

Leadership Tips

Managing Conflicts



Office of Student Life
AND Cultural Centers

for the student leader

Conflict is Good!

No, conflict is not great, but it can be good! If you are aware of conflict in your group, then you have a chance to manage and move forward. Unresolved conflicts tend to grow to the point where groups are no longer effective. Conflicts among group members are inevitable. It is important that you recognize conflicts as soon as they arise. Although most people tend to avoid conflicts, this is not the most effective way of dealing with them. Conflict, if handled effectively, can be extremely constructive for the group process.

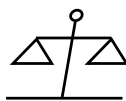
When working through a conflict do not look at everything as a "win-lose" situation. Be sure that everyone involved feels like something good has come out of the conflict. As a leader, part of our role is to confront and, at times, mediate conflicts between and among the group members.

Helpful Hints

- **Do not take sides.**
- **Try not to become emotionally involved.**
- **Focus on the conflict itself.**
- **Assume from the beginning that everyone involved in the conflict has legitimate positions.**
- **Listen quietly no matter how unreasonable or violent the remarks are.**
- **Judging is not your task-the listener's role is not that of a reformer-avoid an "I'm right-You're wrong" position.**
- **All expressions and emotions should be allowed to be voiced without any interference or negative reaction on the listener's part.**
- **Listen to understand whether a person is really conveying one message, but meaning to convey something else.**
- **Avoid interrupting or arguing.**
- **Remember the importance of individual differences.**
- **Be wary of telling your personal experiences or using yourself as an example-listen instead.**
- **Be aware of your own biases, prejudices, strengths, and weaknesses to relate to groups or individuals whose personalities may easily clash with your own.**
- **If the participants cannot possibly talk to each other, have them talk to you.**

Advantages of Constructive Conflict

Increases awareness of problems. Encourages change. Energizes the members of the group.
Stimulates creativity. Allows input into decisions. Builds group cohesion.
Strengthens relationship and trust.



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