Conflict Resolution Training

Oracle Training Services ltd

NHS Professionals
What are we here for?

Aims and Objectives:

The aim of this course is to recognise different aspects of conflict that delegates may encounter and to understand and be aware of different methods of resolving such conflict.

Key sections:

1: Understand conflict – definitions and behaviour.
2: Understand how communication can breakdown.
3: Learn how to use models and strategies to de-escalate conflict.
4: Understand patterns of aggressive behaviour, danger signs and impact factors.
5: Understand our options if communication does not work?

Course Outcomes:

At the end of this course, delegates will be able to:

- describe common causes of conflict
- give examples of how communication can break down
- explain the styles of communication that can assist in conflict resolution
- describe patterns of behaviour encountered in conflict situations
- give examples of the different warning and danger signs
- give examples of the impact factors involved when assessing risk
- describe different models for dealing with conflict
- describe the use of distance when dealing with conflict
- explain the use of ‘reasonable force’ as it applies to conflict resolution
Body Language/non-verbal communication, the ability to communicate without the use of sound.

This is the oldest and most effective way of communicating with others.

It is more difficult for a person to deceive non-verbally than verbally.
Look at the pictures below. Write down what you think the person may be communicating non-verbally.

| ![Picture 1] |  |
| ![Picture 2] |  |
| ![Picture 3] |  |
| ![Picture 4] |  |
Section 1: Understanding conflict – definitions

Activity - The two sides of conflict:
Conflict plus Emotions.

Activity – Defining behaviour:
1: Conflict is defined as...

2: Aggression is defined as...

3: Assertiveness is defined as...

4: Causes of conflict: Write out what you believe to be the common causes of conflict within your working environment?

5: Communication breakdown: How does communication sometimes break down between the customer or their family and the people providing the care?
Section 2: Models of conflict – T.A.

The theory is that we all have 3 basic ego states which make up our personality. Each time we interact with others our ego state affects the way we act and react to others. The three ego states are called Parent, Adult and Child. The theory is not about the relationship between people but how we sometimes all behave like a parent, adult or child. By managing these different ego states we can respond more appropriately when attempting to defuse conflict situations.
Section 2: Models of conflict:

The Blocking Model of Conflict©

We have an inbuilt reflex to put matters right (the Righting Reflex). Often this 'blocks' the flow of information from the customer and can escalate the situation. When a customer is experiencing difficulty getting their point across they tend to escalate the situation.

10 - Rage

9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1 – Calm

Activity 1: What behaviours should we avoid as the customer experiences a level 6 or above on the scale?
Section 3: De-Escalating conflict

R.E.L.A.T.E.

A structured approach to de-escalating conflict.

- **Step 1:** Resist reacting and stay calm
- **Step 2:** Establish a structure for the conversation
- **Step 3:** Listen and ask questions
- **Step 4:** Acknowledge the key facts and feelings
- **Step 5:** Tell the customer what you have heard them say
- **Step 6:** Explain your position/point of view.

It is impossible to avoid confrontation. Whenever there is the possibility of customers wanting something that the staff cannot provide, there will be the potential for confrontation. In confrontation, staff are saying: “You cannot have what you want – or perhaps in the form you want it – or when you want it”. The confronting person is saying in return: “I don't care what you say, I want it – my way – now!” That said, our skills, attitude and approach will go a long way towards reducing the level of hostility experienced.
De-escalating conflict:

Step 1: Resist reacting and stay calm

The best way to calm a situation is to stay calm yourself. Use these strategies to remain composed.

 Strategies:

Learning note:
These steps do not have to be rigidly applied in order. Mix and match to suit your own requirements. However, ensure you do not attempt to advise or solve the client’s problem before they have finished explaining it.

“Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space lies our freedom and power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and freedom”. Victor Frankl, writer of the Book – Man’s search for meaning.
Step 2 – Establish a structure for the conversation

When a client is agitated they have probably lost faith (hopefully temporarily) in your organisation. In order to begin to restore their faith you must provide them with some practical evidence that you are the person to deal with, and that you know what you are doing.

A key strategy for achieving this is to advise the client on how you intend to handle their complaint or situation (tell them how you are going to proceed). When the client is unclear about the structure of the conversation they tend to take control. When this happens they can make ‘demands’ before you have had a chance to calm them down (saying, for example; “what are you going to do about it”?)

The structure:

In practice advising a structure sounds something like this:

“I am going to listen to you to find out what has happened. Then I can look at what I can do to resolve the matter. Would you mind if I asked some questions to find out a bit more about what has happened?”

Step 3: Listen and establish the facts and feelings – encouraging venting

Our aim in step 3 is to ‘open up’ the conversation and encourage the client to talk and get their views and emotions ‘off their chest’. It is very tempting to provide the client with information at this point or correct something they have said. If we are not careful we can get involved in an argument before the customer has had an opportunity to calm down.

Effective listening is a skill set with many subsets. Here are some tools to help you become a more effective listener:

| OPEN QUESTIONS | • What happened...?  
|                | • Where did it happen...?  
|                | • Who was affected...?  
<p>|                | • When did it happen |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBING (T.E.D.)</th>
<th>• <strong>Tell me what happened</strong> - <strong>Explain what happened</strong> – <strong>Describe what happened</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REFLECTING</td>
<td>• “I am hearing...”, - “It sounds like...” - “You say you find our systems confusing”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARISING</td>
<td>• “Let me clarify where we have got to...” - “May I check I have understood the situation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAUSES AND SILENCES</td>
<td>• “Let me take a moment to consider what you have said”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activity** - Listening skills exercises: What have you learnt from participating in the listening exercises?

**Listening – the reality** It must be acknowledged that for many staff/client conversations the problem under discussion can leave limited scope for an extensive listening period. For example, a client chasing their product delivery may provide less listening opportunities than a client complaining about the quality of their holiday experience. That said, to avoid an immediate stand-off (“where is my delivery”, followed with the response “next Tuesday”) there is a need to come up with some creative questions to assist the client to vent their anger.
Step 4: Acknowledge the key facts and feelings

Frequently people use many words and take a lot of time trying to explain a situation and what they feel about it. If we stay composed we can acknowledge the key facts and feelings for the client in one sentence. We can also listen for feelings that are present but are not being expressed. For example, saying/asking something like “are you feeling that no one here cares about your mother”? If this is the sentiment the person is trying to convey in an angry way it can help to clarify matters for all concerned.

Understand how emotions are layered

Also sometimes feelings hide behind each other, making it hard to understand what is going on. If you take time to understand a BIG feeling like anger to see what other emotions might be lurking underneath, you will be better able to handle those emotions (i.e. a customer may be angry because they are fearful about an action your organisation is taking).

Step 5: Tell them what you have heard them say

Customers can get very angry and frustrated in their attempts to make themselves understood. One of the only tools we have to convey our understanding of the customer’s issues is to summaries what they have said. Clients often then relax when they know we ‘get it’. It is frequently the only occasion when the client will stop and really listen to what you have to say – giving their adrenalin an opportunity to subside.

Step 6: Explain your point of view.

When you have listened well, acknowledged the key facts and feelings and provided a summary you can explain your point of view with confidence. If you take the time to understand the customer well they will be more disposed to listening to your explanation.
Section 3: De-Escalating conflict - F.L.A.G.

The FLAG model is an approach to handling single issue conflict situations. Sometimes staff can get involved in a conflict situation when there are limited opportunities to investigate why the customer is angry (e.g. customer complaining that the car park is full).

• F - Face the person.

By stopping what you are doing and facing the customer you are indicating that they have your full attention and you are not ignoring them.

• L - Listen to the customer and ask a question if appropriate

Be willing to listen to the customer and ask a question if appropriate in the situation. Again by asking questions you are demonstrating that you are interested in what they are saying.

• A - Acknowledge that you have heard and understood their complaint

Acknowledge or repeat what you have heard - “Yes, parking outside is a nightmare today”, “I understand you are really upset about…”, “I can hear this is very important to you…”, “Watching your Dad being lifted like that can be distressing”.

• G - Give an explanation

Sometimes an explanation is needed and sometimes it is not. If a person is just trying to tell you they are unhappy then giving lots of reasons why something has happened can sound like an excuse (particularly if they already know why it has happened which is often the case).
Section 4: Patterns of Aggressive Behaviour

While it is sometimes not possible to judge when a person will go from a calm state to violence, that situation is rare. There is usually a build up and escalating lasting seconds, minutes or even hours. It is in this situation where we should be trying to judge where the customer is on the escalations scale below. If we are aware of where they are on the scale we are more equipped to take action to ensure our own personal safety.

Stages of Escalation:

Stage 5:
Stage 4:
Stage 3:
Stage 2:
Stage 1:

Activity: How would you know when someone has moved from one level to the next and what action could you take to calm the situation and/or ensure your personal safety is not compromised?

Warning Signs versus Danger Signs
Impact Factors

Impact factors are the considerations we must identify when dealing with any conflict – like carrying out a mini risk assessment of the situation we are in. You must assess your impact factors and include what you consider the other person’s impact factors to be.

For example:
The person you are talking to is tall, appears fit and healthy and is well-built. He is becoming agitated and louder. You are much shorter, lighter in build and have a wrist injury. If the situation became physical, could you deal with it? Are you the best person to deal with this man?

Now consider that this person is on crutches with a plaster cast on his arm and leg. Have the impact factors changed? Could you now deal with this person?

Dynamic Risk Assessment of Impact Factors (P.E.T.T.):
What is the impact of the following?

Person (size, age, build, mental state…):

Environment (exit possibilities, obstacles, safe rooms, CCTV, access to other staff…):

Task (what are you there to do – say no to a service, remove something, enforce a policy?): The more you are removing what the customer sees as a vital service the more you are at risk.

Time (is there more risk at different times of the day/week/month?):

Activity:
What thoughts or beliefs might keep you involved in an angry confrontation longer than might be safe for you?
Additional Impact Factors:

Alcohol and Drugs:

Audience:

Adrenaline:

Activity: How does each one of these Impact Factors affect a customer’s ability to make good decisions?

Managing Distance and Space:

Distance should not be overlooked. Distance can give us time to think and react. We naturally allow certain people closer; we often give others a wide berth. However, at work, we may not have that luxury; often, caring for someone means invading their personal space and it is important to remember this can make them feel uncomfortable or anxious.

Although we may have to get close to care for someone the service we provide should NOT be to the detriment to our personal safety. It we are far enough away from an attacker all that may get hurt are our feelings.

Intimate space:

Personal space:

Social space

The Reactionary Gap:

Having looked at the distances we are familiar with, we must now look at the distance we should adopt when dealing with conflict. This distance is known as the ‘reactionary gap’. The ‘reactionary gap’ is the distance between the extremities of your reach and the extremities of the customer’s reach. Any implement or weapon will reduce the size of the reactionary gap.
When Communication will not work:

We have looked at the way we communicate with others and how this can influence their behaviour and help to de-escalate a conflict situation. Transactional Analysis showed us how our ego state can affect what we are trying to say. Different models of communication have been provided that can act as tools to assist in conflict resolution and we have also covered the behaviours people can exhibit that help us to make decisions about our actions.

A situation can change very rapidly. A simple strategy for coping with conflict situations includes the following actions:

**Be aware:** Constantly observe what is going on around you.

**Assess:** Acknowledge that situations can change rapidly and will call for regular assessment.

**Plan:** Prepare for unforeseen circumstances.

We recognise that there will be some situations that we will not be able to resolve and that there may be times when the other person’s behaviour may become threatening, abusive or even violent.

**Challenge Abusive Behaviour:**

Every person has a right not to be abused. We have a right to challenge the abuse in a calm way. A simple approach to do so is:

- Indicate a willingness to help.
- Request a change in behaviour.
- State your willingness to help again.

You will need to judge if challenging a person’s behaviour will lead to an increased risk to your personal safety. In a conflict situation verbal abuse would be preferable to physical abuse.
Reasonable Force:

“Any person may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances in preventing a crime, or in effecting or assisting in the lawful arrest of offenders or suspected offenders or of persons unlawfully at large”

The Criminal Law Act 1967

Activity – Under what circumstances can you use reasonable force at work?

Action points: