

March 1, 2002

EAP News #95

## Conflict Resolution At Work and At Home

Maybe it was a misunderstanding with a family member, or friend, or co-worker. Perhaps you just didn't hear what the other person said. Maybe you expected something to happen that didn't. Whatever the cause, you've experienced conflict.

The next time you face a conflict at work or at home try using the following steps to resolve it. Examples of two conflict resolution cases (one between an employee and supervisor, another between a parent and teenager) follow.

**Step 1. Affirm your respect for the other person.** We sometimes try to handle conflicts through put downs or by arguing against the person instead of against the conflict. Neither way works because getting personal puts the other person on defensive.

Instead begin by affirming your respect for the other person. Say something good about the person or how much you value his/her relationship.

**Employee:** *As my supervisor, you've always been fair with me. I appreciate that, and it's one of the reasons I've worked here so long.*

**Parent:** *You're special to me, and I trust you enough to know that you're making good decisions for yourself.*

**Step 2. State the problem.** State what happened or what you saw or heard and how it affected you. Use 'I' statements; 'you' statements are often negative or personal and may only escalate the situation.

**Employee:** *"But I was offended by the comment you made about me at the staff meeting yesterday. I'm not usually sensitive to those kinds of remarks, but I really felt the comment was unfair."*

**Parent:** *"But I asked you to be home by 11 last night and you didn't come home until 12:30. I was worried and I didn't have a way to reach you."*

**Step 3. Let the other person clarify what you said.** So that you're not misunderstood – which would only lead to further conflict – give the person the chance to restate the conflict using his/her own words.

**Supervisor:** *"I remember what I said and I recall the look on your face after I said it. All of us were joking around, but I understand you were hurt by my remark."*

**Teen:** *"You were worried. It was late and you hadn't hear from me."*

**Step 4. Accept responsibility.** Each person should then acknowledge how the conflict affected the other person and take responsibility for the role he/she played in the conflict. This ensures that both parties are on equal terms and helps both parties to view the conflict as a third party.

**Employee:** *"I probably shouldn't be as sensitive. But I had a bad day yesterday, and the comment only made it worse"* **Supervisor:** *"I know I go overboard sometimes. I'm sorry that what I said offended you"*

**Parent:** *"I know you can take care of yourself, and I trust you."* **Teen:** *"I don't want you t worry. I should have called."*

**Step 5: Commit to improve.** Finally, both parties should honestly state what they're willing to do to prevent the conflict from happening again.

**Employee:** *"I'll speak up the next time someone's personal business becomes and office joke."*

**Supervisor:** *"I won't do it again, and I'll be sensitive to what others say so that they don't make the same mistake."*

**Parent:** *"Here are some quarters and tape. Tape them to your glove box. The next time you're late, find a pay phone and call. If it happens again, we'll have to restrict your use of the car."* **Teen:** *"I promise I'll call right before I come home. That way, you'll know I'm on my way."*

### Water Down Your Diet

One of the reasons it is important for you to drink water if you are trying to lose weight is that when you are slightly dehydrated, your resting metabolic rate (the number of calories you burn at rest) decreases by 2%. Since you burn most calories each day while you're at rest, even a small amount can make a big difference.

## EAP NEWSLETTER

### Don't Deny the BIG Problems

He may not cook as much as you' like him too. She may forget where she placed her keys or purse several times a month. He may not like the same movies you do.

Call them 'pet peeves,' every love relationship has its little obstacles. Because these issues are so small, they're easy to forget and forgive. We deny their impact on us because if we made too big a deal out of them, they might become big problems and jeopardize the relationship. Tolerance – not letting something get to you – is part of love.

But denying the big problems – for example, his/her alcohol or other drug use, violent temper, or frequent episodes of depression – does no one any good. The reasons why we don't let the little stuff get to us also apply to the big problems – we don't want to jeopardize the relationship; we're certain it's just a phase; we remember how great things were when the relationship first started. But mental health and substance abuse problems are best handled by trained professionals. Left untreated, such problems may get worse. Someone's life may be at stake.

If substance abuse or a mental health problem in your relationship makes you uncomfortable, contact the employee assistance program where you work. As far as relationships go, we can live with the little stuff, but the big problems we can live without.

### Stress Assessment

How well do you manage your stresses? How committed are you to your work and life? Are you a risk taker? This quiz is a quick measure of your ability to resist stress through your use of these skills.

Score 0 if the statement is definitely not true for you; 1 if it is usually not true; 2 if it is somewhat true; and 3 if it is definitely true.

1. When I work hard, it makes a difference.
2. Getting out of bed in the morning is easy.
3. I have the freedom I want and need.
4. At times I've sacrificed for an exciting opportunity.
5. Sticking to my routine is not important to me.
6. I vote because I think it makes a difference.
7. You make your own lucky breaks.

8. I agree with the goals of my boss and my company.
9. I've been "lucky in love" because I try to be a loving person.
10. I believe I get what I give. But I don't "keep score".
11. It's important for me to try new things.
12. Free time is a gift I really enjoy
13. I work hard, and I'm paid fairly
14. My family is a great pleasure to me.
15. I speak up for what I believe in.

Add your scores for #1,6,7,9,13. This is your stress management score. The higher it is, the more control you feel you have over your own life, and the better you are able to manage your stresses.

Total \_\_\_\_\_

Add your scores for #2,3,8,10,14. This is your commitment score. The higher it is, the more committed to and enjoy your life.

Total \_\_\_\_\_

Add your scores for #4,5,11,12,15. This is your risk score. The higher it is, the more willing you are to take risks.

Total \_\_\_\_\_

Add all three scores together. This is your stress-resistance score.

**TOTAL** \_\_\_\_\_

If you score **35 or above**: You are very resistant to stress, your attitudes help you – congratulations! **27-34**: You are somewhat resistant but could be more so; look at each item, and choose a few to work on. **18 to 26**: You need to look at your habits and attitudes to improve your resistance to stress; go through the statement above, and pick one to improve each month. **Under 18**: If stress gets serious, you could be in trouble; take time now to change your habits and attitudes, you may want to ask a professional counselor for ways to feel more positive about yourself.

**HBA is your 24-hour employee assistance program. Eligible employees and family members may call for confidential assistance with personal, legal, childcare, financial, alcohol/drug and other problems. HBA has identified a variety of community resources and self help associations. Also available is a panel of professional counselors and hospitals that have agreed to provide free or low cost counseling and treatment services to persons who have been referred by Human Behavior Associates. Dial 1-800-937-7770 for information or assistance.**