Conflict is inevitable in any interpersonal relationship or among members of any group. A disagreement between two or more members of an organization can cause stress on the organization as well as individuals.

Members may choose to leave the organization rather than face the unpleasant situations created by conflict. Conflicts should be addressed as soon as they arise. The first step to resolve a conflict is to confront the individual(s) involved and discuss the issue(s). Attitude can play a major role in the outcome of the confrontation, and assuming a win-win, no lose situation will help in creating a positive outcome. When a conflict occurs it is often assumed one person’s needs must win over another’s — causing one person to win and another to lose. In approaching the conflict with a win-win attitude, both party’s needs are being acknowledged and compromise becomes a possibility.

Confrontation

When confronting someone, a three-part message must be communicated. The person’s behavior, it’s effects, and how you feel all must be communicated. In identifying the behavior, you are taking the emphasis away from the person and concentrating on their actions.

Mediation

If a conflict is not handled early and evolves, a neutral mediator may be used to intervene and reduce the conflict. In mediation, each party would present their arguments, question the other side, generate options, and select a solution to which both parties can agree.

What is a mediator?

- unbiased
- directive
- a good listener
- a resourceful person
- thorough

The steps necessary for a successful mediation are:

1. State your purpose
2. Listen to each side
3. Allow questions
4. Point out the problem
5. Brainstorm solutions
6. Make an agreement
7. Follow-up
There are several Styles of Conflict Management that people use. You must determine your style as well as the style that is best used for dealing with your group.

Competing

An individual pursues his or her own concerns at the other person’s expense, using whatever power seems appropriate to win one’s own position. Competing might even mean standing up for your rights, defending a position which you believe to be correct, or simply trying to win.

Accommodating

The opposite of competing. An individual neglects his or her own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person. Accommodating might take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person’s order when one would prefer not to, or yielding to another person’s point of view.

Avoiding

The individual does not pursue his or her own concerns or those of the other person. He or she simply does not address the conflict. Avoiding includes: diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing the issue, or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation.

Compromising

Find a mutually acceptable solution which partially satisfies both parties. Compromising might mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position.

Collaborating

An attempt to work with the other person to find some solution which fully satisfies the concerns of both persons. Collaborating identifies the underlying concerns of the two individuals and to find an alternative which meets both sets of concerns. This is clearly the most effective approach of conflict management. It leads to mutual respect and satisfaction as both sides win.

When a conflict arises in your organization, remember:

- stay calm and neutral
- attempt to keep members focused on pertinent issues
- be fair
- listen
- propose a solution that will satisfy as many people as possible