they perceive conflict, and what conflict means in their life experiences.

EQUIPMENT: Flipchart

MATERIALS: Handout: Pop Quiz on Attitudes Toward Conflict

PROCEDURE:
1. Explain to participants that people often come to a conflict-resolution workshop with a fixed definition of conflict and ideas based on earlier life experiences.

2. Begin by pairing the participants and asking them to discuss with each other their definition of conflict. They should also talk about some earlier experiences that led them to these definitions.

3. Reconvene and have pairs report on the results of their conversations. Ask participants for examples that influenced their thinking about conflict, and then (using participant input) write a group definition of conflict on the flipchart.

4. Lead a discussion about the positive aspects of conflict resolution, asking questions such as:
   - How can conflict strengthen relationships?
   - In what ways can conflict generate growth and self-development?

5. Distribute the handout, and ask the participants to complete the Pop Quiz, thinking about the discussions so far. Explain that this activity is one that should get them thinking about additional feelings concerning conflict and ways to resolve a difficult situation. There will be other activities in this book exploring various conflict styles, as well as the skills and strategies required to resolve conflict effectively.

6. When the Pop Quiz is completed, ask participants to share and discuss answers.
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DEBRIEF:
Ask the following questions regarding the handout, reminding the group that there are no right or wrong answers:

- How do you feel about the responses?
- Can you see a difference in philosophy? What are your thoughts about that? (Possible answers are that responses in the left column generally represent a narrow interpretation of the destructive side of conflict, whereas responses in the right-hand column seems to represent the constructive side of conflict.)
- Which statements best represent your attitude, the ones in the left column, or the ones in the right?

Remember, individual definitions of conflict can shape how you deal with conflict when you are personally involved. Explain that the more you learn about defining conflict, the more likely you are to understand conflict situations and develop resolution skills. You will begin to look at individual needs and intentions (your own and others), and learn to use constructive communication to resolve conflicts.
Handout

Pop Quiz: Attitudes Toward Conflict

In each row across the page, check off the one phrase that best represents your way of thinking. (Your choices should involve your thoughts about present-day conflict in the workplace.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I believe conflict:</th>
<th>Check Here</th>
<th>I believe conflict:</th>
<th>Check Here</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hurts relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthens relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be avoided</td>
<td></td>
<td>Should be resolved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution is based on status and power</td>
<td></td>
<td>Resolution is based on equality of power</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disregards differences of opinion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Recognizes and appreciates differences of opinion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has nothing to be gained from it</td>
<td></td>
<td>Can generate growth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is about blame</td>
<td></td>
<td>Is about understanding and coming to agreement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produces a winner and a loser</td>
<td></td>
<td>Can produce a win-win resolution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total the number of checks in each column. Join the group for comments and further discussion.