



How to Prevail and/or Deal with Workplace Conflict

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Who Am I?



Cynthia (Cin-dee) Dunn, Director, TE/GE, Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

- Longest-Serving EEO/EDI Director for IRS
- 42+ Years of Federal Service (USDA, DoD, Ex-Im Bank of the US & IRS)
- EEO/EDI/Diversity/Civil Rights Field since 1992
- National EEO Lifetime Memberships: BIG, FAPAC, FEW, National Image, Inc. & SAIGE
- Other Memberships: IRS-BIG-NCC, FEW-FTC, DIG, **LULAC**, EEO & CR Executives
- Member of Most IRS EOs/ERGs
- Workshop Presenter & Award Recipient
 - 2018 National Image, Inc. “Woman of the Year” Award
 - 2018 Federally Employed Women “Champion for Diversity” Award
 - 2019 Society of American Indian Government Employees “Spirit” Award
- Proud Mother and Grandmother



Change Can Cause Workplace Conflict

Having a Significant Change in a Hybrid Work Environment - most federal agencies required employees to return to office

How will the work environment change when we return to the office:

- Social Distancing (i.e., no shaking hands, no close face-to-face conversations, wearing of masks and gloves).
- Concerns about the safety in the work environment (i.e., cubicles spaced out, hand sanitizer in restrooms, etc.).
- Concerns about working with unvaccinated colleagues
- Increased use of telework flexibilities.





World Events Impact on Workplace Conflict and Employee Morale

How do we come together with the “unrest” that surrounds us daily in the news? We can start by...

- promoting Employee Organizations and Employee Resource Groups (i.e., LULAC) as a safe space to discuss concerns around world events.
- advocating Self-Care including taking needed time off.
- conducting Pulse Checks with colleagues.
- encouraging to use Agency’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP).





How Can We Prevail and/or Deal with Workplace Conflict When America is in Crisis?

Global
COVID-19
Pandemic

Roe v.
Wade
Overturned

AMERICA
IN CRISIS

Mass
Shootings

On-line
Cyber
Attacks

Police-
Involved
Shootings



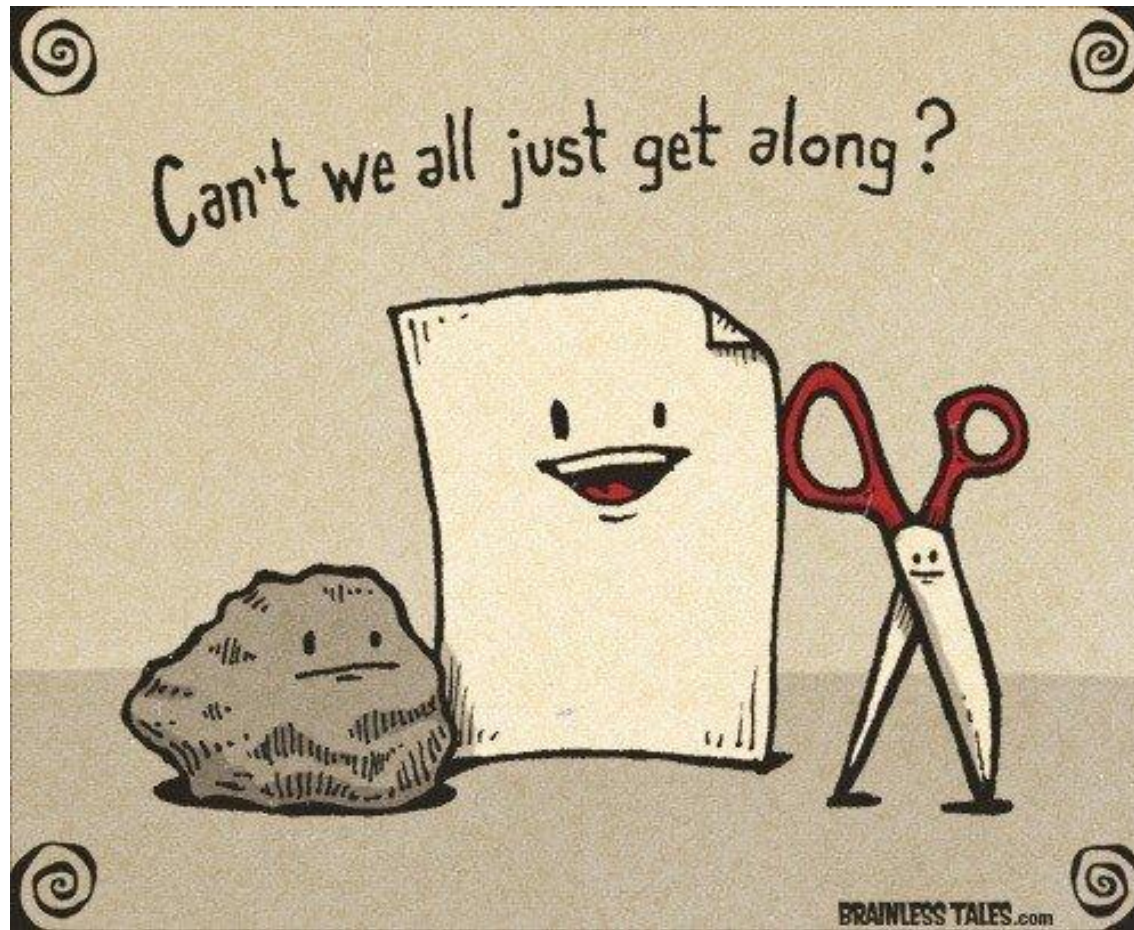


What is Conflict in the Workplace?





Workplace Conflict





Top 3 Topics That You Should **Never** Discuss While at Work

Religion

Sexual Orientation

Politics



Can you think of any other topics that may be added to the list?





5 Most Common Types of Conflict in the Workplace

1. Interdependence Conflicts
2. Differences in Style
3. Differences in Background/Gender
4. Differences in Leadership
5. Personality Clashes





Personality Clashes

All types of conflict in the workplace can be messy but it is the differences in personality that causes the most grief.

Statistics show that 85% of dismissals in the Civilian Labor Force (CLF) in the US are due to personality conflicts.





Conflict...

10%

of conflict is due
to difference
of opinion.

90%

is due to
**WRONG TONE
OF VOICE.**

naeheart*tumblr





Conflict Exercise: Four Words

Task (you will need a pen and a piece of paper):

Step 1: Write 4 words down that you associate with the word “conflict”. (5 minutes)

Step 2: Pair up with another person and between you two, you must decide on the best 4 words out of the 8 you have written down between the two of you. So you should have 4 words at the end. (5 minutes)

Step 3: Each pair will now pair up with another pair and the process goes on again. You will repeat this until half of the team negotiating with the other half of the team to produce the 4 best words between them that they associate with the word “conflict” words. (5 minutes)





Debrief from Conflict Activity: Four Words

Debrief:

- How did you feel during the exercise?
- Did anyone feel uncomfortable? If so, why?
- Did anyone take control and overtake?
- Was there any conflict?
- Would you do anything differently?
- What techniques did you use to come up with the 4 words?
- What did you learn during this exercise?





Top Reasons Why There is Workplace Conflict

- Personality Clashes
- The Aging Workforce/5 Generations in the Workplace
- Distribution of Work Assignments – Having to do more with less
- Stressors at Home:
 - Caring for elderly parents, spouses
 - Grandparents raising their grandchildren
 - Children returning home after college
- Global COVID-19 Pandemic
- **LATEST and TOP REASON – Return to Office**

Can you think of other reasons?



The Aging Workforce



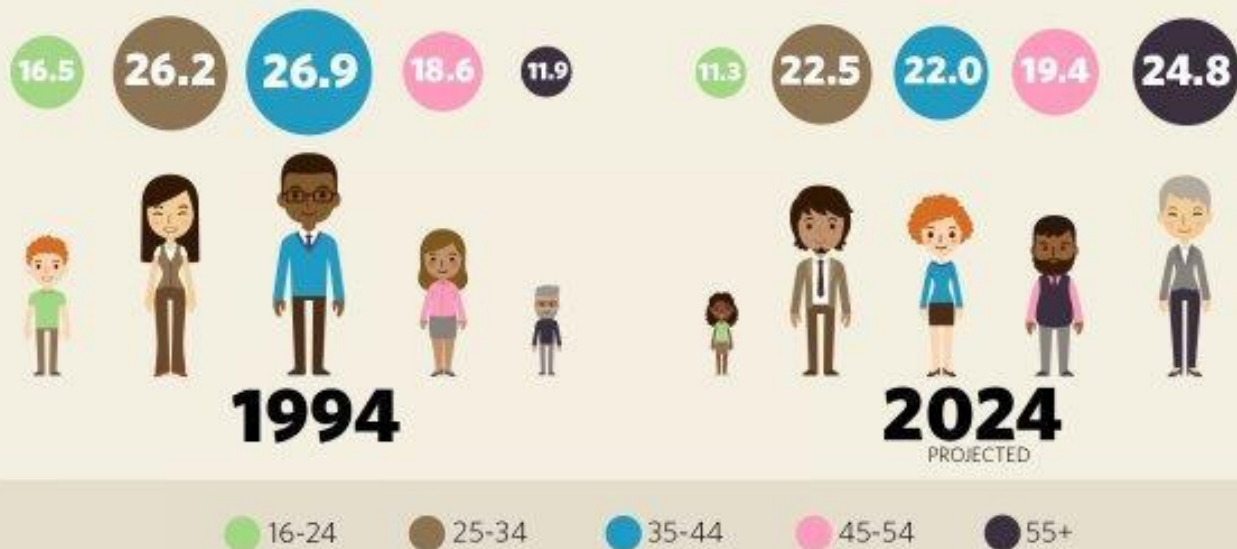


The Labor Force is Aging

The Labor Force is Aging

PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF THE LABOR FORCE BY AGE GROUP

Source: bls.gov





US OVERALL Life Expectancy – Numbers were Steadily Increasing

Year	Average Age
1955	69.6
1995	75.8
2005	77.6
2015	78.6
2016	78.7
2017	78.6*
2018	78.7
2019	78.8
2020	77.3*
2021	76.6*

*2020 CDC Division of Vital Statistics



5 Generations in the Workplace – Lead to Conflict in the Workplace



Traditionalists
born 1900-1945

Boomers
born 1946-1964

Gen X
born 1965-1976

Millennials
born 1976-1997

Gen Z
born after 1997





5 Generations in the Workplace

Traditionalist/Matures: born before 1945

Hard Workers, High respect for rules, considered the silent generation.

Baby Boomers: 1946 – 1964

Personal gratification, started the workaholic trend, team-oriented.

Generation X: 1965 – 1976

“Prove it to me”, technology driven, short attention span (talk in short sound bites); rather work alone and without assistance of supervisor.

Generation Y: 1976 – 1997

Optimistic, Instant gratification, very diverse, will resent those who talk down to them.

Generation 9/11/Gen Z: born after 1997

Less optimistic about the future, questions the importance of College, want to be treated as adults not children.





Keeping Generational Biases (to Reduce Conflict) Out of the Workplace

Understand that generations, like ethnic traits or other personal characteristics, help make us who we are. These differences contribute to a diverse and vibrant workplace.

- Respect those differences.
- Treat others with dignity and respect at all times.
- Try to avoid all stereotypes, be they negative or positive.
- Remember that all traits of a generation may not apply to everyone in that generation.
- Try to be flexible with others.
- Explain to others why it is wrong if you feel that you're being stereotyped.
- Try to learn from one another what each generation has to offer.
- Be inclusive when forming teams; try to have all generations represented.





Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The EAP is a free benefit program to help you and your family in many ways. It provides no cost, confidential services. EAP provides you access to a nationwide counseling network to help you deal with a variety of personal and/or work-related problems. EAP counselors are licensed professionals.

How EAP can help: Depression, stress, anxiety, addictions, anger, marital or relationship issues, parenting issues, grief and loss, drug and alcohol abuse, caregiving, eldercare, coping with change, workplace issues, career transitions, job pressures, self improvement, major life change... just to name a few!

EAP is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

EAP website: www.guidanceresources.com

(first time users will need to enter the company ID number when prompted).





How to Handle Workplace Conflict

Talk with the other person.

Focus on behavior and events, not on personalities.

Listen carefully.

Identify points of agreement and disagreement.

Prioritize the areas of conflict.

Develop a plan to work on conflict.

Follow through on your plan.

Build on your success.





Communication is Key!

- ✓ Listen 2x more than you speak;
- ✓ Ensure what you are saying is relevant to the workplace and can be repeated;
- ✓ Speak purposefully; and
- ✓ Speak with professionalism.





What is Considered Workplace Harassment? (Legally)

Unwelcome verbal or physical conduct (severe or pervasive).

Involving protected class.

Unreasonably interfering with work performance or creating a hostile work environment.





What is **Not** Workplace Harassment?

Petty slights

Trivial annoyances

Lack of good manners

Personality conflicts

Reasonable manager (actions in support of work)

Directions to employees to perform work

Miscommunication





Forms of Conflict in the Workplace: Bullying and Cyber-harassment

Bullying - repeated unreasonable actions of a manager, employee, contractor and/or vendor towards an employee, intended to intimidate, degrade, offend, humiliate or marginalize the target person or group.

Cyber-harassment - using computers, cellular phones, personal digital assistants or wireless hand-held devices to transmit harassing email and/or text messages, digital images and website postings such as blogs and social media.





Common Examples of Workplace Bullying

- Unwarranted or invalid criticism
- Blame without factual justification
- Being treated differently than the rest of your work group
- Being sworn at
- Exclusion or social isolation
- Being shouted at or being humiliated
- Being the target of practical jokes





How to Handle Bullying at Work

1. Check yourself
2. Take action before it has a negative impact on you
3. Tell your manager, EEO, EDI, or HCO
4. Don't take it personally
5. Address the issue head on
6. Leave if it's not worth it
7. Document all of it





Physical Signs of a Toxic Work Environment

A toxic workplace can be defined as any job where the work, the atmosphere, the people, or any combination of those things cause serious disruptions in the rest of your life.

These disruptions can show up in any number of physical symptoms. These include “sleepless nights, feeling constantly vigilant, sweaty palms, and a racing heartbeat.”





What are Some Typical Work Stressors?

Stress triggers and how we deal with stress is different for each of us. Typical workplace stressors include return to office (RTO), challenges with co-workers, manager challenges, low salaries, long hours, excessive workloads, work that's disengaging, lack of support, unclear expectations, constant changes, and fear of a layoff/furlough or severance.

What are other typical work stressors that you've dealt with?





How Can I Manage or Minimize the Impact of Stress at Work?

Check in with yourself frequently with these questions:

How are you sleeping? Are you regularly getting at least 8 hours?

What's your eating pattern? Are you often too stressed to eat or do you tend to overeat?

Are you feeling safe at home and at work?





Contributors to Conflict in the Workplace: Is It Appropriate?

- He said/She said
- Jokes
- Favoritism
- Yelling/Raising Your Voice





Prevention is the Best Tool!

Take appropriate action!

Correct unlawful behavior!

Clear communication to employees!

Offer training and workshops!

Inform alleged harasser of unwelcomed or unwanted behavior!

Report behavior to management at an early stage!





Tips on Preventing Workplace Conflict

- ❖ Treat people with respect, maintain their sense of self-worth.
- ❖ Be human, be positive, and keep your sense of humor.
- ❖ “Sleep on it!” before reacting (particularly email).
- ❖ Be *consistent* in the way you treat people.
- ❖ Be careful of defensiveness in response to complaints.
- ❖ Show gratitude and recognize good work and do it timely.
- ❖ Be honest, follow through on promises and don't over-promise.





7 Steps on Resolving Conflicts at Work

Step 1: Make the decision if you should confront the person who you are in conflict with (weigh the pros and cons).

Step 2: Speak to the other person calmly, politely, and rationally.

Step 3: Be careful not to express hostility in your posture, facial expression, or tone.

Step 4: Listen to the other person carefully.

Step 5: Express interest in what the other person is saying.

Step 6: Communicate clearly what you want.

Step 7: Speak to your supervisor if a problem with a difficult co-worker seriously threatens your work, and you two can no longer work it out among each other.





5 Strategies for Resolving Manager and Employee Conflict

1. Detach from Your Biases
 - Avoidance
 - Accommodation
 - Compromise
 - Collaboration
2. Actively Listen
3. Practice Empathy
4. Focus on the Behavior
5. Know When to Involve EEO/EDI/HCO





Easy Fix: What We All Want

Dignity

Respect

~~Equality~~ Fairness

Opportunity to Contribute





Tips on Communicating with One Another

- Avoid Confrontation!!
- Avoid Inappropriate Remarks
- Maintain Professionalism At All Times





Leadership Tips for Conflict Prevention

Keep Your Word

Be Fair and Respectable to All

Be a Good Communicator

Be Flexible

Be Organized

Delegate

Set an Example

Be Consistent

Give Praise

Ask for Help





8 Tips on How to Get Along with Your Coworkers

1. Avoid too much personal information
2. Be a good listener
3. Keep your hands to yourself
4. Always be positive
5. Be good at what you do
6. Avoid office drama
7. Worry only about your job
8. Be dependable





Quote

“As far as having peace within myself, the one way I can do that is forgiving the people who have done wrong to me. It causes more stress to build up anger. Peace is more productive.”





Practice the F.A.I.R. Approach to Conflict Prevention

F = Feedback

A = Assistance

I = Inclusion

R = Respect





Famous Quote on Conflict Resolution

To practice the process of conflict resolution, we must completely abandon the goal of getting people to do what we want.

Marshall B. Rosenberg

www.idlehearts.com





**Questions, Comments, and/or
Observations?**





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