MODULE 6: COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

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OUTLINE FOR THIS MODULE

- Conflict Resolution Skills
- Professional Communication Skills
- Review and Assessment
- Service Learning

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REVIEW

- What did we learn during our last session?
- What stands out from the first three modules?
- What has been reinforced through your Service Learning experiences?

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CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define the terms conflict and conflict resolution.
- Identify common sources of conflict in the workplace.
- Discuss the importance of understanding personal and cultural conflict styles and become more familiar with your own conflict style.
- Discuss how power and anger can affect conflict resolution.
- Implement steps to take to handle your own anger professionally and to de-escalate the anger of others.
- Negotiate a common framework and process for resolving conflict and explain why this is so important.
- Apply essential listening skills during conflict and discuss their importance for conflict resolution.
- Explore and apply a conflict resolution model that you can adapt to your situation.

WORDS TO KNOW

- Mediation

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GROUP ACTIVITY 13.2
REFLECTION ABOUT CONFLICT

UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT

Conflict: "A disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns."

- Destructive conflict: Diverts energy from more important issues, polarizes groups, results in bias, harms the quality of services.
- Constructive conflict: Promotes new understandings, reduces stress, enhances working relationships, results in better-quality services.

UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT

Destructive
- Diverts energy from more important tasks.
- Deepens differences in values.
- Polarizes groups so cooperation is reduced.
- Results in bias or discrimination.
- Harms the quality of services provided to clients and community.

Constructive
- Promotes new understandings of self, others and working relationships.
- Creates possibilities for positive change and transformation.
- Enhances working relationships and the cohesiveness of work teams.
- Reduces stress.
- Results in better-quality services for clients and communities.

COMMON SOURCES OF WORKPLACE CONFLICT

- Insufficient resources.
- Conflicting personalities.
- Delegation of power.
- Conflicting values.
- Lack of recognition for one's contributions.
- Cultural misunderstandings.
- Poor leadership and unpredictable policies.
- Conflicting pressures.
- Perceived threat to one's identity.
- Disagreements over roles and responsibilities.

SIGNS OR SYMPTOMS OF CONFLICT

- Absenteeism.
- Turnover.
- Accidents.
- Poor teamwork.
- "Us vs. Them."
- Open bickering.
- Low productivity.
- Excessive competition.
- Prejudice (homophobia, sexism, racism).
- Gossip.
- Aggression or hostility.
- Blaming.
- High stress.
- Sabotage.
- Poor job satisfaction.
- Low creativity.
- Tardiness.
- Alcoholism or substance abuse.

LEVELS OF CONFLICT

- Discomfort.
- Incidents.
- Misunderstandings.
- Tension.
- Crisis.

LEVELS OF CONFLICT

Discomfort:

A feeling that something isn't right, but not quite sure, even if something hasn't been said.

- Do you ever feel uncomfortable about a situation but are not quite sure why? This could be internal conflict.

LEVELS OF CONFLICT

Incidents:

Short, sharp exchange without any lasting internal reaction.

- Has something occurred between you and someone else that has left you upset, irritated or with a result you did not want?

LEVELS OF CONFLICT

Misunderstandings:

Motives and facts are often confused or misperceived.

- Do your thoughts keep returning frequently to the problem?

LEVELS OF CONFLICT

Tension:

Relationships are affected by negative attitudes and fixed opinions.

- Has the way you feel about and regard the other person significantly changed for the worse?
- Is the relationship a source of constant worry and concern?

LEVELS OF CONFLICT

Crisis:

Behavior is affected. Normal functioning becomes difficult, extreme gestures are contemplated or acted on.

- Are you dealing with a major event like a breakdown of a relationship, leaving a job or violence?

COMMON SOURCES OF CONFLICT FOR CLIENTS

- Conflicts over resources.
- Conflicts over psychological needs.
- Conflicts involving values and identity.

RESPONSES TO CONFLICT

Culture influences how we understand, communicate and react to conflict.

Common conflict styles:
- Avoiding.
- Accommodating.
- Competing.
- Compromising.
- Collaborating.

COMMON RESPONSES

Your conflict style is developed by:
- Socio-economic status.
- Childhood messages received about conflict.
- Conflict resolution, coaching, support, education, training.
- Attitudes and behaviors seen in media.

COMMON RESPONSES

Your conflict style is developed by:
- Personally and temperament.
- Personal history with discrimination, conflict and trauma.
- Behaviors modeled by parents, teachers and friends.
- Culture, race, ethnicity and religious influences.
- Gender and sexuality roles.

THE CHALLENGE OF ANGER

How to handle anger:

- **Be aware**: become aware of what triggers your anger.
- **Stop**: take time away, breathe, walk, cool down.
- **Think**: about the consequences of taking action.
- **Choose**: behaviors that stay inbound, are safe and do not hurt you and others.
- **Understand**: the issue from the other persons point of view.
- **Take action**: do at least one thing that reduces the potential for harm and makes a positive contribution toward improving the situation.

DE-ESCALATING THE ANGER OF OTHERS

- Offer reassurance.
- Express your desire to understand the other party.
- Assert your own needs and agency policies.
- Try not to interrupt or correct the person.
- Safety should be most important.
- Disengage if you unable to communicate professionally.

APPROACHES TO HANDLING CONFLICT ON THE JOB

- Prevention.
- Early intervention.
- Third-party intervention.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Changing the way we view conflict.

- Moving from certainty to curiosity.
- Disentangling intent from impact.
- Distinguishing blame from contribution.

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COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Plan the strategy to resolve the conflict before you talk about the conflict. Consider these guidelines:

- Express your commitment to resolving the conflict.
- Express your desire for a positive working relationship.
- Acknowledge the values of the other party.
- Express your desire to listen and learn.
- Negotiate common ground rules.
- Focus on what contributed to the conflict — not blame.
- Agree to take a break if the conflict escalates.
- Agree to focus on how you can improve the situation.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Active listening skills:

- Encourage: "Will you tell me more about it?"
- Clarify: "Did this happen before your meeting?"
- Restate: "If I hear you right, you are saying... Is that right?"
- Reflect: "What I'm hearing is that you felt frustrated.."
- Summarize: "Overall, what I'm hearing you say is..."
- Validate: "I appreciate that you took a risk and shared this with me."
- "I" messages: "I feel..." "When you..."

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COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The power of the apology:

- "I hear that when I was late, it felt disrespectful to you. I want you to know that I really did try my best, and I am sorry that I was late."
- "I wish I had remembered to invite you to the meeting. I apologize. I'll make sure to put you on the email list as soon as I get back to the office."
- "I didn't mean to insult you. I apologize. I truly respect you and enjoy working with you."

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MODELS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

1. Investigate and plan.
2. Create a safe space.
3. Investigate the conflict issues together.
4. Explore solutions: is there the possibility for a win-win solution?
5. Follow-up and evaluation.

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GROUP ACTIVITY 13.3
SWITCHING THE FRAME
FOR VIEWING CONFLICT
OR
GROUP ACTIVITY 13.5
DEVELOPING A COMMON FRAMEWORK
FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify and practice verbal and written communication skills relevant for CHWs, including how to provide and receive constructive feedback in a professional manner.
- Discuss the challenge of establishing healthy professional boundaries and making sound choices regarding disclosure of personal information.

GROUP ACTIVITY 14.1
CODE SWITCHING

WORDS TO KNOW

- Corrective feedback
- Supportive feedback

BODY LANGUAGE

- Do you ask clarifying questions?
- How does your voice sound?
- Do you tell people what to do?
- How close do you sit to others?
- Do you make eye contact?
- Do you cross your arms, frown or roll your eyes?

TALKING ON THE PHONE

- Start with a greeting.
- Identify yourself and your agency.
- State the reason for your call and ask if it's a good time to talk.
- Write down key information.
- Ask for and schedule a follow-up call.
- End with a thank you and goodbye.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

- What do you want to say?
- Put yourself in your reader's place.
- Use a simple structure.
- Use clear language.
- Use spell-check.

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EMAIL TIPS

- Subject line is like a headline.
- Use "reply all" only when needed.
- Don't hit send when you're mad.

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FEEDBACK

Most professional settings provide feedback in an annual performance review.

- Supportive feedback reinforces current behavior by identifying what is being done well.
- Corrective feedback indicates desired changes in behavior by explaining what didn't work or needs improvement.

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FEEDBACK

Receiving Feedback

- Actively listen.
- Ask questions.
- Paraphrase.
- Reflect.
- Try not to be defensive.
- Express appreciation.

Giving Feedback

- "Love sandwich" approach.
- Speak in a respectful tone.
- Provide realistic suggestions.
- Invite questions.
- Be detailed and specific.

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COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR

- Express your concerns.
- Accept limitations.
- Speak directly with your supervisor (don't go above their heads).
- Weigh your options.

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BOUNDARIES AT WORK

Consider your motivation and the potential consequences before you disclose personal information with clients or coworkers.

- Remember, you are a role model!
- If you have gone through challenges similar to what your clients face, it may help them.

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GROUP ACTIVITY 14.2
PROVIDING AND RECEIVING
CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

GROUP ACTIVITY 14.3, PART 1
DEVELOPING A PROFESSIONAL RESUME

REVIEW – WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED TODAY?

SERVICE LEARNING