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INSURANCE SECTOR EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING AUTHORITY

## LEARNER GUIDE

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## **Describe how to Manage Workplace Relationships**

### **Introduction**

A consistent effort is required from all colleagues in the workplace in order to maintain effective working relations and create an atmosphere that encourages productivity.

It is important that colleagues treat each other in a polite and helpful manner at all times. If a positive interpersonal relationship exists between all colleagues it will be clearly noticed by customers and will ensure that a positive image reflects to the outside world.

A staff member who is part of a co-operative group will deal promptly with requests to create an efficient, effective work team.

Division of responsibilities and the sharing of workload in a cooperative team will be that much more efficient and therefore contribute to greater productivity.

It is important to support others in the performance of their work since colleagues are dependent on one another and cannot perform well in isolation.

### **Module 1**

#### **The need for Structure in Workplace Relationships**

This Module deals with:

- Documents and policies that indicate the structure in a specific workplace;
- The nature of personal interactions in a specific workplace in order to identify appropriate behaviour.

Risk management involves identifying those things, which could negatively affect the business, including its employees, customers, technologies, processes, procedures, assets etc., and implementing plans to minimize such risk so that it does not pose a threat to the business. It also involves monitoring the plans so that corrective action can be taken to continuously improve the process.

Everyone within the business has a role to play in terms of risk management. One of the ways in which an individual can contribute towards the risk management process is to have a clear understanding of the job or the role s/he is employed to do. This means that you need to understand what your responsibilities are, the standards that need to be maintained and the behaviours required promoting positive relations in the work place so that all employees contribute to the ongoing, efficient running of the business and management of risk.

Should you be the owner of the business, you have the responsibility of instituting policies and procedures to regulate staff behaviour and to ensure and promote harmonious relationships and a motivated productive environment.

## 1.1 Documents and Policies that Indicate Structure in a Specific Workplace

Every organisation has a vision or picture of what it desires for its future, whether foggy or crystal clear. The current mission of the organisation or the purpose for its existence is also understood in general terms.

The values members of the organisation manifest in daily decision-making, and the norms or relationship guidelines, which informally define how people interact with each other and customers, are also visible.

Every organisation has a choice. You can allow these fundamental underpinnings of your organisation to develop on their own, with each individual acting in a self-defined vacuum, or you can invest the time to proactively define them to best serve the organisation and its customers.

Many successful organisations agree upon and articulate their vision, mission or purpose, values, and strategies so all organisation members can enrol in and own their achievement.

A vision is a statement of what the organisation wants to become. It should resonate with all members of the organisation and help them feel proud, excited, and part of something much bigger than themselves.

A vision should stretch the organisation's capabilities and image of itself. It gives shape and direction to the organisation's future.

A mission is a precise description of what an organisation does. It should describe the business the organisation is in. It is a definition of "why" the organisation exists currently. Each member of an organisation should be able to verbally express this mission.

A code of conduct provides the employees of an organisation with the policies and rules regarding how they are expected to behave in the workplace. It contains the rules and regulations which should be upheld in order to maintain a professional work environment.

## 1.2 The Nature of Personal Interactions

A variety of personalities are found in an organisation and certain methods are needed to build relationships for effective interaction in organisations. These methods ensure that the pitfalls that can occur when people don't know what they want from each other, are avoided. The combinations of relationships we will examine include:

- Between two people
- Between people in groups
- Between the groups themselves, and
- Throughout the whole organisation.

### Between two people

- Active listening:

Here one party summarises in her or his own words what s/he hears the other person say and the feelings underlying it. S/he then feeds back to this person. The process continues until the talker is sure the listener understands. Then the roles are reversed.

- Taking turns to help each other:

Each person has a turn describing an issue, idea or problem. The first person acts as consultant and helps the second person to arrive at a solution. At the end of the turn, the person being helped gives the consultant feedback on what the other participant did that helped. Then the roles are reversed.

This technique is an economical and effective way to give and receive help and build good relationships at the same time. It will work *if* you take turns. Then both people feel good about giving useful help and about getting it.

- Helping contracts:

On the left-hand side of a sheet of paper, write down a list of 'things I can do to help you'. Then, on the right-hand side, write a list of 'things you could do to help me'. Invite the other person to add to both lists. Discuss the results and work on the changes.

### Between people in groups

- Taking turns:

Start by asking each person to talk for up to a minute about something that is going well for them, while everyone else listens. This relaxes people and they will be more positive for the remainder of the meeting. Then ask each person in the group to speak in turn for, say, up to three minutes on the topic of the meeting, while everyone else listens without interrupting. Everyone will have had a turn to say what they want *and be heard*. This simple process avoids the competition and frustration that make so many meetings ineffective.

- Process review:

Halfway through a meeting, ask each participant to say how s/he thinks the meeting is going. You can use phrases like: 'What is good about the way we are working together?' and 'How can we improve the second half of our meeting?' If this is difficult to do during the discussion, ask similar questions at the end of any significant meeting.

### Between groups

- Image exchange:

In separate groups write on a flipchart 'How we see ourselves', 'How we see the other group(s)' and 'how we think the other group sees us'. Then meet together in a plenary session, examine the data and discuss what lies behind it. Finally, set up mixed groups to tackle common problems.

- Joint projects:

Identify projects that require participation from two or more groups. Involve members of these groups in the planning of the project, and make sure you discuss with them how the meetings are going and how to improve them.

- Joint activities:

Creating something together can be an excellent way of building relationships between groups. This is especially true when the activity requires talents, organisational ability, social skills and contacts, which you cannot predict from group membership.

### **In the whole organisation**

- Team building:

The effectiveness of an organisation depends on people working well in teams. Team building helps a team to create a clear and shared vision of what its members are trying to achieve. Team members also identify the practical issues they face, start to tackle them together and learn how to work together.

- Survey work:

An objective person who is usually external to the organisation interviews people from across and down the organisation, and collects a valid picture by asking: 'What is working well?' 'What is not working for you, or your department?' 'What do you or your colleagues need to improve?' and 'How are you managing these things now?' The outsider feeds this information back to the organisation and helps those involved plan improvements. The process brings things into the open and makes them easier to talk about.

### **1.2.1 Signs of Personal Problems in the Workplace**

One disgruntled and unbalanced employee can poison an entire work force. Emotionally volatile behaviour unsettles other employees and endless discussion of personal problems impacts on work productivity. If someone has an undisclosed health problem and is constantly off sick, it can be demoralizing for the other employees who have to fill in on a constant basis. While people don't need to know details, it might be a good idea to give colleagues a broad outline of the problem. They might be more sympathetic.

Temporary problems should be treated differently to permanent problems. An employee, whose work performance is failing because his marriage has just fallen apart, should be treated differently to someone who has a history of getting involved in volatile or abusive relationships. Someone who has just had a bad case of mumps cannot be treated in the same way as someone whose substance abuse is affecting his performance.

People are appointed and paid to work. Their contribution to the company should be of a greater value than their cost to the company. If, over a long period of time, this is not the case, a manager should initiate the correct procedures for dismissal. This should obviously only be done in extreme cases when all other avenues of intervention have failed.

Look out for these signs:

- Shaking and nervous twitching
- Reduced interest in appearance
- Personal hygiene ignored
- Weight loss or gain
- Alcohol on breath
- Overreaction to criticism
- Isolation from colleagues
- Sudden emotional outbursts
- Considerable mood swings
- Forgetfulness
- Inappropriate behaviour at work
- Absenteeism and Tardiness
- Arriving late and leaving early
- Unexplained absences
- Friday and Monday absences
- Accidents both in the workplace and outside

Job performance:

- Wasted materials
- Increased operating errors
- Increasingly unsatisfactory work quality
- Faulty decision making

It is not the duty of a manager to sort out the personal problems of employees, but good communication is required. Employers or managers must be kept in the picture, possibly intervene by means of a good referral, or be a little more sympathetic if the employee's job performance is not entirely up to its usual standard.

Sometimes early intervention can prevent a problem from taking on gigantic proportions.

## **Module 2**

### **The Interrelationship between Personal and Professional Relationships**

This Module deals with:

- The difference between personal and professional relationships with reference to the need for clear boundaries;
- Ways in which difficulties in personal relationships influence workplace relationships with examples;
- The effect of professional relationships on personal relationships with examples.

#### **2.1 The Difference between Personal and Professional Relationships with reference to the need for clear boundaries**

Interpersonal relationships as a category may have escaped public attention until the late 20th century. The term "relationship", as applied to personal life, came into general use only twenty or thirty years ago, as did the idea that there is a need for "intimacy" or "commitment" in personal life.

In the contexts of sociology and of popular culture, the concept of interpersonal relationships involves social associations, connections, or affiliations between two or more people. Such persons may interact overtly, covertly, face-to-face; or may remain effectively unknown to each other (as in a virtual community whose members maintain anonymity and do not socialize outside of a chat-room).

Interpersonal relationships are social associations, connections, or affiliations between two or more people.

They vary in differing levels of intimacy and sharing, implying the discovery or establishment of common ground, and may be centered on something(s) shared in common. The study of relationships is of concern to sociology, psychology and anthropology.

#### **Stages of Relationship Formation**

- 1) Contact
  - a) Uncertainty reduction - through eye contact, identification, opening disclosure, etc.
  - b) Perceptual - notice how a person looks at the other and their body language.
  - c) Interactional cues - nodding, maintaining eye contact, etc.
  - d) Invitational - encouraging the relationship (ex. asking if they want to meet up later for coffee)
  - e) Avoidance strategies - if one person discloses and the other does not, minimal response, lack of eye contact, etc.
- 2) Involvement
  - a) Feelers - hints or questions (e.g. asking about family)

- b) Intensifying strategies - further the relationship (e.g. meeting old friend, bringing the other to meet family, becoming more affectionate, etc.)
  - c) Public - seen in public together often (e.g. if in a romantic relationship, may be holding hands)
- 3) Intimacy  
Very close, may have exchanged some sort of personal belonging or something that represents further commitment. (E.g. may be a promise ring in a romantic relationship or a friendship necklace symbolizing two people are best friends)
- 4) Deterioration  
Things start to fall apart. In a romantic relationship, after six months people are out of the "honeymoon stage" and start to notice flaws. The way this is dealt with determines the fate of the relationship.

In light of the above one can see why it is important to maintain clear boundaries between a personal and a professional relationship. This is not to say individuals in a professional environment may not have a personal relationship, but there must be a clear distinction between the two in order to ensure that one's judgement is not clouded by their personal feelings, rather than making decisions based on our professional knowledge and experience.

## 2.2 Ways in which difficulties in Personal Relationships influence Workplace Relationships

### 2.2.1 Types of Interpersonal Relationships

- Kinship relationships, including family relationships, being related to someone else by blood e.g. fatherhood, motherhood; or through marriage (affinity), e.g. father-in-law, mother-in-law
- Formalized intimate relationships or long term relationships through law and public ceremony, e.g. marriage and civil union.
- Non-formalized intimate relationships or long term relationships such as loving relationships or romantic relationships or significant other. If the partners live together, the relationship may be similar to marriage.
- Soul mates, individuals who are intimately drawn to one another through a favourable meeting of the minds and who find mutual acceptance and understanding with one another. Soul mates may feel themselves bonded together for a lifetime; and, hence, they may be sexual partners but not necessarily.
- Platonic love is an affectionate relationship into which the sexual element does not enter, especially in cases where one might easily assume otherwise.
- Friendship, which consists of mutual love, trust, respect, and unconditional acceptance, and usually implies the discovery or establishment of common ground between the individuals involved; see also internet friendship and pen pal.
- Brotherhood and sisterhood, individuals united in a common cause or having a common interest, which may involve formal membership in a club, organisation,



association, society, lodge, sorority, fraternity. This type of interpersonal relationship also includes the comradeship of fellow soldiers in peace or war.

- Partners or co-workers in a profession, business, or a common workplace.
- Acquaintanceship, simply being introduced to someone or knowing who they are by interaction.

### 2.2.2 Factors affecting Interpersonal Relationships

The discovery or establishment of common ground between individuals is a fundamental component for enduring interpersonal relationships. Loss of common ground, which may happen over time, may tend to end interpersonal relationships.

For each relationship type, essential skills are needed, and without these skills more advanced relationships are not possible. Systemic coaching advocates a hierarchy of relationships, from friendship to global order. Expertise in each relationship type requires the skills of all previous relationship types. (For example partnership requires friendship and teamwork skills).

Interpersonal relationships through consanguinity and affinity can persist despite the absence of love, affection, or common ground. When these relationships are in prohibited degrees, sexual intimacy in them would be the taboo of incest. Marriage and civil union are relationships reinforced and regularized by their legal sanction to be "respectable" building blocks of society.

In the United States the de-criminalization of homosexual sexual relations in the landmark Supreme Court decision, *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003) facilitated the "mainstreaming" of gay long term relationships, and broached the possibility of the legalization of same-sex marriages in that country.

In intimate relationships there is often, but not always, an implicit or explicit agreement that the partners will not have sex with someone else - monogamy. The extent to which physical intimacy with other people is accepted may vary. For example, a husband may be more receptive to his wife being physically affectionate with her female friend if she has one than with her male friend (see also jealousy).

In friendship there is some transitivity: one may become a friend of an existing friend's friend. However, if two people have a sexual relationship with the same person, they may be competitors rather than friends. Accordingly, sexual behaviour with the sexual partner of a friend may damage the friendship.

Sociologists recognize a hierarchy of forms of activity and interpersonal relations, which divides them into: behaviour, action, social behaviour, social action, social contact, social interaction and finally social relation.

It is the nature of personal relationships that they are unable to be governed by policy.

The general principle, which should guide behaviour, is that it is undesirable that relationships should intrude or be seen to intrude on or influence working practices.

## 2.3 The effect of Professional Relationships on Personal Relationships

The concept of boundaries is not limited to professional relationships -- nations, tribes, families, and individuals all have boundaries. Professional boundaries are relevant to the delivery of professional services in that the degree to which they are necessary or produce some predictable outcome; the professional is obligated to be concerned about them.

Any treatment, or any practice or decision concerning a professional boundary can be evaluated based on the ethical premises:

- Beneficence - the likelihood that it will do good
- Non-maleficence - the likelihood that it will not cause harm
- Client autonomy - the likelihood that it will foster client independence
- Fidelity - the degree to which it reflects what was promised and is true to the articulated goals of the professional service

### 2.3.1 Making the most of Personal and Professional Relationships

It is not possible to document the instances in which personal relationships, which impinge on the workplace, may lead to questionable outcomes. These guidelines intend to provide an adequate indication of situations to be avoided.

Examples of situations where it is inappropriate for such relationships to intrude are:

- Selection, confirmation and promotion of staff;
- Termination of employment;
- Provision of opportunities and funding for research, conferences, and development/training;
- Performance appraisal and review;
- Assessment of students or award of medals etc.
- Selection of candidates for admission.

There may be instances where staff involved in personal relationships is called on to provide advice to a deliberative body (e.g. to review performance). In such an instance the body seeking the advice is advised to seek contrary evidence of strongly presented negative or positive views.

Colleagues that are or become involved in personal relationships as discussed above are expected to declare any conflict of interest to their supervisor.

Staff is also expected to advise the responsible officer of any necessary action that may need to be taken as a result of the declared conflict of interest. The officer concerned should give consideration to taking such necessary action (on the advice of staff).

It is not seen as appropriate for an organisation to establish any formal apparatus to monitor or record the existence of personal relationships. However, it is normally an "unwritten" rule.

Some companies actually forbid relationships between co-workers.

It is important that some sort of guideline exist in the company operating procedure or code of conduct that clearly indicate to employees how professional relationships are to be conducted and maintained.

Mentoring new employees has the effect that older employees, or experienced employees, can describe the company hierarchy to new employees, as well as the way in which more senior staff are addressed and approached. Company values determine the approach to professional relationships.

Warning signs that boundary violations may happen or are happening:

- the relationship feels ambiguous, confusing or uncomfortable
- you seem to have become the caretaker
- you are given special status as a co - worker
- you are not being helped with the issues for which you sought assistance
- you are used as a confidant for personal support

Professionalism is fostered by an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. Actions of supervisors regarding their subordinates that harm this atmosphere can undermine professionalism and hinder fulfilment of the company's mission.

Trust and respect are diminished when those in positions of authority abuse or appear to abuse their power or appear to favour a subordinate based on a personal relationship with that subordinate.

Decide what type of relationships you want to have with people in the workplace:

- Do you want to keep your relationships on a professional level?
- Do you want to have relationships that combine professional and personal elements?
- Do you want to have a mentoring relationship?
- Are you looking to develop relationships with people who will be your allies?

After you establish what type of relationship you want to have, you will need to decide on a plan or strategy for establishing it. This may be as simple as asking a colleague to be your mentor or asking someone to go for coffee outside of the office, although in some cases it might be more complex.

For example, it is more challenging to change an existing relationship. If you already have problems in the relationship or if you didn't confront someone who responded to you in inappropriate ways, it will be more difficult to rectify these situations.

**Remember:** It is easier to establish a good relationship from the start than to change one that has already developed inappropriately.

**Hint:** You do not have to like someone to have a professional relationship with that person. You just need to show your willingness to do whatever it takes to get the job done.

It is very important that you consciously develop your relationships. You should think about the type of relationship you want to have so you can plan how to develop it. Relationships formed automatically or without planning may not give you what you

want or need. Or they may develop in negative, toxic or uncontrollable ways and lower your self-esteem.

At the very least, try to think consciously about developing and maintaining professional relationships with those you work with. This can simply be a cordial or civil relationship that lets you share information and work together. However, you may wish to develop personal relationships with a co-worker with whom you share common interests. You may find that your children are in the same grade, or you go to the same church or have mutual friends.

It is quite acceptable to extend the relationship beyond the workplace, but there are some questions to consider before you do.

It is your decision to add a personal aspect to any professional relationship. Understand that it is a conscious decision and make it in your own best interest. Think about how work relationships will impact your immediate and long-term performance at work



## Module 3

### Techniques for Self-Management

This Module deals with:

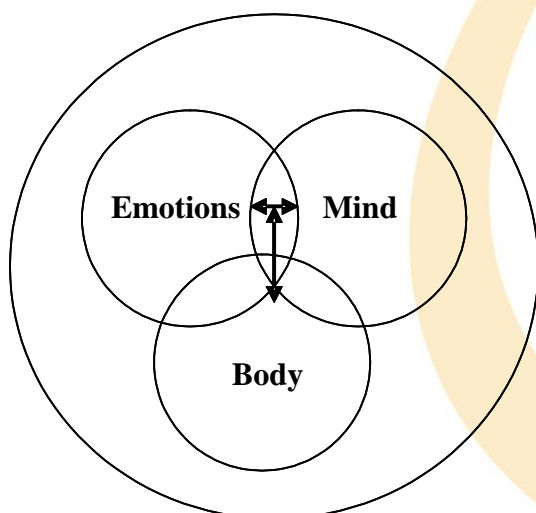
- Ways of acquiring self-knowledge and an indication of the role of self-knowledge in interpersonal relationships;
- Techniques for communicating own feelings, thoughts and opinions for three different situations;
- Knowledge of self and relationships to manage conflict constructively;
- Techniques to aid understanding of the thoughts, feelings and opinions of others with reference to listening, reflection and body language.

#### 3.1 Self-knowledge and Interpersonal Relationships

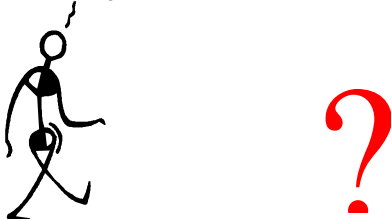



Self-knowledge describes ideas pertaining to psychology, philosophy and mysticism. In the psychological sense it is the idea of a self-aware person understanding himself (in all ways, but mostly in a wider biographical or emotional sense). In philosophy it is the concept of a mind knowing itself (realizing its nature) or simply, in what is called "basic self-knowledge", the thinker's capacity of directly knowing his own thoughts. Mysticism sometimes uses this word to describe the pursuing, or the experience of, direct contact with the self.

We all have a body, a mind and emotions. However, none of these adequately explain what we really are. The body, mind and emotions are dimensions or functional areas of the self. The combinations of the functional areas comprise the 'self' or the whole person.

**FIGURE: DIMENSIONS OF SELF**



**Figure: Dimensions of Self** represents the individual as consisting of a mind, a body and emotions. These contribute to what is referred to as the **spiritual self**. We will now discuss these individual components in more detail.

Dimensions of self	Discussion
<p><b>The Body</b></p>  <p>People are aware of feelings such as hunger, pain and tiredness. However, few are aware of all the different parts of their bodies. Take a moment to think about your body.</p>	<p>Which parts of your body are you uncomfortable with? How do your body react to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hunger;</li> <li>● Pain;</li> <li>● Tiredness;</li> <li>● Other examples?</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Emotions</b></p>  <p>Many people in our society are taught from an early age to suppress or repress their emotions. For many, this long-term suppression of emotions means that they are incapable of recognising certain emotions and, as a result, they are unable to demonstrate or express these emotions. A long-term suppression of emotions may eventually manifest itself in physical or psychological problems</p>	<p>Example of supressing of emotions: Women may be unable to express anger, while men may repress emotions such as grief and fear. Other examples: What emotions do you feel and how can you express it?</p>
<p><b>The Mind</b></p>  <p>Many people are locked up in their minds. They have constant internal conversations (thoughts) and there is no release. Often, people resort to drugs and alcohol (mind-altering substances) as a welcome release.</p>	<p>Take some time to discuss what type of internal conversations (thoughts) you are having and ways in which you could express them</p>
<p><b>The Soul or the Spiritual Self</b></p> <p>The soul or the spiritual self are those inner resources from which you draw meaning, relevance and inspiration in your life. Your soul is your most direct means of recognising what is good in you and in others. Religion, which is one of the ways of remaining in contact with your spiritual self has, to a great extent, lost its significance in today's world.</p>	<p>What techniques can be used to help you in finding your spiritual self?</p> 

- **Knowing the Self through Introspection**

Introspection is the process by which someone forms beliefs about their own mental states. We might form the belief that someone else is happy on the basis of perception, for example, by perceiving their behaviour. But a person typically does not have to observe their own behaviour in order to determine whether they are happy. Rather, one makes this determination by introspecting.

- **Using other People to know ourselves**

The self-concept is not solely created by our own knowledge, but also how the self is moulded by social contact. When interacting with others around us, we compare our own abilities and attitudes—illustrating the social comparison theory.

- **Self-knowledge and Epistemology**

Self-knowledge distinguishes itself from knowledge of other things (exterior to the individual) because it is *immediate*, in the sense that the evidence is present naturally. We can say self-knowledge is the result of introspection. The individual has privileged access to his own thoughts, that is, knows his own thoughts in a way others usually don't. Privileged access is the distinctive feature of first person authority, since what someone sincerely claims to be thinking should often be taken as what he is in fact thinking. On the other hand, claims about the thoughts of others do not hold such kind of authority.

### 3.2 Techniques for Communicating own Feelings, Thoughts and Opinions

The following techniques can be used for communicating one's own feelings, thoughts and opinions:

#### Listen Actively

- Be attentive - concentrate on what is being said.
- Be impartial - don't form an opinion, just listen.
- Reflect back - restating what has been said helps the speaker know that you understand.
- Summarize - pull together the important messages so that you and the speaker recognize what was important during the conversation.

#### Nonverbal Message

- Posture - let your body show that you are interested by sitting up and leaning toward the speaker.
- Equal positioning - if the speaker is standing, you stand. If the speaker is sitting, you sit as well.
- Facial expression - remember that feelings are reflected in facial expressions.
- Gestures - your body language reveals a lot about how you interpret a message, so be aware of when you send signals that might cause the speaker to believe that you are angry, in a hurry, bored, etc.

#### Express Thoughts and Feelings

- Be open and honest - collaboration between parents and professionals begins with the understanding that you trust each other with all information.

- Speak clearly - don't mumble and don't talk too quietly. If you don't know the word for something, describe what you mean so that you and the speaker can have a shared understanding of your concern or question.

### **Communicate Without Being Adversarial**

- Express concerns non-judgmentally - talk about your questions or concerns without blaming other people. For example, you might be angry that your child is not receiving enough speech therapy. Rather than talk about the speech therapist not doing his/her job, discuss your idea of how often your child should receive this service.
- Use "I" messages. Rather than say, "You didn't explain that very well," say, "I didn't understand what you just said. Please explain it again."

### **3.3 Knowledge of Self and Relationships to Manage Conflict constructively**

Conflict management refers to the long-term management of intractable conflicts. It is the label for the variety of ways by which people handle grievances—standing up for what they consider to be right and against what they consider to be wrong. Those ways include such diverse phenomena as gossip, ridicule, lynching, terrorism, warfare, feuding, genocide, law, mediation, and avoidance. Which forms of conflict management will be used in any given situation can be somewhat predicted and explained by the social structure—or social geometry—of the case.

Conflict management is often considered to be distinct from conflict resolution. In order for actual conflict to occur, there should be an expression of exclusive patterns, and tell why the conflict was expressed the way it was. Conflict is not just about simple inaptness, but is often connected to a previous issue. The latter refers to resolving the dispute to the approval of one or both parties, whereas the former concerns an ongoing process that may never have a resolution. Neither is it considered the same as conflict transformation, which seeks to reframe the positions of the conflict parties.

Working in teams means that we must not only consider the organisation's goals and standards of ethical behaviour, but also our team members. It often happens that conflict arises between employees or between groups within an organisation.


Conflict can be broadly defined as:

'A process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect, something that the first party cares about.'

Conflict is inevitable, and can even facilitate change. Conflict can also stimulate creative thinking and innovation. However, conflict can also be extremely disruptive as it can negatively affect productivity and cause tension between members of a group.



### Conflict can be either **Constructive or Destructive**

<b>Destructive conflict</b>	<b>Constructive conflict</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● takes attention away from other important activities;</li> <li>● undermines the morale or the self-concept of employees;</li> <li>● polarises (divides) people and groups which results in a lack of co-operation;</li> <li>● increases or highlights the differences between people; and</li> <li>● leads to irresponsible and harmful behaviour, such as fighting and name-calling.</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● results in the clarification of important problems and issues;</li> <li>● results in establishing solutions to problems;</li> <li>● involves people in resolving issues that are important to them;</li> <li>● creates authentic communication;</li> <li>● helps to release emotion, anxiety, and stress;</li> <li>● team or a group builds co-operation among people as they learn more about each other;</li> <li>● assists in finding solutions to a conflict; and</li> <li>● helps individuals to develop understanding and skills.</li> </ul>

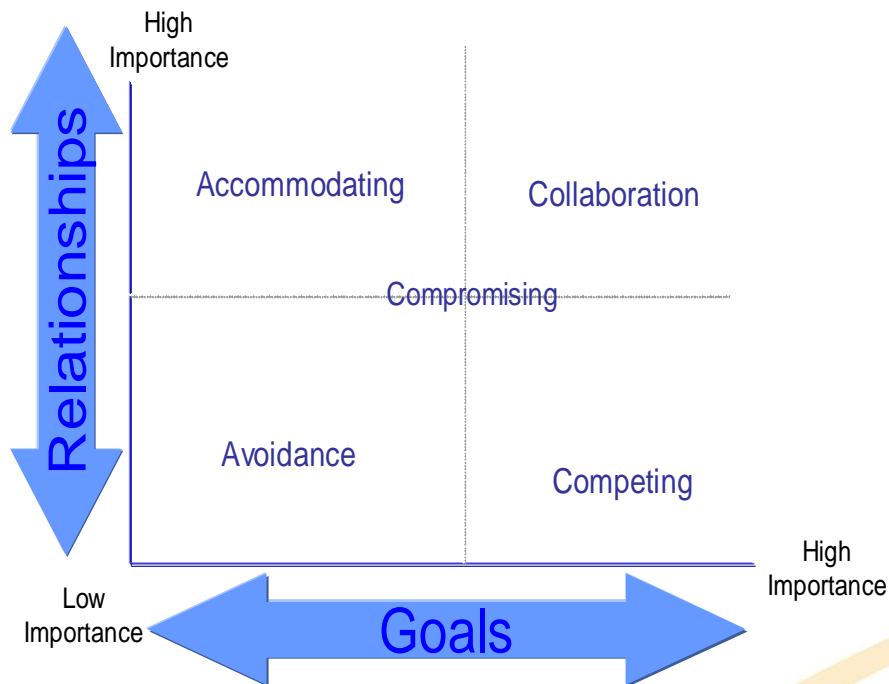
### Types of Conflict

There are many types of conflict that can arise in a workplace. These are:

- Emotional conflict ~ arises when the feelings and emotions of the various team members are incompatible.
- Conflict of interests ~ arises when there is competition for scarce resources
- Value conflict ~ arises when there are differences in the value systems of group members.
- Cognitive conflict ~ arises when there are differences in the thought processes and insights of group members.
- Goal conflict ~ arises when there is disagreement about the relative importance of goals.
- Task conflict ~ arises when group members disagree on the task to be achieved.
- Role conflict ~ arises when group members are unsure of their roles.

Conflict can also be the result of a lack of knowledge and skills, feelings of job insecurity, poor communication and misunderstandings between people.

Your primary conflict-handling style is the category with the highest total. Your fall-back style is the category with the second highest total.



#### Competing Style:

If your natural style is competing, it implies that the achievement of goals is so important that you will sacrifice relationships in the process.

#### Collaboration:

Your natural style is to balance both the relationships and the goals, but you don't compromise on any one of the two. Both excellent relationships and the maximum achievement of goals are important.

#### Avoiding:

You shy away from conflict to the detriment of both the goals and the relationship.

#### Accommodating:

Relationships are more important than goals. You would rather save the relationship than achieving the goals.

#### Compromising:

You tend to compromise on both the relationship and the goals.

## **Module 4:**

### **How Stereotyping Affects Relationships**

This Module deals with:

- The concept of stereotyping with examples;
- Stereotypes in the workplace with reference to gender, race, nationality, age and disability;
- Own stereotypes and an indication of how labelling people affects personal relationships;
- Reasons why people label groups with reference to upbringing, culture, exposure and general background.

#### **4.1 Stereotyping**

Stereotypes are as old as human culture itself. They reflect ideas that groups of people hold about others who are different from them.

A stereotype can be embedded in single word or phrase (such as, "jock" or "nerd"), an image, or a combination of words and images. The image evoked is easily recognized and understood by others who share the same views.

Stereotypes can be either positive ("black men are good at basketball") or negative ("women are bad drivers"). But most stereotypes tend to make us feel superior in some way to the person or group being stereotyped. Stereotypes ignore the uniqueness of individuals by painting all members of a group with the same brush.

Stereotypes can appear in the media because of the biases of writers, directors, producers, reporters and editors. But stereotypes can also be useful to the media because they provide a quick identity for a person or group that is easily recognized by an audience. When deadlines loom, it's sometimes faster and easier to use a stereotype to characterize a person or situation, than it is to provide a more complex explanation.

Stereotype is a type of logical oversimplification in which all the members of a class or set are considered to be definable by an easily distinguishable set of characteristics. The term is often used with a negative connotation, as stereotypes can be used to deny individuals respect or legitimacy based on their membership in a particular group. In America, the term has long been associated with the Civil Rights movement and is imbued with a semblance of racial context.

Stereotypes often form the basis of prejudice and are usually employed to explain real or imaginary differences due to race, gender, religion, age, ethnicity, socio-economic class, disability, and occupation, among the limitless groups one may be identified with.

#### **4.2 Stereotypes in the Workplace**

In a 2003 participative survey on the racial perceptions of over three thousand employees in ten South African organisations, the following dominant stereotypes emerged:

### Negative Perceptions

Blacks' negative perception of whites	Whites' negative perception of blacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Whites are cold racists</li> <li>▪ Whites have a superiority attitude over blacks and do not treat their black colleagues as equals</li> <li>▪ Whites stick together to further their own interests at the expense of blacks</li> <li>▪ Whites are constantly engaging in sabotaging affirmative action by deliberately withholding information, skills and co-operative efforts from blacks</li> <li>▪ Whites are patronizing pretenders</li> <li>▪ Whites are rigid, intolerant, exploitative and selfish</li> <li>▪ Whites have unforgiving attitudes</li> <li>▪ Whites are permanent conspirators against black agendas and progress</li> <li>▪ Whites are reactionaries who are against change</li> <li>▪ Whites are persistently undervaluing black talent, contributions and culture</li> <li>▪ Whites cannot accept black leadership and authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Blacks are non-contributors, with limited knowledge and expertise, and with an entitlement mentality</li> <li>▪ Blacks are unreliable, particularly at time keeping, appointments and promises</li> <li>▪ Blacks are disrespectful of personal space and distance</li> <li>▪ Blacks are have a diminished sense of accountability</li> <li>▪ Blacks are grumpy and constantly complain about the past</li> <li>▪ Blacks are disorganized, dirty and with little respect for property</li> <li>▪ Black are slow and possess limited intelligence</li> <li>▪ Blacks are unruly and uncouth, with a tendency towards violence and loudness</li> <li>▪ Blacks are easily intimidated.</li> </ul>

### Positive Perceptions

Blacks' positive perception of whites	Whites' positive perception of Blacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Whites are loyal, hard-working employees with expertise</li> <li>▪ Whites are good at time-keeping and keeping promises</li> <li>▪ Whites are decisive and action-orientated</li> <li>▪ Whites are respectful of authority</li> <li>▪ Whites have strong commitment and are task focused</li> <li>▪ Whites are stubborn and persistent.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Blacks have solidarity and have the capacity to stick together around selected issues</li> <li>▪ Blacks are more sociable and have the capacity to enjoy themselves</li> <li>▪ Blacks are very artistic, particularly in music and dance</li> <li>▪ Blacks have the ability to mobilise support around a common cause</li> <li>▪ Blacks have respect for elders</li> <li>▪ Blacks have a unique ability to look after each other and extended family members.</li> </ul>

To prejudice: A pre-conceived, irrational, sometimes unconscious, thought, belief or emotion not based on fact. You are prejudice if you dislike another person simply because that person is a member of a different ethnic group, sex or religion.

Types of Prejudice:

- *Ethnocentrism*: The tendency to regard one's own ethnic group, nation, religion, culture or gender as better than others

- *Racism*: Prejudice directed at people because of their ethnic membership
- *Sexism*: This is prejudice directed at a person because of his/her gender
- *Ageism*: Prejudice against the elderly, or a person because of his/her age.

Other stereotypes which may hamper successful teamwork in a work environment may include unjust and unfounded views projected on individuals of a different sexual orientation, people with disabilities or even from a different social class. Can you think of a few views expressed in this respect?

For example, men struggle to work with other men who are of homosexual orientation. The perception may be that they won't have anything in common or that they may attempt to force them into a romantic relationship. Is this rational? If it were the case then surely heterosexual males and females should also be averse to working together?

Other examples of negative stereotyping may include, people having a preconceived notion that people with disabilities may require additional assistance and won't be able to cope with their given workload or that people who come from a "poor" background aren't smart. Take some time to think about these and your own preconceived notions about certain individuals who are different to you, do you think these notions are fair? Do you believe that any one characteristic can be fairly applied on a blanket basis to an entire group of people? If not, then why do you believe we still do this?

### 4.3 Reasons Why People Label Groups

Labelling is describing someone or something in a word or short phrase. For example, describing someone who has broken a law as a criminal. Labelling theory is a theory in sociology which ascribes labelling of people to control and identification of deviant behaviour.

More broadly, the use of the term *labelling* is often intended to highlight the fact that the label is a description applied from the outside, rather than something intrinsic to the labelled thing. This can be done for various reasons:

- To provoke a discussion about what the best description is
- To reject a particular label
- To reject the whole idea that the labelled thing can be described in a short phrase.

This last usage can be seen as an accusation that such a short description is overly-reductive.

Giving something a label can be seen as positive, but the term *label* is not usually used in this case. For example, giving a name to a common identity is seen as essential in identity politics.

Labelling is often equivalent to pigeonholing or the use of stereotypes and can suffer from the same problems as these activities.

The labelling of people can be related to a reference group. For example, the labels *black* and *white* are related to black people and white people; the labels *young* and *old* are related to young people and old people.

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