GAME CHANGERS

GAMING SKILLS AND THE WORKPLACE

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Literacy Link South Central

This participant playbook is part of a series created for the course "Game Changers: Gaming Skills and the Workplace." Built in a modular fashion to allow for maximum flexibility, this course provides training on real-world skills that can be developed and practiced in a game-based environment. Using a combination of facilitated lessons, activities, research, and games, this course will help teach a new generation of job seekers the 21st Century soft skills critical to Canadian employers. Modules in this course include:

Why Gaming is Good
Verbal Communication
Non-verbal Communication
Observation Skills
Decision Making
Problem Solving
Teamwork
Flexibility and Adaptability
Work Ethic
Conflict Resolution
Resiliency
Who Do You Think You Are?
The Employment Game
Leveling Up

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Agenda:

1. The Colour of Conflict

2. Why is Conflict Resolution Important

3. Dealing With Conflict

4. What's Your Conflict Style?

5. Language for Conflict Resolution

6. Playing Through Conflict

7. Selecting the next session's topic

8. Wrap-up and take-away

1. Activity: The Colour of Conflict

What colour represents conflict to you? _____

Why does it make you think of conflict? _____

_____

_____
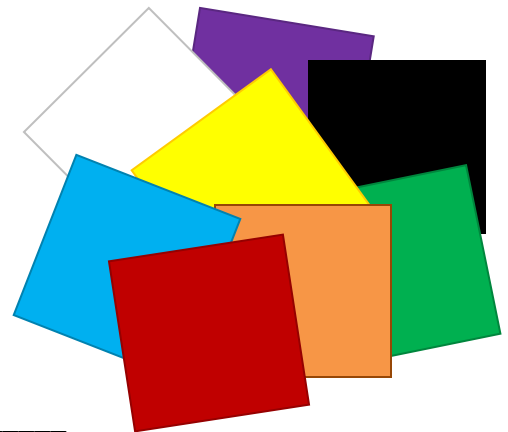
2. Why is Conflict Resolution Important?

No two people are the same – we all have different values, goals, opinions and ways of thinking and acting. Sometimes our differences are interesting or exciting, and create opportunities for us to learn from one another. Sometimes, those differences make us feel uncomfortable, misunderstood or frustrated.

We may not be able to get along with everyone we meet, but it's important that we know what to do when our differences become a problem. Dealing with conflict when it happens – and hopefully fixing it – is often called conflict resolution.

Before we look at ways to resolve conflict, let's talk about what conflict actually refers to.

What does the word "conflict" mean to you?

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Dealing with Conflict

According to the dictionary a conflict is *"a serious disagreement or argument, typically a protracted one."*

Recognizing conflict is a good start, but we need to understand **why** the conflict is happening to resolve it.

One way of looking at conflict is that it's something that happens when one person needs something from another, and they aren't getting it.

For example, in a relationship where one person really needs attention, affection, or to be treated with respect by the other person, and they're not getting those things, you're going to end up with conflict.

Can you think of other examples of when someone needs something and isn't getting it, and that situation leads to conflict?

_____

_____

_____

We need others to let us have a differing opinion without being punished for it. We need personal safety, access to basic needs, acceptance, to belong. And if any of those things are withheld by another person who appears to be in the position to give it to us, it can result in conflict.

Why Are Some Needs Not Met?

Those needs aren't known or _____

Other things may be considered

_____

The situation may not allow it, so it's possible that those needs

_____

There's no way to find out whether those needs can be met without talking about them.

Communicating Needs

Letting people know what we need can be hard. For the conversation to go well, we need to:

- Express our needs clearly

- Explain why we need those needs met

- Remain calm

- Use respectful language

- Think about what others need too

Why is it important to speak this way during a conflict?

_____

_____

_____

The result of communicating

Clearly communicating our needs can lead to everyone's needs being met. However, if those needs cannot or will not be met, we can:

Continue _____ for our needs.

_____ from the situation.

Consider what is _____ and what isn't.

Needs vs. Wants

We have to look very carefully at whether what's causing conflict is a need that's not being met, or a want.

A true need can be hard to compromise on.

Wants can be negotiated, even those that are very important to us.

There may be times when it is hard to tell wants from needs, and sometimes we may have to weigh our wants and needs against each other to decide which ones are more important.

We also have to consider that we live in a world with other people who have their own wants and needs. That means there will be times when we have to compromise. Perhaps there's a solution that satisfies both our wants and needs, and the wants and needs of the person we're in conflict with.

What one person considers a need may be something that another person thinks is just a want. That could create a serious conflict. The fact that we see things differently gives us an opportunity to practice clear, respectful communication and creative problem-solving.

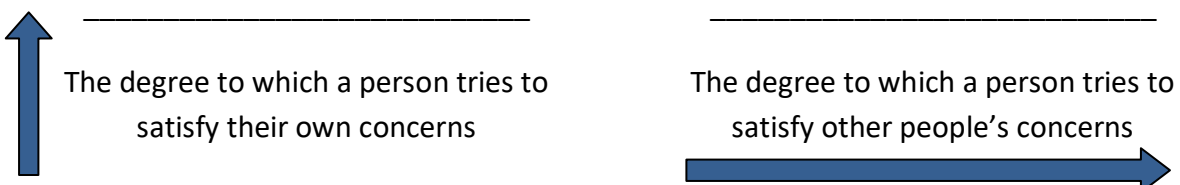**The Thomas-Kilmann Instrument (TKI)**

Fill in the five styles of conflict management, and label the arrows with the two key focuses they represent.
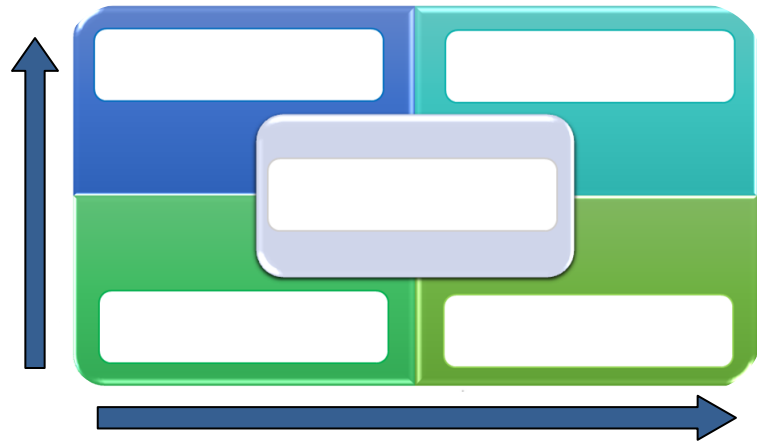
According to the TKI, there are five major styles of conflict management:

1. _____, which means during a disagreement you tend to bow to other's wishes at the expense of your own

2. _____, which means you're more likely to try and sidestep the conflict, even if it means that neither your issues or the other persons are dealt with

3. _____, where during a disagreement you try to find a win-win solution that completely satisfies both your concerns and the other persons

4. _____, which means when faced with conflict your goal is to ensure your own point of view comes out ahead of the other persons

5. _____, where you try to find a solution to the issue that partially satisfies both your wishes and those of another, with neither getting all they wanted

They are measured on an axis with two key focuses:

_____

The degree to which a person tries to satisfy their own concerns

_____

The degree to which a person tries to satisfy other people's concerns

There are benefits to each of these different styles of conflict resolution depending on the situation.

When would **accommodating** be the most effective way to deal with a conflict? _____

_____

When would it be a bad choice? _____

When would **avoiding** be the most effective way to deal with a conflict? _____

_____

When would it be a bad choice? _____

When would **collaborating** be the most effective way to deal with a conflict? _____

_____

When would it be a bad choice? _____

When would **competing** be the most effective way to deal with a conflict? _____
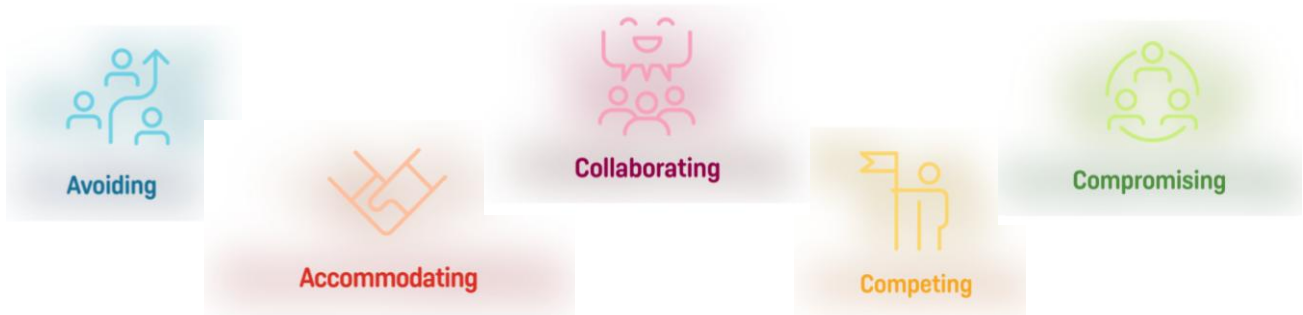
_____

When would it be a bad choice? _____

When would **compromising** be the most effective way to deal with a conflict? _____

_____

When would it be a bad choice? _____

Question: Which of these five styles do you think you most naturally lean towards?

_____

4. What's Your Conflict Style?

Complete the 5-question survey that you will find at https://tinyurl.com/wsdhkze and circle your result below.

Did the survey result match what you guessed your conflict resolution style was? _____

When Conflict Styles Meet

It's important to consider not only your conflict resolution style, but the conflict resolution style of people that you work or live with.

What would happen if you had two people in conflict with one another, and both were using the "Competing" style of conflict resolution?

_____

Why could that be a problem? _____

What if one person were Competing, and the other were Avoiding?

_____

Why could that be a problem? _____

We mentioned earlier that one of the great things about understanding the five different conflict modes is that you can try out different styles depending on the circumstance. Once we recognize our go-to style, we can also recognize that if it's not working there may be other approaches we can try.

Review the Conflict Management Cheat Sheet and use the chart on the second page that shows how the different conflict styles interact to answer the questions below.

What advice is offered to someone who is Compromising, if the person they are in conflict with is Avoiding?

_____

_____

What advice is offered to someone who is Competing if the person they are in conflict with is Accommodating?

_____

_____

What advice is offered to someone if both they and the person they are in conflict with are Collaborating?

_____

_____

Find your conflict style on the chart, and take a moment to read the suggestions it offers for dealing with each of the five conflict styles.

5. Language for Conflict Resolution

Difficult conversations can raise a lot of emotions. For them to go well, we need to express ourselves in a way that is well-thought-out, clearly stated, calm, respectful, and considers not only what we need but what the other person needs as well.

If a difficult conversation ends up as a screaming match, it rarely results in the two people involved coming up with a solution.

Question: What have you seen happen when someone having a difficult conversation expresses themselves in anger, with a lot of emotion, or by criticizing the other person?

_____

_____

Even when people are hurt, angry, anxious or frustrated, if they want to resolve conflict they need to talk about it in a way that allows other people to hear them. When they approach a conversation with ramped-up emotions, unfortunately that rarely happens.
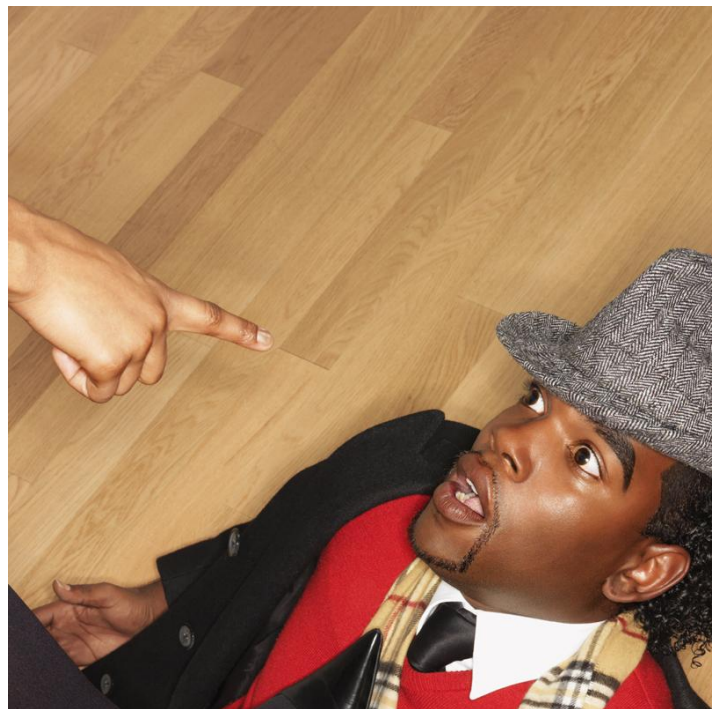
There will be many times in our lives when we experience conflict with a family member, friend, or co-worker. Unless we decide to leave the conflict unresolved, it often means we need to have a difficult conversation with that person. Whether you are the person starting the conversation, or someone approaches you to point out that there's a problem, there are five things you can do to resolve a conflict effectively.

Step 1: Admit that a conflict exists

Are you the person starting the conversation? Something brought you to this point. Prepare for the conversation by putting into words what the problem is. Imagine yourself talking about it with someone who isn't involved in the situation. See if you can say it or write it down in simple, clear words and prepare to share it with the person you need to talk to.

Is someone coming to you to discuss a conflict? Recognize that if someone is concerned enough to approach you, there's a problem whether you have noticed it or not. Acknowledge that, by telling the person that you recognize there's something that the two of you need to resolve.

Step 2: Point out your shared goals

Are you the person starting the conversation? You likely have some sort of a relationship with the person causing the conflict. Perhaps you share a home, family, workplace, or other environment. That shared responsibility means you have something in common, and pointing it out is a good step to finding common ground.

Is someone coming to you to discuss a conflict? The person talking to you recognizes that you have a relationship of some kind, which means you share experiences and responsibilities. There is middle ground somewhere, and reminding yourself of what both of you agree on can help you focus on the bigger picture.

Step 3: Talk about how the conflict is affecting you, and what you want to change

Are you the person starting the conversation? Take a moment to picture what would make the situation better. Be specific – for the other person to "stop being a jerk" isn't enough. What exactly would they need to stop doing, and why is that behaviour currently a problem for you? What difference would it make if that behaviour stopped?

Is someone coming to you to discuss a conflict? This is where your listening skills come into play. When someone points out a conflict with our actions or behaviours, our gut instinct is often to deflect (everyone does that, and if you're not okay with it that's your problem) or get defensive (I'm only doing that because you're doing something that causes me to react this way). Now is your time to listen. The person approaching you has a need that isn't being met – they want something. What is it, and why do they want it?

Step 4: Use respectful language and avoid personal attacks

Are you the person starting the conversation? Trying to explain an issue using language that is aggressive or critical will immediately plug the ears of the person you need to talk to. If you want them to hear what you have to say, reword your message so it's factual, clear, and non-combative.

Is someone coming to you to discuss a conflict? Recognize that when confronted with something we don't want to hear, we often lash out. Whether you agree with what the person speaking to you is saying or not, responding in a respectful, calm way will help you bring the conversation, and hopefully the conflict, to a resolution.

Step 5: Talk about how you can work together to resolve the problem

Are you the person starting the conversation? Resolving conflict is more effective when it's a shared responsibility, not only one person's job. Let the other person know that you're not just demanding they change, but that you're willing to work with them to reach a resolution you can both live with.

Is someone coming to you to discuss a conflict? All relationships that encounter conflict are just that – relationships. No one would approach you with a problem unless you share something, and that means you can share the solution as well. Hearing them out is the first step, and working together to come up with a solution is the key to moving that relationship forward in a healthy way.

On the following page, you will find a workplace scenario where there's a conflict. Read the scenario, and complete the exercise that follows.

Scenario: Beth is the manager of a busy car dealership. She holds regular team meetings but while all staff attend them, not everyone is vocal in a group setting. The more outgoing and extroverted staff dominate the meetings, and often create additional opportunities to talk to Beth about their ideas outside meetings as well. Paul is one of the quieter staff members, and he's feeling overshadowed by other employees. He has some great ideas that he'd like to share, but doesn't feel like Beth has time for him during team meetings, and doesn't feel comfortable barging into her office as some of the other salespeople do. If something doesn't change, Paul will start looking for another job where he feels his voice will be heard.

Help Paul have this difficult conversation with Beth by suggesting things he might say. Use each of the five suggestions in the article you just read.

How could Paul admit to Beth there is a conflict?

_____

_____

What could Paul say about the goals that he and Beth share?

_____

_____

How could Paul explain the way this issue is affecting him, and what he would like to change?

_____

_____

Give an example of language Paul could use that is respectful and doesn't attack.

_____

_____

What could Paul say about how he and Beth could work together to make the situation better?

_____

_____

6. Playing Through Conflict: One Night Ultimate Werewolf

In this game, players will find themselves in conflict with each other, and will need to convince others to accept their point of view. This may take some planning, as each of the players in the game have different and often competing priorities. The only consistent thing is that none of them want to be accused of being a werewolf… even if they are one.

During the daytime portion of the game, watch how players behave. Who seems to be avoiding conflict, or pushing others to agree with their point of view? Who is simply agreeing with what others say and why might they be doing that? Consider what techniques could be used to make players accept another point of view.

Note: This is a competitive game that can be played by between 3 and 10 people. If you don't play the game, be sure to watch carefully and make notes below about what you saw. Your facilitator will ask you to share your observations after the game.

_____

_____

_____

Did you know who the werewolf was? What made you think you did? _____

_____

The game will play differently each time, so play more than once and see what changes.

7. Selecting the next session's topic

We will be discussing another skill from the list during our next session. Each of these skills can be developed and practiced in a gaming environment, and are important not only in games, but in a non-gaming environment.

1. Verbal communication
2. Non-verbal communication
3. Observation skills
4. Decision making
5. Problem solving
6. Teamwork
7. Flexibility and adaptability
8. Work ethic
9. Conflict resolution
10. Resiliency

Which skill should we look at next? Participate in the poll to let your workshop facilitator know.

8. Wrap-up and take-away

In today's session we discussed techniques and language we can use to effectively resolve conflicts, and learned about the five conflict resolution styles (accommodating, avoiding, competing, collaborating, and compromising). Spend some time between now and our next session watching the people around you when they have disagreements. Consider the following questions:

What caused this conflict? _____

What conflict resolution styles do you see in play? _____

Did anyone lose control of a conversation because emotions took over? _____

Tip: Once you decide what someone else's conflict style is, look at the Conflict Management Cheat Sheet and cross-reference it with your own conflict style. This is a valuable tool for the next time you find yourself in conflict with the same person, or someone else who shares their conflict style.

Your facilitator will be asking about the conflict you observed at the start of the next session.

Reminder: record the date and time of our next session below.

The next session is: _____ at _____.