



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

TEAM MEMBERS: \_\_\_\_\_

## Positive Teamwork and Conflict Mediation Tip Sheet

(1 OF 1)

When you are involved in social issues, conflicts (with team members and potentially with people who oppose your ideas) are likely to arise. Equip yourself with techniques to avoid and alleviate conflicts. While the team contract developed earlier should prevent many misunderstandings regarding roles and responsibilities, unforeseen issues may arise. When necessary, review the contract to keep everyone aligned.

Keep in mind that conflicts are not necessarily a negative situation. Differences in opinion can allow for healthy debate, allowing your team to work out small issues that could develop into larger problems later on. Provide time in each team meeting for discussions on difference of opinion, possible grievances, or objections.

The stronger and more harmonious the team, the better each individual will feel when facing possible criticism. Also, the more open and comfortable you make the team dynamics, the easier it will be to resolve issues and conflict in a constructive and productive manner.

Through the support of the team, along with a calm demeanor, many conflicts can be mitigated. Use the following tips to prevent team and outside conflict:

- ▶ Be reliable. If you say you will complete a task, do so. And if you will miss a deadline, pro-actively seek support and communicate the challenges you are facing.
- ▶ Be considerate of other people's time. Be prepared and on time for meetings.
- ▶ Show respect for the ideas and feelings of others.
- ▶ Express your needs and feelings, not your frustrations or resentment.
- ▶ If you have a conflict with an individual, approach them directly. Do not gossip behind the person's back.

**If you are in conflict:**

- ▶ Be proactive and address the issue immediately. Allowing it to build up may create resentment, hurt, and anger.
- ▶ Seek clarification. Show you want to understand the other individual and they will be more open to understanding your perspective. This may also clear up simple misunderstandings.
- ▶ Repeat what you are hearing from the other person in a respectful manner to ensure you fully understand their position.
- ▶ Ask them to do the same with what you have said.
- ▶ Express your feeling and needs with "I" statements such as "I feel," "I believe," "It is important to me that" and "I need" instead of assigning blame.
- ▶ Ask if the other person has any suggestions for constructive solutions to the problem that would be mutually beneficial. When both parties are engaged in the problem-solving process, a better solution can often be achieved.

**If you are mediating a conflict between others (facilitating a discussion or negotiation between conflicting parties by clarifying the problem and encouraging them to understand each other's perspectives):**

- ▶ Redefine the conflict by turning it from a competition between two sides to a mutual problem that can only be solved cooperatively.
- ▶ Encourage honest and open communication of perspectives and needs in order to identify the true source of the problem.
- ▶ Keep the dialogue on track and progressing toward a solution.
- ▶ Encourage both parties to come up with solutions that are beneficial to both parties.
- ▶ Ensure similar problems do not arise in the future by recognizing the lessons learned from the conflict.



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## Applying Teamwork and Conflict Mediation Skills

(1 OF 2)

Apply tips and methods from the tip sheet to the following examples of how to provide constructive feedback while addressing potentially contentious issues:

**Scenario 1:** A team member is consistently late for project meetings, increasing frustration and resentment amongst the other team members.

How would you address this?

- ▶ Seek to understand: "I've noticed you are often late for our team meetings. Can you help me understand why this is the case?"
- ▶ Communicate to the team member: "I feel that your tardiness interrupts the productivity of the meetings and is seen as inconsiderate of other people's time."
- ▶ Ask how you can support the team member and have them provide suggestions of what they can do to address the issue. You can also propose changing the time of the meetings to accommodate all schedules.

**Scenario 2:** A team member has now missed two deadlines in a row. How would you address this?

**Scenario 3:** A team member dominates group discussions and often interrupts others while they are sharing their thoughts and ideas. How would you address this?

What are some of the issues with which you are struggling within your team? Articulate the problem and then work through a solution by writing out how you would resolve it. Then, address the actual issue with the relevant team member.

# Feedback Sandwich: Showing Appreciation and Providing Constructive Feedback

Sustaining a positive group dynamic can be as easy as showing appreciation to team members.

Providing (and receiving) feedback can be an intimidating process if students are not prepared. Even constructive criticism that is intended to help improve what is being identified can seem harsh and hurtful if not presented thoughtfully. As a result, conflict may ensue.

Have students practice giving positive and constructive feedback. Teach students to use the “feedback sandwich” technique: a piece of constructive criticism sandwiched between two pieces of positive feedback.

## Record and Reflect:

Have students reflect on the following:

- ▶ For each team member, write two points of positive feedback or praise and one point of critique or area of improvement as feedback.
- ▶ What do you think others appreciate about you?
- ▶ What is an area of improvement for yourself that you know you need to work on?
- ▶ How can you pro-actively share your areas of improvement with your team members? How will you show that you understand and that you know how to ask for help and/or make improvements?
- ▶ Have students practice the feedback sandwich technique by sharing the feedback sandwich with each member of their group. Then have the teams meet to discuss how they can work together on the areas identified as the middle of the sandwich.

## Record and Reflect:

As a wrap up to this activity, hold a conversation with the class about conflict mediation and the effectiveness of timely feedback. Ask students/teams to respond to the following:

- ▶ What overarching lessons did you learn through this activity? (Students should talk about why this process worked, how they felt about the overall approach rather than about the specific feedback they gave and received)
- ▶ How can you proactively apply these lessons to the rest of your project and teamwork?
- ▶ How can you ensure you are more thoughtful and reflective of your personal contributions to a situation and/or the solution?