Conflict Management

Conflict Management

Perspectives for the Canadian Workplace

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- Andrew Stracuzzi – *Faculty Lead, Instructional Design, and Quality Assurance*
- Shauna Roch & Jennifer Ayers – *Project Coordination*
- Robert Armstrong – *Graphic Design*
- Davandra Earle – *Ancillary Developer*

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Author's Preface

Introduction to Conflict Management

Welcome!

This Open Educational Resource (OER) is a custom publication for students enrolled in PSYC-6006: Conflict Management. PSYC-6006 is a requirement for the Advanced Communication for Professionals post-graduate certificate at Fanshawe College.

Many students reading the book will have previously taken PSYC-6005: Communication Psychology and will have read the companion OER, Psychology, Communication and the Canadian Workplace. If you did not take PSYC-6005: Communication Psychology, you may find it helpful to look at this resource for a general introduction to many of the topics that we will be discussing in this book.

The course learning objectives for PSYC-6006 are as follows:

1. **Identify** factors that contribute to conflict in the workplace.
2. **Name** factors that lead to positive professional identity and productive group dynamics.
3. **Describe** different conflict styles.
4. **Discuss** their own interpersonal competencies and areas in need of improvement regarding conflict management in the workplace.
5. **Evaluate** the strengths and weaknesses of conflict management styles and strategies.
6. **Analyze** hypothetical/case study conflict scenarios for the workplace.
7. **Implement** strategies to manage/resolve conflict in the workplace.
8. **Analyze** workplace conflict prevention and management policies.

These learning objectives were formed in consultation with local employers and stakeholders in London, ON. Employers indicated that it was desirable for graduates entering the workforce to have more explicit training in conflict management. While employees do not usually need to be trained negotiators or legal experts, it is helpful for students to have the skills and knowledge to navigate both the mundane occurrences of conflict in the workplace (e.g., the coworker with a difficult personality) and more serious incidences of conflict at work (e.g., bullying, harassment, and violence). We will learn a bit about federal and provincial legislation, organizational policies and the formal conflict process. However, the focus will be on the individual, and how each one of us can play a role in making the workplace a safe and functional environment.

Throughout the book, you will be encouraged to engage in critical self-assessment and case studies. These exercises will provide you with the opportunity to assess potential conflict situations, recognize your emotions, communicate assertively, and manage conflict with integrity and professionalism.

Enjoy!

Laura

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I would like to give thanks to all of the authors that allowed me to adapt and re-mix their work under Creative Commons licenses.

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Finally, thanks to my students – past, present, and future. You're the best! It's been a pleasure to create this resource for you. I hope that you enjoy it!

Introduction: Chapter Overview

Chapter Overview

Below is a high-level overview of the topics and themes discussed in this book.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Conflict

In this chapter, we will introduce some key elements to understanding conflict. In addition, we'll recognize how conflict can be differentiated from disputes, competitions, and interpersonal, explain different levels at which conflict can occur, and discuss the potential benefits and costs of conflict in the workplace. We'll also explore why understanding conflict is important for your career and workplace success.

Go to Chapter 1

Chapter 2: Conflict Resolution, Negotiations, and Labour Relations

In this chapter, we will learn about the nature of the conflict process and common approaches to conflict. In addition, we will explore the process of negotiation, third-party negotiators, and labour relations between labour unions and management.

Go to Chapter 2

Chapter 3: Organizational Culture and Policies

In this chapter, we will examine organizational culture – it's characteristics, how it's created, and strategies used to maintain or change culture. We will discuss several popular frameworks for assessing organizational culture. Finally, we will examine formalized codes, discipline, and termination and their role in maintaining expected standards of behaviour.

Go to Chapter 3

Chapter 4: Power and Politics

In this chapter, we will examine organizational culture as it relates to conflict. Power and politics are the lifeblood of most organizations. Most organizations are composed of coalitions and alliances of different parties that continually compete for available resources. As a result, informed employees need to understand power dynamics and their impact on conflict.

Go to Chapter 4

Chapter 5: Interpersonal Relationships and Group Dynamics

In this chapter, we will explore the functions and types of relationships that exist in organizations between supervisors, subordinates, and coworkers in interpersonal and group settings.

Go to Chapter 5

Chapter 6: Values, Perceptions and Attributions

In this chapter, we will turn our attention away from organizational level factors and begin to explore the influence of our own behaviours and perceptions on conflict. We will start with how our personal values guide our behaviours. Next, we will review of the process of perception – how we select, organize and interpret information. We will discuss how we assign meaning to the behaviour of ourselves and others by making attributions. Finally, we will review perception checking and other considerations for making perceptions during conflict.

Go to Chapter 6

Chapter 7: Emotions

In this chapter, we will begin to considering the role of affect on behaviour, discussing the importance of emotional intelligence. Then we will consider how emotions and stress influence our mental and physical health. We will discuss how the experience of long-term stress causes illness and impacts behaviours at work. We will explore individual and organizational strategies for managing stress. Finally, we will turn our attention to research on positive thinking and what has been learned about the beneficial health effects of more positive emotions.

Go to Chapter 7

Chapter 8: Motivation

In this chapter, we will examine how our needs and goals can lead to conflict. In particular, we will examine two popular theories of motivation (Maslow's hierarchy of needs and equity theory) as they relate to conflict. We will also explore how organizational strategies like job enrichment and communication strategies can be used to create an environment that fills an employees needs for safety, belonging, and esteem. Next, we will contrast strategies for asserting our needs from passivity to aggression and explore the process of asserting our needs in a way that honours our own boundaries while also respecting the other person. Finally, we will explore two additional frameworks that can help us to understand our goals and needs in conflict situations.

Go to Chapter 8

Chapter 9: Personality and Conflict Styles

In this chapter, we will examine personality and the how the stable traits impact our interactions with others. We will focus on the Big 5 trait theory of personality and how our personality traits can foster positive (or negative) interpersonal interactions during conflict. We will also examine cognitive and personal-social dimensions of the self and how these qualities impact our relationships. Using Harden Fritz's typologies, we will examine how deviant workplace behaviours can become stable patterns of interactions. Finally, we will explore an alternative to the Thomas-Kilmann model – the ABC styles of conflict management.

Go to Chapter 9

Chapter 10: Communication in Conflict

In this chapter, we will explore the process of communication (written, verbal, and nonverbal) within organizations. We will unpack various barriers to effective communication and how our self-esteem, communication dispositions and relational dispositions impact how we communicate with others. We will differentiate between hearing and listening and the steps involved in the listening process. We will summarize four different listening styles and explore factors that make listening a challenge. In addition, we will identify guidelines for giving and receiving feedback. Finally, we will examine communication behaviours during conflict and strategies for communicating effectively during conflict.

Go to Chapter 10

New to this Version

Changes to this version of the book include:

- Expanded explanation of the Thomas-Kilmann conflict styles in Chapter 2.
- An H5P interactive on organizational culture was added to Chapter 3.
- Callout boxes with “Krista’s Book Club” contain recommendations for four best-seller books that students can seek out if they wish to learn more about a topic.
- Chapter 4 has expanded to include research on knowledge hierarchies, worker precarity, and power differentials in conflict.
- Chapter 7 contains an expanded section on stress and burnout.
- Chapter 9 includes a discussion of strategies for dealing with a coworker who is narcissistic.
- Small changes to correct spelling and grammar were performed throughout the resource.

Appendices

This section contains a list of case studies and self-assessment activities cross-referenced to each chapter where they apply.

Go to Appendix A: Case Studies

Go to Appendix B: Self-Assessments

Glossary of Key Terms

This section contains a list of key terms that appear throughout the book.

Go to Glossary

Ancillary Resources

This section contains a full list of H5P interactives, slide decks for each chapter, and links to APA referencing resources.

Go to Ancillary Resources

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO CONFLICT

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

- Define conflict.
- Describe the key elements of conflict.
- Recognize how conflict can be differentiated from disputes, competitions, and interpersonal violence.
- Identify three views to understanding conflict in the workplace.
- Explain different levels at which conflict can occur.
- Review common sources of conflict in the workplace.
- Discuss the potential benefits and costs of conflict in the workplace.
- Recognize the importance of conflict management skills for success in your personal and professional relationships.

Who do you have the most conflict with right now? Your answer to this question probably depends on the various contexts in your life. If you still live at home with a parent or parents, you may have daily conflicts with your family as you try to balance your autonomy, or desire for independence, with the practicalities of living under your family's roof. If you've recently moved away to go to college, you may be negotiating roommate conflicts as you adjust to living with someone you may not know at all. You probably also have experiences managing conflict in romantic relationships, friendships, and in the workplace. In this chapter, we will introduce some introductory concepts and explore why understanding conflict is important for your career success.

1.1 Conflict Defined

There are many different definitions of conflict existing in the literature. For our purposes,

> **Conflict** occurs in interactions in which there are real or perceived incompatible goals, scare resources, or opposing viewpoints.

Conflict can vary in severity from mild to severe and can be expressed verbally or nonverbally along a continuum ranging from a nearly imperceptible cold shoulder to a very obvious blowout.

Elements of Conflict

There are six elements to a conflict described by Rice (2006). The are:

1. **Conflict is inevitable.** Unless there is a way that we could be cloned or exactly the same as everyone else, there WILL be disagreements.
2. **Conflict by itself is neither good nor bad; it is what happens that has good or bad outcomes.** In Chinese writing, the characters for the word conflict are actually the characters for two other words–danger and opportunity. In essence, the danger of unresolved or ineffectively resolved conflict can lead to bad outcomes, and the opportunity of working through a conflict can lead to good outcomes.
3. **Conflict is a process (rather than a moment in time)**. We each make choices every time we respond to the other person in a conflict, and those choices dictate what happens next.
4. **Conflict consumes energy, but so does NOT dealing with conflict.** Most of us are familiar with that knot-in-the-stomach feeling that goes along with avoiding someone with whom one has an unresolved conflict.
5. **Conflict has elements of both content and feeling/relationships.** A conflict is rarely just about what it is about (content); it usually has more to do with the feelings and state of the relationship underneath. For example, if two people repetitively argue about who takes out the trash, the argument is probably really about feeling respected and validated, rather than the garbage!
6. **Finally, one has a choice in conflict to be proactive or reactive**—and the more non-violent one chooses to be, the more proactive a person will become. The participant will learn to act when he/she senses conflict, so that it can be resolved before it festers and grows.

Other Key Terms

Some people use the terms conflict, competition, dispute, and violence interchangeably. While these concepts are similar, they aren't exactly the same. We will define each of these terms to ensure that we have a shared understanding of how they will be used in this book:

Dispute is a term for a disagreement between parties. Typically, a dispute is adversarial in nature. While conflict can be hostile, it isn't always . Dispute also sometimes carries with it a legal connotation. We will briefly discuss labour relations later in this book.

Competition is a rivalry between two groups or two individuals over an outcome that they both seek. In a competition there is a winner and a loser. Parties involved in a conflict may or may not view the situation as a competition for resources. Ideally, parties in a conflict will work together rather than compete.

The term **interpersonal violence** is also not synonymous with conflict. Although some conflict situations escalate to include acts of aggression and hostility, interpersonal violence involves acts of aggression such as an intent to harm or actual physical or psychological harm to another or their property. Ideally, conflict will be productive, respectful, and non-violent.

All of these terms – conflict, dispute, competition, and violence – are all distinct and have important role to play in framing our discussion of conflict.

Let's Review

Review the following scenarios and decided whether it's an example of a dispute, a competition or interpersonal virulence.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/conflictmanagement/?p=5#h5p-1

Three Views of Workplace Conflict

There has been plenty of conflict over how conflict is viewed in the workplace over the years. In this section, we will discuss the traditional view, the human relations view, and the interactionist view.

Traditional View

Early in our pursuit of management study, conflict was thought to be a dysfunctional outcome, a result of poor communication and lack of trust between co-workers. Conflict was associated with words like violence and destruction, and people were encouraged to avoid it at all costs.

This was the case all the way up until the 1940s, and, if you think about it, it goes right along with what we thought we knew about what motivated people, how they worked together and the structure and supervision we thought we needed to provide to ensure productivity. Because we viewed all conflict as bad, we looked to eradicate it, usually by addressing it with the person causing it. Once addressed, group and organization would become more productive again. While many of us still take the traditional view that conflict is bad and we need to get rid of it, evidence today tells us that's not the case.

The Human Relations View

Since the late 1940s, our studies of organizational behavior have indicated that conflict isn't so thoroughly bad. We came to view it as a natural occurrence in groups, teams and organizations. The **human relations view** suggested that, because conflict was inevitable, we should learn to embrace it. But they were just starting to realize, with this point of view, that conflict might benefit a group's performance. These views of dominated conflict theory from the late 1940s through the mid-1970s.

The Interactionist View

In the **interactionist view of conflict**, we went from accepting that conflict would exist and dealing with it to an understanding that a work group that was completely harmonious and cooperative was prone to becoming static and non-responsive to needs for change and innovation. This view encourages managers to maintain a minimal level of conflict, a level that was enough to keep the group creative and moving forward. The interactionist view is still viable today, so it's the view we're going to take from here on as we discuss conflict. We know that all conflict is both good and bad, appropriate and inappropriate, and how we rate conflict is going to depend on the type of conflict.

Adapted Works

1.2 Levels and Types of Conflict

Levels of Conflict

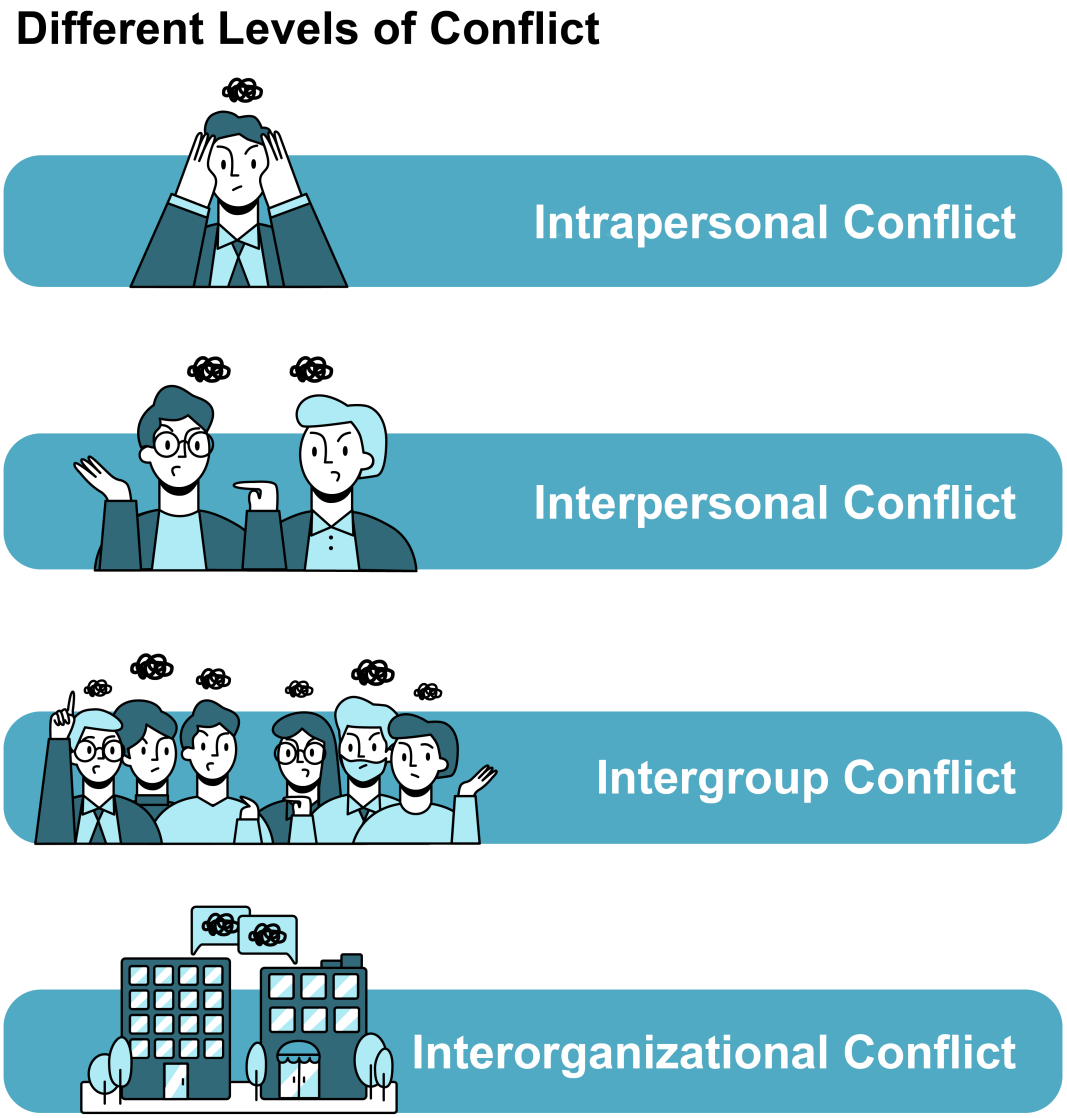

Figure 1.1 Different Levels of Conflict. Image: Fanshawe College. Original Image, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. [Click to enlarge].

In addition to different views of conflict, there exist several different levels of conflict. By level

of conflict, we are referring to the number of individuals involved in the conflict. That is, is the conflict within just one person, between two people, between two or more groups, or between two or more organizations? Both the causes of a conflict and the most effective means to resolve it can be affected by level. Four levels can be identified: within an individual (intrapersonal conflict), between two parties (interpersonal conflict), between groups (intergroup conflict), and between organizations (interorganizational conflict).

Intrapersonal Conflict

Intrapersonal conflict arises within a person. In the workplace, this is often the result of competing motivations or roles. We often hear about someone who has an approach-avoidance conflict; that is, they are both attracted to and repelled by the same object. Similarly, a person can be attracted to two equally appealing alternatives, such as two good job offers (approach-approach conflict) or repelled by two equally unpleasant alternatives, such as the threat of being fired if one fails to identify a coworker guilty of breaking company rules (avoidance-avoidance conflict). Intrapersonal conflict can arise because of differences in roles.

A **role conflict** occurs when there are competing demands on our time, energy, and other resources. For example, a conflict may arise if you're the head of one team but also a member of another team. We can also have conflict between our roles at work and those roles that we hold in our personal lives.

Another type of intrapersonal conflict involves **role ambiguity**. Perhaps you've been given the task of finding a trainer for a company's business writing training program. You may feel unsure about what kind of person to hire—a well-known but expensive trainer or a local, unknown but low-priced trainer. If you haven't been given guidelines about what's expected, you may be wrestling with several options.

Interpersonal Conflict

Interpersonal conflict is among individuals such as coworkers, a manager and an employee, or CEOs and their staff. Many companies suffer because of interpersonal conflicts as it results in loss of productivity and employee turnover. According to one estimate, 31.9 percent of CEOs resigned from their jobs because they had conflict with the board of directors (Whitehouse, 2008). Such conflicts often tend to get highly personal because only two parties are involved and each person embodies the opposing position in the conflict. Hence, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the opponent's position and the person. Keeping conflicts centered around ideas rather than individual differences is important in avoiding a conflict escalation. Throughout the book, we will learn more about strategies for dealing with interpersonal conflicts.

Intergroup Conflict

Intergroup conflict is conflict that takes place among different groups and often involves disagreement over goals, values, or resources. Types of groups may include different departments, employee unions, or management in a company or competing companies that supply the same customers. Departments may conflict over budget allocations, unions and management may disagree over work rules, and suppliers may conflict with each other on the quality of parts.

Merging two groups together can lead to friction between the groups—especially if there are scarce resources to be divided among the group. For example, in what has been called "the most difficult and hard-fought labor issue in an airline merger," Canadian Air and Air Canada pilots were locked into years of personal and legal conflict when the two airlines' seniority lists were combined following the merger (Stoykewch, 2003). Seniority is a valuable and scarce resource for pilots, because it helps to determine who flies the newest and biggest planes, who receives the best flight routes, and who is paid the most. In response to the loss of seniority, former Canadian Air pilots picketed at shareholder meetings, threatened to call in sick, and had ongoing conflicts with pilots from Air Canada. The history of past conflicts among organizations and employees makes new deals challenging. Intergroup conflict can be the most complicated form of conflict because of the number of individuals involved. Coalitions can form and result in an "us-against-them" mentality. Here, too, is an opportunity for groups to form insulated ways of thinking and problems solving, thus allowing groupthink to develop and thrive.

Interorganizational Conflict

Finally, we can see **interorganizational conflic**t in disputes between two companies in the same industry (for example, a disagreement between computer manufactures over computer standards), between two companies in different industries or economic sectors (for example, a conflict between real estate interests and environmentalists over land use planning), and even between two or more countries (for example, a trade dispute between the United States and Russia). In each case, both parties inevitably feel the pursuit of their goals is being frustrated by the other party.

Power Differentials in Conflict

The traditional levels of conflict (intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, and intraorganizational) all represent potentially and/or relatively equal entities in terms of power and status. This model can be useful in naming and understanding some common levels of conflict. However, it does not fully capture the complexity, nuance, and power dynamics of some workplace conflict situations. For instance, what happens where there is a conflict between individuals and/or other entities (e.g. organizations) who differ in power, status, and/or authority?

Gladwell (2013) discusses the classic example of conflict despite unequal power differentials in David and Goliath. Nonetheless, conflict—including bullying, harassment, and violence—can be present within the typical hierarchical structures present in most workplaces. For example, conflict can occur between supervisor and subordinate (see section 9.3 on Problem Bosses). This poses unique challenges given the varying degrees of authority and power. Indeed, as Ahmed (2021) puts it, "hierarchies can make handling harassment hard, which is how hierarchies enable harassment" (p. 120).

Types of Conflict

If we are to try to understand conflict, we need to know what type of conflict is present. At least four types of conflict can be identified:

1. **Goal conflict** can occur when one person or group desires a different outcome than others do. This is simply a clash over whose goals are going to be pursued.
2. **Cognitive conflict** can result when one person or group holds ideas or opinions that are inconsistent with those of others. Often cognitive conflicts are rooted in differences in attitudes, beliefs, values, and worldviews, and ideas maybe tied to deeply held culture, politics, and religion. This type of conflict emerges when one person's or group's feelings or emotions (attitudes) are incompatible with those of others.
3. **Affective conflict** is seen in situations where two individuals simply don't get along with each other.
4. **Behavioral conflict** exists when one person or group does something (i.e., behaves in a certain way) that is unacceptable to others. Dressing for work in a way that "offends" others and using profane language are examples of behavioral conflict.

Each of these types of conflict is usually triggered by different factors, and each can lead to very different responses by the individual or group. It is important to note that there are many types of conflict and that not all researchers use this same four-type classification. For example, Dr. Amy Gallo (2015) has characterized conflict as being rooted in relationships, tasks (what to do), process (how to do things), or status. Regardless, when we find ourselves in a conflict situation, it can be helpful to try and take a step back and identify what type of conflict it is. It can also be helpful to acknowledge that what may look like a goal conflict may actually also have components of affective or cognitive conflict.

Adapted Works

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1.3 Common Sources of and Response to Conflict in the Workplace

Common Sources of Conflict in the Workplace

Remember, anything that leads to a disagreement can be a cause of conflict. Although conflict is common to organizations, some organizations have more than others. A number of factors are known to facilitate organizational conflict (Miles, 1980). We'll go over six common sources of workplace conflict. They are summarized in Figure 1.2 below.

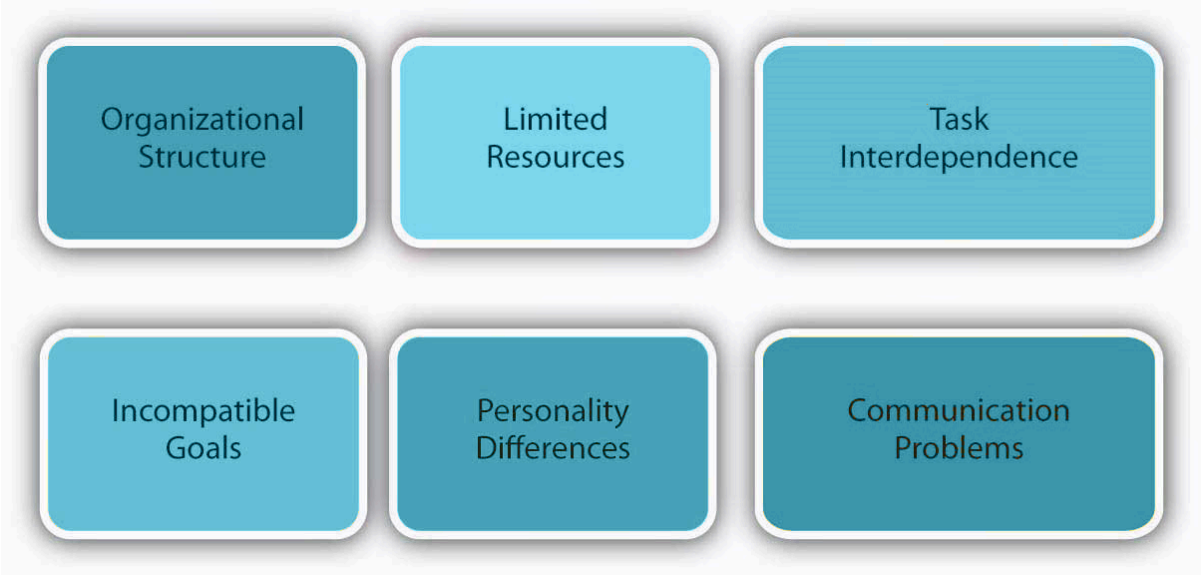

Figure 1.2 Potential Causes of Conflict. Image: Saylor Academy. Human Relations, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

Organizational Structure

Conflict tends to take different forms, depending upon the structure of an organization. For example, if a company uses a matrix structure as its organizational form, it will have decisional conflict built in because the structure specifies that each manager report to two bosses. For example, global company ABB Inc. is organized around a matrix structure based on the dimensions of country and industry. This structure can lead to confusion as the company is divided geographically into 1,200 different units and by industry into 50 different units. Conflict can also emerge from jurisdictional ambiguities—situations where it is unclear exactly where responsibility for something

lies. For example, many organizations use an employee selection procedure in which applicants are evaluated both by the personnel department and by the department in which the applicant would actually work. Because both departments are involved in the hiring process, what happens when one department wants to hire an individual, but the other department does not?

A second factor is status inconsistencies among the parties involved. For example, managers in many organizations have the prerogative to take personal time off during workdays to run errands, and so forth, whereas non-managerial personnel do not. Consider the effects this can have on the non-managers' view of organizational policies and fairness.

Differences in performance criteria and reward systems provide more potential for organizational conflict. This often occurs because of a lack of common performance standards among differing groups within the same organization. For example, production personnel are often rewarded for their efficiency, and this efficiency is facilitated by the long-term production of a few products. Sales departments, on the other hand, are rewarded for their short-term response to market changes—often at the expense of long-term production efficiency. In such situations, conflict arises as each unit attempts to meet its own performance criteria.

Consider This: Organizational Structure

Precarity and Conflict

Given neoliberal tendencies and the erosion of secure employment across many industries, the realities of the workplaces today are such that precarious employment situations are increasingly more common (Woodcock & Graham, 2020). This might resemble short-term contracts and other such contingent 'gig-economy' arrangements that equates to wage and job insecurity (see Woodcock & Graham, 2020). Gig economy work may include delivery work, microwork, online freelancing, or domestic and care work (Woodcock & Graham, 2020). Beyond the gig-economy, precarity is also prevalent in creative industries (Chafe & Kaida, 2020). Further, even professions that might not typically be associated with precarity (such as post-secondary education and library and information science) often rely heavily on contract and part-time workers (see Babb, 2021; Lacey, 2019; Curtis et al., 2016). Given the prevalence across a multitude of sectors, the implications can be numerous and widespread.

Precarity can be bound up with various levels of conflict and other challenges at work and beyond (Chafe & Kaida, 2020; Fan et al., 2019). Lacey (2019) discusses financial insecurity, devaluation of labour, and challenges around mental and physical health. Further, Babb (2021) describes the "sickly sense of insecurity" and the "omni-present low-level sense of dread" that comes along with precarity (p. 3). The job circumstances of precarious employment make it such that speaking out against the organization/institution, discipline, or employer can be quite risky (Ahmed, 2021; Babb, 2021). Moreover, in the workplace, it is not uncommon for precariously employed workers to work alongside permanent

fulltime colleagues who have job-security, higher pay, and benefits (see Curtis, et al., 2016). Yet, the structural disadvantages that come along with precarity can play a significant role in one's ability to engage with conflict even laterally (e.g. it may be harder to be assertive, or to speak up in the first place when there is an issue, etc.). Crucially, precariously employed workers have a greater likelihood of being from equity-deserving groups, which can add additional layers to existing challenges and inequities (Levac & Cowper-Smith, 2016). Thus, consideration of power dynamics in conflict is ever more crucial.

Still, Woodcock and Graham (2020) discuss various challenges that workers face in the gig economy, alongside creative ways workers have organized to push back against poor conditions (e.g. strikes and other coordinated labour actions, undermining surveillance attempts, challenging independent contractor status). Sometimes precarious work, such as online freelancing, is structured in a way that isolates workers from each other; nonetheless, workers find ways to access support, community, and solidarity (e.g. in other online spaces, such as forums or other social media) (Woodcock & Graham, 2020). Further, Ahmed (2021) discusses complaint collectives as a mode of communal agency and resistance. Workers show agency and innovation in adapting to challenges in the workplace landscape; however, how much resilience, vulnerability, and strife should a worker have to demonstrate to have gainful employment?

Questions to Consider

- *What levels of conflict can you identify in this discussion on power differentials and precarity?*
- *What roles and responsibilities do you think employers should play in preventing some of the issues discussed?*

Limited Resources/Common Resource Pool

Another previously discussed factor that contributes to conflict is dependence on common resource pools. Resources such as money, time, and equipment are often scarce (or they are perceived to be scarce). Competition among people or departments for limited resources is a frequent cause for conflict. For example, cutting-edge laptops and gadgets such as the newest iPhone are expensive resources that may be allocated to employees on a need-to-have basis in some companies. When a group of employees have access to such resources while others do not, conflict may arise among employees or between employees and management. While technical employees may feel that these devices are crucial to their productivity, employees with customer contact such as sales representatives may make the point that these devices are important for them to make a good impression to clients. Because important resources are often limited, this is one source of conflict many companies have to live with. When resources are limited, a zero-sum game exists in which someone wins and, invariably, someone loses.

Task Interdependence

Another cause of conflict is task interdependence; that is, when accomplishment of your goal

requires reliance on others to perform their tasks the greater the extent of task interdependence among individuals or groups (that is, the more they have to work together or collaborate to accomplish a goal), the greater the likelihood of conflict if different expectations or goals exist among entities, in part because the interdependence makes avoiding the conflict more difficult. This occurs in part because high task interdependency heightens the intensity of relationships. Hence, a small disagreement can very quickly get blown up into a major issue.

For example, if you're tasked with creating advertising for your product, you're dependent on the creative team to design the words and layout, the photographer or videographer to create the visuals, the media buyer to purchase the advertising space, and so on. The completion of your goal (airing or publishing your ad) is dependent on others.

Incompatible Goals

Sometimes conflict arises when two parties think that their goals are mutually exclusive. Within an organization, incompatible goals often arise because of the different ways department managers are compensated. For example, a sales manager's bonus may be tied to how many sales are made for the company. As a result, the individual might be tempted to offer customers "freebies" such as expedited delivery in order to make the sale. In contrast, a transportation manager's compensation may be based on how much money the company saves on transit. In this case, the goal might be to eliminate expedited delivery because it adds expense. The two will butt heads until the company resolves the conflict by changing the compensation scheme.

Personality Differences

Personality differences among coworkers are common. By understanding some fundamental differences among the way people think and act, we can better understand how others see the world. Knowing that these differences are natural and normal lets us anticipate and mitigate interpersonal conflict – it's often not about "you" but simply a different way of seeing and behaving. For example, Type A individuals have been found to have more conflicts with their coworkers than Type B individuals.

In addition to personality, a variety of individual differences, such as personal abilities, traits, and skills, can influence in no small way the nature of interpersonal relations. Individual dominance, aggressiveness, authoritarianism, and tolerance for ambiguity all seem to influence how an individual deals with potential conflict. Indeed, such characteristics may determine whether or not conflict is created at all.

Communication Problems

Various communication problems or ambiguities in the communication process can create a breeding ground for conflict. When one person misunderstands a message or when information is withheld, the person often responds with frustration and anger. Sometimes conflict arises simply out of a small, unintentional communication problem, such as lost emails or dealing with people who don't return phone calls. Giving feedback is also a case in which the best intentions can quickly escalate into a conflict situation.

Now that we've identified common sources of conflict, let's turn our attention to responses to conflict.

Responses to Conflict

There are many possible responses to conflict that we will explore throughout this book. Some of these strategies try to end the conflict, **conflict resolution,** while other strategies merely seek to minimize the negative effects of a conflict on a on team performance, **conflict management.** We will learn more about resolution and conflict management strategies throughout this book, the focus will be on conflict management strategies and how we, as individuals, can make positive contributions to the workplace by managing our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

There are a variety of individual responses to conflict that you may see as a team member. Some people take the constructive and thoughtful path when conflicts arise, while others may jump immediately to destructive behaviors. In *Managing Conflict Dynamics: A Practical Approach*, Capobianco et al. (2005) recognized that there are both constructive and destructive responses to conflict, as well as active and passive responses that we need to recognize. In the event of conflict, the goal is to have a constructive response in order to encourage dialogue, learning, and resolution (Capobianco et al., 2005). Responses such as perspective taking, creating solutions, expressing emotions, and reaching out are considered active and constructive responses to conflict. Reflective thinking, delay responding, and adapting are considered passive and constructive responses to conflict. See Figure 1.3 for a visual of the constructive responses, as well as the destructive responses, to conflict.

	Constructive	Destructive
Active	• Perspective taking • Creating solutions • Expressing emotions • Reaching out	• Winning • Displaying anger • Demeaning others • Retaliating
Passive	• Reflective thinking • Delay responding • Adapting	• Avoiding • Yielding • Hiding emotions • Self-criticizing

Figure 1.3 Responses to Conflict. Image: Rice University & OpenStax, Principles of Management, CC BY 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

Let's Review

In summary, conflict is never easy for an individual or a team to navigate through, but it can and should be done. Illuminating the team about areas of conflict and differing perspectives can have a very positive impact on the growth and future performance of the team, and it should be managed constructively.

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1.4 Benefits and Challenges of Conflict

Benefits and Challenges of Conflict

As we discussed with the traditional view of conflict, many people often assume that all conflict is necessarily bad and should be eliminated or avoided at all costs. On the contrary, there are some circumstances in which a moderate amount of conflict can be helpful a bring energy and focus to a task. For instance, conflict can lead to the search for new ideas and new mechanisms as solutions to organizational problems. It can also facilitate employee motivation in cases where employees feel a need to excel and, as a result, push themselves in order to meet performance objectives.

Conflict can at times help individuals and group members grow, develop self-identities, and to create change and stability (Coser, 1956). Conflict can stimulate the conversations of important issues and spur change. Within a group, productive conflict can lead to consensus and group cohesiveness.

Conflict can, on the other hand, have negative consequences for both individuals and organizations when people divert energies away from performance and goal attainment and direct them toward resolving the conflict. During conflict, it can be easy for judgement to get clouded and to lose sight of end-goals. Conflict in groups can lead to lack of motivation, social loafing, and other withdrawal behaviours. Continued conflict can make for a toxic work environment and take a heavy toll on our psychological well-being. As we learn in future chapters, conflict can be a stressor in the workplace and contribute to burnout. Finally, continued conflict can also affect the social climate of the group and inhibit group cohesiveness.

As we discussed earlier in the chapter with the interactionist view, conflict can be either functional or dysfunctional and a benefit or a detriment in work situations depending upon the nature of the conflict, its intensity, and its duration. Indeed, both too much and too little conflict can lead to a variety of negative outcomes, as discussed above. This is shown in figure 1.4 below. In such circumstances, a moderate amount of conflict may be the best course of action. The issue for management, therefore, is not how to eliminate conflict but rather how to manage and resolve it when it occurs.

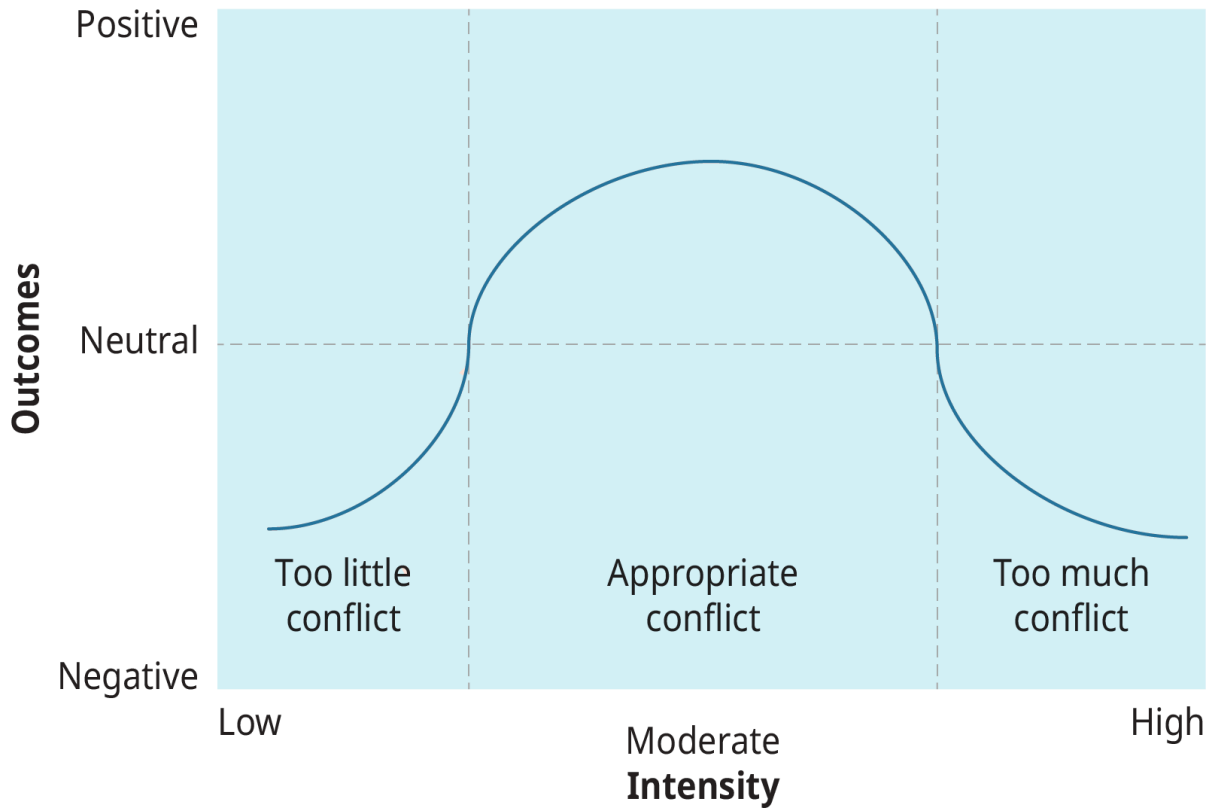

Figure 1.4 The Relationship Between Conflict Intensity and Outcomes Source. Originally adapted from L. David Brown, Managing Conflict at Organizational Interfaces, 1986 by Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Inc., Reading, Massachusetts, Figure 1.1, p.8. Image: Rice University & OpenStax, Organizational Behavior, CC BY 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

Costs of Conflict in Canadian Workplaces

Conflict in organizations represents an important topic for managers. Across decades of research, it has been consistently found that managers spend 15-20% of their time dealing with some form of conflict (Thomas & Schmidt, 1978; Rahim, 1983; Half, 2017). In another study, Graves (1983) found that managerial skill in handling conflict was a major predictor of managerial success and effectiveness. Many professionals do not receive training in conflict management even though they are expected to do it as part of their job. A lack of training and a lack of competence could be a recipe for disaster. Being able to manage conflict situations can make life more productive and less stressful.

A study of Canadian workplaces conducted by Psychometrics (2015) stated that conflict was reported in virtually all workplaces and were often associated with negative outcomes such as increased levels of sickness, bullying, termination of employment and turnover. Their study reported that in the Canadian workplaces surveyed, "the most common causes of conflict are warring egos and personality clashes (86%), poor leadership (73%), lack of honesty (67%), stress (64%), and clashing values (59%)" (p. 7). The HR consultants from Morneau Shepell estimate that workplace conflict costs business in Canada at least two billion dollars each year (Consulting.ca, 2021). Conflict between

coworkers and between staff and management, as well as aggressive or abusive behaviour by various parties can negatively impact a workplaces' productivity. It can also lead to expensive legal fees and time in court if conflict moves into formal legal proceedings. Prolonged stress due to conflict and toxic workplaces can contribute to burnout and mental health disorders (e.g., anxiety and depression), which are leading causes of disability in Canada and significant contributors to loss of productivity in the Canadian workplace each year (CAMH, 2020).

Let's Focus: Why Should I Care About Conflict?

What if you are thinking to yourself: I'm not a manager, I'm just a student. Why should I care about conflict management?

Conflict is an inevitable part of work and can take a negative emotional toll. It takes effort to ignore someone or be passive aggressive, and the anger or guilt we may feel after blowing up at someone are valid negative feelings. However, conflict isn't always negative or unproductive. In fact, numerous research studies have shown that quantity of conflict in a relationship is not as important as how the conflict is handled (Markman et al., 1993). Additionally, when conflict is well managed, it has the potential to lead to more rewarding and satisfactory relationships (Canary & Messman, 2000).

Since conflict is present in our personal and professional lives, the ability to manage conflict and negotiate desirable outcomes can help us be more successful at both. You don't have to wait until you are a manager to need or benefit from these skills. Improving your competence in dealing with conflict can yield positive effects on your personal and professional relationships right now. Additionally, conflict management strategies can be used to learn more about yourself and others, and to deepen your relationships and connections with the people in your life. The negative effects of poorly handled conflict, which can range from an awkward last few weeks of the semester with a college roommate to anger, divorce, illness, or violence, can be minimized by improving our ability and capacity to manage the normal and naturally occurring conflict in our lives. The ideas, tools, and strategies we explore in this book will seem simple, but they won't always be easy to implement.

In this book, you will be putting language and frameworks to the conflict experiences you have had in your life. We will be approaching the concepts and frameworks from three angles:

1. **Theory** – Examining existing psychological theories, as they relate to conflict management in the workplace.
2. **Mindset** – Examining our beliefs and ideas about conflict, communication, and people. Developing our awareness and understanding of how our mindset impacts our approach to conflict.
3. **Skillset** – Examining what skills you currently have and what skills you need to improve in order to more effectively manage conflict.

By the end of this book, I hope that you have a new understanding about the nature of conflict, an open mindset towards embracing conflict, and a skillset that supports you in managing the conflicts you encounter in your life.

Adapted Works

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1.5 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms

Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **Conflict occurs in interactions** in which there are real or perceived incompatible goals, scare resources, or opposing viewpoints.
- **Conflict will inevitably occur and isn't inherently good or bad.** Conflict is a process that requires our time and energy. We can choose to be proactive and address conflict in functional ways. Conflict is as much about a relationship as the content of the conflict itself.
- **Conflict may be marked by disputes, competitions, and/or interpersonal violence.** However, conflict does not need to be adversarial, competitive, and/or violent.
- **There are several views of conflict.** In the traditional view, conflict is always bad and should be avoided. According to the human relations view, conflict can be helpful if it is harnessed efficiently. Finally, the interactionist view of conflict notes that conflict can be a challenge or benefit, depending on its characteristics.
- **Conflict can occur at different levels:** within individuals, between individuals, between groups, and between organizations. Additionally, we need to consider that conflict within these various levels can be further impacted by differences in power.
- **The four types of conflict are**: goal conflict, cognitive conflict, affective conflict, and behavioral conflict.
- **There are many potential sources of conflict in the workplace** including organizational structure, limited resources, task interdependence, incompatible goals, personality differences, and communication problems.
- **When faced with conflict, we have many choices on how to respond.** These approaches be active or passive and constructive or destructive.
- **Depending on its characteristics, a conflict in the workplace can provide benefits or challenges** to the performance of individuals, groups, and organizations.
- **Students can benefit from this information now by building their knowledge, mindset, and skillset** surrounding the nature of conflict and how to manage it.

Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/conflictmanagement/?p=37#h5p-2

Key Terms

Key terms from this chapter include:

- **Affective conflict**
- **Behavioral conflict**
- **Cognitive conflict**
- **Competition**
- **Conflict**
- **Dispute**
- **Goal conflict**
- **Intergroup conflict**
- **Interorganizational conflict**
- **Interpersonal conflict**
- **interpersonal violence**
- **Intrapersonal conflict**

CHAPTER 2: CONFLICT RESOLUTION, NEGOTIATIONS, AND LABOUR RELATIONS

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

- Summarize stages in the conflict process.
- Recognize characteristics of conflict escalation.
- Describe common approaches to conflict and explain when to use them.
- Explore common strategies for preventing and managing conflict at work.
- Define negotiations.
- Contrast distributive and integrated approaches to bargaining.
- Summarize the steps in the negotiation process.
- Demonstrate awareness of the history of labour relations in Canada.
- Describe how the collective bargaining agreement impacts negotiation and conflict management in the workplace.

In this chapter, we will learn about the nature of the conflict process and common approaches to conflict. In addition, we will explore the process of negotiation, third party negotiators, and labour relations between labour unions and management.

2.1 The Conflict Process

In this Section:

- The Conflict Process
- Conflict Escalation

The Conflict Process

The most commonly accepted model of the conflict process was developed by Kenneth Thomas (1976). This model, consists of four stages: (1) **frustration**, (2) **conceptualization**, (3) **behavior**, and (4) **outcome**.

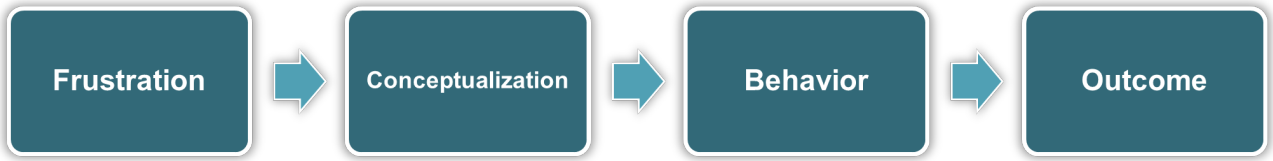

Figure 2.1 The Conflict Process: Fanshawe College. Original Image, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. [Click to enlarge].

Let's review each stage in more detail.

Stage 1: Frustration

As we have seen, conflict situations originate when an individual or group feels frustration in the pursuit of important goals. This frustration may be caused by a wide variety of factors, including disagreement over performance goals, failure to get a promotion or pay raise, a fight over scarce economic resources, new rules or policies, and so forth. In fact, conflict can be traced to frustration over almost anything a group or individual cares about.

Stage 2: Conceptualization

In stage 2, the conceptualization stage of the model, parties to the conflict attempt to understand the nature of the problem, what they themselves want as a resolution, what they think their opponents want as a resolution, and various strategies they feel each side may employ in resolving the conflict. This stage is really the problem-solving and strategy phase. For instance, when management and union negotiate a labor contract, both sides attempt to decide what is most important and what can be bargained away in exchange for these priority needs.

Stage 3: Behavior

The third stage in Thomas's model is actual behavior. As a result of the conceptualization process, parties to a conflict attempt to implement their resolution mode by competing or accommodating in the hope of resolving problems. A major task here is determining how best to proceed strategically. That is, what tactics will the party use to attempt to resolve the conflict? Thomas has identified five modes for conflict resolution: (1) **competing**, (2) **collaborating**, (3) **compromising**, (4) **avoiding**, and (5) **accommodating**. We will discuss these modes in further detail below.

Stage 4: Outcome

Finally, as a result of efforts to resolve the conflict, both sides determine the extent to which a satisfactory resolution or outcome has been achieved. Where one party to the conflict does not feel satisfied or feels only partially satisfied, the seeds of discontent are sown for a later conflict. One unresolved conflict episode can easily set the stage for a second episode. Managerial action aimed at achieving quick and satisfactory resolution is vital; failure to initiate such action leaves the possibility (more accurately, the probability) that new conflicts will soon emerge.

Conflict Escalation

Many academics and conflict resolution practitioners have observed predictable patterns in the way conflict escalates. Conflict is often discussed as though it is a separate entity, and in fact it is true that an escalating dispute may seem to take on a life of its own. Conflict will often escalate beyond reason unless a conscious effort is made to end it.

Figure 2.2 is called the conflict escalation tornado. It demonstrates how conflict can quickly escalate out of control. By observing and listening to individuals in dispute, it is often possible to determine where they are in the escalation process and anticipate what might occur next. In doing so, one can develop timely and appropriate approaches to halt the process.

Figure 2.2 "Conflict Escalation Tornado," by the Dispute Resolution Office, Ministry of Justice (Government of Saskatchewan), redesigned by JVDW Designs, is licensed under CC BY 4.0. Reproduced from Leadership and Influencing Change In Nursing by Joan Wagner. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

Let's Focus: Escalating Conflict Example

The following is an example of an escalating conflict. Most people will recognize their own actions in the description. A conflict begins . . .

- The parties become aware of the conflict but attempt to deal with it sensibly. Often, they will attribute the problem to "a misunderstanding" and indicate that "they can work it out."
- The parties begin to slide from cooperation to competition. ("I'll bend but only if they will first.") They begin to view the conflict as resulting from deliberate action on the part of the other. ("They must have known this would happen.") Positions begin to harden and defensiveness sets in, which creates adversarial encounters. Parties begin to take actions to strengthen their positions and look to others for support. ("Don't you feel this is reasonable?" "Do you know what that idiot is doing to me?")
- As communication deteriorates, parties rely more on assumptions about the other and attribute negative motives to them. ("I'll bet they are going to . . . ," "Those sorts of people would . . . ," "Their thinking is so muddled, they must . . .") Groupthink often takes over as each disputant seeks support from others. ("We have to appear strong and take a united front.") Parties begin to look for more evidence of other problems—their beliefs feed their observations.
- Parties soon believe that cooperation cannot resolve the problem because of the actions of the other, and aggressive actions are planned. ("I've tried everything to get them to see reason." "It's time to get tough with them." "I'm going to put a stop to this.")
- Parties begin to feel righteous and blame the other for the whole problem. Generalizing and stereotyping begin. ("I know what those people are like. . . . We can't let them get away with this.") Parties begin to be judgemental and moralistic, and believe they are defending what is right. ("It's the principle of the matter." "What will people say if we give in to this?")
- The conflict becomes more complicated but also more generalized and personalized. Severe confrontation is anticipated and, in fact, planned for, thus making it inevitable. The parties view this as acceptable as the other has, in their mind, clearly shown they are lacking in human qualities. ("He's just a jerk; we'll have to really hit him hard.")
- All parties appears now to believe that the objective of the conflict is to hurt others more than they are being hurt. ("I'll make you pay even if we both go down over this.") The dispute is beyond rational analysis; causing damage to the other, even at your own expense, is the main focus. ("Whatever it takes . . ." "There is no turning back now." "They won't make a fool out of me.")
- Finally, destruction of the other, even if it means self-destruction as well, is the driving force. ("If it takes everything I have, for the rest of my life . . .")

Consider This: Risk for Workplace Violence

An extreme escalation of conflict might include violence in the workplace. While violence can occur in any situation, below are some examples of roles and situations that make violence more likely to occur at work.

Dealing With People

Jobs which involve dealing with other people increase the opportunities for conflict. Some examples include:

- Caring for others either emotionally or physically, such as at a long-term care home
- Interacting with frustrated customers, such as with retail sales.
- Supervising others, such as being a manager.
- Denying requests others make of you, such as with customer service.

Being in High-Risk Situations

Jobs which involve high-risk situations also can increase the probability of violence. Examples of high-risk situations include:

- Dealing with valuables or exchanging money, such as in banking.
- Handling weapons, such as in law enforcement or corrections.
- Working with drugs, alcohol, or those under the influence of them, such as bartending.
- Working nights or weekends, such as gas station attendants.

Sources: Adapted from information in LeBlanc, M. M., & Kelloway, E. K. (2002). Predictors and outcomes of workplace violence and aggression. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 87,* 444–453; National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. (1997). Violence in the workplace. Retrieved November 12, 2008, from http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/violfs.html; National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. (2006). Workplace prevention strategies and research needs. Retrieved November 12, 2008, from http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2006-144/.

Strategies for De-escalating Conflict

An appropriate level of risk must be taken by the individuals involved to de-escalate the conflict. Taking these risks can be scary as it requires people to be vulnerable and express emotions. Emotional intelligence plays an important role in the de-escalation of conflict. By taking risks to

de-escalate conflict, whether the result is successful or unsuccessful, we can send a message of wanting to rebuild trust, respect, and effective communication. Risk taking can also provide an opportunity to make necessary change by learning and developing new behaviours and capacities to work effectively as individuals and as work units.

Typically, when conflict is not de-escalated and resolved appropriately, it results in more conflict in the relationship. The relationship continues in a state of heightened sensitivity to actions, and assumptions can be formed quickly. Actions that may previously have been viewed as innocent or acceptable may be perceived as threatening. Every unresolved conflict reduces the time it takes to get to the top of the tornado because of this heightened sensitivity. The following steps are suggestions for use at every stage of conflict escalation. The ability to harness fear and be vulnerable is a critical step for de-escalation.

Table 2.1 Steps to De-Escalate Conflict

Step 1: Self Awareness

- Reflect on your own approach and the approach of others.

- Find people to you trust to discuss potential solutions.

- Think about who may challenge your perspective rather than who would agree with you

Step 2: Raising The Issue

- Decide to raise the issue with the other person(s) when it is important or affects you personally.

- Raise the issue at an appropriate time.

- Commit to a change in your own behaviour(s) that contribute to resolution.

- When raising the issue, use specific examples to limit confusion. Speaking from your perspective will reduce defensiveness. Use "I" language rather than "you."

Step 3: Follow Up

- Follow up with others and assess if a change has been made.

- Determine if a change is continuing to work.

- If the change is not working, decide what adjustments need to me made.

Step 4: When Change Is Not Implemented

- Raise the issue again if necessary.

- Use further problem solving by focusing on what each person need to create the necessary change and discuss any available actions.

- While problem solving,. compare the options presented with the necessary outcome (i.e., what is needed).

- If a resolution cannot be reached with others , determine what change(s) you can make that would bring some resolution to you personally.

Table Source: *The Dispute Resolution Office, Ministry of Justice (Government of Saskatchewan),*

Adapted Works

References

Thomas, K. (1976). Conflict and conflict management. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (pp. 889-935). Rand McNally.

2.2 Approaches to Conflict

Approaches to Conflict

Every individual or group manages conflict differently. In the 1970s, consultants Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann developed a tool for analyzing the approaches to conflict resolution. This tool is called the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) (Kilmann Diagnostics, n.d.).

Thomas and Kilmann suggest that in a conflict situation, a person's behaviour can be assessed on two factors:

1. **Commitment to goals or assertiveness**—the extent to which an individual (or a group) attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns or goals. A person may behaviour in behaviour that is not assertive or is highly assertive.
2. **Commitment to relationships or cooperation**—the extent to which an individual (or a group) attempts to satisfy the concerns of the other party, and the importance of the relationship with the other party. A person may behave in a may that is uncooperative or highly cooperative.

Thomas and Kilmann use these factors to explain the five different approaches to dealing with conflict: avoiding, competing, accommodating, compromising, and collaborating. These approaches are pictured in Figure 2.3 below.

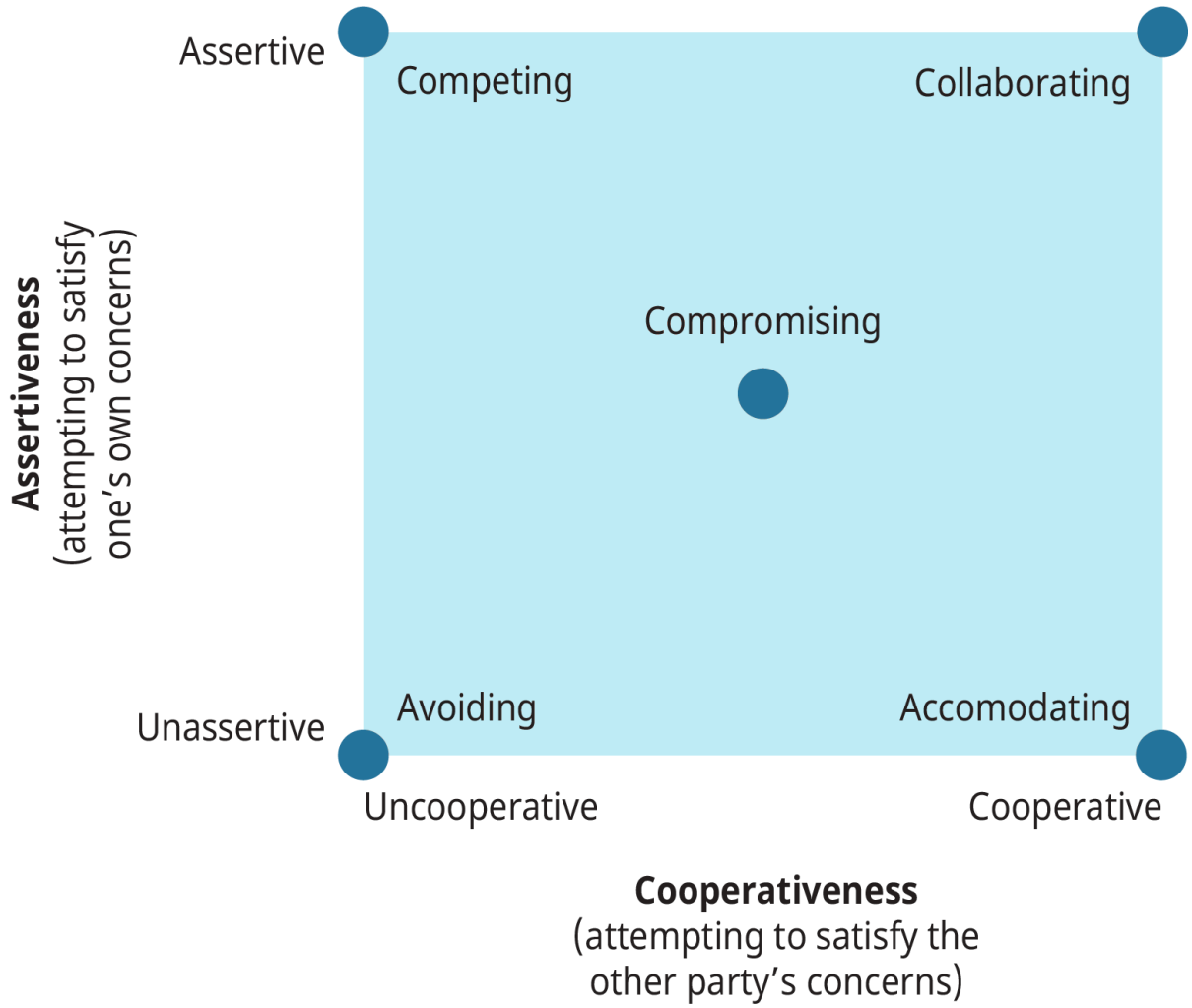

Figure 2.3 Approaches to Conflict Resolution. Adapted from Thomas, K. (1976). Conflict and conflict management, In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), Handbook of industrial and organizational behavior (p. 900). Wiley. Reproduced from Rice University & OpenStax, Organizational Behavior, CC BY 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

Let's take a closer look at each approach and when to use it.

Avoidance

An **avoidance approach to conflict** demonstrates a low commitment to both goals and relationships. This is the most common method of dealing with conflict, especially by people who view conflict negatively.

Table 2.2 Avoiding

Types of Avoidance	Results	Appropriate When
Physical flight	The dispute is not resolved.	The issue is trivial or unimportant, or another issue is more pressing
Mental withdrawal	Disputes often build up and eventually explode.	Potential damage outweighs potential benefits
Changing the subject	Low satisfaction results in complaining, discontentment, and talking back.	Timing for dealing with the conflict is inappropriate (because of overwhelming emotions or lack of information)
Blaming or minimizing	Stress spreads to other parties (e.g., co-workers, family).	
Denial that the problem exists		
Postponement to a more appropriate time (which may never occur)		
Use of emotions (tears, anger, etc.)		

Source: Leadership and Influencing Change In Nursing by Joan Wagner, CC BY 4.0.

People exhibiting the avoidance style seek to avoid conflict altogether by denying that it is there. They are prone to postponing any decisions in which a conflict may arise. People using this style may say things such as, "I don't really care if we work this out," or "I don't think there's any problem. I feel fine about how things are." Conflict avoidance may be habitual to some people because of personality traits such as the need for affiliation. While conflict avoidance may not be a significant problem if the issue at hand is trivial, it becomes a problem when individuals avoid confronting important issues because of a dislike for conflict or a perceived inability to handle the other party's reactions.

It is important to consider that there are some situations that avoidance may be the most appropriate course of action. When a situation is minor, it may not be worth the time and effort to pursue. When a conflict or the potential outcome is serious, avoiding a person/situation may also be the appropriate course of action. Avoidance is also different than taking a break to gather your thoughts and calm emotion or find a more appropriate setting to have a conversation. If you take a break, make sure it's not a strategy to avoid. If possible, try to plan for when to resume the discussion.

Competing

A **competing approach to conflict** demonstrates a high commitment to goals and a low commitment to relationships. Individuals who use the competing approach pursue their own goals at the other party's expense. People taking this approach will use whatever power is necessary to win. It may display as defending a position, interest, or value that you believe to be correct. Competing approaches are often supported by structures (courts, legislatures, sales quotas, etc.) and

can be initiated by the actions of one party. Competition may be appropriate or inappropriate (as defined by the expectations of the relationship).

Table 2.3 Competing

Types of Competing	Results	Appropriate When
Power of authority, position, or majority	The conflict may escalate or the other party may withdraw.	There are short time frames and quick action is vital.
Power of persuasion	Reduces the quality and durability of agreement.	Dealing with trivial issues.
Pressure techniques (e.g., threats, force, intimidation)	Assumes no reciprocating power will come from the other side; people tend to reach for whatever power they have when threatened.	Tough decisions require leadership (e.g., enforcing unpopular rules, cost cutting, discipline).
Disguising the issue	Increases the likelihood of future problems between parties.	
Tying relationship issues to substantive issues	Restricts communication and decreases trust.	

Source: Leadership and Influencing Change In Nursing by Joan Wagner, CC BY 4.0.

Like avoidance, the competing style of conflict is low in cooperation and may be helpful when issues are either trivial or serious in nature and require swift decisions. When individuals have legitimate authority and power to make decisions, it is sometimes necessary that they make a choice without engaging in a collaborative conflict process. While this style of decision-making can be required in some situations, it can lead to problems with trust. Misuse of power and coercive behaviours can also create compliance in the short-term, but these strategies can become a source for future conflict.

Accommodating

Accommodating demonstrates a low commitment to goals and high commitment to relationship. This approach is the opposite of competing. It occurs when a person ignores or overrides their own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other party. An accommodating approach is used to establish reciprocal adaptations or adjustments. This could be a hopeful outcome for those who take an accommodating approach, but when the other party does not reciprocate, conflict can result. Others may view those who use the accommodating approach heavily as “that is the way they are” and don’t need anything in return. Accommodators typically will not ask for anything in return.

Table 2.4 Accommodating

Types of Accommodating	Results	Appropriate When
Playing down the conflict to maintain surface harmony	Builds relationships that will allow you to be more effective in future problem solving	You are flexible on the outcome, or when the issue is more important to the other party.
Self-sacrifice	Increases the chances that the other party may be more accommodating to your needs in the future	Preserving harmony is more important than the outcome.
Yielding to the other point of view	Does not improve communication	It's necessary to build up good faith for future problem solving.
		You are wrong or in a situation where competition could damage your position.

Source: Leadership and Influencing Change In Nursing by Joan Wagner, CC BY 4.0.

People who use this style may fear speaking up for themselves or they may place a higher value on the relationship, believing that disagreeing with an idea might be hurtful to the other person. They will say things such as, "Let's do it your way" or "If it's important to you, I can go along with it." Accommodation may be an effective strategy if the issue at hand is more important to others compared to oneself. Accommodators typically will not ask for anything in return. Accommodators tend to get resentful when a reciprocal relationship isn't established. Once resentment grows, people who rely on the accommodating approach often shift to a competing approach because they are tired of being "used." This leads to confusion and conflict.

Compromising

A **compromising approach** strikes a balance between a commitment to goals and a commitment to relationships. The objective of a compromising approach is a quick solution that will work for both parties. Usually it involves both parties giving up something and meeting in the middle.

Table 2.5 Compromising

Types of Compromising	Results	Appropriate When
Splitting the difference	Both parties may feel they lost the battle and feel the need to get even next time.	Time pressures require quick solutions.
Exchanging concessions	No relationship is established although it should also not cause relationship to deteriorate.	Collaboration or competition fails.
Finding middle ground	Danger of stalemate	Short-term solutions are needed until more information can be obtained.
	Does not explore the issue in any depth	

Source: Leadership and Influencing Change In Nursing by Joan Wagner, CC BY 4.0.

The compromiser may say things such as, "Perhaps I ought to reconsider my initial position" or "Maybe we can both agree to give in a little." In a compromise, each person sacrifices something valuable to them. Compromising is often used in labour negotiations, as typically there are multiple issues to resolve in a short period of time.

Collaborating

Collaborating is an approach that demonstrates a high commitment to goals and also a high commitment to relationships. This approach is used in an attempt to meet concerns of all parties. Trust and willingness for risk is required for this approach to be effective.

Table 2.6 Collaborating

Type of Collaborating	Results	Appropriate When
Maximizing use of fixed resources	Builds relationships and improves potential for future problem solving	Parties are committed to the process and adequate time is available.
Working to increase resources	Promotes creative solutions	The issue is too important to compromise.
Listening and communicating to promote understanding of interests and values		New insights can be beneficial in achieving creative solutions.
Learning from each other's insight		There is a desire to work through hard feelings that have been a deterrent to problem solving.
		There are diverse interests and issues at play.
		Participants can be future focused.

Source: Leadership and Influencing Change In Nursing by Joan Wagner, CC BY 4.0.

The collaborating style is a strategy to use for achieving the best outcome from conflict—both sides argue for their position, supporting it with facts and rationale while listening attentively to the other side. The objective is to find a win–win solution to the problem in which both parties get what they want. They'll challenge points but not each other. They'll emphasize problem solving and integration of each other's goals. For example, an employee who wants to complete an MBA program may have a conflict with management when he wants to reduce his work hours. Instead of taking opposing positions in which the employee defends his need to pursue his career goals while the manager emphasizes the company's need for the employee, both parties may review alternatives to find an integrative solution. In the end, the employee may decide to pursue the degree while taking online classes, and the company may realize that paying for the employee's tuition is a worthwhile investment. This may be a win–win solution to the problem in which no one gives up what is personally important, and every party gains something from the exchange.

Consider This: Communicating in Conflict

Consider the Other Person's Conflict Approach

There are times when others may take a conflict approach that is not helpful to the situation. However, the only person that you can control in a conflict is yourself. It is important to be flexible and shift your approach according to the situation and the other people with whom you are working. When someone else is taking an approach that is not beneficial to the situation, it is critical to understand what needs underlie the decision to take that approach. Here are a few examples:

- **Avoiders** may need to feel physically and emotionally safe. When dealing with avoiders, try taking the time to assure them that they are going to be heard and listened to.
- **Competitors** may need to feel that something will be accomplished in order to meet their goals. When dealing with competitors, say for example, "We will work out a solution; it may take some time for us to get there."
- **Compromisers** may need to know that they will get something later. When dealing with compromisers, say for example, "We will go to this movie tonight, and next week you can pick." (Be true to your word.)
- **Accommodators** may need to know that no matter what happens during the conversation, your relationship will remain intact. When dealing with accommodators, say for example, "This will not affect our relationship or how we work together."
- **Collaborators** may need to know what you want before they are comfortable sharing their needs. When dealing with collaborators, say for example, "I need this, this, and this. . . . What do you

need?”

Which Approach to Conflict is Best?

Like much of organizational behavior, there is no one “right way” to deal with conflict. Much of the time it will depend on the situation. However, the collaborative style has the potential to be highly effective in many different situations.

We do know that most individuals have a dominant style that they tend to use most frequently. Think of your friend who is always looking for a fight or your coworker who always backs down from a disagreement. Successful individuals are able to match their style to the situation. There are times when avoiding a conflict can be a great choice. For example, if a driver cuts you off in traffic, ignoring it and going on with your day is a good alternative to “road rage.” However, if a colleague keeps claiming ownership of your ideas, it may be time for a conversation. Allowing such intellectual plagiarism to continue could easily be more destructive to your career than confronting the individual. Research also shows that when it comes to dealing with conflict, managers prefer forcing, while their subordinates are more likely to engage in avoiding, accommodating, or compromising (Howat & London, 1980). It is also likely that individuals will respond similarly to the person engaging in conflict. For example, if one person is forcing, others are likely to respond with a forcing tactic as well.

Case Study

See Appendix A: Case Studies

- Case Study 1: Handling Roommate Conflicts

Self-Assessments

See Appendix B: Self-Assessments

- What Is Your Approach to Conflict Resolution? Questionnaire
- Conflict Analysis/Capability Questionnaire

Adapted Works

References

Howat, G., & London, M. (1980). Attributions of conflict management strategies in supervisor-subordinate dyads. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 65, 172–175.

Thomas, K. (1976). Conflict and conflict management. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (pp. 889-935). Rand McNally.

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2.3 Conflict Resolution Strategies

In this Section:

- Common Strategies that Seldom Work
- Strategies for Preventing and Reducing Conflict
- Nine Reduction Strategies

Common Strategies that Seldom Work

We have discovered that conflict is pervasive throughout organizations and that some conflict can be good for organizations. People often grow and learn from conflict, as long as the conflict is not dysfunctional. The challenge is to select a resolution strategy appropriate to the situation and individuals involved. A review of past management practice in this regard reveals that managers often make poor strategy choices. At leave five conflict resolution techniques commonly found in organizations prove to be ineffective fairly consistently (Miles, 1980). Let's review these strategies and why they are ineffective.

Nonaction

Perhaps the most common managerial response when conflict emerges is *nonaction*—doing nothing and ignoring the problem. This aligns with the avoidance strategy in the Thomas-Kilmann model discussed in the previous section. It may be felt that if the problem is ignored, it will go away. Unfortunately, that is not often the case. In fact, ignoring the problem may serve only to increase the frustration and anger of the parties involved.

Administrative Orbiting

In some cases, managers will acknowledge that a problem exists but then take little serious action. Instead, they continually report that a problem is "under study" or that "more information is needed." Telling a person who is experiencing a serious conflict that "these things take time" hardly relieves

anyone's anxiety or solves any problems. This ineffective strategy for resolving conflict is aptly named **administrative orbiting**.

Due Process Nonaction

A third ineffective approach to resolving conflict is to set up a recognized procedure for redressing grievances but at the same time to ensure that the procedure is long, complicated, costly, and perhaps even risky. The **due process nonaction** strategy is to wear down the dissatisfied employee while at the same time claiming that resolution procedures are open and available. This technique has been used repeatedly in conflicts involving race and sex discrimination. When we discuss conflict policies, one key consideration will be to have clear and timely deadlines for addressing conflicts.

Secrecy

Oftentimes, managers will attempt to reduce conflict through *secrecy.* Some feel that by taking secretive actions, controversial decisions can be carried out with a minimum of resistance. One argument for pay secrecy (keeping employee salaries secret) is that such a policy makes it more difficult for employees to feel inequitably treated. Essentially, this is a "what they don't know won't hurt them" strategy. A major problem of this approach is that it leads to distrust of management. When managerial credibility is needed for other issues, it may be found lacking.

Character Assassination

The final ineffective resolution technique to be discussed here is **character assassination**. The person with a conflict, perhaps a person claiming sex discrimination, is labeled a "troublemaker." Attempts are made to discredit the person and distance them from the others in the group. The implicit strategy here is that if the person can be isolated and stigmatized, they will either be silenced by negative group pressures or they will leave the organization. In either case, the problem is "solved."

Strategies for Preventing and Reducing Conflict

On the more positive side, there are many things managers can do to reduce or actually solve dysfunctional conflict when it occurs. These fall into two categories: actions directed at conflict *prevention* and actions directed at conflict *reduction.*

Strategies for Preventing Conflict

We shall start by examining conflict prevention techniques, because preventing conflict is often easier than reducing it once it begins. These include:

- **Emphasizing organization-wide goals and effectiveness**
  Focusing on organization-wide goals and objectives should prevent goal conflict. If larger goals are emphasized, employees are more likely to see the big picture and work together to achieve corporate goals.
- **Providing stable, well-structured tasks.**
  When work activities are clearly defined, understood, and accepted by employees, conflict should be less likely to occur. Conflict is most likely to occur when task uncertainty is high; specifying or structuring jobs minimizes ambiguity.
- **Facilitating intergroup communication**.
  Misperception of the abilities, goals, and motivations of others often leads to conflict, so efforts to increase the dialogue among groups and to share information should help eliminate conflict. As groups come to know more about one another, suspicions often diminish, and greater intergroup teamwork becomes possible.
- **Avoiding win-lose situations**
  If win-lose situations are avoided, less potential for conflict exists. When resources are scarce, management can seek some form of resource sharing to achieve organizational effectiveness. Moreover, rewards can be given for contributions to overall corporate objectives; this will foster a climate in which groups seek solutions acceptable to all.

Strategies for Reducing Conflict

Where dysfunctional conflict already exists, something must be done, and managers may pursue one of at least two general approaches: they can try to change employee *attitudes,* or they can try to change employee *behaviors*. If they change behavior, open conflict is often reduced, but groups may still dislike one another; the conflict simply becomes less visible as the groups are separated from one another. Changing attitudes, on the other hand, often leads to fundamental changes in the ways that groups get along. However, it also takes considerably longer to accomplish than behavior change because it requires a fundamental change in social perceptions.

Nine conflict reduction strategies are shown in Figure 2.4. The techniques should be viewed as a continuum, ranging from strategies that focus on changing behaviors near the top of the scale to strategies that focus on changing attitudes near the bottom of the scale.

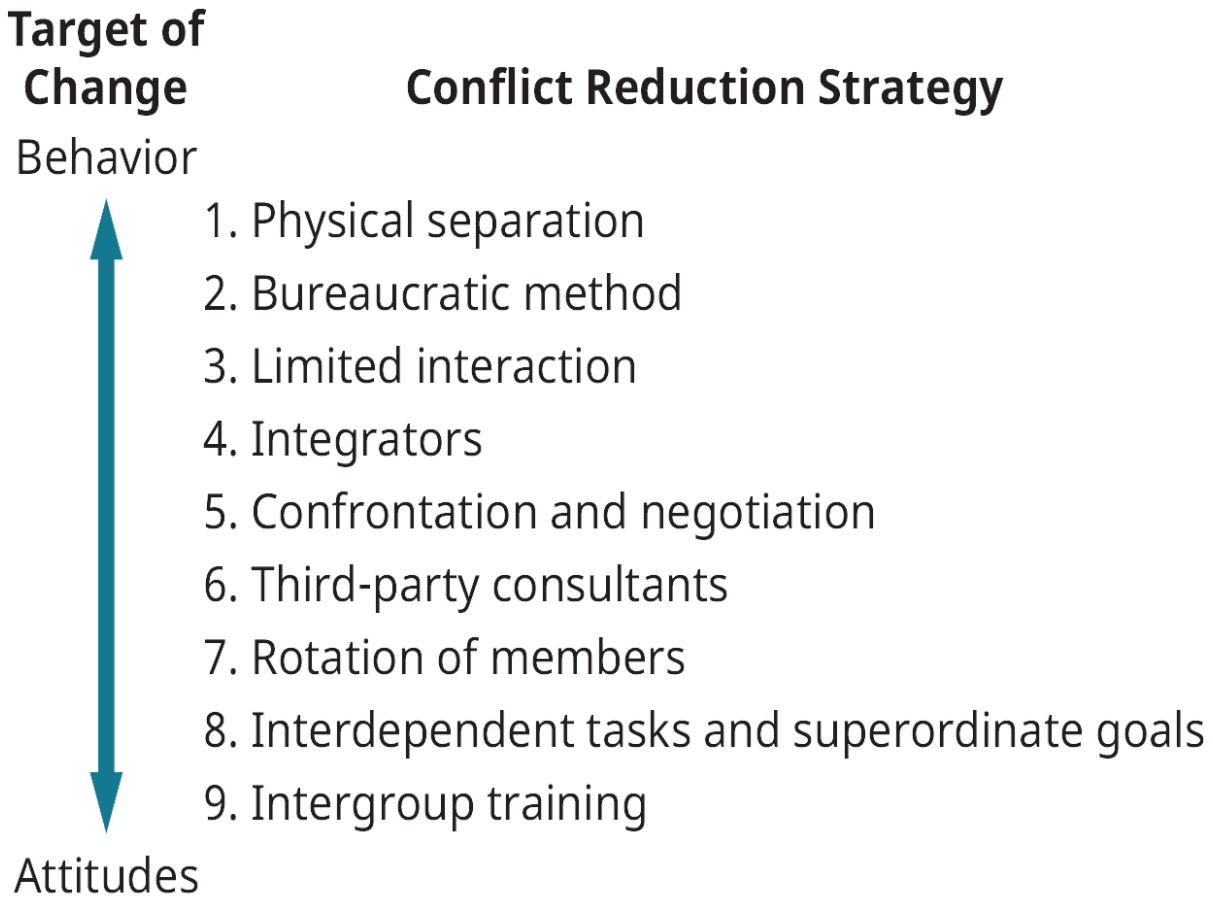

Figure 2.4 Nine conflict reduction strategies. Adapted from concepts in Nielsen, E. H. (1972). Understanding and managing conflict. In J. Lorsch and P. Lawrence (Eds.,), Managing group and intergroup relations. Irwin. Reproduced from Rice University & OpenStax, Organizational Behavior, CC BY 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

Let's Focus: Reduction Strategies

Nine Conflict Reduction Strategies

1. **Physical separation:** The quickest and easiest solution to conflict is physical separation. Separation is useful when conflicting groups are not working on a joint task or do not need a high degree of interaction. Though this approach

does not encourage members to change their attitudes, it does provide time to seek a better accommodation.

2. **Use of rules and regulations:** Conflict can also be reduced through the increasing specification of rules, regulations, and procedures. This approach, also known as the bureaucratic method, imposes solutions on groups from above. Again, however, basic attitudes are not modified.
3. **Limiting intergroup interaction:** Another approach to reducing conflict is to limit intergroup interaction to issues involving common goals. Where groups agree on a goal, cooperation becomes easier.
4. ***Use of integrators:*** Integrators are individuals who are assigned a boundary-spanning role between two groups or departments. To be trusted, integrators must be perceived by both groups as legitimate and knowledgeable. The integrator often takes the "shuttle diplomacy" approach, moving from one group to another, identifying areas of agreement, and attempting to find areas of future cooperation.
5. **Confrontation and negotiation:** In this approach, competing parties are brought together face-to-face to discuss their basic areas of disagreement. The hope is that through open discussion and negotiation, means can be found to work out problems. Contract negotiations between union and management represent one such example. If a "win-win" solution can be identified through these negotiations, the chances of an acceptable resolution of the conflict increase. (More will be said about this in upcoming sections of this chapter.)
6. **Third-party consultation:** In some cases, it is helpful to bring in outside consultants for third-party consultation who understand human behavior and can facilitate a resolution. A third-party consultant not only serves as a go-between but can speak more directly to the issues, because she is not a member of either group. We will talk more about third party consultants later in this chapter.
7. **Rotation of members:** By rotating from one group to another, individuals come to understand the frames of reference, values, and attitudes of other members; communication is thus increased. When those rotated are accepted by the receiving groups, change in attitudes as well as behavior becomes possible. This is clearly a long-term technique, as it takes time to develop good interpersonal relations and understanding among group members.
8. **Identification of interdependent tasks and superordinate goals:** A further strategy for management is to establish goals that require groups to work together to achieve overall success—for example, when company survival is threatened. The threat of a shutdown often causes long-standing opponents to come together to achieve the common objective of keeping the company going.
9. **Use of intergroup training:** The final technique on the continuum is intergroup training. Outside training experts are retained on a long-term basis to help groups develop relatively permanent mechanisms for working together. Structured workshops and training programs can help forge more favorable intergroup attitudes and, as a result, more constructive intergroup behavior.

Works Adapted

References

Miles, R. (1980). *Macro organizational behavior*. Scott Foresman.

2.4 Negotiation

In this section:

- Negotiation Defined
- Approaches to Bargaining
- Phases of the Negotiation Process
- Avoiding Common Mistakes in Negotiation
- Third-Party Negotiations

Negotiation Defined

Where two people come in contact with one another, there is a potential for conflict. In this way, conflict can result in the need for negotiation. Alternatively, the need for negotiation can arise out of two parties' willingness to exchange goods and services.

Negotiation is the process by which individuals or groups attempt to realize their goals by bargaining with another party who has at least some control over goal attainment.

All negotiations share four common characteristics:

- The parties involved are somehow interdependent
- The parties are each looking to achieve the best possible result in the interaction for themselves
- The parties are motivated and capable of influencing one another
- The parties believe they can reach an agreement

If these conditions don't exist, neither can a negotiation. The parties have to be interdependent—whether they are experiencing a conflict at work or want to do business with one another. Each has an interest in achieving the best possible result. The parties are motivated and capable of influencing one another, like a union bargaining for better working conditions. A worker doesn't have influence over a manufacturer, but a union of workers does, and without that influence as a factor, both parties won't be motivated to come to the table for discussions. Finally, the parties need to believe they can reach an agreement; otherwise any negotiation talks will be futile.

Let's Practice

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/conflictmanagement/?p=68#h5p-3

Approaches to Bargaining

In a negotiation, parties must select an approach to that they believe will assist them in the attainment of their objectives. In general, two rather distinct approaches to negotiation can be identified. These are distributive bargaining and integrative bargaining. Let's compare these strategies.

Distributive Bargaining

In essence, **distributive bargaining i**s "win-lose" or fixed-pie bargaining. That is, the goals of one party are in fundamental and direct conflict with those of the other party. Negotiators see the situation as a pie that they have to divide between them. Each tries to get more of the pie and "win." Resources are fixed and limited, and each party wants to maximize their share of these resources. Finally, in most cases, this situation represents a short-term relationship between the two parties. In fact, such parties may not see each other ever again.

For example, managers may compete over shares of a budget. If marketing gets a 10% increase in its budget, another department such as the research and development department will need to decrease its budget by 10% to offset the marketing increase. Focusing on a fixed pie is a common mistake in negotiation, because this view limits the creative solutions possible. Another example of this can be seen in the relationship between the buyer and seller of an item. If the buyer gets the item for less money (that is, they "win"), the seller also gets less (that is, they "lose").

Under such circumstances, each side will probably adopt a course of action as follows. First, each side to a dispute will attempt to discover just how far the other side is willing to go to reach an accord.

This can be done by offering outrageously low (or high) proposals simply to feel out the opponent. For example, in selling an item, the seller will typically ask a higher price than she actually hopes to get. The buyer, in turn, typically offers far less than she is willing to pay. These two prices are put forth to discover the opponent's resistance price. The resistance price is the point beyond which the opponent will not go to reach a settlement. Once the resistance point has been estimated, each party tries to convince the opponent that the offer on the table is the best one the opponent is likely to receive and that the opponent should accept it. As both sides engage in similar tactics, the winner is often determined by who has the best strategic and political skills to convince the other party that this is the best she can get.

Integrative Bargaining

A newer, more creative approach to negotiation is called the **integrated approach.** In this approach, both parties look for ways to integrate their goals. That is, they look for ways to *expand* the pie, so that each party gets more. This is also called a win–win approach. The first step of the integrative approach is to enter the negotiation from a cooperative rather than an adversarial stance. The second step is all about listening. Listening develops trust as each party learns what the other wants and everyone involved arrives at a mutual understanding. Then, all parties can explore ways to achieve the individual goals. The general idea is, "If we put our heads together, we can find a solution that addresses everybody's needs." Unfortunately, integrative outcomes are not the norm. A summary of 32 experiments on negotiations found that although they could have resulted in integrated outcomes, only 20% did so (Thompson & Hrebec, 1996). One key factor related to finding integrated solutions is the experience of the negotiators who were able to reach them (Thompson, 1990).

One of the classic negotiations approaches consistent with the integrated approach is the book *Getting to Yes* (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Fisher et al., 2012). This book expound the authors favored method of conflict resolution, which they term **principled negotiation.** This method attempts to find an objective standard, typically based on existing precedents, for reaching an agreement that will be acceptable to both interested parties. Principled negotiation emphasizes the parties' enduring interests, objectively existing resources, and available alternatives, rather than transient positions that the parties may choose to take during the negotiation. The outcome of a principled negotiation ultimately depends on the relative attractiveness of each party's so-called **BATNA: the "Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement",** which can be taken as a measure of the objective strength of a party's bargaining stance. In general, the party with the more attractive BATNA gets the better of the deal. If both parties have attractive BATNAs, the best course of action may be not to reach an agreement at all (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Fisher et al., 2012; Edwards, 2013).

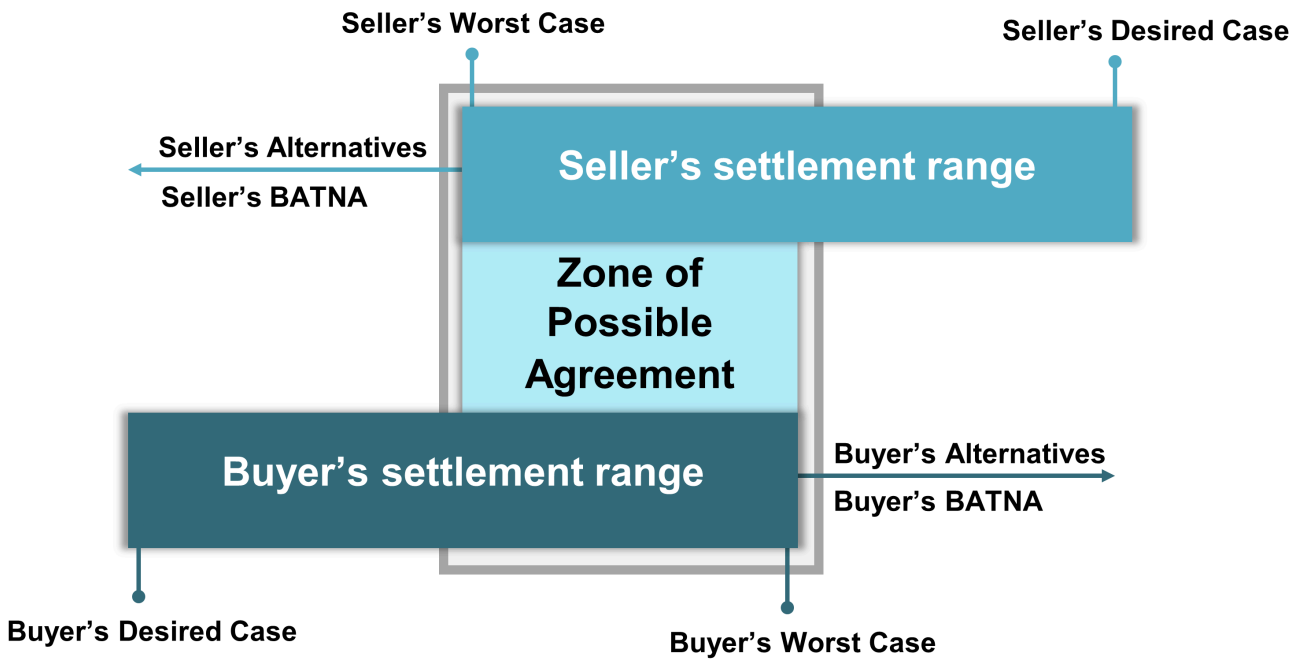

Figure 2.5 Distributive Bargaining Range. Fanshawe College. Original Image, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. [Click to enlarge].

This integrated approach is characterized by the existence of variable resources to be divided, efforts to maximize joint outcomes, and the desire to establish or maintain a long-term relationship. The interests of the two parties may be convergent (noncompetitive, such as preventing a trade war between two countries) or congruent (mutually supportive, as when two countries reach a mutual defense pact).

Bargaining tactics are quite different from those typically found in distributive bargaining. Here, both sides must be able and willing to understand the viewpoints of the other party. Otherwise, they will not know where possible consensus lies. Moreover, the free flow of information is required. Obviously, some degree of trust is required here too. In discussions, emphasis is placed on identifying commonalities between the two parties; the differences are played down. And, finally, the search for a solution focuses on selecting those courses of action that meet the goals and objectives of both sides. This approach requires considerably more time and energy than distributive bargaining, yet, under certain circumstances, it has the potential to lead to far more creative and long-lasting solutions.

Table 2.7 Two Approaches to Bargaining

Bargaining Characteristic	Distributive Bargaining	Integrative Bargaining
Payoff structure	Fixed amount of resources to be divided	Variable amount of resources to be divided
Primary motivation	I win, you lose	Mutual benefit
Primary interests	Opposed to each other	Convergent with each other
Focus of relationships	Short term	Long term

Source: Organizational Behavior, OpenStax, CC BY 4.0.

Distributed or Integrated Approach to Bargaining?

The negotiation process consists of identifying one's desired goals—that is, what you are trying to get out of the exchange—and then developing suitable strategies aimed at reaching those goals. A key feature of one's strategy is knowing one's relative position in the bargaining process. That is, depending upon your relative position or strength, you may want to negotiate seriously or you may want to tell your opponent to "take it or leave it." The dynamics of bargaining power can be extrapolated directly from the discussion of power and indicate several conditions affecting this choice. For example, you may wish to negotiate when you value the exchange, when you value the relationship, and when commitment to the issue is high. In the opposite situation, you may be indifferent to serious bargaining.

Table 2.8 When to Negotiate - Bargaining Strategies

Characteristics of the Situation	Negotiate	"Take It or Leave It"
Value of exchange	High	Low
Commitment to a decision	High	Low
Trust Level	High	Low
Time	Ample	Pressing
Power distribution*	Low or balanced	High
Relationship between two parties	Important	Unimportant

*Indicates relative power distribution between the two parties; "low" indicates that one has little power in the situation, whereas "high" indicates that one has considerable power.

Source: Organizational Behavior, OpenStax, CC BY 4.0.

Phases of Negotiation

In general, negotiation and bargaining are likely to has five stages. They are summarized in Figure 2.5 below. The presence and sequence of these stages are quite common across situations, although the length or importance of each stage can vary from situation to situation or from one culture to another (Graham, 1985). Let's examine what commonly occurs in each of these phases of the negotiation process.

Figure 2.6 The Five Stages of Negotiation. Adapted from Saylor Academy, Human Relations, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Color, style, and alignment altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

Phase 1: Investigation

The first step in negotiation is **investigation** or information gathering stage. This is a key stage that is often ignored. Surprisingly, the first place to begin is with yourself: What are your goals for the negotiation? What do you want to achieve? Once goals and objectives have been clearly established and the bargaining strategy is set, time is required to develop a suitable plan of action. Planning for negotiation requires a clear assessment of your own strengths and weaknesses as well as those of your opponents. Roy Lewicki and Joseph Litterer have suggested a format for preparation for negotiation (Graham, 1985; Lewicki et al., 2016; Baerman, 1986; Graham & Sano, 1989).

Phase 2: Determine Your BATNA

One important part of the investigation and planning phase is to determine your **BATNA.** Thinking through your BATNA is important to helping you decide whether to accept an offer you receive during the negotiation. You need to know what your alternatives are. If you have various alternatives, you can look at the proposed deal more critically. Could you get a better outcome than the proposed deal? Your BATNA will help you reject an unfavorable deal. On the other hand, if the deal is better than another outcome you could get (that is, better than your BATNA), then you should accept it. Think about it in common sense terms: When you know your opponent is desperate for a deal, you

can demand much more. If it looks like they have a lot of other options outside the negotiation, you'll be more likely to make concessions. The party with the best BATNA has the best negotiating position, so try to improve your BATNA whenever possible by exploring possible alternatives (Pinkley, 1995).

Let's Focus: BATNA Best Practices

Here are some best practices for generating your BATNA:

- **Brainstorm** a list of alternatives that you might conceivably take if the negotiation doesn't lead to a favorable outcome for you.
- **Improve** on some of the more promising ideas and convert them into actionable alternatives.
- **Identify** the most beneficial alternative to be kept in reserve as a fall-back during the negotiation.
- **Remember** that your BATNA may evolve over time, so keep revising it to make sure it is still accurate.
- **Don't reveal** your BATNA to the other party. If your BATNA turns out to be worse than what the other party expected, their offer may go down.

Sources: Adapted from information in Spangler (2003), Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado. (1998) and Venter (2003).

Phase 4: Presentation

Before the presentation of information, the parties come together and focus on getting to know and become comfortable with each other. At this stage, they do not focus directly on the task or issue of the negotiation. This is called **non-task time.** In Canadian culture, this stage is often filled with small talk. However, it is usually not very long and is not seen as important as other stages. As such, many Canadian textbooks (including this one) do not even include non-task time as a discrete phase in the negotiation process. North Americans use phrases such as "Let's get down to business," "I know you're busy, so let's get right to it,". However, in other cultures, the non-task stage is often

longer and of more importance because it is during this stage the relationship is established. It is the relationship more than the contract that determines the extent to which each party can trust the other to fulfill its obligations.

At the start of the presentation stage, parties also work together to define the ground rules and procedures for the negotiation. This is the time when you and the other party will come to agreement on questions like

- Who will do the negotiating—will we do it personally or invite a third party
- Where will the negotiation take place?
- Will there be time constraints placed on this negotiation process?
- Will there be any limits to the negotiation?
- If an agreement can't be reached, will there be any specific process to handle that?

Finally, in the presentation phase, parties present the information that they have gathered in a way that supports their position. Once initial positions have been exchanged, the clarification and justification stage can begin. The parties can explain, clarify, bolster and justify their original position or demands. This is an opportunity to educate the other side on your position, and gain further understanding about the other party and how they feel about their side. You might each take the opportunity to explain how you arrived at your current position, and include any supporting documentation. Each party might take this opportunity to review the strategy they planned for the negotiation to determine if it's still an appropriate approach.

This doesn't need to be—and should not be—confrontational, though in some negotiations that's hard to avoid. But if tempers are high moving into this portion of the negotiation process, then those emotions will start to come to a head here. It's important for you to manage those emotions so serious bargaining can begin.

Phase 5: Bargaining

During the bargaining phase, each party discusses their goals and seeks to get an agreement.

At the heart of the bargaining phase are efforts to influence and persuade the other side. Generally, these efforts are designed to get the other party to reduce its demands or desires and to increase its acceptance of your demands or desires. There are a wide variety of influence tactics, including promises, threats, questions, and so on. The use of these tactics as well as their effectiveness is a function of several factors. First, the perceived or real power of one party relative to another is an important factor. For example, if one party is the only available supplier of a critical component, then threatening to go to a new supplier of that component unless the price is reduced is unlikely to be an effective influence tactic. Second, the effectiveness of a particular influence tactic is also a function of accepted industry and cultural norms. For example, if threats are an unacceptable form of influence, then their use could lead to consequences opposite from what is desired by the initiator of such tactics.

A natural part of this process is making **concessions**, namely, giving up one thing to get something else in return. Making a concession is not a sign of weakness—parties expect to give up some of their goals. Rather, concessions demonstrate cooperativeness and help move the negotiation toward its conclusion. Making concessions is particularly important in tense union-management disputes, which can get bogged down by old issues. Making a concession shows forward movement and process, and it allays concerns about rigidity or closed-mindedness. What would a typical concession be? Concessions are often in the areas of money, time, resources, responsibilities, or autonomy. When negotiating for the purchase of products, for example, you might agree to pay a higher price in exchange for getting the products sooner. Alternatively, you could ask to pay a lower price in exchange for giving the manufacturer more time or flexibility in when they deliver the product.

Consider This: Bargaining and Questions

Bargaining and the Importance of Asking Questions

One key to the bargaining phase is to ask questions. Don't simply take a statement such as "we can't do that" at face value. Rather, try to find out ***why*** the party has that constraint. Let's take a look at an example.

Say that you're a retailer and you want to buy patio furniture from a manufacturer. You want to have the sets in time for spring sales. During the negotiations, your goal is to get the lowest price with the earliest delivery date. The manufacturer, of course, wants to get the highest price with the longest lead time before delivery. As negotiations stall, you evaluate your options to decide what's more important: a slightly lower price or a slightly longer delivery date? You do a quick calculation. The manufacturer has offered to deliver the products by April 30, but you know that some of your customers make their patio furniture selection early in the spring, and missing those early sales could cost you $1 million. So, you suggest that you can accept the April 30 delivery date if the manufacturer will agree to drop the price by $1 million.

"I appreciate the offer," the manufacturer replies, "but I can't accommodate such a large price cut." Instead of leaving it at that, you ask, "I'm surprised that a 2-month delivery would be so costly to you. Tell me more about your manufacturing process so that I can understand why you can't manufacture the products in that time frame."

"Manufacturing the products in that time frame is not the problem," the manufacturer replies, "but getting them shipped from Asia is what's expensive for us."

When you hear that, a light bulb goes off. You know that your firm has favorable contracts with shipping companies because of the high volume of business the firm gives them. You make the following counteroffer: "Why don't we agree that my company will arrange and pay for the shipper, and you agree to have the products ready to ship on March 30 for $10.5 million instead of $11 million?" The

manufacturer accepts the offer—the biggest expense and constraint (the shipping) has been lifted. You, in turn, have saved money as well.

Source: Adapted from Malhotra & Bazerman (2007).

Phase 6: Closure

The final stage of any negotiation is the closing. The closing may result in an acceptable agreement between the parties involved or it may result in failure to reach an agreement. Most negotiators assume that if their best offer has been rejected, there's nothing left to do. You made your best offer and that's the best you can do. The savviest of negotiators, however, see the rejection as an opportunity to learn. "What would it have taken for us to reach an agreement?" Sometimes at the end of negotiations, it's clear why a deal was not reached. But if you're confused about why a deal did not happen, consider making a follow-up call. Even though you may not win the deal back in the end, you might learn something that's useful for future negotiations. What's more, the other party may be more willing to disclose the information if they don't think you're in a "selling" mode.

The symbols that represent the close of a negotiation vary across cultures. For example, in Canada, a signed contract is often the symbol of a closed negotiation. At that point, "a deal is a deal" and failure to abide by the contents of the document is considered a breach of contract.

Consider This: Negotiation Tips

Tips for Negotiation Success

- ***Focus on agreement first***. If you reach an impasse during negotiations, sometimes the best recourse is to agree that you disagree on those topics and then focus only on the ones that you can reach an agreement on. Summarize

what you've agreed on, so that everyone feels like they're agreeing, and leave out the points you don't agree on. Then take up those issues again in a different context, such as over dinner or coffee. Dealing with those issues separately may help the negotiation process.

- ***Be patient.*** If you don't have a deadline by which an agreement needs to be reached, use that flexibility to your advantage. The other party may be forced by circumstances to agree to your terms, so if you can be patient you may be able to get the best deal.
  Whose reality? During negotiations, each side is presenting their case—their version of reality. Whose version of reality will prevail? Negotiation brings the relevant facts to the forefront and argues their merit.
- ***Deadlines.*** Research shows that negotiators are more likely to strike a deal by making more concessions and thinking more creatively as deadlines loom than at any other time in the negotiation process.
- ***Be comfortable with silence.*** After you have made an offer, allow the other party to respond. Many people become uncomfortable with silence and feel they need to say something. Wait and listen instead.

Source: Adapted from information in Stuhlmacher et al. (1998).

Avoiding Common Mistakes in Negotiations

Below are several common mistakes that occur during the negotiation process

Winner's Curse or Failing to Negotiate

Winner's curse is said to occur when a negotiator makes a high offer quickly and it's accepted just as quickly, making the negotiator feel as though they have been cheated. Lack of information and expertise are chief among the issues that cause this mistake.

Some people are taught to feel that negotiation is a conflict situation, and these individuals may tend to avoid negotiations to avoid conflict. Research shows that this negotiation avoidance is especially prevalent among women. For example, one study looked at students from Carnegie-Mellon who were getting their first job after earning a master's degree. The study found that only 7% of the women negotiated their offer, while men negotiated 57% of the time (CNN, 2003). The result had profound consequences. Researchers calculate that people who routinely negotiate salary increases will earn over $1 million more by retirement than people who accept an initial offer every time without asking for more (Babcock & Lascheve, 2003). The good news is that it appears that it is possible to increase negotiation efforts and confidence by training people to use effective negotiation skills (Stevens et al., 1993).

It is important to note that women and men don't necessarily negotiate differently; studies show that men negotiate slightly better outcomes than women do in the same situations, but the difference is often nominal. Many studies suggest that failing to negotiate may not explain gender differences in negotiation and that assertive behaviour on the part of female negotiators may result in backlash (Dannals et al., 2021). This is consistent with other research that women are more successful in negotiations when they are representing others rather than themselves (Shonk, 2022). Thus, gender differences in negotiation behaviour are an important area of continued investigation, but it is important to recognize that negotiations are only part of the explanation as to why there is a continued pay gap between women and men in Canada (To explore other factors see, for example, Moyer, 2019).

Letting Ego Get in the Way

When an negotiator is overconfident, they may put too much belief in their ability to be correct. This may lead to high anchors for their initial offers and adjustments. Irrational **escalation of**

commitment occurs when the negotiator continues a course of action long after it's been proven to be the wrong choice. Ego, distorted self-perception, and a need to "win" has lost many negotiators a fair deal.

Thinking only about yourself is another common mistake. People from societies like Canada that value individualism often tend to fall into a self-serving bias in which they over-inflate their own worth and discount the worth of others. This can be a disadvantage during negotiations. Instead, think about why the other person would want to accept the deal. People aren't likely to accept a deal that doesn't offer any benefit to them. Help them meet their own goals while you achieve yours. Integrative outcomes depend on having good listening skills, and if you are thinking only about your own needs, you may miss out on important opportunities. Remember that a good business relationship can only be created and maintained if both parties get a fair deal. This "softer" strategy of appealing to the greater good is often used by women to assert their needs while conforming to societal gender norms (Shonk, 2022).

Having Unrealistic Expectations

Susan Podziba, a professor of mediation at Harvard and MIT, plays broker for some of the toughest negotiations around, from public policy to marital disputes. She takes an integrative approach in the negotiations, identifying goals that are large enough to encompass both sides. As she puts it, "We are never going to be able to sit at a table with the goal of creating peace and harmony between fishermen and conservationists. But we can establish goals big enough to include the key interests of each party and resolve the specific impasse we are currently facing. Setting reasonable goals at the outset that address each party's concerns will decrease the tension in the room, and will improve the chances of reaching an agreement." Those who set unreasonable expectations are more likely to fail.

Getting Overly Emotional

Negotiations, by their very nature, are emotional. The findings regarding the outcomes of expressing anger during negotiations are mixed. Some researchers have found that those who express anger negotiate worse deals than those who do not and that during online negotiations, those parties who encountered anger were more likely to compete than those who did not (Kopelman et al., 2006; Friedman et al., 2004). In a study of online negotiations, words such as *despise*, *disgusted*, *furious*, and *hate* were related to a reduced chance of reaching an agreement (Brett et al., 2007). However, this finding may depend on individual personalities.

Research has also shown that those with more power may be more effective when displaying anger. The weaker party may perceive the anger as potentially signaling that the deal is falling apart and may concede items to help move things along (Van Kleef & Cote, 2007). This holds for online negotiations as well. In a study of 355 eBay disputes in which mediation was requested by one or

both of the parties, similar results were found. Overall, anger hurts the mediation process unless one of the parties was perceived as much more powerful than the other party, in which case anger hastened a deal (Friedman et al., 2004). Another aspect of getting overly emotional is forgetting that facial expressions are universal across cultures, and when your words and facial expressions don't match, you are less likely to be trusted (Hill, 2007; Holloway, 2007).

Letting Past Negative Outcomes Affect the Present Ones

Research shows that negotiators who had previously experienced ineffective negotiations were more likely to have failed negotiations in the future. Those who were unable to negotiate some type of deal in previous negotiation situations tended to have lower outcomes than those who had successfully negotiated deals in the past (O'Connor et al., 2005). The key to remember is that there is a tendency to let the past repeat itself. Being aware of this tendency allows you to overcome it. Be vigilant to examine the issues at hand and not to be overly swayed by past experiences, especially while you are starting out as a negotiator and have limited experiences.

Mythical Fixed Pie

Taking a distributive approach to bargaining can lead to failure when the negotiator assumes that what's good for the other side is bad for their side. Competitiveness can get in the way of coming up with a creative solution that benefits all parties.

Third-Party Negotiations

For every negotiation that goes well, there is one that is not successful. In the last section, we talked about some of the ways a negotiation can go wrong. At this point, a third party negotiator may be brought in to help parties find an agreement. There are four basic third-party negotiator roles: consultant, conciliator, mediator, and arbitrator. Each of these third-party negotiator roles provides a specific service for the parties who have employed them. Let's take a look at each role and how it functions.

Consultants

A **consultant** is a third-party negotiator who is skilled in conflict management and can add their knowledge and skill to the mix to help the negotiating parties arrive at a conclusion. A consultant will help parties learn to understand and work with each other, so this approach has a longer-term focus to build bridges between the conflicting parties.

A real estate agent is an excellent example of a third-party negotiator who is considered a consultant. People who are looking to buy a house might not understand the ins and outs of money deposit, title insurance and document fees. A real estate agent will not only explain all of that, but prepare the purchase agreement and make the offer on behalf of their client.

Conciliators

A **conciliator** is a trusted third party who provides communication between the negotiating parties. This approach is used frequently in international, labour, family and community disputes. Conciliators often engage in fact finding, interpreting messages, and persuading parties to develop an agreement. Very often conciliators act only as a communication conduit between the parties and don't actually perform any specific negotiation duties.

Mediators

A **mediator** is a neutral, third party who helps facilitate a negotiated solution. The mediator may use reasoning and persuasion, or may suggest alternatives. Parties using a mediator must be motivated to settle the issue, or mediation will not work. Mediation differs from arbitration in that there is not a guaranteed settlement.

Mediators are most commonly found as third-party negotiators for labour disputes. If a labour union and a company come together to discuss contract terms, a mediator may be employed to assist in ironing out all the issues that need extra attention—like vacation days and percentage of raise.

One of the advantages of mediation is that the mediator helps the parties design their own solutions, including resolving issues that are important to both parties, not just the ones under specific dispute. Interestingly, sometimes mediation solves a conflict even if no resolution is reached. Here's a quote from Avis Ridley-Thomas, the founder and administrator of the Los Angeles City Attorney's Dispute Resolution Program, who explains, "Even if there is no agreement reached in mediation, people are happy that they engaged in the process. It often opens up the possibility for resolution in ways that people had not anticipated" (Layne, 1999). An independent survey showed 96 percent of all respondents and 91 percent of all charging parties who used mediation would use it again if offered (Layne, 1999).

You Know It's Time for a Mediator When...

- The parties are unable to find a solution themselves.
- Personal differences are standing in the way of a successful solution.

- The parties have stopped talking with one another.
- Obtaining a quick resolution is important.

Source: Adapted from information in Crawley (1994).

Arbitrators

In contrast to mediation, in which parties work with the mediator to arrive at a solution, in arbitration the parties submit the dispute to the third-party arbitrator. It is the arbitrator who makes the final decision. The **arbitrator** is a neutral third party, but the decision made by the arbitrator is final (the decision is called the "award"). Awards are made in writing and are binding to the parties involved in the case (American Arbitration Association, 2007). It is common to see mediation followed by arbitration. Arbitration can be voluntary or forced on the parties of a negotiation by law or contract. The arbitrator's power varies according to the rules set by the negotiators. The arbitrator might be limited to choosing one of the party's offers and enforcing it, or they may be able to freely suggest other solutions. Arbitration is often used in union-management grievance conflicts.

Case Study

See Appendix A: Case Studies

- Case Study 2: Salary Negotiation at College Corp

Adapted Works

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2.5 Labour Relations

In this section:

- Unions in Canada: A Brief History
- Union Structure
- Legislation and Unionization
- Collective Bargaining
- The Grievance Process

Unions in Canada: A Brief History

At some time in your career in Canada, you may encounter labour relations/negotiations in a unionized work environment. According to Statistics Canada (2022), 30.9% of employees in the Canadian workforce are unionized employees. Rates of unionized workplaces vary by industry and also by geographical region (StatCan, 2021). The purpose of this section is to give students some background about unions and negotiations within a unionized work environment.

A **labour union**, or union, is defined as workers banding together to meet common goals, such as better pay, benefits, or promotion rules.

Let's discuss some basic information about unions before we discuss the unionization process.

Trade unions were developed in Europe during the Industrial Revolution, when employees had little skill and thus the entirety of power was shifted to the employer. When this power shifted, many employees were treated unfairly and underpaid. In the United States, unionization increased with the building of railroads in the late 1860s. Wages in the railroad industry were low and the threat of injury or death was high, as was the case in many manufacturing facilities with little or no safety laws and regulations in place. As a result, the Bortherhood of Locomotive Engineers and several other brotherhoods (focused on specific tasks only, such as conductors and brakemen) were formed to protect workers' rights, although many workers were fired because of their membership.

Craft unions first arose in Canada in the 1820s; these are made up of a specific trade or skilled workers (e.g. printers, shoemakers, masons, bakers and tailors). The first union action in Canada

occurred when the Toronto Typographical Union went out on strike in 1872 when its demands for standardized shorter working days were ignored. The rapid industrialization associated with the first World War, led to a rapid growth of the labour movement in the country. The failure and violence of the Winnipeg General Strike (1919) combined with the Depression of the 1930s hurt Canadian unionization until World War II. The post-war era saw union membership soar to 4 million members in the 1990's. Part of this growth is related to the unionization of government employees that grew rapidly from 1965 to the present. Today, Canada has a relatively high unionization rate.

To read more about the history of unions in Canada, you may wish to read Craft and Industrial Unions.

Union Structure

Unions have a pyramidal structure much like that of large corporations. At the bottom are locals that serve workers in a particular geographical area. Certain members are designated as stewards to serve as go-betweens in disputes between workers and supervisors. Locals are usually organized into national or regional unions that assist with local contract negotiations, organize new locals, help negotiate contracts, and lobby government bodies on issues of importance to organized labour. In turn, national or regional unions may be linked by a labour federation which provides assistance to member unions and serves as a principal political organ for organized labour. Here are the basic units that compose unions:

- **Local** represents workers in their own workplace or town (e.g., Quebec Crane Operator, Local 791G)
- **Parent union** decides on union policy for all locals across the province, country or world (e.g., CSN, FTQ)
- **National unions** represent union members across the country (e.g., PSA, Unifor).
- **International unions** represent union members in more than one country (e.g., UAW, Teamsters).
- **Central labour organizations** do not negotiate union contracts but lobby government to pass laws favourable to unions (e.g., Canadian Labour Congress).

Working with Labour Unions as Management

First and foremost, when working with labour unions, a clear understanding of the contract is imperative for all managers. The contract (also called the collective bargaining agreement) is the guiding document for all decisions relating to employees. All human resources (HR) professionals and managers should have intimate knowledge of the document and be aware of the components

of the contract that can affect dealings with employees. The agreement outlines all requirements of managers and usually outlines how discipline, promotion, and transfers will work.

Because as managers we will be working with members of the union on a daily basis, a positive relationship can not only assist the day-to-day operations but also create an easier bargaining process. Solicitation of input from the union before decisions are made can be one step to creating this positive relationship. Transparent communication is another way to achieve this goal.

Legislation and Unionization

The path to unionization and the process of maintaining a union is heavily regulated. These regulations can greatly vary from one legislation to another. In Canada, the system of collective bargaining is embodied in federal and provincial labour relations acts and labour codes. Canadian workers have the right to join trade unions, which may be certified to collectively bargain conditions of employment with their employers on their behalf. The Federal *Public Service Labour Relations Act* (*PSLRA*) is the law that regulates the collective bargaining and grievance adjudication systems in the federal public service. Provincial legislation, such as the *Labour Relations Code* in British Columbia, the *Labour Act* of Prince Edward Island, and the Quebec *Labour Code*, regulate various aspects of labour relations for most workplaces.

The creation of a union follows has to follow a fairly strict process which is outlined in the table below.

The Unionization Process

Table 2.9 The Unionization Process

Union and employees make contact	As a result of employee dissatisfaction, union and employees make contact and discuss possibility of joining forces.
Initial Organization Meeting	Initial meeting with union is scheduled to gather employee support.
Formation of organizing committee	Local union leadership is identified. Its objectives is to organize a campaign to obtain the signature of a majority of workers willing to join the union.
Application to Labour Relations Board	Once a majority of these signatures are gathered, the workers can apply for official recognition to the Labour Relation Board.
Certificate is issues by the Board	After checking the process and the signatures, the Board certifies the union.
Election of bargaining committee and contract negotiation	After having been certified, the first step for the newly formed union is to elect a bargaining team that will be tasked with negotiating a contract with the employer.

Source: Human Resources Management – Canadian Edition

It is advisable for HR and management to be educated on what can legally and illegally be said during this process. It is illegal to threaten or intimidate employees if they are discussing a union. Employers cannot threaten job, pay, or benefits loss as a result of forming a union.

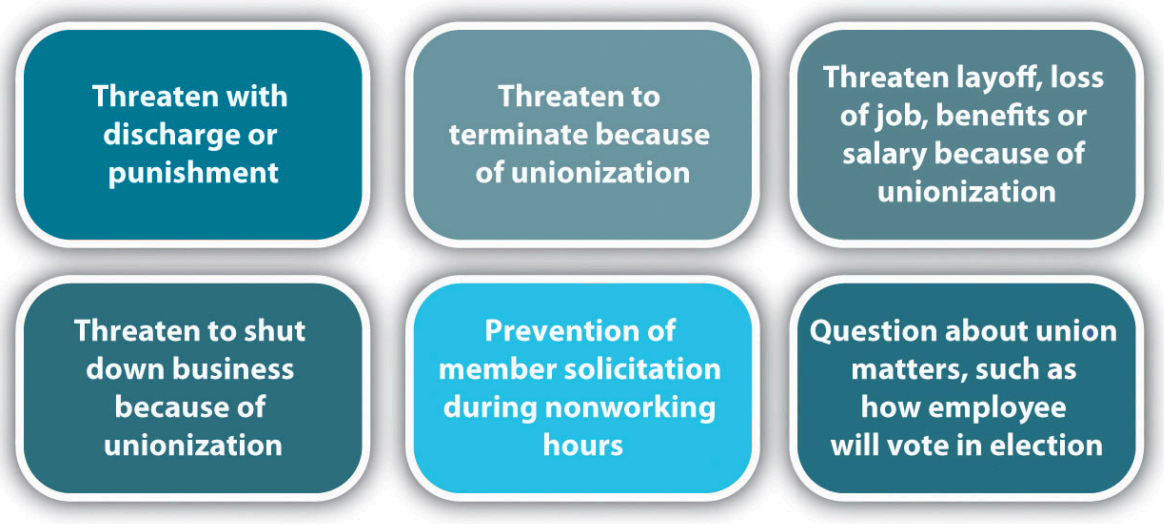

Figure 2.7 Things That Shouldn't Be Said to Employees during a Unionization Process. Image: Saylor Academy. Human Relations, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

Collective Bargaining

When employees of an organization vote to unionize, the process for collective bargaining begins. **Collective bargaining** is the process of negotiations between the company and representatives of the union. The goal is for management and the union to reach a contract agreement, which is put into place for a specified period of time. Once this time is up, a new contract is negotiated. In this section, we will discuss the components of the collective bargaining agreement.

In any bargaining agreement, certain management rights are not negotiable, including the right to manage and operate the business, hire, promote, or discharge employees. However, in the negotiated agreement there may be a process outlined by the union for how these processes should work. Management rights also include the ability of the organization to direct the work of the employees and to establish operational policies.

Another important point in the collective bargaining process is the aspect of union security. Obviously, it is in the union's best interest to collect dues from members and recruit as many new members as possible. In the contract, a checkoff provision may be negotiated. This provision occurs

when the employer, on behalf of the union, automatically deducts dues from union members' paychecks. This ensures that a steady stream of dues is paid to the union.

In a collective bargaining process, both parties are legally bound to bargain in good faith. This means they have a mutual obligation to participate actively in the deliberations and indicate a desire to find a basis for agreement. There are three main classification of bargaining topics: mandatory, permissive, and illegal. Wages, health and safety, management rights, work conditions, and benefits fall into the mandatory topics category. Permissive topics are those that are not required but may be brought up during the process. An example might include the requirement of drug testing for candidates or the required tools that must be provided to the employee to perform the job, such as a cellular phone or computer. It is important to note that while management is not required by labour laws to bargain on these issues, refusing to do so could affect employee morale. We can also classify bargaining issues as illegal topics, which obviously cannot be discussed. These types of illegal issues may be of a discriminatory nature or anything that would be considered illegal outside the agreement.

Some examples of bargaining topics include:

- Pay rate and structure
- Health benefits
- Incentive programs
- Job classification
- Performance assessment procedure
- Vacation time and sick leave
- Health plans
- Layoff procedures
- Seniority
- Training process
- Severance pay
- Tools provided to employees
- Process for new applicants

The Collective Bargaining Process

The collective bargaining process has five main steps; we will discuss each of these steps in turn.

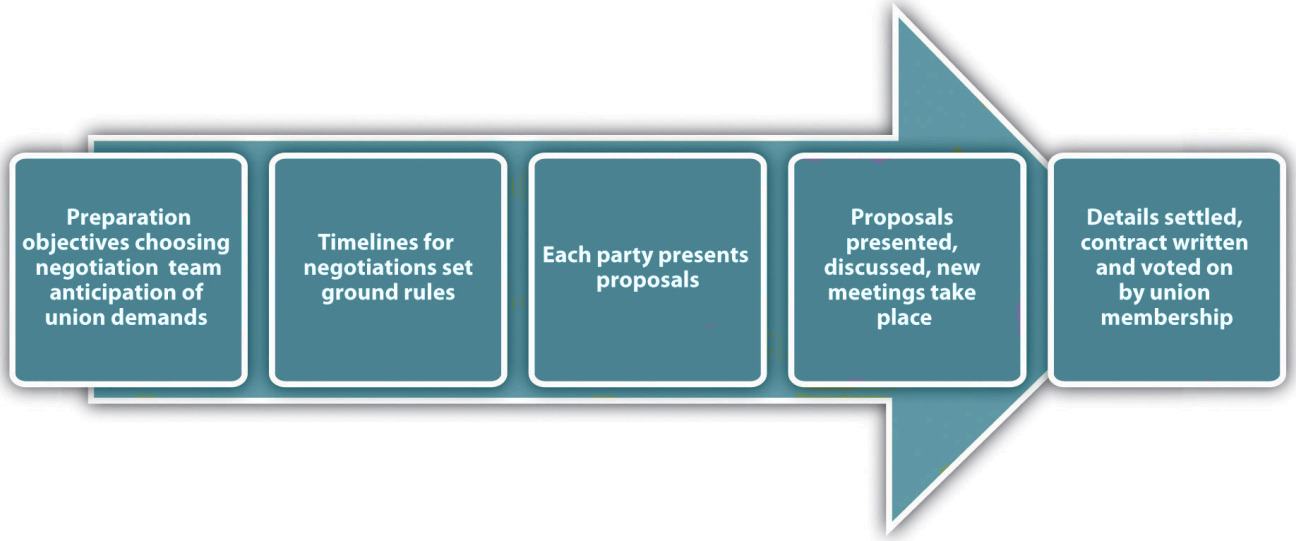

Figure 2.8 Steps in Collective Bargaining. Image: Saylor Academy. Human Relations, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

Steps in Collective Bargaining

The first step is the preparation of both parties. The negotiation team should consist of individuals with knowledge of the organization and the skills to be an effective negotiator. An understanding of the working conditions and dissatisfaction with working conditions is an important part of this preparation step. Establishing objectives for the negotiation and reviewing the old contract are key components to this step. Both sides should also prepare and anticipate demands, to better prepare for compromises.

The second step of the process involves both parties agreeing on how the timelines will be set for the negotiations. In addition, setting ground rules for how the negotiation will occur is an important step, as it lays the foundation for the work to come.

In the third step, each party comes to the table with proposals. It will likely involve initial opening statements and options that exist to resolve any situations that exist. The key to a successful proposal is to come to the table with a “let’s make this work” attitude. An initial discussion is had and then each party generally goes back to determine which requests it can honor and which it can’t. At this point, another meeting is generally set up to continue further discussion.

Once the group comes to an agreement or settlement (which may take many months and proposals), a new contract is written and the union members vote on whether to accept the agreement. If the union doesn’t agree, then the process begins all over again.

Ramifications of a Bargaining Impasse

When the two parties are unable to reach consensus on the collective bargaining agreement, this is called a **bargaining impasse.** Various kinds of strikes are used to show the displeasure of workers regarding a bargaining impasse. An economic strike is a strike stemming from unhappiness about the economic conditions during contract negotiations. An unfair labour practices strike can happen during negotiations. The goal of an unfair labour practice strike is to get the organization to cease committing what the union believes to be an unfair labour practice. A bargaining impasse could mean the union goes on strike or a lockout occurs. The goal of a lockout, which prevents workers from working, is to put pressure on the union to accept the contract. A lockout can only be legally conducted when the existing collective bargaining agreement has expired and there is truly an impasse in contract negotiations.

Similarly, the goal of a strike is to put pressure on the organization to accept the proposed contract. Some organizations will impose a lockout if workers engage in slowdowns, an intentional reduction in productivity. Some unions will engage in a slowdown instead of a strike, because the workers still earn pay, while in a strike they do not. A sick-out is when members of a union call in sick, which may be illegal since they are using allotted time, while a walk-out is an unannounced refusal to perform work. However, this type of tactic may be illegal if the conduct is irresponsible or indefensible, according to a judge. Jurisdictional strikes are used to put pressure on an employer to assign work to members of one union versus another (if there are two unions within the same organization) or to put pressure on management to recognize one union representation when it currently recognizes another. The goal of a sick-out strike is to show the organization how unproductive the company would be if the workers did go on strike. Sympathy strikes are work stoppages by other unions designed to show support for the union on strike. While they are not illegal, they may violate the terms of the collective bargaining agreement.

The Grievance Process

A violation of the contract terms or perception of violation normally results in a grievance. A grievance procedure or process is normally created within the collective bargaining agreement. The **grievance procedure** outlines the process by which grievances over contract violations will be

handled. As you have probably already identified, the grievance procedure is a formalized conflict. Learning how to handle this type of conflict takes self-management skills—or the ability to avoid taking things personally—and relationship management skills.

Most grievances fall within one of four categories. There are individual or personal grievances, in which one member of the union feels he or she has been mistreated. A group grievance occurs if several union members have been mistreated in the same way. A principle grievance deals with basic contract issues surrounding seniority or pay, for example. If an employee or group is not willing to formally file a grievance, the union may file a union or policy grievance on behalf of that individual or group.

The important things to remember about a grievance are that it should not be taken personally and, if used correctly, can be a fair, clear process to solving problems within the organization.

Procedures for Grievances

The grievance procedure is specific to each contract, so we will discuss the process in generalities. A grievance is normally initiated by an employee and then handled by union representatives. Most contracts specify how the grievance is to be initiated, the steps to complete the procedure, and identification of representatives from both sides who will hear the grievance. Normally, the human relations department is involved in most steps of this process. The basic process is shown in Figure 2.9.

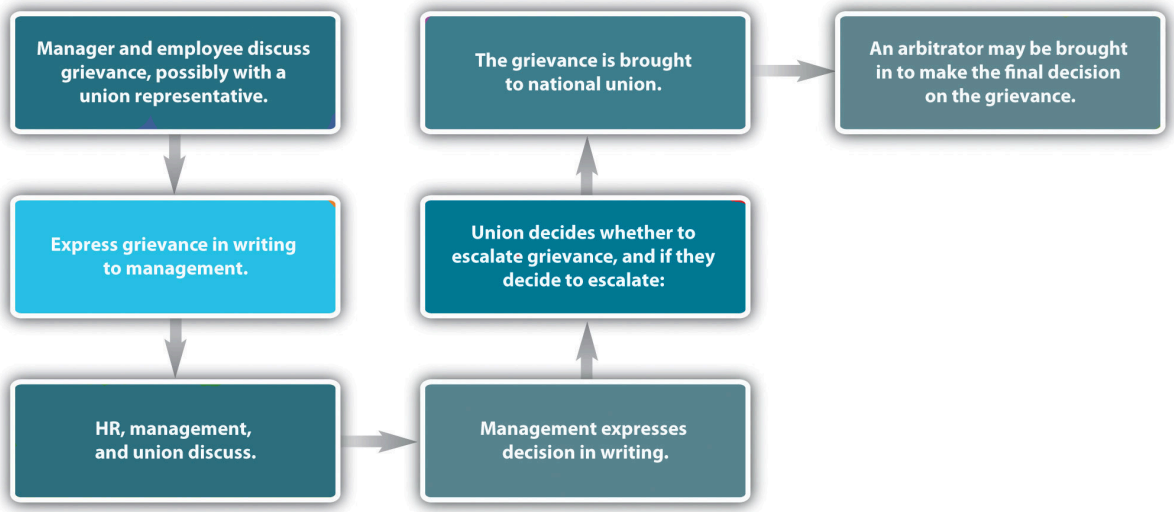

Figure 2.9 Steps in Collective Bargaining. Image: Saylor Academy. Human Relations, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

Conflict in these situations can result in major issues on both sides, such as grievances and strikes. Employing effective communication skills can reduce conflict and raise productivity in a union environment. The first step is normally an informal conversation with the manager, employee, and possibly a union representative. Many grievances never go further than this step, because often the complaint is a result of a misunderstanding. If the complaint is unresolved at this point, the union will normally initiate the grievance process by formally expressing it in writing. At this time, HR and management may discuss the grievance with a union representative. If the result is unsatisfactory to both parties, the complaint may be brought to the company's union grievance committee. This can be in the form of an informal meeting or a more formal hearing.After discussion, management will then submit a formalized response to the grievance. It may decide to remedy the grievance or may outline why the complaint does not violate the contract. At this point, the process is escalated.Further discussion will likely occur, and if management and the union cannot come to an agreement, the dispute will normally be brought to a national union officer, who will work with management to try and resolve the issue. A mediator may be called in, who acts as an impartial third party and tries to resolve the issue.

If no resolution develops, an arbitrator might be asked to review the evidence and make a binding decision in the situation. Thus, arbitration is the final aspect of a grievance.

Some examples of grievances might include the following:

- One employee was promoted over another, even though he had seniority.
- An employee doesn't have the tools needed to perform his or her job, as outlined in the contract.
- An employee was terminated, although the termination violated the rules of the contract.
- An employee was improperly trained on chemical handling in a department.

Adapted Works

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2.6 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms

Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **The conflict process consists of four stages:** frustration, conceptualization, behaviour, and outcomes.
- **Conflict can often escalate in similar patterns.** Using self-awareness and communication, it is possible to de-escalate tense situations.
- **The Thomas and Kilmann model identifies five approaches to conflict** based on commitment to goals and relationships. Each of these approaches to conflict can be in/appropriate depending on the characteristics of the situation and the parties involved in the conflict.
- **Ineffective conflict resolution strategies include** nonaction, administrative orbiting, due process nonaction, secrecy, and character assassination.
- **Strategies for preventing conflict include** (1) emphasizing organization-wide goals; (2) providing stable, well-structured tasks; (3) facilitating intergroup communication; and (4) avoiding win-lose situations.
- **Strategies for reducing conflict include** (1) physical separation, (2) use of rules and regulations, (3) limiting intergroup interaction, (4) use of integrators, (5) confrontation and negotiation, (6) third-party consultation, (7) rotation of members, (8) identification of interdependent tasks and superordinate goals, and (9) use of intergroup training.
- **Negotiation is the process by which individuals or groups attempt to realize their goals** by bargaining with another party who has at least some control over goal attainment.
- **Different negotiation strategies include** the distributive approach (fixed-pie approach) and the integrative approach (expanding-the-pie approach).
- **Negotiation consists of five phases** that include investigation, determining your BATNA, presentation, bargaining, and closure.
- **Research shows that some common mistakes made during negotiations include** accepting the first offer made, letting egos get in the way, having unrealistic expectations, getting overly emotional, and letting past negative outcomes affect the present ones.
- **Third-party negotiators are sometimes needed** when two sides cannot agree.
- **Legislation has been created over time** to support both labor unions and the companies who have labor unions.
- **Collective bargaining is the process of negotiating the contact with union representatives.**

Collective bargaining, to be legal, must always be done in good faith. There are three categories of collective bargaining issues. Mandatory issues might include pay and benefits. Permissive bargaining items may include things such as drug testing or the required equipment the organization must supply to employees. Illegal issues are those things that cannot be discussed, which can include issues that could be considered discriminatory.

- **The collective bargaining process can take time.** Both parties prepare for the process by gathering information and reviewing the old contract. They then set timelines for the bargaining and reveal their wants and negotiate those wants. A bargaining impasse occurs when members cannot come to an agreement.
  When a bargaining impasse occurs, a strike or lockout of workers can occur. These are both strategies that can be used to encourage the other side to agree to collective bargaining terms.
- **The grievance process is a formal process that addresses any complaints about contract violations**. The grievance process can consist of any number of steps. First, the complaint is discussed with the manager, employee, and union representative. If no solution occurs, the grievance is put into writing by the union. Management then expresses its decision in writing to the union. If the union decides to escalate the grievance, the grievance may be brought to the national union for a decision. At this point, an arbitrator may be brought in, suitable to both parties, to make the final binding decision.
- **Grievances should not be taken personally** and should be considered a fair way in which to solve problems that can come up between the union and management.

Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/conflictmanagement/?p=72#h5p-4

Key Terms

Key terms from this chapter include:

- **Accommodating approach to conflict**
- **Arbitrator**
- **Avoidance approach to conflict**
- **Bargaining impasse**
- **BATNA**
- **Collaborating approach to conflict**
- **Collective bargaining**
- **Compromising approach to conflict**
- **Conciliator**
- **Consultant**
- **Distributive bargaining**
- **Escalation of commitment**
- **Grievance procedure**
- **Integrated approach to bargaining.**
- **Labour union**
- **Mediator**
- **Negotiation**
- **Winner's curse**

CHAPTER 3: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND POLICIES

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

- Define organizational culture.
- Compare the three levels of organizational culture.
- Recognize the importance of organizational culture on behaviours and outcomes.
- Describe the process of creating and maintaining organizational culture.
- Explain the influence of external factors on organizational culture.
- Review the process for changing culture.
- Explore common reactions to change.
- List common reasons that employees are resistant to change in the workplace.
- Describe strategies for effectively executing change.
- Summarize popular frameworks for assessing organizational culture.
- Analyze the role of codes in enacting workplace culture and behaviours.
- Identify steps in the processive discipline and termination processes.

In this chapter, we will examine organizational culture – its characteristics, how its created, and strategies used to maintain or change culture. We will discuss several popular frameworks for assessing organizational culture. Finally, we will examine formalized codes, discipline, and termination and their role in maintaining expected standards of behaviour.

3.1 Organizational Culture

In this section:

- Organizational Culture Defined
- Levels of Organizational Culture
- Strength of Culture
- The Importance of Organizational Culture

Organizational Culture Defined

Organizational culture refers to a system of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs that show employees what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior (Chatman & Cha, 2003; Kerr & Slocum, 2005).

These values have a strong influence on employee behavior as well as organizational performance. In fact, the term organizational culture was made popular in the 1980s when Peters and Waterman's best-selling book *In Search of Excellence* made the argument that company success could be attributed to an organizational culture that was decisive, customer oriented, empowering, and people oriented. Since then, organizational culture has become the subject of numerous research studies, books, and articles.

Culture is by and large invisible to individuals. Even though it affects all employee behaviors, thinking, and behavioral patterns, individuals tend to become more aware of their organization's culture when they have the opportunity to compare it to other organizations. If you have worked in multiple organizations, you can attest to this. Maybe the first organization you worked was a place where employees dressed formally. It was completely inappropriate to question your boss in a meeting; such behaviors would only be acceptable in private. It was important to check your email at night as well as during weekends or else you would face questions on Monday about where you were and whether you were sick. Contrast this company to a second organization where employees dress more casually. You are encouraged to raise issues and question your boss or peers, even in front of clients. What is more important is not to maintain impressions but to arrive at the best solution to any problem. It is widely known that family life is very important, so it is acceptable

to leave work a bit early to go to a family event. Additionally, you are not expected to do work at night or over the weekends unless there is a deadline. These two hypothetical organizations illustrate that organizations have different cultures, and culture dictates what is right and what is acceptable behavior as well as what is wrong and unacceptable.

Organizational Subcultures

So far, we have assumed that a company has a single culture that is shared throughout the organization. However, you may have realized that this is an oversimplification. In reality there might be multiple cultures within any given organization. For example, people working on the sales floor may experience a different culture from that experienced by people working in the warehouse. A culture that emerges within different departments, branches, or geographic locations is called a **subculture.** Subcultures may arise from the personal characteristics of employees and managers, as well as the different conditions under which work is performed. Within the same organization, marketing and manufacturing departments often have different cultures such that the marketing department may emphasize innovativeness, whereas the manufacturing department may have a shared emphasis on detail orientation.

In an interesting study, researchers uncovered five different subcultures within a single police organization. These subcultures differed depending on the level of danger involved and the type of background experience the individuals held, including "crime-fighting street professionals" who did what their job required without rigidly following protocol and "anti-military social workers" who felt that most problems could be resolved by talking to the parties involved (Jermier et al., 1991). Research has shown that employee perceptions regarding subcultures were related to employee commitment to the organization (Lok et al., 2005). Therefore, in addition to understanding the broader organization's values, managers will need to make an effort to understand subculture values to see its impact on workforce behavior and attitudes. Moreover, as an employee, you need to understand the type of subculture in the department where you will work in addition to understanding the company's overall culture.

Sometimes, a subculture may take the form of a **counterculture.** Defined as shared values and beliefs that are in direct opposition to the values of the broader organizational culture (Kerr & Slocum, 2005), countercultures are often shaped around a charismatic leader. For example, within a largely bureaucratic organization, an enclave of innovativeness and risk taking may emerge within a single department. A counterculture may be tolerated by the organization as long as it is bringing in results and contributing positively to the effectiveness of the organization. However, its existence may be perceived as a threat to the broader organizational culture.

Levels of Organizational Culture

Organizational culture consists of some aspects that are relatively more visible, as well as aspects

that may lie below one's conscious awareness. Organizational culture can be thought of as consisting of three interrelated levels (Schein, 1992).

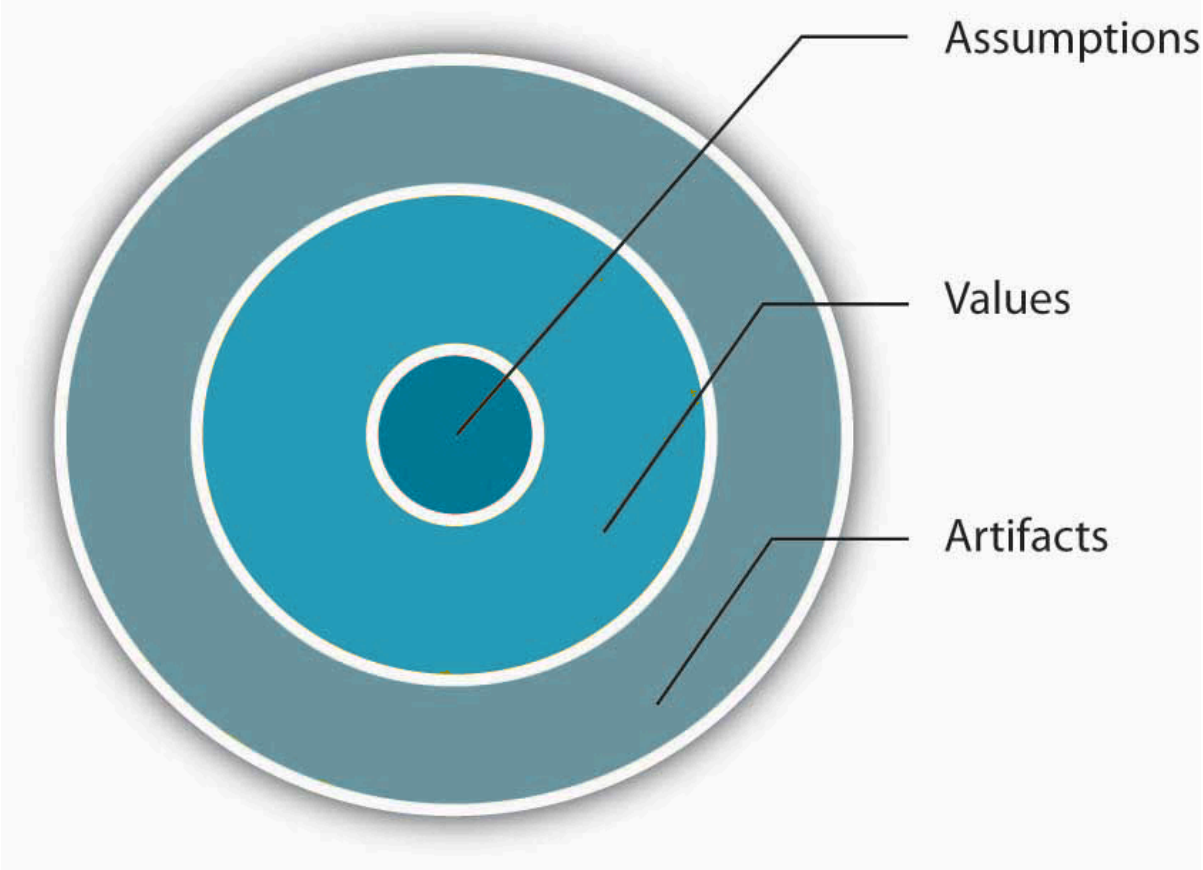

Figure 3.1 Three levels of culture. Image: University of Minnesota, Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

At the deepest level, below our awareness lie basic assumptions. **Assumptions** are taken for granted, and they reflect beliefs about human nature and reality. At the second level, values exist. **Values** are shared principles, standards, and goals. Finally, at the surface we have **artifacts**, or visible, tangible aspects of organizational culture. If assumptions and values are not shared by everyone or there are basic differences in assumptions between departments or subcultures, this may be a source of conflict within the organization. Similarly, differences in your own personal assumptions and values can create feelings of discomfort and intrapersonal conflict if they do not align with organizational culture.

For example, in an organization one of the basic assumptions employees and managers share might be that happy employees benefit their organizations. This assumption could translate into values such as social equality, high quality relationships, and having fun. The artifacts reflecting such values might be an executive "open door" policy, an office layout that includes open spaces and gathering areas equipped with pool tables, and frequent company picnics in the workplace. For example, Alcoa

Inc. designed their headquarters to reflect the values of making people more visible and accessible, and to promote collaboration (Stegmeier, 2008).

Understanding the organization's culture may start from observing its artifacts: the physical environment, employee interactions, company policies, reward systems, and other observable characteristics. When you are interviewing for a position, observing the physical environment, how people dress, where they relax, and how they talk to others is definitely a good start to understanding the company's culture. However, simply looking at these tangible aspects is unlikely to give a full picture of the organization. An important chunk of what makes up culture exists below one's degree of awareness. The values and, at a deeper level, the assumptions that shape the organization's culture can be uncovered by observing how employees interact and the choices they make, as well as by inquiring about their beliefs and perceptions regarding what is right and appropriate behavior.

Let's Practice: The Organizational Cultural Iceberg Activity

These levels of organizational culture are sometimes portrayed as an iceberg, with artifacts appearing as the tip of the iceberg above the surface of the water, with deeper layers of values and assumptions being placed under the surface of the water. Practice your understanding of these elements of culture by dragging the various elements of organizational culture either above or below the surface of the water.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/conflictmanagement/?p=80#h5p-14

Strength of Culture

A strong culture is one that is shared by organizational members (Arogyaswamy & Byles, 1987; Chatman & Cha, 2003). In other words, if most employees in the organization show consensus regarding the values of the company, it is possible to talk about the existence of a strong culture. A culture's content is more likely to affect the way employees think and behave when the culture in question is strong. For example, cultural values emphasizing customer service will lead to higher

quality customer service if there is widespread agreement among employees on the importance of customer service-related values (Schneider et al., 2002).

It is important to realize that a strong culture may act as an asset or liability for the organization, depending on the types of values that are shared. For example, imagine a company with a culture that is strongly outcome oriented. If this value system matches the organizational environment, the company outperforms its competitors. On the other hand, a strong outcome-oriented culture coupled with unethical behaviors and an obsession with quantitative performance indicators may be detrimental to an organization's effectiveness. An extreme example of this dysfunctional type of strong culture is Enron.

A strong culture may sometimes outperform a weak culture because of the consistency of expectations. In a strong culture, members know what is expected of them, and the culture serves as an effective control mechanism on member behaviors. Research shows that strong cultures lead to more stable corporate performance in stable environments. However, in volatile environments, the advantages of culture strength disappear (Sorensen, 2002).

One limitation of a strong culture is the difficulty of changing a strong culture. If an organization with widely shared beliefs decides to adopt a different set of values, unlearning the old values and learning the new ones will be a challenge, because employees will need to adopt new ways of thinking, behaving, and responding to critical events. A strong culture may also be a liability during a merger. During mergers and acquisitions, companies inevitably experience a clash of cultures, as well as a clash of structures and operating systems.

Culture clash becomes more problematic if both parties have unique and strong cultures. For example, during the merger of Daimler AG with Chrysler Motors LLC to create DaimlerChrysler AG, the differing strong cultures of each company acted as a barrier to effective integration. Daimler had a strong engineering culture that was more hierarchical and emphasized routinely working long hours. Daimler employees were used to being part of an elite organization, evidenced by flying first class on all business trips. On the other hand, Chrysler had a sales culture where employees and managers were used to autonomy, working shorter hours, and adhering to budget limits that meant only the elite flew first class. The different ways of thinking and behaving in these two companies introduced a number of unanticipated problems during the integration process (Badrtalei & Bates, 2007; Bower, 2001). Differences in culture may be part of the reason that, in the end, the merger didn't work out.

The Importance of Organizational Culture

An organization's culture may be one of its strongest assets, as well as its biggest liability. In fact, it has been argued that organizations that have a rare and hard-to-imitate organizational culture benefit from it as a competitive advantage (Barney, 1986). Kihlstrom (2020) goes as far to assert that culture is an important as strategy when it comes to organizational performance.

Company performance may benefit from the benefits of shared values provided by culture when they have a match to the company and the industry at large (Arogyaswamy & Byles, 1987). For example, if a company is in the high-tech industry, having a culture that encourages innovativeness and adaptability will support its performance. However, if a company in the same industry has a culture characterized by stability, a high respect for tradition, and a strong preference for upholding rules and procedures, the company may suffer as a result of its culture. In other words, just as having the "right" culture may be a competitive advantage for an organization, having the "wrong" culture may lead to performance difficulties, may be responsible for organizational failure, and may act as a barrier preventing the company from changing and taking risks.

In addition to having implications for organizational performance, organizational culture is an effective control mechanism for dictating employee behavior. Culture is in fact a more powerful way of controlling and managing employee behaviors than organizational rules and regulations. When problems are unique, rules tend to be less helpful. Organizations can (and should) create formalized policies and procedures to deal with conflict (We will talk more about policies in future sections of this chapter). In addition, having a culture of respect, civility, and inclusion will help to keep workplace conflict functional and productive.

Adapted Works

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3.2 Creating, Maintaining, and Changing Culture

In this section:

- Creating and Maintaining Organizational Culture
- External Influences on Organizational Culture
- Changing Organizational Culture

Creating and Maintaining Organizational Culture

Where do cultures come from? Understanding this question is important so that you know how they can be maintained or changed. An organization's culture is shaped as the organization faces external and internal challenges and learns how to deal with them. When the organization's way of doing business provides a successful adaptation to environmental challenges and ensures success, those values are retained. These values and ways of doing business are taught to new members as the way to do business (Schein, 1992).

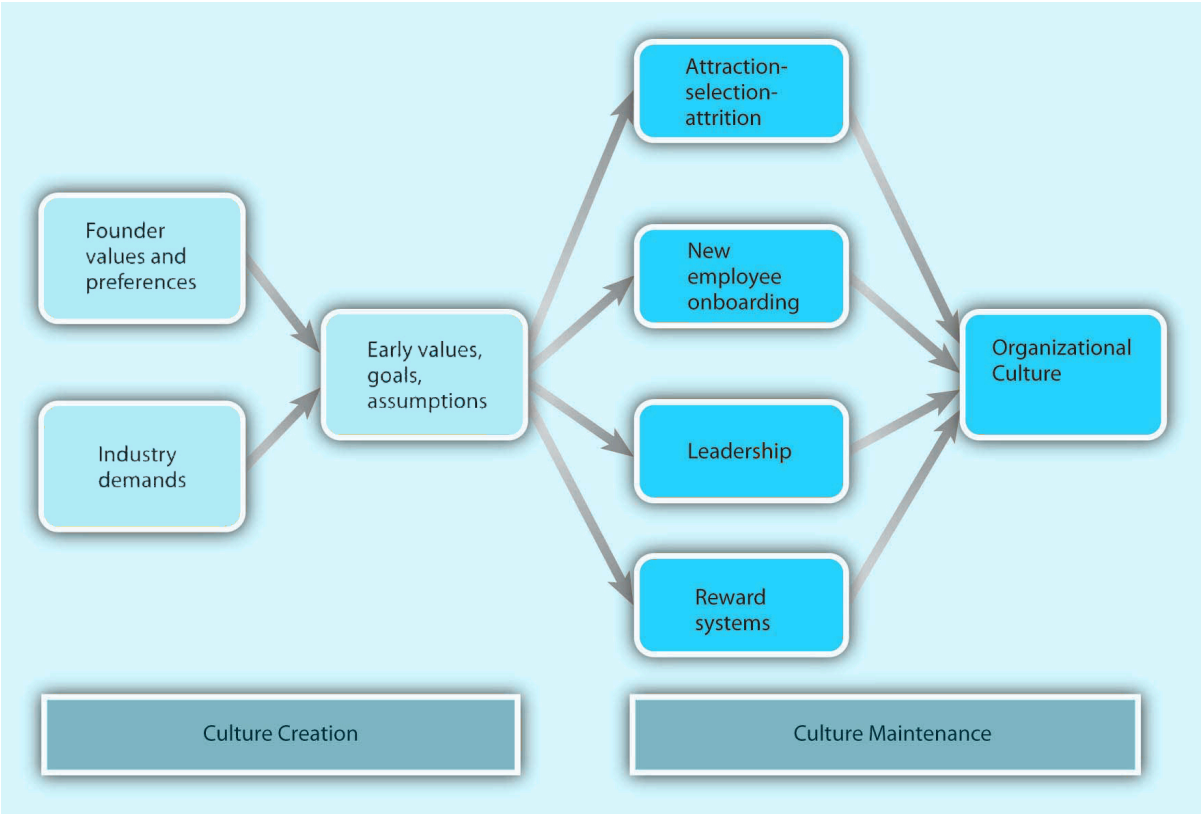

Figure 3.2 Culture Creation and Maintenance. Image: University of Minnesota, Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

Creating Organizational Culture

The factors that are most important in the creation of an organization's culture include founders' values, preferences, and industry demands. Let's talk about each of these factors in more detail.

Founder's Values

A company's culture, particularly during its early years, is inevitably tied to the personality, background, and values of its founder or founders, as well as their vision for the future of the organization. This explains one reason why culture is so hard to change: It is shaped in the early days of a company's history. When entrepreneurs establish their own businesses, the way they want to do business determines the organization's rules, the structure set-up in the company, and the people they hire to work with them.

As a case in point, some of the existing corporate values of the ice cream company Ben & Jerry's Homemade Holdings Inc. can easily be traced to the personalities of its founders Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield. In 1978, the two ex-hippie high school friends opened up their first ice-cream shop in a renovated gas station in Burlington, Vermont. Their strong social convictions led them to buy

only from the local farmers and devote a certain percentage of their profits to charities. The core values they instilled in their business can still be observed in the current company's devotion to social activism and sustainability, its continuous contributions to charities, use of environmentally friendly materials, and dedication to creating jobs in low-income areas. Even though the company was acquired by Unilever PLC in 2000, the social activism component remains unchanged and Unilever has expressed its commitment to maintaining it (Kiger, 2005; Rubis et al., 2005; Smalley, 2007; Ben & Jerry's, 2021).

There are many other examples of founders' instilling their own strongly held beliefs or personalities to the businesses they found. Microsoft's aggressive nature is often traced back to Bill Gates and his competitiveness. According to one anecdote, his competitive nature even extends to his personal life such that one of his pastimes is to compete with his wife in solving identical jigsaw puzzles to see who can finish faster (Schlender, 1998). Similarly, Joseph Pratt, a history and management professor, notes, "There definitely is an Exxon way. This is John D. Rockefeller's company, this is Standard Oil of New Jersey, this is the one that is most closely shaped by Rockefeller's traditions. Their values are very clear. They are deeply embedded. They have roots in 100 years of corporate history" (Mouawad, 2008).

Founder values become part of the corporate culture to the degree they help the company be successful. For example, the social activism of Ben & Jerry's was instilled in the company because founders strongly believed in these issues. However, these values probably would not be surviving so many decades later if they had not helped the company in its initial stages. In the case of Ben & Jerry's, these charitable values helped distinguish their brand from larger corporate brands and attracted a loyal customer base. Thus, by providing a competitive advantage, these values were retained as part of the corporate culture and were taught to new members as the right way to do business. Similarly, the early success of Microsoft may be attributed to its relatively aggressive corporate culture, which provided a source of competitive advantage.

Industry Demands

While founders undoubtedly exert a powerful influence over corporate cultures, the industry characteristics also play a role. Industry characteristics and demands act as a force to create similarities among organizational cultures. For example, despite some differences, many companies in the insurance and banking industries are stable and rule oriented, many companies in the high-tech industry have innovative cultures, and companies in the nonprofit industry tend to be people oriented. If the industry is one with a large number of regulatory requirements—for example, banking, health care, and nuclear power plant industries—then we might expect the presence of a large number of rules and regulations, a bureaucratic company structure, and a stable culture. Similarly, the high-tech industry requires agility, taking quick action, and low concern for rules and authority, which may create a relatively more innovative culture (Chatman & Jehn, 1994; Gordon, 1991). The industry influence over culture is also important to know, because this shows that it may not be possible to imitate the culture of a company in a different industry, even though it may seem admirable to outsiders.

Maintaining Organizational Culture

As a company matures, its cultural values are refined and strengthened. The early values of a company's culture exert influence over its future values. It is possible to think of organizational culture as an organism that protects itself from external forces. Organizational culture determines who is included and excluded in the hiring process. Moreover, once new employees are hired, the company assimilates new employees and teaches them the way things are done in the organization. We call these processes **attraction-selection-attrition** and **onboarding processes**. We will also examine the role of leaders and reward systems in shaping and maintaining an organization's culture. It is important to remember two points: The process of culture creation is in fact more complex and less clean than the name implies. Additionally, the influence of each factor on culture creation is reciprocal. For example, just as leaders may influence what type of values the company has, the culture may also determine what types of behaviors leaders demonstrate.

Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA)

Organizational culture is maintained through a process known as attraction-selection-attrition. First, employees are attracted to organizations where they will fit in. In other words, different job applicants will find different cultures to be attractive. Someone who has a competitive nature may feel comfortable and prefer to work in a company where interpersonal competition is the norm. Others may prefer to work in a team-oriented workplace. Research shows that employees with different personality traits find different cultures attractive. For example, out of the Big Five personality traits, employees who demonstrate neurotic personalities were less likely to be attracted to innovative cultures, whereas those who had openness to experience were more likely to be attracted to innovative cultures (Judge & Cable, 1997). As a result, individuals will self-select the companies they work for and may stay away from companies that have core values that are radically different from their own.

Of course this process is imperfect, and value similarity is only one reason a candidate might be attracted to a company. There may be other, more powerful attractions such as good benefits. For example, candidates who are potential misfits may still be attracted to Google because of the cool perks associated with being a Google employee. At this point in the process, the second component of the ASA framework prevents them from getting in: Selection. Just as candidates are looking for places where they will fit in, companies are also looking for people who will fit into their current corporate culture. Many companies are hiring people for fit with their culture, as opposed to fit with a certain job. For example, Southwest Airlines prides itself for hiring employees based on personality and attitude rather than specific job-related skills, which are learned after being hired. This is important for job applicants to know, because in addition to highlighting your job-relevant skills, you will need to discuss why your personality and values match those of the company.

Companies use different techniques to weed out candidates who do not fit with corporate values. For example, Google relies on multiple interviews with future peers. By introducing the candidate

to several future coworkers and learning what these coworkers think of the candidate, it becomes easier to assess the level of fit. Companies may also use employee referrals in their recruitment process. By using their current employees as a source of future employees, companies may make sure that the newly hired employees go through a screening process to avoid potential person-culture mismatch.

Even after a company selects people for person-organization fit, there may be new employees who do not fit in. Some candidates may be skillful in impressing recruiters and signal high levels of culture fit even though they do not necessarily share the company's values. Moreover, recruiters may suffer from perceptual biases and hire some candidates thinking that they fit with the culture even though the actual fit is low. In any event, the organization is going to eventually eliminate candidates who do not fit in through attrition. **Attrition** refers to the natural process in which the candidates who do not fit in will leave the company. Research indicates that person-organization misfit is one of the important reasons for employee turnover (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; O'Reilly III et al., 1991).

As a result of the ASA process, the company attracts, selects, and retains people who share its core values. On the other hand, those people who are different in core values will be excluded from the organization either during the hiring process or later on through naturally occurring turnover. Thus, organizational culture will act as a self-defending organism where intrusive elements are kept out. Supporting the existence of such self-protective mechanisms, research shows that organizations demonstrate a certain level of homogeneity regarding personalities and values of organizational members (Giberson et al., 2005). Many organizations are currently having important conversations about diversity and inclusion and the value of attracting and retaining a more diverse workforce.

New Employee Onboarding

Another way in which an organization's values, norms, and behavioral patterns are transmitted to employees is through onboarding (also referred to as the organizational socialization process). **Onboarding** refers to the process through which new employees learn the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors required to function effectively within an organization. If an organization can successfully socialize new employees into becoming organizational insiders, new employees feel confident regarding their ability to perform, sense that they will feel accepted by their peers, and understand and share the assumptions, norms, and values that are part of the organization's culture. This understanding and confidence in turn translate into more effective new employees who perform better and have higher job satisfaction, stronger organizational commitment, and longer tenure within the company (Bauer et al., 2007).

What Can New Employees Do During Onboarding?

New employees who are proactive, seek feedback, and build strong relationships tend to be more successful than those who do not (Bauer & Green, 1998; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). For example, feedback seeking helps new employees.

Especially on a first job, a new employee can make mistakes or gaffes and may find it hard to understand and interpret the ambiguous reactions of coworkers. New hires may not know whether they are performing up to standards, whether it was a good idea to mention a company mistake in front of a client, or why other employees are asking if they were sick over the weekend because of not responding to work-related emails. By actively seeking feedback, new employees may find out sooner rather than later any behaviors that need to be changed and gain a better understanding of whether their behavior fits with the company culture and expectations. Several studies show the benefits of feedback seeking for new employee adjustment. We will talk more about strategies for giving and receiving feedback in future chapters of this book.

Relationship building, or networking, is another important behavior new employees may demonstrate. Particularly when a company does not have a systematic approach to onboarding, it becomes more important for new employees to facilitate their own onboarding by actively building relationships. According to one estimate, 35% of managers who start a new job fail in the new job and either voluntarily leave or are fired within 1.5 years. Of these, over 60% report not being able to form effective relationships with colleagues as the primary reason for their failure (Fisher, 2005). New employees may take an active role in building relations by seeking opportunities to have a conversation with their new colleagues, arranging lunches or coffee with them, participating in company functions, and making the effort to build a relationship with their new supervisor (Kim et al., 2005).

Consider This: Tips for the Onboarding Process

You've Got a New Job! Now How Do You Get on Board?

Here are some suggestions about how to engage in the onboarding process at a new job:

- **Gather information.** Try to find as much about the company and the job as you can before your first day. After you start working, be a good observer, gather information, and read as much as you can to understand your job and the company. Examine how people are interacting, how they dress, and how they act to avoid behaviors that might indicate to others that you are a misfit.
- **Manage your first impression.** First impressions may endure, so make sure that you dress appropriately, are friendly, and communicate your excitement to be a part of the team. Be on your best behavior!
- **Invest in relationship development.** The relationships you develop with your manager and with coworkers will be essential for you to adjust to your new job. Take the time to strike up

conversations with them. If there are work functions during your early days, make sure not to miss them!

- **Seek feedback.** Ask your manager or coworkers how well you are doing and whether you are meeting expectations. Listen to what they are telling you and also listen to what they are not saying. Then, make sure to act upon any suggestions for improvement. Be aware that after seeking feedback, you may create a negative impression if you consistently ignore the feedback you receive.
- **Show success early on**. In order to gain the trust of your new manager and colleagues, you may want to establish a history of success early. Volunteer for high-profile projects where you will be able to demonstrate your skills. Alternatively, volunteer for projects that may serve as learning opportunities or that may put you in touch with the key people in the company.

Source: Adapted from ideas in Beagrie, (2005).

What Can Organizations Do During Onboarding?

Many organizations, including Microsoft, Kellogg Company, and Bank of America, take a more structured and systematic approach to new employee onboarding, while others follow a "sink or swim" approach in which new employees struggle to figure out what is expected of them and what the norms are.

A formal orientation program indoctrinates new employees to the company culture, as well as introduces them to their new jobs and colleagues. An orientation program is important, because it has a role in making new employees feel welcome in addition to imparting information that may help new employees be successful on their new jobs. Many large organizations have formal orientation programs consisting of lectures, video lectures and written material, while some may follow more unusual approaches. According to one estimate, most orientations last anywhere from one to five days, and many companies are currently switching to a computer-based orientation. Research shows that formal orientation programs are helpful in teaching employees about the goals and history of the company, as well as communicating the power structure. Moreover, these programs may also help with a new employee's integration into the team.

One of the most important ways in which organizations can help new employees adjust to a company and a new job is through organizational insiders—namely supervisors, coworkers, and mentors. Research shows that leaders have a key influence over onboarding, and the information and support leaders provide determine how quickly employees learn about the company politics and culture. Coworker influence determines the degree to which employees adjust to their teams.

Mentors can be crucial to helping new employees adjust by teaching them the ins and outs of their jobs and how the company really operates. A **mentor** is a trusted person who provides an employee with advice and support regarding career-related matters. Although a mentor can be any employee or manager who has insights that are valuable to the new employee, mentors tend to be relatively more experienced than their protégés. Mentoring can occur naturally between

two interested individuals, or organizations can facilitate this process by having formal mentoring programs. These programs may successfully bring together mentors and protégés who would not come together otherwise.

Research indicates that the existence of these programs does not guarantee their success, and there are certain program characteristics that may make these programs more effective. For example, when mentors and protégés feel that they had input in the mentor-protégé matching process, they tend to be more satisfied with the arrangement. Moreover, when mentors receive training beforehand, the outcomes of the program tend to be more positive (Allen et al., 2006). Because mentors may help new employees interpret and understand the company's culture, organizations may benefit from selecting mentors who personify the company's values. Thus, organizations may need to design these programs carefully to increase their chance of success.

Leadership

While subcultures develop in organizations, the larger organization's culture influences these, especially with strong leaders and leadership teams who set the tone at the top and communicate expectations and performance standards throughout.

Leaders are instrumental in creating and changing an organization's culture. There is a direct correspondence between a leader's style and an organization's culture. For example, when leaders motivate employees through inspiration, corporate culture tends to be more supportive and people oriented. When leaders motivate by making rewards contingent on performance, the corporate culture tends to be more performance oriented and competitive (Sarros et al., 2002). In these and many other ways, what leaders do directly influences the cultures their organizations have.

Part of the leader's influence over culture is through role modeling. Many studies have suggested that leader behavior, the consistency between organizational policy and leader actions, and leader role modeling determine the degree to which the organization's culture emphasizes ethics (Driscoll & McKee, 2007). The leader's own behaviors will signal to employees what is acceptable behavior and what is unacceptable. In an organization in which high-level managers make the effort to involve others in decision making and seek opinions of others, a team-oriented culture is more likely to evolve. By acting as role models, leaders send signals to the organization about the norms and values that are expected to guide the actions of organizational members.

Leaders also shape culture by their reactions to the actions of others around them. For example, do they praise a job well done, or do they praise a favored employee regardless of what was

accomplished? How do they react when someone admits to making an honest mistake? What are their priorities? In meetings, what types of questions do they ask? Do they want to know what caused accidents so that they can be prevented, or do they seem more concerned about how much money was lost as a result of an accident? Do they seem outraged when an employee is disrespectful to a coworker, or does their reaction depend on whether they like the harasser? Through their day-to-day actions, leaders shape and maintain an organization's culture.

Reward Systems

Finally, the company culture is shaped by the type of reward systems used in the organization, and the kinds of behaviors and outcomes it chooses to reward and punish. One relevant element of the reward system is whether the organization rewards behaviors or results. Some companies have reward systems that emphasize intangible elements of performance as well as more easily observable metrics. In these companies, supervisors and peers may evaluate an employee's performance by assessing the person's behaviors as well as the results. In such companies, we may expect a culture that is relatively people or team oriented, and employees act as part of a family (Kerr & Slocum Jr., 2005).

On the other hand, in companies that purely reward goal achievement, there is a focus on measuring only the results without much regard to the process. In these companies, we might observe outcome-oriented and competitive cultures. Another categorization of reward systems might be whether the organization uses rankings or ratings. In a company where the reward system pits members against one another, where employees are ranked against each other and the lower performers receive long-term or short-term punishments, it would be hard to develop a culture of people orientation and may lead to a competitive culture. Evaluation systems that reward employee behavior by comparing them to absolute standards as opposed to comparing employees to each other may pave the way to a team-oriented culture. Whether the organization rewards performance or seniority would also make a difference in culture. When promotions are based on seniority, it would be difficult to establish a culture of outcome orientation.

Finally, the types of behaviors that are rewarded or ignored set the tone for the culture. Service-oriented cultures reward, recognize, and publicize exceptional service on the part of their employees. In safety cultures, safety metrics are emphasized and the organization is proud of its low accident ratings. What behaviors are rewarded, which ones are punished, and which are ignored will determine how a company's culture evolves.

External Influences on Organizational Culture

To succeed and thrive, organizations must adapt, exploit, and fit with the forces in their external environments. Organizations are groups of people deliberately formed together to serve a purpose through structured and coordinated goals and plans. As such, organizations operate in different external environments and are organized and structured internally to meet both external and internal demands and opportunities. Different types of organizations include not-for-profit, for-profit, public, private, government, voluntary, family owned and operated, and publicly traded on stock exchanges. Organizations are commonly referred to as companies, firms, corporations, institutions, agencies, associations, groups, consortiums, and conglomerates. While the type, size, scope, location, purpose, and mission of an organization all help determine the external environment in which it operates, it still must meet the requirements and contingencies of that environment to survive and prosper. In this section, we consider how organizations are structured to meet challenges and opportunities of these environments.

Figure 3.3 illustrates types of general macro environments and forces that are interrelated and affect organizations: sociocultural, technological, economic, government and political, natural disasters, and human-induced problems that affect industries and organizations. For example, economic environmental forces generally include such elements in the economy as exchange rates and wages, employment statistics, and related factors such as inflation, recessions, and other shocks—negative and positive. Hiring and unemployment, employee benefits, factors affecting organizational operating costs, revenues, and profits are affected by global, national, regional, and local economies. Other factors discussed here that interact with economic forces include politics and governmental policies, international wars, natural disasters, technological inventions, and sociocultural forces. It is important to keep these dimensions in mind when studying organizations since many if not most or all changes that affect organizations originate from one or more of these sources—many of which are interrelated.

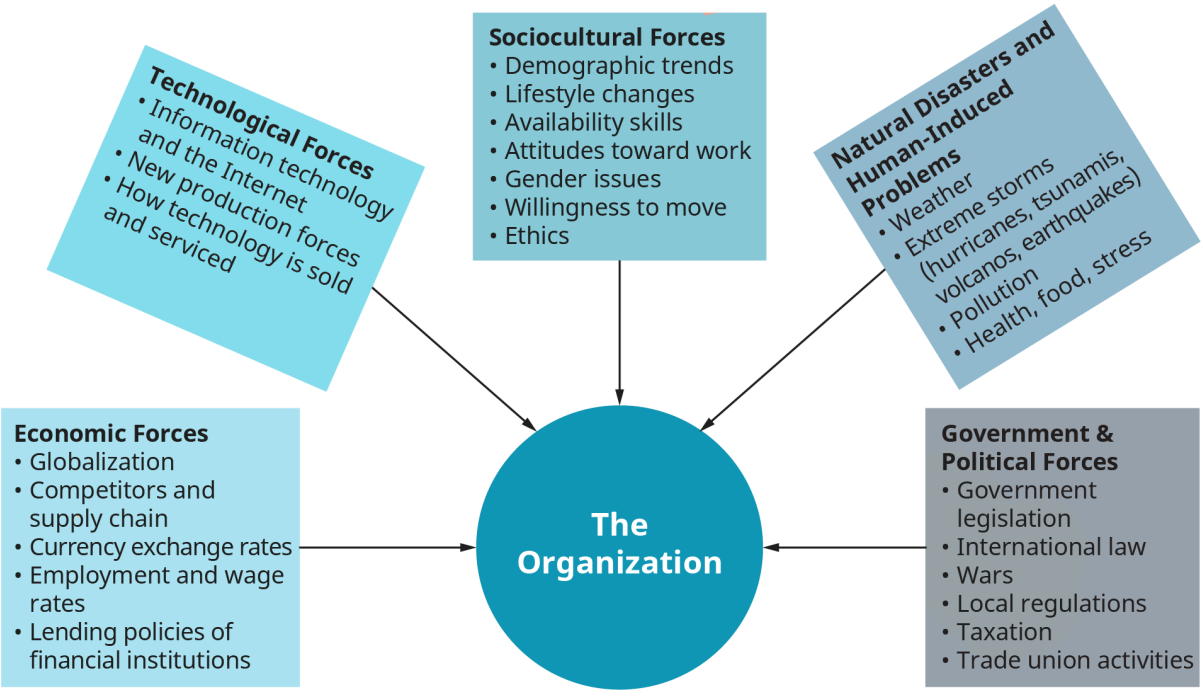

Figure 3.3 Macro Forces and Environments. Image: Rice University & OpenStax, Organizational Behavior, CC BY 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

Changing Organizational Culture

Culture is often deeply ingrained and resistant to change efforts. Unfortunately, many organizations may not even realize that their current culture constitutes a barrier against organizational productivity and performance. Changing company culture may be the key to the company turnaround when there is a mismatch between an organization's values and the demands of its environment.

Sometimes the external environment may force an organization to undergo culture change. For example, if an organization is experiencing failure in the short run or is under threat of bankruptcy or an imminent loss of market share, it would be easier to convince managers and employees that culture change is necessary. A company can use such downturns to generate employee commitment to the change effort. However, if the organization has been successful in the past, and if employees do not perceive an urgency necessitating culture change, the change effort will be more challenging.

Mergers and acquisitions are another example of an event that changes a company's culture. In fact, the ability of the two merging companies to harmonize their corporate cultures is often what makes or breaks a merger effort. Achieving culture change is challenging, and many companies ultimately fail in this mission. Research and case studies of companies that successfully changed their culture indicate that the following six steps increase the chances of success (Schein, 1990).

Alternate models of change include Lewin's 3-stage model, Kotter's 8-stage model, and appreciative inquiry. For brevity, we will only discuss Schein's 6 steps.

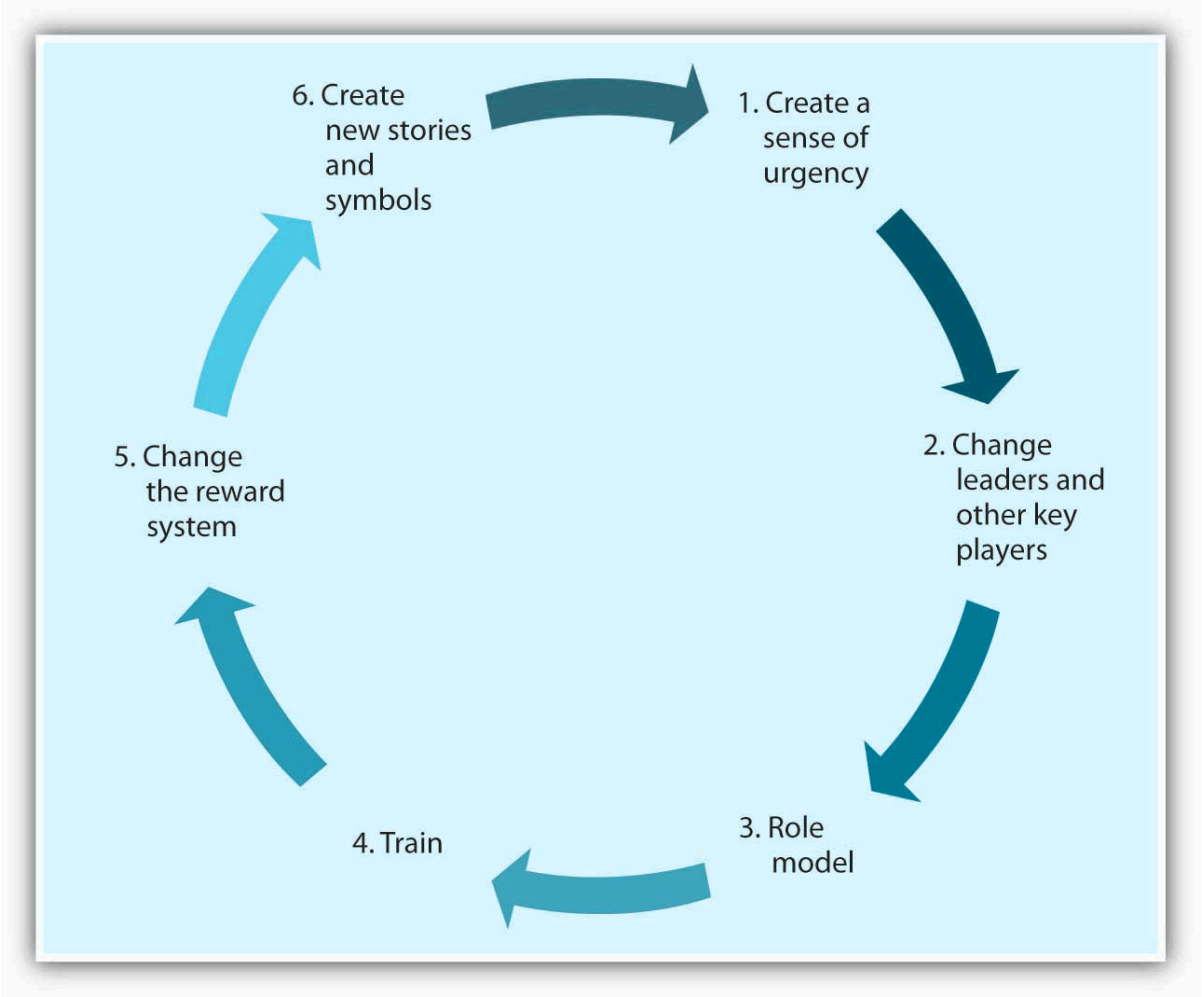

Figure 3.4 Six Steps to Culture Change. Image: University of Minnesota, Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

Six Steps to Culture Change: 1) Create a sense of urgency, 2) Change leaders and other key players, 3) Role model, 4) Train, 5) Change the reward system, 6) Create new stories and symbols

Step 1: Creating a Sense of Urgency

In order for the change effort to be successful, it is important to communicate the need for change to employees. One way of doing this is to create a sense of urgency on the part of employees and explain to them why changing the fundamental way in which business is done is so important. In successful culture change efforts, leaders communicate with employees and present a case for culture change as the essential element that will lead the company to eventual success.

Step 2: Changing Leaders and Other Key Players

A leader's vision is an important factor that influences how things are done in an organization. Thus, culture change often follows changes at the highest levels of the organization. Moreover, in order to implement the change effort quickly and efficiently, a company may find it helpful to remove managers and other powerful employees who are acting as a barrier to change. Because of political reasons, self interest, or habits, managers may create powerful resistance to change efforts. In such cases, replacing these positions with employees and managers giving visible support to the change effort may increase the likelihood that the change effort succeeds.

Step 3: Role Modeling

Role modeling is the process by which employees modify their own beliefs and behaviors to reflect those of the leader (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007). CEOs can model the behaviors that are expected of employees to change the culture. The ultimate goal is that these behaviors will trickle down to lower level employees.

Step 4: Training

Well-crafted training programs may be instrumental in bringing about culture change by teaching employees the new norms and behavioral styles. For example, after the space shuttle Columbia disintegrated upon reentry from a February 2003 mission, NASA decided to change its culture to become more safety sensitive and minimize decision-making errors leading to unsafe behaviors. The change effort included training programs in team processes and cognitive bias awareness (NASA, 2004).

Step 5: Changing the Reward System

The criteria with which employees are rewarded and punished have a powerful role in determining the cultural values in existence. Switching from a commission-based incentive structure to a straight salary system may be instrumental in bringing about customer focus among sales employees. Moreover, by rewarding employees who embrace the company's new values and even promoting these employees, organizations can make sure that changes in culture have a lasting impact. If a company wants to develop a team-oriented culture where employees collaborate with each other, methods such as using individual-based incentives may backfire. Instead, distributing bonuses to intact teams might be more successful in bringing about culture change.

Step 6: Creating New Symbols and Stories

Finally, the success of the culture change effort may be increased by developing new rituals, symbols, and stories. By replacing the old symbols and stories, the new symbols and stories will help enable the culture change and ensure that the new values are communicated.

Reactions to Change

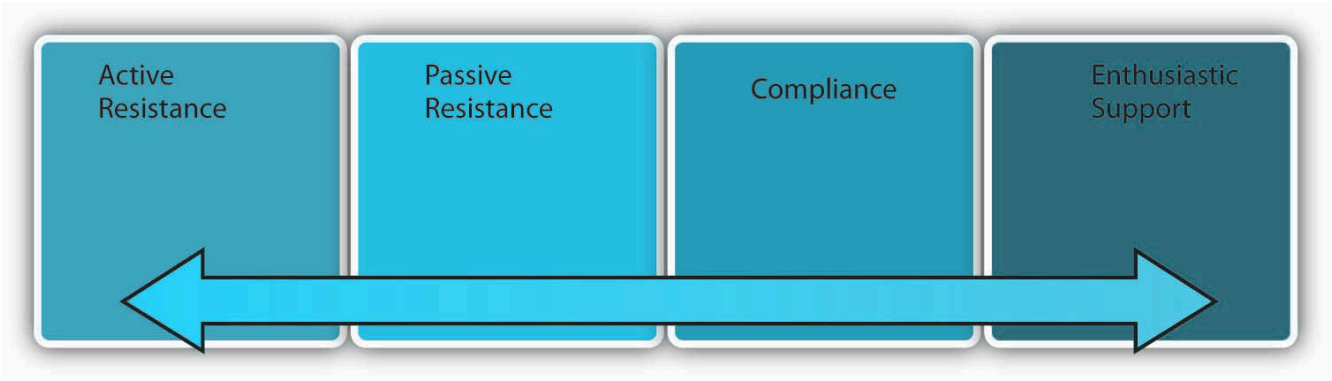

Figure 3.5 Reactions to change may take many forms. Image: Saylor Academy, Human Relations, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

Active resistance is the most negative reaction to a proposed change attempt. Those who engage in active resistance may sabotage the change effort and be outspoken objectors to the new procedures. In contrast, passive resistance involves being disturbed by changes without necessarily voicing these opinions. Instead, passive resisters may quietly dislike the change, feel stressed and unhappy, and even look for an alternative job without necessarily bringing their point to the attention of decision makers. Compliance, on the other hand, involves going along with proposed changes with little enthusiasm. Finally, those who show enthusiastic support are defenders of the new way and actually encourage others around them to give support to the change effort as well.

Any change attempt will have to overcome the resistance on the part of people to be successful. Otherwise, the result will be loss of time and energy as well as an inability on the part of the organization to adapt to the changes in the environment and make its operations more efficient. Resistance to change also has negative consequences for the people in question. Research shows that when people negatively react to organizational change, they experience negative emotions, use sick time more often, and are more likely to voluntarily leave the company (Fugate et al., 2008).
Resistance to change may be a positive force in some instances. In fact, resistance to change is a valuable feedback tool that should not be ignored. Why are people resisting the proposed changes? Do they feel that the new system will not work? If so, why not? By listening to people and incorporating their suggestions into the change effort, it is possible to make a more effective change. Some of a company's most committed employees may be the most vocal opponents of a

change effort. They may fear that the organization they feel such a strong attachment to is being threatened by the planned change effort and the change will ultimately hurt the company. In contrast, people who have less loyalty to the organization may comply with the proposed changes simply because they do not care enough about the fate of the company to oppose the changes. As a result, when dealing with those who resist change, it is important to avoid blaming them for a lack of loyalty (Ford et al., 2008).

Let's Focus: Overcome Resistance to Your Proposals

You feel that change is needed. You have a great idea. But people around you do not seem convinced. They are resisting your great idea. How do you make change happen?

- ***Listen to naysayers.*** You may think that your idea is great, but listening to those who resist may give you valuable ideas about why it may not work and how to design it more effectively.
- ***Is your change revolutionary?*** If you are trying to dramatically change the way things are done, you will find that resistance is greater. If your proposal involves incrementally making things better, you may have better luck.
- ***Involve those around you in planning the change.*** Instead of providing the solutions, make them part of the solution. If they admit that there is a problem and participate in planning a way out, you would have to do less convincing when it is time to implement the change.
- ***Do you have credibility?*** When trying to persuade people to change their ways, it helps if you have a history of suggesting implementable changes. Otherwise, you may be ignored or met with suspicion. This means you need to establish trust and a history of keeping promises over time before you propose a major change.
- ***Present data to your audience.***Be prepared to defend the technical aspects of your ideas and provide evidence that your proposal is likely to work.
- ***Appeal to your audience's ideals.*** Frame your proposal around the big picture. Are you going to create happier clients? Is this going to lead to a better reputation for the company? Identify the long-term goals you are hoping to accomplish that people would be proud to be a part of.
- ***Understand the reasons for resistance.*** Is your audience resisting because they fear change? Does the change you propose mean more work for them? Does it impact them in a negative way? Understanding the consequences of your proposal for the parties involved may help you tailor your pitch to your audience.

Sources: McGoon, (1995) and Stanley, (2002).

Common Reasons for Resisting Change

Resisting change can be a source of conflict in the workplace. Let's discuss some of the common reasons that people are resistant to change.

Disrupted Habits

People often resist change for the simple reason that change disrupts our habits. You may find that for this simple reason, people sometimes are surprisingly outspoken when confronted with simple changes such as updating to a newer version of a particular software or a change in their voice mail system.

Personality

Some people are more resistant to change than others. Research shows that people who have a positive self-concept are better at coping with change, probably because those who have high self-esteem may feel that whatever the changes are, they are likely to adjust to it well and be successful in the new system. People with a more positive self-concept and those who are more optimistic may also view change as an opportunity to shine as opposed to a threat that is overwhelming. Finally, risk tolerance is another predictor of how resistant someone will be to stress. For people who are risk avoidant, the possibility of a change in technology or structure may be more threatening (Judge et al., 1999; Wanber & Banas, 2000).

Feelings of Uncertainty

Change inevitably brings feelings of uncertainty. You have just heard that your company is merging with another. What would be your reaction? Such change is often turbulent, and it is often unclear what is going to happen to each individual. Some positions may be eliminated. Some people may see a change in their job duties. Things can get better—or they may get worse. The feeling that the future is unclear is enough to create stress for people, because it leads to a sense of lost control (Ashford et al., 1989; Fugate et al., 2008)

Fear of Failure

People also resist change when they feel that their performance may be affected under the new system. People who are experts in their jobs may be less than welcoming of the changes, because they may be unsure whether their success would last under the new system. Studies show that people who feel that they can perform well under the new system are more likely to be committed

to the proposed change, while those who have lower confidence in their ability to perform after changes are less committed (Herold et al., 2007).

Personal Impact of Change

It would be too simplistic to argue that people resist all change, regardless of its form. In fact, people tend to be more welcoming of change that is favorable to them on a personal level (such as giving them more power over others, or change that improves quality of life such as bigger and nicer offices). Research also shows that commitment to change is highest when proposed changes affect the work unit with a low impact on how individual jobs are performed (Fedor et al., 2006).

Prevalence of Change

Any change effort should be considered within the context of all the other changes that are introduced in a company. Does the company have a history of making short-lived changes? If the company structure went from functional to product-based to geographic to matrix within the past 5 years, and the top management is in the process of going back to a functional structure again, a certain level of resistance is to be expected because people are likely to be fatigued as a result of the constant changes. Moreover, the lack of a history of successful changes may cause people to feel skeptical toward the newly planned changes. Therefore, considering the history of changes in the company is important to understanding why people resist. Also, how big is the planned change? If the company is considering a simple switch to a new computer program, such as introducing Microsoft Access for database management, the change may not be as extensive or stressful compared to a switch to an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system such as SAP or PeopleSoft, which require a significant time commitment and can fundamentally affect how business is conducted (Labianca et al., 2000; Rafferty & Griffin, 2006).

Perceived Loss of Power

One other reason why people may resist change is that change may affect their power and influence in the organization. Imagine that your company moved to a more team-based structure, turning supervisors into team leaders. In the old structure, supervisors were in charge of hiring and firing all those reporting to them. Under the new system, this power is given to the team itself. Instead of monitoring the progress the team is making toward goals, the job of a team leader is to provide support and mentoring to the team in general and ensure that the team has access to all resources to be effective. Given the loss in prestige and status in the new structure, some supervisors may resist the proposed changes even if it is better for the organization to operate around teams.

Case Study

See Appendix A: Case Studies

- Case Study 3: OECollaboration

Adapted Works

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3.3 Frameworks for Assessing Organizational Culture

Which values characterize an organization's culture? Even though culture may not be immediately observable, identifying a set of values that might be used to describe an organization's culture helps us identify, measure, and manage culture more effectively. For this purpose, several researchers have proposed various culture typologies. We will discuss four of these frameworks in this section.

In this section:

- Organizational Culture Profile (OCP)
- Service Cultures
- Safety Cultures
- The Competing Values Framework (CVF)

Organizational Culture Profile (OCP)

One typology that has received a lot of research attention is the Organizational Culture Profile (OCP), in which culture is represented by seven distinct values (Chatman & Jehn, 1991; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991).

Figure 3.6 Dimensions of Organizational Culture Profile (OCP). Adapted from information in O'Reilly, C. A., III, Chatman, J. A., & Caldwell, D. F. (1991). People and organizational culture: A profile comparison approach to assessing person-organization fit. Academy of Management Journal, 34, 487–516. Image: University of Minnesota, Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

Dimensions of Organizational Culture Profile: Detail-oriented, innovative, aggressive, outcome-oriented, stable, people-oriented, and team-oriented

Innovative Cultures

According to the OCP framework, companies that have innovative cultures are flexible and

adaptable, and experiment with new ideas. These companies are characterized by a flat hierarchy in which titles and other status distinctions tend to be downplayed. In this company culture, employees do not have bosses in the traditional sense, and risk taking is encouraged by celebrating failures as well as successes (Deutschman, 2004). Companies such as W. L. Gore, Genentech Inc., and Google encourage their employees to take risks by allowing engineers to devote 20% of their time to projects of their own choosing (Deutschman, 2004; Morris et al., 2006).

Aggressive Cultures

Companies with aggressive cultures value competitiveness and outperforming competitors: By emphasizing this, they may fall short in the area of corporate social responsibility. For example, Microsoft Corporation is often identified as a company with an aggressive culture. The company has faced a number of antitrust lawsuits and disputes with competitors over the years. In aggressive companies, people may use language such as "We will kill our competition." In the past, Microsoft executives often made statements such as "We are going to cut off Netscape's air supply....Everything they are selling, we are going to give away." Its aggressive culture is cited as a reason for getting into new legal troubles before old ones are resolved (Green et al., 2004; Schlender, 1998). While Microsoft founder, Bill Gates, is no longer taking an active part in leadership in the company and efforts have been made to reduce the aggressive nature of the culture, claims of bullying and harassing behaviour are still making national headlines in the past few years.

Outcome-Oriented Cultures

The OCP framework describes outcome-oriented cultures as those that emphasize achievement, results, and action as important values. Outcome-oriented cultures hold employees as well as managers accountable for success and utilize systems that reward employee and group output. In these companies, it is more common to see rewards tied to performance indicators as opposed to seniority or loyalty. Research indicates that organizations that have a performance-oriented culture tend to outperform companies that are lacking such a culture (Nohria et al., 2003). At the same time, some outcome-oriented companies may have such a high drive for outcomes and measurable performance objectives that they may suffer negative consequences. Companies over-rewarding employee performance such as Enron Corporation and WorldCom experienced well-publicized business and ethical failures. When performance pressures lead to a culture where unethical behaviors become the norm, individuals see their peers as rivals and short-term results are rewarded; the resulting unhealthy work environment serves as a liability (Probst & Raisch, 2005).

Stable Cultures

Stable cultures are predictable, rule-oriented, and bureaucratic. These organizations aim to

coordinate and align individual effort for greatest levels of efficiency. When the environment is stable and certain, these cultures may help the organization be effective by providing stable and constant levels of output (Westrum, 2004). These cultures prevent quick action, and as a result may be a misfit to a changing and dynamic environment. Public sector institutions may be viewed as stable cultures.

People-Oriented Cultures

People-oriented cultures value fairness, supportiveness, and respect for individual rights. These organizations truly live the mantra that "people are their greatest asset." In addition to having fair procedures and management styles, these companies create an atmosphere where work is fun and employees do not feel required to choose between work and other aspects of their lives. In these organizations, there is a greater emphasis on and expectation of treating people with respect and dignity (Erdogan et al., 2006). One study of new employees in accounting companies found that employees, on average, stayed 14 months longer in companies with people-oriented cultures (Sheridan, 1992). Starbucks Corporation is an example of a people-oriented culture. The company pays employees above minimum wage, offers health care and tuition reimbursement benefits to its part-time as well as full-time employees, and has creative perks such as weekly free coffee for all associates. As a result of these policies, the company benefits from a turnover rate lower than the industry average (Weber, 2005; Motivation secrets, 2003). The company is routinely ranked as one of the best places to work.

Team-Oriented Cultures

Companies with team-oriented cultures are collaborative and emphasize cooperation among employees. For example, Southwest Airlines Company facilitates a team-oriented culture by cross-training its employees so that they are capable of helping each other when needed. The company also places emphasis on training intact work teams (Bolino & Turnley, 2003). In team-oriented organizations, members tend to have more positive relationships with their coworkers and particularly with their managers (Erdogan et al., 2006).

Detail-Oriented Cultures

Organizations with detail-oriented cultures are characterized in the OCP framework as emphasizing precision and paying attention to details. Such a culture gives a competitive advantage to companies in the hospitality industry by helping them differentiate themselves from others. McDonald's Corporation specifies in detail how employees should perform their jobs by including photos of exactly how French fries and hamburgers should look when prepared properly (Fitch, 2004; Ford & Heaton, 2001; Kolesnikov-Jessop, 2005; Markels, 2007).

Service Culture

Service culture is not one of the dimensions of the CVF or the OCP, but given the importance of the retail industry in the overall economy, having a service culture can make or break an organization. Some of the organizations we have illustrated in this section, such as Nordstrom, Southwest Airlines, Ritz-Carlton, and Four Seasons are also famous for their service culture. In these organizations, employees are trained to serve the customer well, and cross-training is the norm. Employees are empowered to resolve customer problems in ways they see fit. Because employees with direct customer contact are in the best position to resolve any issues, employee empowerment is truly valued in these companies.

What differentiates companies with service culture from those without such a culture may be the desire to solve customer-related problems proactively. In other words, in these cultures employees are engaged in their jobs and personally invested in improving customer experience such that they identify issues and come up with solutions without necessarily being told what to do. For example, a British Airways baggage handler noticed that first-class passengers were waiting a long time for their baggage, whereas stand-by passengers often received their luggage first. Noticing this tendency, a baggage handler notified his superiors about this problem, along with the suggestion to load first-class passenger luggage last (Ford & Heaton, 2001). This solution was successful in cutting down the wait time by half. Such proactive behavior on the part of employees who share company values is likely to emerge frequently in companies with a service culture.

Safety Culture

Some jobs are safety sensitive. For example, logger, aircraft pilot, fishing worker, steel worker, and roofer are among the top 10 most dangerous jobs in the United States (Christie, 2005). In organizations where safety-sensitive jobs are performed, creating and maintaining a safety culture provides a competitive advantage, because the organization can reduce accidents, maintain high levels of morale and employee retention, and increase profitability by cutting workers' compensation insurance costs. Some companies suffer severe consequences when they are unable to develop such a culture. For example, British Petroleum experienced an explosion in their Texas City, Texas, refinery in 2005, which led to the death of 15 workers while injuring 170. In December 2007, the company announced that it had already depleted the $1.6-billion fund to be used in claims for this explosion (Tennissen, 2007). A safety review panel concluded that the development of a safety culture was essential to avoid such occurrences in the future (Hofmann, 2007). In companies that have a safety culture, there is a strong commitment to safety starting at management level and trickling down to lower levels. Managers play a key role in increasing the level of safe behaviors in the workplace, because they can motivate employees day-to-day to demonstrate safe behaviors and act as safety role models. A recent study has shown that in organizations with a safety culture, leaders encourage employees to demonstrate behaviors such as volunteering for safety committees, making recommendations to increase safety, protecting coworkers from hazards, whistleblowing, and in general trying to make their jobs safer (Hofman et al., 2003; Smith, 2007).

The Competing Values Framework

The Competing Values Framework (CVF) is one of the most cited and tested models for diagnosing an organization's cultural effectiveness and examining its fit with its environment. The CVF, shown in Figure 3.7 has been tested for over 30 years; the effectiveness criteria offered in the framework were discovered to have made a difference in identifying organizational cultures that fit with particular characteristics of external environments (Cameron et al., 2014; Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

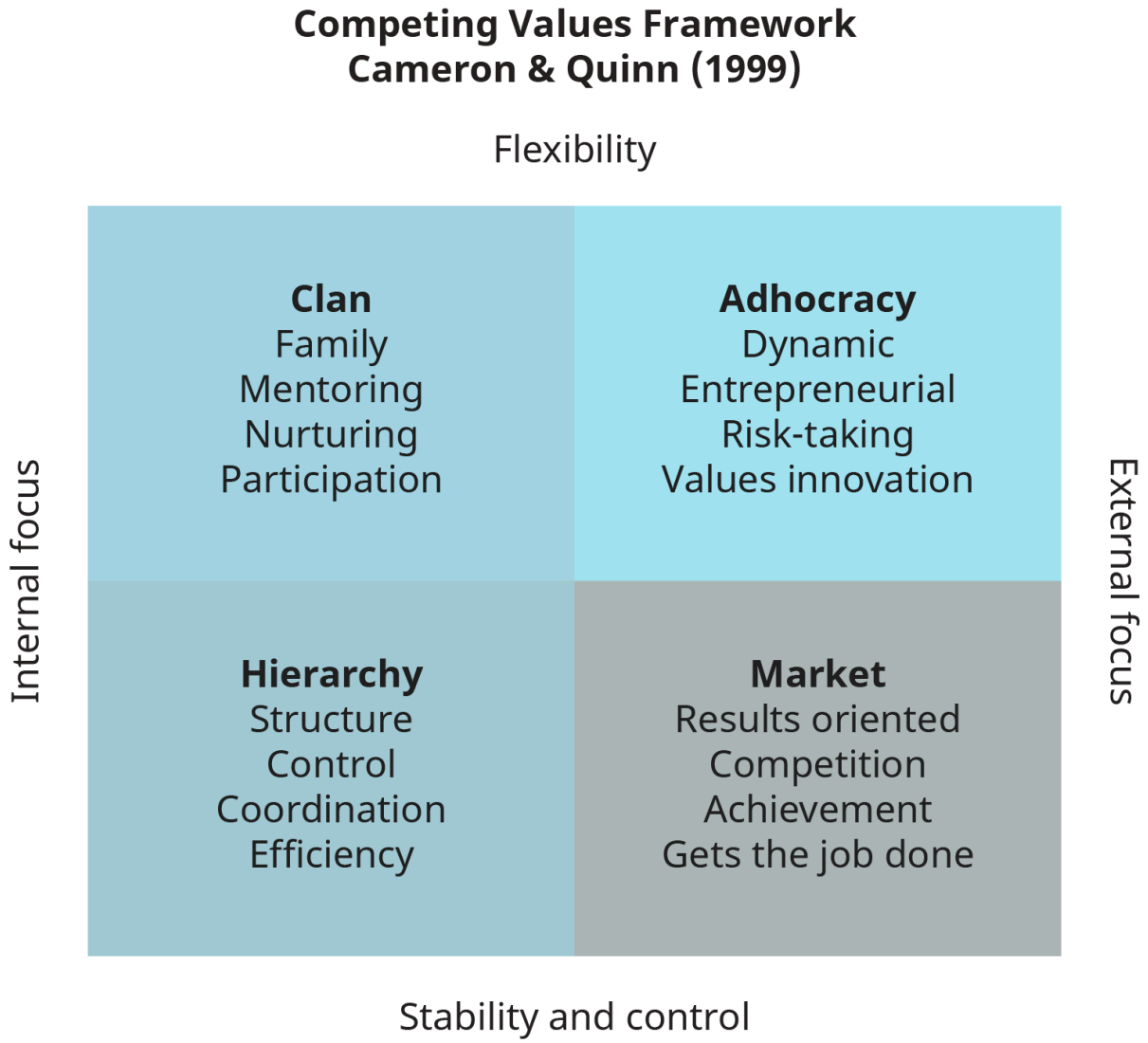

Figure 3.7 The Competing Values Framework. Source: Adapted from K. Cameron and R. Quinn, 1999. Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture, Addison-Wesley, p. 32. Image: University of Minnesota, Principles of Management, CC BY 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

The two axes in the framework, external focus versus internal focus, indicate whether or not the organization's culture is externally or internally oriented. The other two axes, flexibility versus stability and control, determine whether a culture functions better in a stable, controlled environment or

a flexible, fast-paced environment. Combining the axes offers four cultural types: (1) the dynamic, entrepreneurial Adhocracy Culture—an external focus with a flexibility orientation; (2) the people-oriented, friendly Clan Culture—an internal focus with a flexibility orientation; (3) the process-oriented, structured Hierarchy Culture—an internal focus with a stability/control orientation; and (4) the results-oriented, competitive Market Culture—an external focus with a stability/control orientation.

The Adhocracy Culture

The **adhocracy culture** profile of an organization emphasizes creating, innovating, visioning the future, managing change, risk-taking, rule-breaking, experimentation, entrepreneurship, and uncertainty. This profile culture is often found in such fast-paced industries as filming, consulting, space flight, and software development. Facebook and Google's cultures also match these characteristics (Yu & Wu, 2009). It should be noted, however, that larger organizations may have different cultures for different groupings of professionals, even though the larger culture is still dominant. For example, a different subculture may evolve for hourly workers as compared to PhD research scientists in an organization.

The Clan Culture

The **Clan Culture** type focuses on relationships, team building, commitment, empowering human development, engagement, mentoring, and coaching. Organizations that focus on human development, human resources, team building, and mentoring would fit this profile. This type of culture fits Tom's of Maine, which has strived to form respectful relationships with employees, customers, suppliers, and the physical environment.

The Hierarchy Culture

The **Hierarchy Culture** emphasizes efficiency, process and cost control, organizational improvement, technical expertise, precision, problem solving, elimination of errors, logical, cautious and conservative, management and operational analysis, and careful decision-making. This profile would suit a company that is bureaucratic and structured, such government agencies.

The Market Culture

The **Market Culture** focuses on delivering value, competing, delivering shareholder value, goal achievement, driving and delivering results, speedy decisions, hard driving through barriers,

directive, commanding, and getting things done. This profile suits a marketing-and-sales-oriented company that works on planning and forecasting but also getting products and services to market and sold. Oracle under the dominating, hard-charging executive chairman Larry Ellison characterized this cultural fit.

Adapted Works

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3.4 Organizational Codes and Discipline

In this section:

- Organizational Codes
- Progressive Discipline
- Termination

Organizational Codes

While culture can be a powerful mechanism of behavioural control within organizations, often these standards are often outlined in company codes. **Formalization** is the extent to which policies, procedures, job descriptions, and rules are written and explicitly articulated. In other words, formalized structures are those in which there are many written rules and regulations. These structures control employee behavior using written rules, and employees have little autonomy to make decisions on a case-by-case basis. Formalization makes employee behavior more predictable. Whenever a problem at work arises, employees know to turn to a handbook or a procedure guideline. Therefore, employees respond to problems in a similar way across the organization, which leads to consistency of behavior.

Part of managing conflict in the workplace is having clear expectations for employees' behaviour and methods of recourse if these expectations are not being met. Having codes of conduct, policies and procedures can help all parties to navigate a variety of circumstances including interpersonal conflicts, ethical violations, and instances of workplace incivility like harassment, bullying or discrimination. These policies and procedures should adhere to principles of basic human rights (e.g., the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code), federal and provincial labour laws, and also conditions in the collective bargaining agreement if one is in place.

Types of Codes

Here are some examples of types of codes that you might encounter within an organization:

- **Professional Codes of Ethics**. Professions such as engineering and accounting have developed codes of ethics. These set forth the ideals of the profession as well as more mundane challenges faced by members. Engineering codes, for example, set forth service to humanity as an ideal of the profession. But they also provide detailed provisions to help members recognize conflicts of interest, issues of collegiality, and confidentiality responsibilities.
- **Corporate Codes of Ethics**. Corporate codes are adopted by many companies to provide guidelines on particularly sticky issues (When does a gift become a bribe?) They also set forth provisions that express the core values of the corporation. These lengthy codes with detailed provisions support a compliance approach to organizational discipline.
- **Corporate Credos**. Some companies have shortened their lengthy codes into a few general provisions that form a creed.
- **Statements of Values**. Some companies express their core value commitments in Statements of Values. These form the basis of values-based decision-making. While codes of ethics clearly establish minimum standards of acceptable conduct, Statements of Values outline the aspirations that can drive companies toward continuous improvement.

Functions of Codes

Codes and policies can serve a number of functions within the organization including the following:

- **Discipline**. This function gets all the attention. Most codes are set forth to establish clearly and forcefully an organization's standards, especially its minimum standards of acceptable conduct. Having established the limits, organizations can then punish those who exceed them.
- **Educate**. This can range from disseminating standards to enlightening members. Company A's employees learned that anything over $100 was a bribe and should not be accepted. But engineers learn that their fundamental responsibility is to hold paramount public safety, health, and welfare. Codes certainly teach minimum standards of conduct, but they can help a community to articulate and understand their highest shared values and aspirations.
- **Inspirate**. Codes can set forth ideals in a way that inspires a community's members to strive for excellence. They can be written to set forth the aspirations and value commitments that express a community's ideals. They can point a community toward moral excellence.
- **Stimulate Dialogue**. Engineering professional codes of ethics have changed greatly over the last 150 years. This has been brought about by a vigorous internal debate stimulated by these very codes. Members debate controversial claims and work to refine more basic statements.
- **Empower and Protect**. Codes empower and protect those who are committed to doing the right thing. If an employer orders an employee to do something that violates that employee's ethical or professional standards, the code provides a basis for saying, "**No!**". Since codes

establish and disseminate moral standards, they can provide the structure to convert personal opinion into reasoned professional judgment. To reiterate, they provide support to those who would do the right thing, even under when there is considerable pressure to do the opposite.

- **Codes capture or express a community's identity**. They provide the occasion to identify, foster commitment, and disseminate the values with which an organization wants to be identified publicly. These values enter into an organization's core beliefs and commitments forming an identify-conferring system. By studying the values embedded in a company's code of ethics, observing the values actually displayed in the company's conduct, and looking for inconsistencies, the observer can gain insight into the core commitments of that company. Codes express values that, in turn, reveal a company's core commitments, or (in the case of a hypocritical organization) those values that have fallen to the wayside as the company has turned to other value pursuits.

Difficulties with Codes

The following objections note some of the difficulties with codes:

- **Codes can undermine moral autonomy** by habituating us to act from motives like deference to external authority and fear of punishment. We get out of the habit of making decisions for ourselves and fall into the habit of deferring to outside authority.
- **Codes often fail to guide us through complex situations.** Inevitably, gaps arise between general rules and the specific situations to which they are applied; concrete situations often present new and unexpected challenges that rules, because of their generality, cannot anticipate. Arguing that codes should provide action recipes for all situations neglects the fact that effective moral action requires more than just blind obedience to rules.
- **Codes of ethics can encourage a legalistic attitude** that turns us away from the pursuit of moral excellence and toward just getting by or staying out of trouble. For example, compliance codes habituate us to striving only to maintain minimum standards of conduct. They fail to motivate and direct action toward aspirations. Relying exclusively on compliance codes conveys the idea that morality is nothing but staying above the moral minimum.

Want to learn more?

For best practices in creating and administering codes see this Employer's Toolkit: Resources for Building an Inclusive Workplace.

Let's Practice: Exercise On Mission, Vision and Values

Mission Impact on Business Practice and Employee Behavior

In this exercise, you will have an opportunity to explore the way an organization's mission, vision and values influence their business practices and employee behavior—or not!

Your Task:

- Select a business or organization that you're familiar with and conduct research to determine their stated mission, vision and values.
- Reflect on your experience with the company/organization. Do the statements ring true or hollow? That is, do their business practices reflect the stated mission, vision and values?
- Next, investigate to see if you can find any codes or policies regarding conflict management, conflict resolution, bullying, harassment, etc.
- Write a brief reflection identifying your selected organization's mission, vision and values and your opinion on the validity of the statements and policies. Support your position with a specific example based on your personal experience or research. As always, include links to sources cited.

Source: Nina Burokas, Mission Impact on Business Practice and Employee Behavior. Lumen Learning. Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0).

Progressive Discipline

According to Indiana University Organizational Development "**Progressive discipline** is the process of using increasingly severe steps or measures when an employee fails to correct a problem after being given a reasonable opportunity to do so. The underlying principle of sound progressive discipline is to use the least severe action that you believe is necessary to correct the undesirable situation" (Indiana University Human Resources, n.d.).

There are usually two reasons for disciplining employees: performance problems and misconduct. Misconduct is generally the more serious problem as it is often deliberate, exhibited by acts of defiance. In contrast, poor performance is more often the result of lack of training, skills, or motivation. Performance problems can often be solved through coaching and performance

management, while misconduct normally calls for progressive discipline. Sometimes extreme cases of misconduct are grounds for immediate termination.

Consider This: Disciplinary Actions

Examples of Behaviours that May Require Disciplinary Action

Managers often cite the following behaviour when identifying what they perceive to be poor worker performance or misconduct:

- Lack of skills or knowledge
- Lack of motivation
- Poor attitude
- Lack of effort or misconduct (working at a reduced speed, poor quality, tardiness, sleeping on the job, wasting time)
- Poor co-worker relations (arguing on the job, lack of cooperation)
- Poor subordinate-supervisor relations (insubordination, lack of follow-through)
- Inappropriate supervisor-subordinate relations (favouritism, withholding of key information, mistreatment, abuse of power)
- Mishandling company property (misuse of tools, neglect)
- Harassment or workplace violence (verbal or physical abuse, threats, bullying)
- Dishonesty
- Disregard for safety practices (not wearing safety equipment, horseplay, carrying weapons on the job, working under the influence of alcohol or drugs)

Appropriate Level of Discipline

It is important to determine the proper level of discipline in each situation. In other words, "the punishment must fit the crime." Company policies on discipline should strive for fairness by adhering to these criteria:

- Develop clear, fair rules and consequences.
- Clearly communicate policies.
- Conduct a fair investigation.
- Balance consistency with flexibility.
- Use corrective action, not punishment.

Consistency in discipline is important. How others have been treated for similar infractions should provide the primary basis for determining appropriate action, but there are several factors that may justify increasing or decreasing the level of discipline:

- The employee's length of service
- Previous record of performance and conduct
- Whether the employee was provoked
- Whether the misconduct was premeditated or a spur-of-the-moment lack of judgment (i.e., was it with or without intent?)
- Whether the employee knew the rules and those rules have been consistently enforced on others
- Whether the employee acknowledges the mistake and shows remorse

After considering all of these factors, there still may be times when you believe it is best for the business to terminate an employee, particularly if you determine that a particular person or situation is likely to be a chronic problem. Paying the required severance, or termination pay, is a small cost compared to the damage a problem employee can cause.

Steps of Progressive Discipline

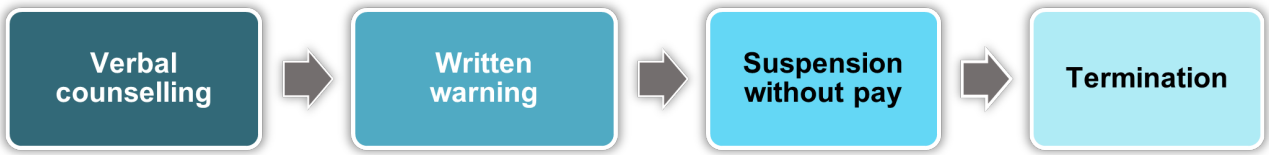

Figure 3.7 Steps of Progressive Discipline. Fanshawe College. Original Image, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. [Click to enlarge].

After each step before termination, the employee should be given an opportunity to correct the problem or behaviour. If he or she fails to do so, the final step is taken: termination.

Step 1: Verbal Counselling

Verbal counselling is usually the initial step. Verbal counselling sessions are used to bring a problem to the attention of the employee before it becomes so serious that it has to become part of a written warning and placed in the employee's file.

The purpose of the initial discussion is to alleviate misunderstandings and clarify the direction for necessary and successful correction. Most discipline problems can be solved at this stage if the

matter is approached constructively and if the employee can be engaged in seeking solutions. This is usually effective because most people don't want the disciplinary process to escalate.

Consider This: Counselling Session Tips

Below are some tips for conducting a verbal counselling session:

- Conduct the counselling session in private. Keep the tone low-key, friendly yet firm.
- Tell the employee the purpose for the discussion. Identify the problems specifically and ensure the employee understands expectations.
- Have documentation available to serve as a basis for the discussion, but try not to read from a list as this might lead the employee to feel defensive.
- Seek input from the employee about his or her perceptions of causes of problems.
- Where possible, identify solutions together. If this is not possible, clearly state your desired solution.
- Be sure the employee understands your expectations; ask them to describe the standard involved and how he or she will behave to correct the problem.
- Let the employee know that possible disciplinary action may follow if the problem is not corrected.
- Ask for a commitment from the employee to resolve the problem.

It isn't necessary to complete a formal document of the counselling session as it is considered an informal step in progressive discipline. However, you may want to write a brief statement confirming the subject matter discussed and the agreed-upon course of action to correct the problem. This can be a useful reference later if further discipline is needed.

After an appropriate period, be sure to schedule a follow-up meeting with the employee. Provide opportunities for two-way feedback and discussion. Let the employee know how he or she is progressing and ask how the new procedures or behaviours are working.

Step 2: Written Warning

If the problem is not resolved, you will need to prepare the written warning. Include in the warning information, responses, and commitments already made in the verbal counselling session.

The written warning has three parts:

- A statement that the verbal discussion has occurred, which reviewed the employee's history

with respect to the problem. Be sure to include the date the verbal discussion took place.

- A statement about the present, including a description of the current situation and including the employee's explanation or response. Use the "who, what, when" model to be sure you include all necessary details.
- A statement of the future, describing your expectations and the consequences of continued failure to correct the problem. This step may be repeated in the future with stronger consequence statements, so be clear on what the next step is. For example, this statement might state that the situation "may lead to further disciplinary action" or, in a later warning, "this is a final warning and failure to correct the problem will lead to discharge."

Consider This: Written Warning

Tips for Creating a Written Warning

By documenting these conversations, you cover yourself in legal disputes that may arise from terminations. Here are some guidelines for documenting written warnings:

- Clearly identify the performance issue that needs to be resolved.
- Give the employee the opportunity to propose a solution to the issue with you.
- Agree on the solution, and document what is going to change. Include a section on how the employer will help the employee change the behaviour.
- If appropriate, agree on a date when you will review the situation together, and ensure that the performance issue has changed for the better.
- Ensure that the employee understands the repercussions if the behaviour does not change. This must also be documented on the progressive discipline form.
- Both the employee and the employer should sign this written record of the conversation that outlines the issue, the solution, and the timeline for the change.
- Give the employee a copy of the written documentation for his or her own records.
- Follow-up on the agreed-upon date.

Step 3: Suspension without Pay

Depending on the situation there are times when it is appropriate to suspend an employee and times when it is not.

The rules on suspending employees without pay may depend on the specific situation, and, therefore, it is advised that employers review the provincial employment standards (Ontario Employment Standards, BC Employment Standards Act, or other provincial employment standards legislation) before carrying out a suspension without pay.

Step 4: Termination

If a problem is not resolved after appropriate warning, you may have to terminate an employee. As well, there may be cases when you want to terminate an employee immediately before going through steps 1 to 3.

Employment standards legislation in most provinces establishes a three-month probationary period during which an employee can be terminated for any reason, without notice. The only exceptions to termination within the probation period are any reason deemed discriminatory under human rights legislation, such as religious beliefs or nationality.

After the probationary period, the employer must have **just cause** for termination or otherwise provide sufficient notice or severance. It is recommended that you consult with your provincial labour regulations to confirm what is deemed "just cause." Poor work performance is *not* normally considered just cause unless the progressive discipline process has been followed and the employee has been given sufficient time to improve.

Just cause normally includes any of the following as grounds for immediate dismissal:

- Theft, fraud, or embezzlement
- Fighting
- Working while under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Any conduct that threatens the safety of others*
- Gross insubordination

**To learn more about warning signs of violence and best practices in designing and implementing anti-violence workplace strategies see Workplace Violence: Preventing and Minimizing Tragedy.*

Termination

If you are going to terminate an employee, you must have all the pertinent documentation in order and follow all the rules. If you do not, you risk legal repercussions for wrongful termination.If you have a human resources department, it is advisable to discuss the termination process with them beforehand. If your business is small and there is no formal human resources function, be sure you follow the employment standards regulations for your jurisdiction. If you feel unsure about any rule, you may want to contact a similar business that has a human resource department or the provincial Employment Standards Branch for advice. In all termination cases, aim to preserve the dignity of the employee and to have them leave with the feeling of being treated fairly and with respect. See the suggestions below for additional guidelines for best practices when terminating an employee.

Let's Focus: Steps When Terminating an Employee

Regardless of the specific rules for your jurisdiction, you should follow these general steps when terminating an employee:

- A discussion with the employee must occur before a final determination is reached. Inform the employee about the nature of the problem.
- The employee must be given an opportunity to explain his or her action and to provide information.
- If the employee provides pertinent information, you must investigate where appropriate.
- A written notice of termination must be prepared after the discussion and consideration of all available information.
- When you meet with the employee for the final termination meeting, hold it in a private location where the employee will not have to walk past co-workers afterwards.
- Have a witness or backup present in case the conversation gets heated.
- Explain how the employee has continued to perform below expectations. Refer to warnings given earlier.
- Announce the termination.
- Collect all property of the company, such as keys and uniforms.
- Ensure that the employee's hours of work are sent to the payroll department, and final cheques and vacation pay are paid out according to the provincial regulations.
- Inform the employee of any information they need to know, such as when the final pay cheque will be ready if not already available, where to hand in keys and uniform, and if and when there will be an exit interview.

Adapted Works

3.5 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms

Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **Organizational culture refers to a system of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs** that show employees what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior
- **Organizational culture consists of three levels:** assumptions, values, and artifacts.
- **Organizations vary in the strength of their culture.** Strong organizational cultures can be an organizing and controlling mechanism for organizations. Strong culture can also lead to resistance to change.
- **Organization cultures are created by a variety of factors**, including founders' values and preferences, industry demands, and early values, goals, and assumptions.
- **Culture is maintained through** attraction-selection-attrition, new employee onboarding, leadership, and organizational reward systems.
- **Organizations change in response to** changes in the environment and in response to the way decision makers interpret these changes.
- **When it comes to organizational change, one of the biggest obstacles is resistance to change.** People resist change because change disrupts habits, conflicts with certain personality types, causes a fear of failure, can have potentially negative impacts, can result in a potential for loss of power, and, when done too frequently, can exhaust employees.
- **There are a number of frameworks that can be used to assess and understand organizational culture** including Occupational Culture Profiles, service culture, safety culture, and the Competing Values Framework.
- **In addition to organizational culture, codes and other policies** can formalize the expectations for behaviour at work.
- **Performance issues and misconduct** can result in disciplinary action at work.
- **Discipline should match the level of offense.** Unless there is just cause for immediate termination, discipline should be progressive in nature starting with a conversation.
- **When designing and implementing codes in the workplace, it is important to be aware of various legislation** which outlines human rights and employment standards.

Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/conflictmanagement/?p=98#h5p-5

Key Terms

Key terms from this chapter include:

- **Attrition**
- **Competing Values Framework**
- **Counterculture**
- **Formalization**
- **Mentor**
- **Onboarding**
- **Organizational culture**
- **Organizational culture profile (OCP)**
- **Progressive discipline**
- **Safety culture**
- **Service culture**
- **Subculture**

CHAPTER 4: POWER AND POLITICS

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

- Define power.
- Contrast power, leadership, and authority.
- Recognize symbols of managerial power.
- Explain the relationship between power and dependency.
- Review the bases of power.
- Compare the different use of power bases and the likelihood that they will result in resistance, compliance, or commitment.
- Summarize common power tactics used in the workplace.
- Define politics.
- Identify individual and organizational antecedents of political behaviour,
- Recognize common influence tactics and their outcomes.
- Describe potential directions of influence.
- Explore suggestions for how-to use power and politics ethically in the workplace.
- Define bullying, harassment, and violence.
- Recognize that bullying and harassment disproportionally impact some groups more than others.
- Review types of bullying.
- Compare response to bullying and harassment.
- Identify the role or organizations in reducing and addressing bullying and harassment

In this chapter, we will examine organizational culture as it relates to conflict. Power and politics are the lifeblood of most organizations. Most organizations are composed of coalitions and alliances of different parties that continually compete for available resources. As a result, informed employees need to understand power dynamics and their impact on conflict.

An awareness of the nature and pervasiveness of power and politics is essential for a better understanding of how conflict can be prevented and managed. We will explore the importance of professionalism and methods for engaging in power, politics, and conflict in an ethical manner. Finally, we will explore extreme situations of conflict that take the form of bullying, harassment, and/or workplace violence.

Adapted Works

4.1 Power

In this section:

- Power
- Bases of Power
- Consequences of Power
- Common Power Tactics in Organizations
- Recourse for Conflict Within a Power Differential?

Power

We'll look at the aspects and nuances of power in more detail in this chapter, but to begin, we will define power as follows:

Power can be defined as an interpersonal relationship in which one individual (or group) has the ability to cause another individual (or group) to take an action that would not be taken otherwise.

In other words, power involves one person changing the behavior of another. It is important to note that in most organizational situations, we are talking about implied force to comply, not necessarily actual force. That is, person A has power over person B if person B believes that person A can, in fact, force person B to comply.

Power distribution is usually visible within organizations. For example, Salancik and Pfeffer (1989) gathered information from a company with 21 department managers and asked 10 of those department heads to rank all the managers according to the influence each person had in the organization. Although ranking 21 managers might seem like a difficult task, all the managers were immediately able to create that list. When Salancik and Pfeffer compared the rankings, they found virtually no disagreement in how the top 5 and bottom 5 managers were ranked. The only slight differences came from individuals ranking themselves higher than their colleagues ranked them. The same findings held true for factories, banks, and universities.

Power, Authority, and Leadership

Clearly, the concept of power is closely related to the concepts of authority and leadership (see Figure 4.1 below). In fact, power has been referred to by some as "informal authority," whereas authority has been called "legitimate power." However, these three concepts are not the same, and important differences among the three should be noted (Mintzberg, 1983; House, 1988).

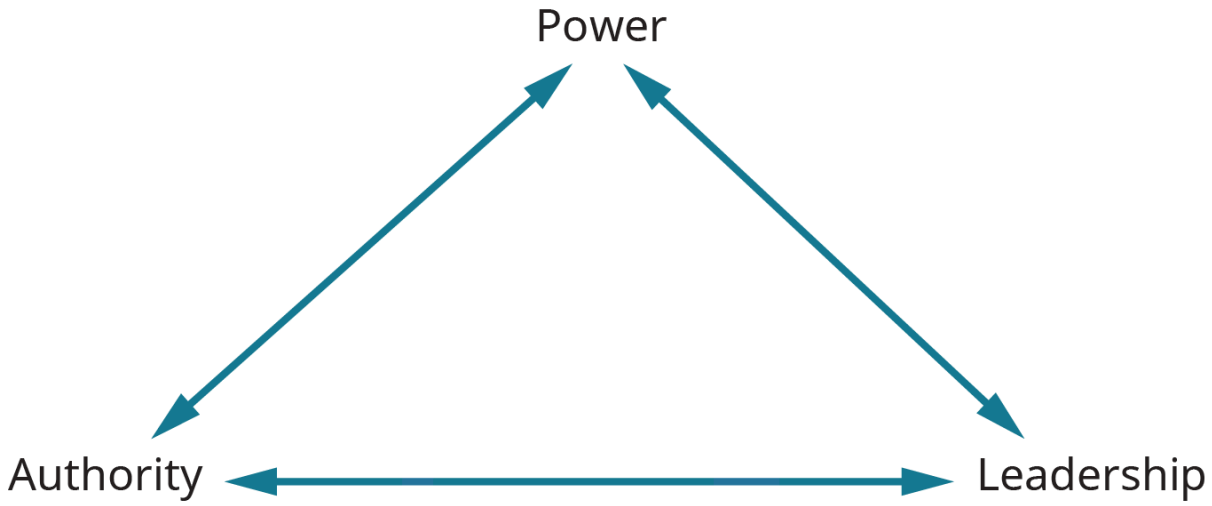

Figure 4.1 Three Major Types of Influence. Image: Rice University, Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

As stated previously, power represents the capacity of one person or group to secure compliance from another person or group. Nothing is said here about the right to secure compliance—only the ability. In contrast, **authority** represents the right to seek compliance by others; the exercise of authority is backed by legitimacy. If a manager instructs an employee to complete a task that is a part of their assigned duties, they presumably have the authority to make such a request. However, if the same manager asked the employee to run personal errands, this would be outside the bounds of the legitimate exercise of authority. Although the employee may still act on this request, this compliance would be based on power or influence considerations, not authority.

Hence, the exercise of authority is based on group acceptance of someone's right to exercise legitimate control. As Grimes notes, "What legitimates authority is the promotion or pursuit of collective goals that are associated with group consensus. The polar opposite, power, is the pursuit of individual or particularistic goals associated with group compliance" (Grimes, 1978, p. 726)

Finally, **leadership** is the ability of one individual to elicit responses from another person that go beyond required or mechanical compliance. It is this voluntary aspect of leadership that sets it apart from power and authority. Hence, we often differentiate between headship and leadership. A department head may have the right to require certain actions, whereas a leader has the ability to inspire certain actions. Although both functions may be served by the same individual, such is clearly not always the case.

Krista's Book Club Recommendation: Gentle Power

In her 2023 book *Gentle Power: A Revolution in How We Think, Lead and Succeed Using the Finnish Art of Sisu*, Dr. Emilia Elisabeth Lahti offers suggestions about how to balance power with compassion. Lahti describes her approach: "Sisu is a Finnish word for determination and inner fortitude in the face of extreme adversity. Gentle power is to apply sisu with wisdom and heart."

Lahti notes that this model of gentle power is helpful for everyone – not just high-power executives. This book also touches on the self and the importance of self-care. If you've struggled with discomfort around exercising power because the idea is integrally tied to toxic dominance and aggression, this book might be helpful in helping you think about your own power in a different way. Students may also be interested in her TEDx Talk introducing the concept of Sisu.

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Symbols of Managerial Power

How do we know when a manager has power in an organizational setting? Harvard professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter (2004) has identified several of the more common symbols of managerial power. For example, managers have power to the extent that they can intercede favorably on behalf of someone in trouble with the organization. Have you ever noticed that when several people commit the same mistake, some don't get punished? Perhaps someone is watching over them.

Moreover, managers have power when they can get a desirable placement for a talented subordinate or get approval for expenditures beyond their budget. Other manifestations of power include the ability to secure above-average salary increases for subordinates and the ability to get items on the agenda at policy meetings.

And we can see the extent of managerial power when someone can gain quick access to top decision makers or can get early information about decisions and policy shifts. In other words, who can get through to the boss, and who cannot? Who is "connected," and who is not?

Finally, power is evident when top decision makers seek out the opinions of a particular manager on important questions. Who gets invited to important meetings, and who does not? Who does the

boss say “hello” to when they enter the room? Through such actions, the organization sends clear signals concerning who has power and who does not. In this way, the organization reinforces or at least condones the power structure in existence.

Relationship Between Dependency and Power

Dependency is directly related to power. The more that a person or unit is dependent on you, the more power you have. The strategic contingencies model provides a good description of how dependency works. According to the model, dependency is power that a person or unit gains from their ability to handle actual or potential problems facing the organization (Saunders, 1990). You know how dependent you are on someone when you answer three key questions surrounding scarcity, importance, and substitutability. Let’s learn more about each of these criteria.

Scarcity

Recall back to our definition of conflict in Chapter 1. Scarcity (actual or perceived) is often involved in conflict. In the context of dependency, scarcity refers to the uniqueness of a resource. The more difficult something is to obtain, the more valuable it tends to be. Effective persuaders exploit this reality by making an opportunity or offer seem more attractive because it is limited or exclusive. They might convince you to take on a project because “it’s rare to get a chance to work on a new project like this,” or “You have to sign on today because if you don’t, I have to offer it to someone else.”

Importance

Importance refers to the value of the resource. The key question here is “How important is this?” If the resources or skills you control are vital to the organization, you will gain some power. Think back to our discussion of negotiation. The more vital the resources that you control are, the more power you will have. For example, if Kecia is the only person who knows how to fill out reimbursement forms, it is beneficial that you are able to work with her, if you place importance on getting your personal expense reports processed in a timely fashion.

Substitutability

Finally, substitutability refers to one’s ability to find another option that works as well as the one offered. The question around whether something is substitutable is “How difficult would it be for me to find another way to this?” The harder it is to find a substitute, the more dependent the person becomes and the more power someone else has over them. If you are the only person who knows how to make a piece of equipment work, you will be very powerful in the organization. This is true unless another piece of equipment is brought in to serve the same function. At that point, your

power would diminish. Similarly, countries with large supplies of crude oil have traditionally had power to the extent that other countries need oil to function.

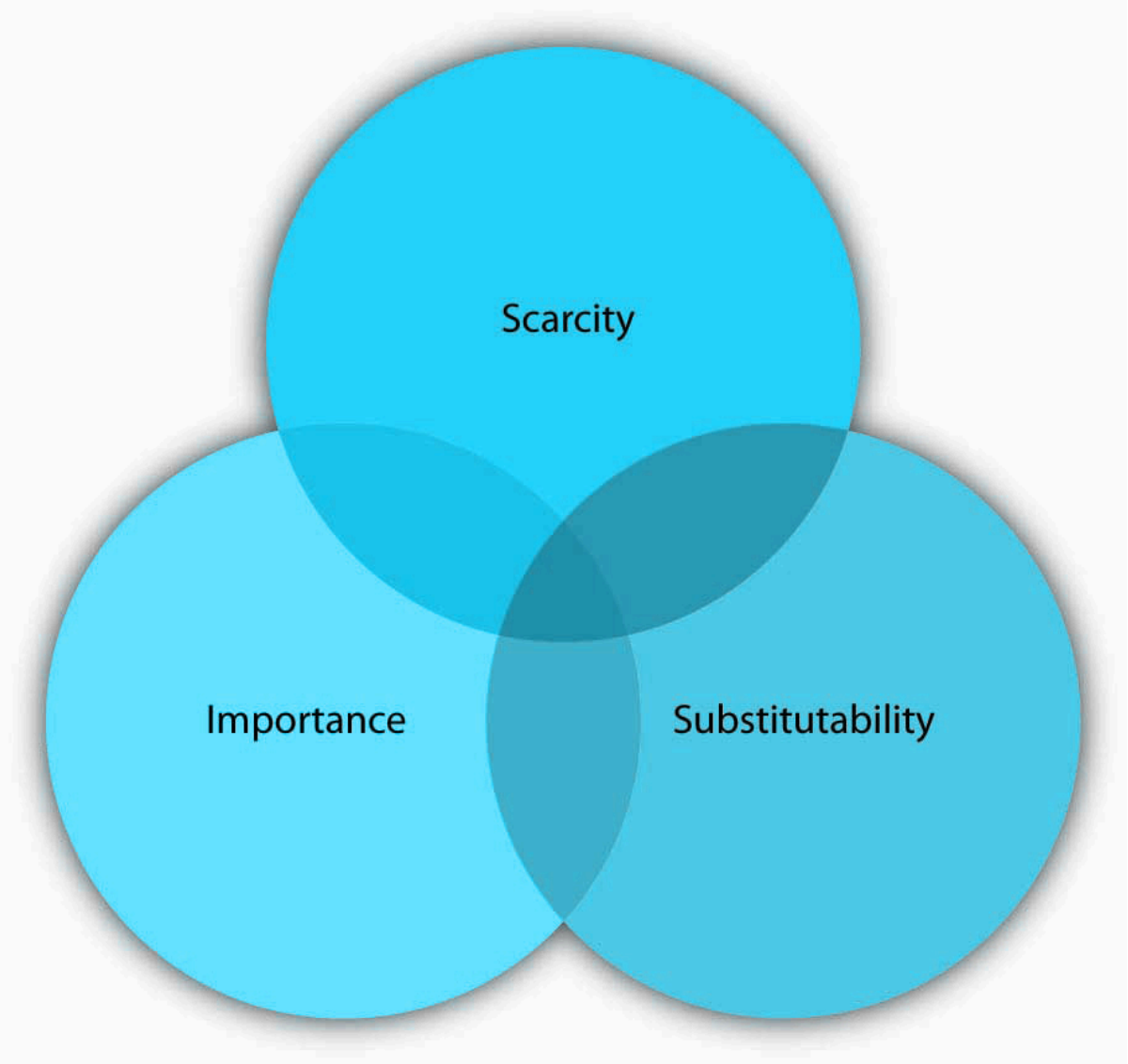

Figure 4.2 Possessing any of the three aspects of a resource could make others depend on you, two would make you extremely needed, and having all three could make you indispensable. Image: Saylor Academy, Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

Bases of Power

Having power and using power are two different things. What are the sources of one's power over others? Researchers identified six sources of power, which include legitimate, reward, coercive, expert, information, and referent (French & Raven, 1960).

Legitimate Power

Legitimate power is power that comes from one's organizational role or position. It is synonymous with authority. For example, a manager can assign projects, a police officer can arrest a citizen, and a teacher assigns grades. Others comply with the requests these individuals make because they accept the legitimacy of the position, whether they like or agree with the request or not.

Legitimate power derives from three sources. First, prevailing cultural value, accepted social structures, and designation are all ways that power can be assigned to a group. Whatever the reason, people exercise legitimate power because others assume they have a right to exercise it.

Reward Power

Reward power is the ability to grant a reward, such as an increase in pay, a perk, or an attractive job assignment. Reward power tends to accompany legitimate power and is highest when the reward is scarce. Anyone can wield reward power, however, in the form of public praise or giving someone something in exchange for their compliance.

Coercive Power

Coercive power is the ability to take something away or punish someone for noncompliance. Coercive power often works through fear, and it forces people to do something that ordinarily they would not choose to do. The most extreme example of coercion is government dictators who threaten physical harm for noncompliance.

As Kipnis (1976) points out, coercive power does not have to rest on the threat of violence. "Individuals exercise coercive power through a reliance upon physical strength, verbal facility, or the ability to grant or withhold emotional support from others. These bases provide the individual with the means to physically harm, bully, humiliate, or deny love to others." (p. 77) Examples of coercive power in organizations include the ability (actual or implied) to fire or demote people, transfer them to undesirable jobs or locations, or strip them of valued perquisites. Indeed, it has been suggested that a good deal of organizational behavior (such as prompt attendance, looking busy, avoiding whistle-blowing) can be attributed to coercive power.

Expert Power

Expert power comes from knowledge and skill. In an organization include long-time employees, such as a steelworker who knows the temperature combinations and length of time to get the best yields have expert power. Examples of expert power can be seen in staff specialists in organizations

(e.g., accountants, labor relations managers, management consultants, and corporate attorneys). In each case, the individual has credibility in a particular—and narrow—area as a result of experience and expertise, and this gives the individual power in that domain.

Information Power

Information power is similar to expert power but differs in its source. Experts tend to have a vast amount of knowledge or skill, whereas information power is distinguished by access to specific information. For example, knowing price information gives a person information power during negotiations. Within organizations, a person's social network can either isolate them from information power or serve to create it. Individuals who are able to span boundaries and serve to connect different parts of the organizations often have a great deal of information power.

Consider This: Authority & Knowledge Hierarchies

When discussing power, authority, and status, and who holds it in organizational and other contexts, it is worthwhile considering knowledge hierarchies or epistemological status, or, in other words, the ways we ascribe credibility/authority to certain knowledge claims above others (do Mar Pereira, 2017).

For example, consider the ways knowledge is created and privileged in academic spaces. Positivist approaches, such as what is often seen in the 'hard sciences' (using quantitative methods, deduction, and experimentation), are generally positioned as objective (Park et al., 2020; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016) compared with interpretivist approaches, which use tend to rely on more inductive approaches and acknowledge and value subjectivities (Rechberg, 2018; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Moreover, in many academic/institutional spaces, Western scientific/positivist approaches are often valued and prioritized above interpretivist or other approaches (e.g. see Althaus, 2020); this can be evident in subtle and overt ways, such as in relative funding opportunities, prestige, and other outcomes attached to the respective paradigms (e.g. see Anderson, 1995). These domains or approaches represent distinct ways of viewing and doing things based around certain sets of assumptions. Moreover, knowledge hierarchies can also occur along disciplinary, gendered (e.g. see Anderson, 1995), and cultural boundaries (e.g. see Althaus, 2020).

Likewise, in many contexts, Western (and colonial) paradigms often shape the way many institutions run (i.e. policies, administration, etc.) (Althaus, 2020). Because of the implicit assumptions and biases within such knowledge claims, this can be a barrier to engagement, equity, and inclusion, as well as a precipitating factor for conflict situations across various levels of conflict. However, more recently, with greater attention given to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives, knowledge systems and approaches (e.g. Indigenous ways of knowing) that extend beyond the Western models are being

valued for their unique and important contributions (Althaus, 2020; see also Bowers, 2012). Increased collaboration and honouring of holistic and relational approaches and other Indigenous models could have notable implications for a broad array of organizational spaces, systems, and skills, including in the areas of intercultural competence, communication, and conflict management/resolution (Althaus, 2020; Duggan et al., 2013; see also Bowers, 2012) and can support some of the 94 Calls to Action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (TRCC, 2015).

Questions to Consider

- What knowledge claims are prioritized in the spaces you inhabit?
- How do you know?
- Who benefits from this? Who doesn't?

Further, understanding knowledge hierarchies and epistemological status also 1) enables critical thinking, 2) cultivates self-awareness of the self and others within broader systems, 3) challenges assumptions and norms within institutional/organizational practices, and 4) creates space for us to move beyond the traditional levels to consider greater complexity and understandings of power and status, particularly within organizational/institutional spaces.

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Referent Power

Referent power stems from the personal characteristics of the person such as the degree to which we like, respect, and want to be like them. Referent power is often called charisma—the ability to attract others, win their admiration, and hold them spellbound. In work environments, junior managers often emulate senior managers and assume unnecessarily subservient roles more because of personal admiration than because of respect for authority.

Consequences of Power

We have seen, then, that at least six bases of power can be identified. In each case, the power of the individual rests on a particular attribute of the power holder, the follower, or their relationship. In some cases (e.g., reward power), power rests in the superior; in others (e.g., referent power), power is given to the superior by the subordinate. In all cases, the exercise of power involves subtle and sometimes threatening interpersonal consequences for the parties involved. In fact, when power is exercised, employees have several ways in which to respond. These are shown in Figure 4.3.

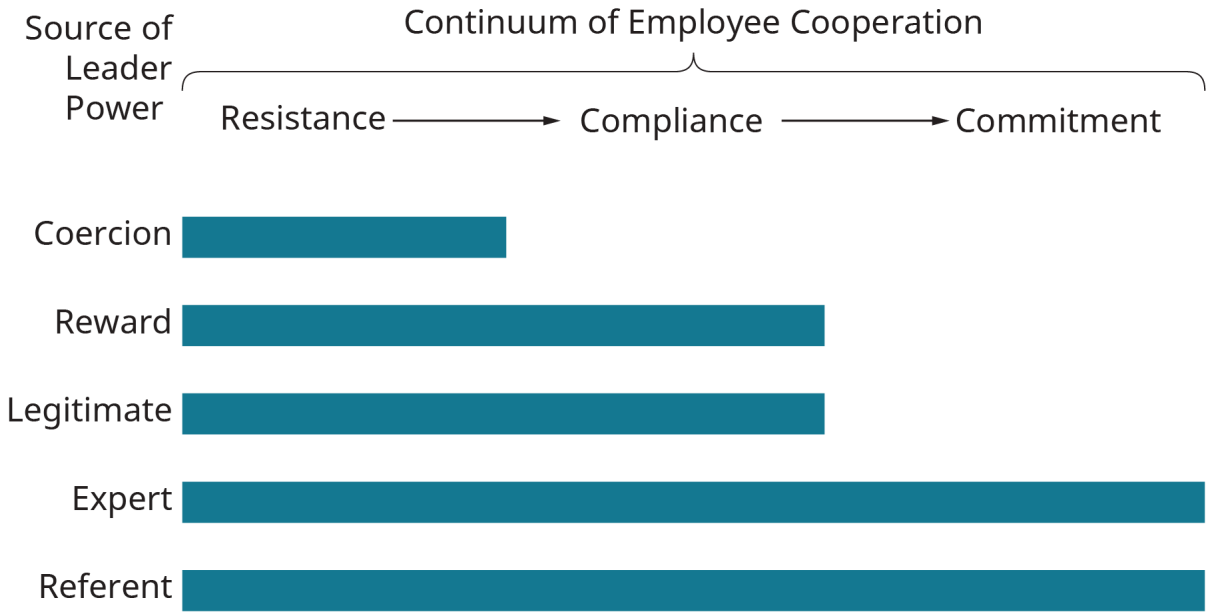

Figure 4.3 Employee Reactions to Bases of Power. Rice University & OpenStax, Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

If the subordinate accepts and identifies with the leader, his behavioral response will probably be one of **commitment.** That is, the subordinate will be motivated to follow the wishes of the leader. This is most likely to happen when the person in charge uses referent or expert power. Under these circumstances, the follower believes in the leader's cause and will exert considerable energies to help the leader succeed.

A second possible response is **compliance**. This occurs most frequently when the subordinate feels the leader has either legitimate power or reward power. Under such circumstances, the follower will comply, either because it is perceived as a duty or because a reward is expected; but commitment or enthusiasm for the project is lacking.

Finally, under conditions of coercive power, subordinates will more than likely use **resistance.** Here, the subordinate sees little reason—either altruistic or material—for cooperating and will often engage in a series of tactics to defeat the leader's efforts.

Positive and Negative Consequences of Power

Power has both positive and negative consequences. On one hand, powerful CEOs can align an entire organization to move together to achieve goals. Amazing philanthropists such as Paul Farmer, a doctor who brought hospitals, medicine, and doctors to remote Haiti, and Greg Mortenson, a mountaineer who founded the Central Asia Institute and built schools across Pakistan, draw on their own power to organize others toward lofty goals; they have changed the lives of thousands of individuals in countries around the world for the better (Kidder, 2004: Mortenson & Relin, 2006). On the other hand, autocracy can destroy companies and countries alike. The phrase, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" was first said by English historian John Emerich Edward Dalberg, who warned that power was inherently evil and its holders were not to be trusted. History shows that power can be intoxicating and can be devastating when abused. One reason that power can be so easily abused is because individuals are often quick to conform.

Common Power Tactics in Organizations

Here, we look at some of the more commonly used power tactics found in both business and public organizations (Pfeffer, 2011).

Controlling Access to Information

Most decisions rest on the availability of relevant information, so persons controlling access to information play a major role in decisions made. A good example of this is the common corporate practice of pay secrecy. Only the personnel department and senior managers typically have salary information—and power—for personnel decisions.

Controlling Access to Persons

Another related power tactic is the practice of controlling access to persons. This can lead to isolation, especially of individuals in upper levels of organizational hierarchy.

Selective Use of Objective Criteria

Very few organizational questions have one correct answer; instead, decisions must be made concerning the most appropriate criteria for evaluating results. As such, significant power can be exercised by those who can practice selective use of objective criteria that will lead to a decision favorable to themselves. According to Herbert Simon, if an individual is permitted to select decision criteria, they needn't care who actually makes the decision. Attempts to control objective decision criteria can be seen in faculty debates in a university or college over who gets hired or promoted. One group tends to emphasize teaching and will attempt to set criteria for employment dealing with teacher competence, subject area, interpersonal relations, and so on. Another group may emphasize research and will try to set criteria related to number of publications, reputation in the field, and so on.

Controlling the Agenda

One of the simplest ways to influence a decision is to ensure that it never comes up for consideration in the first place. There are a variety of strategies used for controlling the agenda. Efforts may be made to order the topics at a meeting in such a way that the undesired topic is last on the list. Failing this, opponents may raise a number of objections or points of information concerning the topic that cannot be easily answered, thereby tabling the topic until another day.

Using Outside Experts

Still another means to gain an advantage is using outside experts. The unit wishing to exercise power may take the initiative and bring in experts from the field or experts known to be in sympathy with their cause. Hence, when a dispute arises over spending more money on research versus actual production, we would expect differing answers from outside research consultants and outside production consultants. Most consultants have experienced situations in which their clients fed them information and biases they hoped the consultant would repeat in a meeting.

Bureaucratic Gamesmanship

In some situations, the organizations own policies and procedures provide ammunition for power plays, or bureaucratic gamesmanship. For instance, a group may drag its feet on making changes in the workplace by creating red tape, work slowdowns, or "work to rule." (Working to rule occurs when employees diligently follow every work rule and policy statement to the letter; this typically results in the organization's grinding to a halt as a result of the many and often conflicting rules and policy statements.) In this way, the group lets it be known that the workflow will continue to slow down until they get their way.

Coalitions and Alliances

The final power tactic to be discussed here is that of coalitions and alliances. One unit can effectively increase its power by forming an alliance with other groups that share similar interests. This technique is often used when multiple labor unions in the same corporation join forces to gain contract concessions for their workers. It can also be seen in the tendency of corporations within one industry to form trade associations to lobby for their position. Although the various members of a coalition need not agree on everything—indeed, they may be competitors—sufficient agreement on the problem under consideration is necessary as a basis for action.

Although other power tactics could be discussed, these examples serve to illustrate the diversity of techniques available to those interested in acquiring and exercising power in organizational situations.

Recourse for Conflict Within a Power Differential?

Various conflict prevention, reduction, management, and resolution strategies are discussed throughout the textbook, including many that may still be relevant despite the power differential. Still, power dynamics can pose additional challenges, for instance, when one party is disproportionately impacted by the conflict and they are disempowered because of a power hierarchy/differential. If the typical strategies prove ineffective and/or the situation is severe (i.e. includes bullying, harassment, or violence), there can be other options, including the following:

- relying on the organizations/institutions own texts, such as policies and procedures, job descriptions, and/or a Collective Agreement
- consulting with the organization's human resources department, the employee union, or the EDI office (where relevant)

Sometimes, institutional policies and practices create and/or enable problematic hierarchies. In this

case, it can be useful or sometimes even necessary to find support outside of the organization. For example, leaning on more authoritative texts might be helpful:

- Occupational Health and Safety Act
- Public Services Health & Safety Association
- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety
- Ontario Human Rights Commission

Seeking legal counsel (independent of the organization) can be another option; nonetheless, as Ahmed (2021) states, "complaints have consequences" (p. 272). Sometimes the situation improves, sometimes it stays the same, and sometimes it gets worse (and sometimes it gets worse before it gets better). The outcomes can be complex and dependent on numerous factors. Ahmed also discusses the notion of collective complaints to share experiences and to increase the weight of the complaint.

Whistleblowing can offer recourse in some situations. Whistleblowing is defined as "disclosure by organization members (former or current) of illegal, immoral or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers, to persons or organizations that may be able to effect action" (Micelli & Near, 1984). Roberts et al. (2011) wrote a guide for public sector organizations to set up systems and procedures for dealing with public interest whistleblowing. Additionally, the Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner of Canada (2016) commissioned a report discussing the very real fear of reprisal that can exist alongside whistleblowing, in addition to evidence-informed strategies that organizations can adopt to increase safety for those exposing wrongdoing. Still, good resources for individuals who are considering whistleblowing in ways that minimize personal risk are harder to come by.

Krista's Book Club Recommendation: Complaint!

Ahmed's (2021) Complaint! explores circumstances and outcomes of complaints against harassment, bullying, violence, and other uses and abuses of power in institutional contexts (particularly in post-secondary academic institutions). Ahmed shares lived experiences from students and faculty about the power imbalances that occur and the outcomes of complaints. This book highlights the costs of raising a complaint, the institutional processes that hide issues under a blanket of confidentiality, and how the policies and procedures within institutions can perpetuate structural violence.

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Case Study

See Appendix A: Case Studies

- Case Study 4: The Ohio Connection

Adapted Works

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4.2 Politics and Influence

In this section:

- Organizational Politics
- Reasons for Political Behaviour
- Influence

Organizational Politics

Organizational politics are informal, unofficial, and sometimes behind-the-scenes efforts to sell ideas, influence an organization, increase power, or achieve other targeted objectives (Brandon & Seldman, 2004: Hochwarter et al., 2000). Politics has been around for millennia. Aristotle wrote that politics stems from a diversity of interests, and those competing interests must be resolved in some way. "Rational" decision making alone may not work when interests are fundamentally incongruent, so political behaviors and influence tactics arise.

Another definition of politics was offered by Lasswell (1936), who described it as who gets what, when, and how. Even from this simple definition, one can see that politics involves the resolution of differing preferences in conflicts over the allocation of scarce and valued resources. Politics represents one mechanism to solve allocation problems when other mechanisms, such as the introduction of new information or the use of a simple majority rule, fail to apply.

For our purposes here, we will adopt Pfeffer's (2011) definition of **politics** as involving "those activities taken within organizations to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to obtain one's preferred outcomes in a situation in which there is uncertainty or dissensus about choices" (p. 8).

In comparing the concept of politics with the related concept of power, Pfeffer notes:

> If power is a force, a store of potential influence through which events can be affected, politics involves those activities or behaviors through which power is developed and used in organizational settings. Power is a property of the system at rest; politics is the study of power in action. An individual, subunit or department may have power within an organizational context at some period of time; politics involves the exercise of power to get something accomplished, as well as those activities which are undertaken to expand the power already possessed or the scope over which it can be exercised.

In other words, from this definition it is clear that political behavior is activity that is initiated for the purpose of overcoming opposition or resistance. In the absence of opposition, there is no need for political activity. Moreover, it should be remembered that political activity need not necessarily be dysfunctional for organization-wide effectiveness. In fact, many managers often believe that their political actions on behalf of their own departments are actually in the best interests of the organization as a whole.

Finally, we should note that politics, like power, is not inherently bad. In many instances, the survival of the organization depends on the success of a department or coalition of departments challenging a traditional but outdated policy or objective. That is why an understanding of organizational politics, as well as power, is so essential for managers. As John Kotter (1985) wrote in *Power and Influence*, "Without political awareness and skill, we face the inevitable prospect of becoming immersed in bureaucratic infighting, parochial politics and destructive power struggles, which greatly retard organizational initiative, innovation, morale, and performance."

In our discussion about power, we saw that power issues (and conflict) often arise around scarce resources. Organizations typically have limited resources that must be allocated in some way. Individuals and groups within the organization may disagree about how those resources should be allocated, so they may naturally seek to gain those resources for themselves or for their interest groups, which gives rise to organizational politics. Simply put, with organizational politics, individuals ally themselves with like-minded others in an attempt to win the scarce resources. They'll engage in behavior typically seen in government organizations, such as bargaining, negotiating, alliance building, and resolving conflicting interests.

Politics are a part of organizational life, because organizations are made up of different interests that need to be aligned. In fact, 93% of managers surveyed reported that workplace politics exist in their organization, and 70% felt that in order to be successful, a person has to engage in politics (Gandaz & Murray, 1980). In the negative light, saying that someone is "political" generally stirs up images of backroom dealing, manipulation, or hidden agendas for personal gain. A person engaging in these types of political behaviors is said to be engaging in self-serving behavior that is not sanctioned by the organization (Ferris et al., 1996; Valle & Perrewe, 2000; Harris et al., 2005; Randall et al., 1999).

Examples of these self-serving behaviors include bypassing the chain of command to get approval for a special project, going through improper channels to obtain special favors, or lobbying high-level managers just before they make a promotion decision. These types of actions undermine fairness in the organization, because not everyone engages in politicking to meet their own objectives.

Those who follow proper procedures often feel jealous and resentful because they perceive unfair distributions of the organization's resources, including rewards and recognition (Parker et al., 1995).

Researchers have found that if employees think their organization is overly driven by politics, the employees are less committed to the organization (Maslyn & Fedor, 1998 Nye & Wit, 1993), have lower job satisfaction (Ferris et al., 1996; Hochwarter et al., 2010; Kacmar et al., 1999) perform worse on the job (Anderson, 1994), have higher levels of job anxiety (Ferris et al., 1996; Kacmar & Ferris, 1989), and have a higher incidence of depressed mood (Byrne et al., 2005).

The negative side of organizational politics is more likely to flare up in times of organizational change or when there are difficult decisions to be made and a scarcity of resources that breeds competition among organizational groups. To minimize overly political behavior, company leaders can provide equal access to information, model collaborative behavior, and demonstrate that political maneuvering will not be rewarded or tolerated. Furthermore, leaders should encourage managers throughout the organization to provide high levels of feedback to employees about their performance. High levels of feedback reduce the perception of organizational politics and improve employee morale and work performance (Rosen et al., 2006). Remember that politics can be a healthy way to get things done within organizations.

Intensity of Political Behavior

Contemporary organizations are highly political entities. Indeed, much of the goal-related effort produced by an organization is directly attributable to political processes. However, the intensity of political behavior varies, depending upon many factors. For example, in one study, managers were asked to rank several organizational decisions on the basis of the extent to which politics were involved (Ganz & Murray, 1980). Results showed that the most political decisions (in rank order) were those involving interdepartmental coordination, promotions and transfers, and the delegation of authority. Such decisions are typically characterized by an absence of established rules and procedures and a reliance on ambiguous and subjective criteria.

On the other hand, the managers in the study ranked as least political such decisions as personnel policies, hiring, and disciplinary procedures. These decisions are typically characterized by clearly established policies, procedures, and objective criteria.

On the basis of findings such as these, it is possible to develop a typology of when political behavior would generally be greatest and least. This model is shown in Figure 4.3 below. As can be seen, we would expect the greatest amount of political activity in situations characterized by high uncertainty and complexity and high competition among employees or groups for scarce resources. The least politics would be expected under conditions of low uncertainty and complexity and little competition among employees over resources.

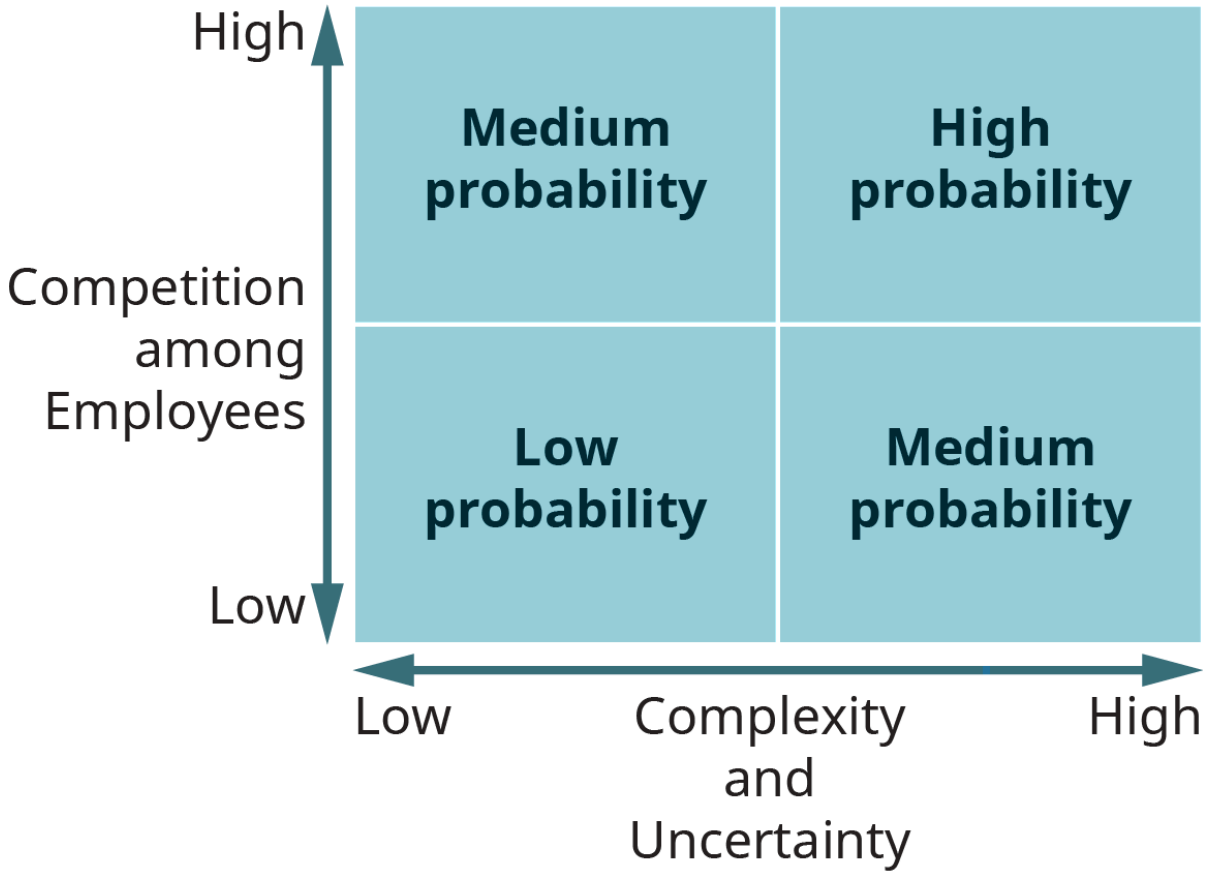

Figure 4.4 Probability of Political Behavior in an Organization Source: Adapted from "The Use and Abuse of Corporate Politics" by Don R. Beeman and Thomas W. Sharkey. Reprinted from Business Horizons, March–April 1987. Image: Rice University & OpenStax, Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

Reasons for Political Behaviour

We can trace the source of political behaviour back to a number of ancedents. We will broadly define these as individual factors and organizational factors.

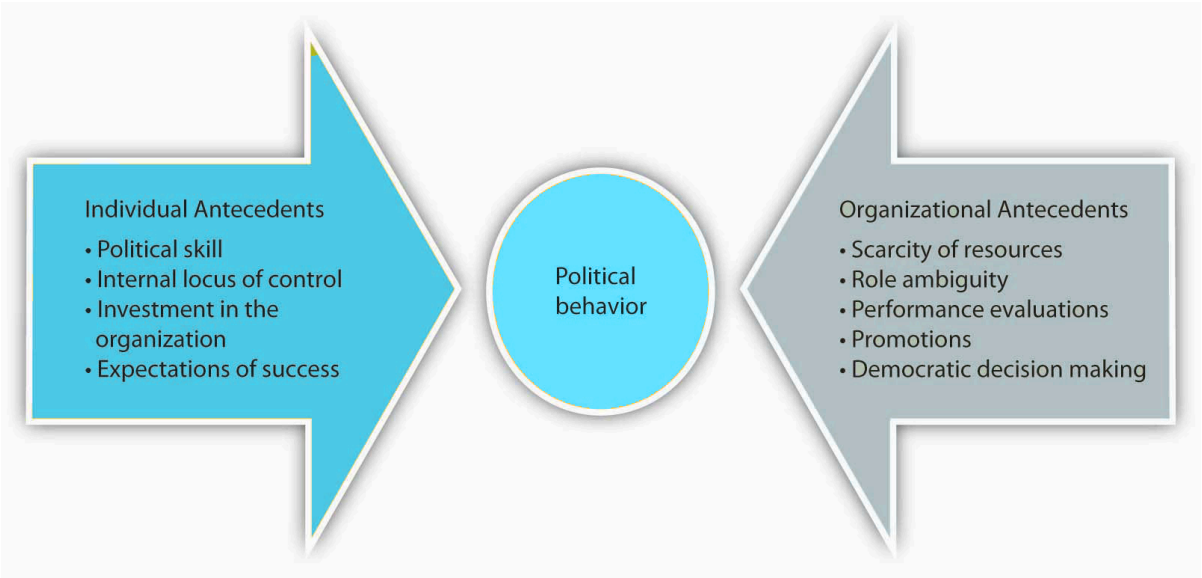

Figure 4.5 Individual and organizational antecedents can both lead to political behavior. Image: Saylor Academy, Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

Individual Antecedents of Political Behaviour

Individual antecedents of political behaviour include political skills, locus of control, investment in the organization and expectation of success. Let's talk about each.

Political Skill

Political skill refers to peoples' interpersonal style, including their ability to relate well to others, self-monitor, alter their reactions depending upon the situation they are in, and inspire confidence and trust (Ferris et al., 2000). Researchers have found that individuals who are high on political skill are more effective at their jobs or at least in influencing their supervisors' performance ratings of them (Ferris et al., 1994: Kilduff & Day, 1994).

Internal Locus of Control

Individuals who are high in internal locus of control believe that they can make a difference in organizational outcomes. They do not leave things to fate. Therefore, we would expect those high in internal locus of control to engage in more political behavior. Research shows that these individuals perceive politics around them to a greater degree (Valle & Perrewe, 2000).

Investment in the Organization

Investment in the organization is also related to political behavior. If a person is highly invested in an organization either financially or emotionally, they will be more likely to engage in political behavior because they care deeply about the fate of the organization.

Expectations of Success

Finally, expectations of success also matter. When a person expects that they will be successful in changing an outcome, they are more likely to engage in political behavior. Think about it: If you know there is no chance that you can influence an outcome, why would you spend your valuable time and resources working to effect change? You wouldn't. Over time you'd learn to live with the outcomes rather than trying to change them (Bandura, 1996).

Organizational Antecedents

In additional to characteristics of an individual, we can also observe political behaviour that is rooted in the nature of the organization and its culture. Relevant factors include scarcity of resources, role ambiguity, performance evaluations, promotions, and democratic decision making.

Scarcity of Resources

Scarcity of resources breeds politics. When resources such as monetary incentives or promotions are limited, people see the organization as more political. When resources are are scarce and allocation decisions must be made. If resources were ample, there would be no need to use politics to claim one's "share."

Periods of organizational change also present opportunities and politics. Efforts to restructure a particular department, open a new division, introduce a new product line, and so forth, are invitations to all to join the political process as different factions and coalitions fight over territory and resources.

Ambiguity

Any type of ambiguity can relate to greater organizational politics. When the goals of a department or organization are ambiguous, more room is available for politics. As a result, members may pursue personal gain under the guise of pursuing organizational goals. For example, **role ambiguity** allows individuals to negotiate and redefine their roles. This freedom can become a political process.

Research shows that when people do not feel clear about their job responsibilities, they perceive the organization as more political (Muhammad, 2007).

In general, political behavior is increased when the nature of the internal technology is nonroutine and when the external environment is dynamic and complex. Under these conditions, ambiguity and uncertainty are increased, thereby triggering political behavior by groups interested in pursuing certain courses of action.

Performance Evaluations

Ambiguity also exists around performance evaluations and promotions. These human resource practices can lead to greater political behavior, such as impression management, throughout the organization.

Democratic Decision-Making

As you might imagine, democratic decision-making leads to more political behavior. Since many people have a say in the process of making decisions, there are more people available to be influenced.

With respect to decision-making, non-programmed decisions can result in political behaviour. When decisions are not programmed, conditions surrounding the decision problem and the decision process are usually more ambiguous, which leaves room for political maneuvering. Programmed decisions, on the other hand, are typically specified in such detail that little room for maneuvering exists. Hence, we are likely to see more political behavior on major questions, such as long-range strategic planning decisions.

Because most organizations today have scarce resources, ambiguous goals, complex technologies, and sophisticated and unstable external environments, organizations often have policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs) in organizations. These policies are frequently aimed at reducing the extent to which politics influence a particular decision. This effort to encourage more "rational" decisions in organizations was a primary reason behind Max Weber's development of the bureaucratic model. That is, increases in the specification of policy statements often are inversely related to political efforts, as shown in the table below. This is true primarily because such actions reduce the uncertainties surrounding a decision and hence the opportunity for political efforts.

Table 4.1 Examples of Conditions Conducive to Political Behavior

Prevailing Conditions	Resulting Political Behaviors
Ambiguous goals	Attempts to define goals to one's advantage
Scarcity of resources	Fight to maximize one's share of resources
Ambiguity	Attempts to exploit uncertainty for personal gain
Democratic and non-programmed decisions	Attempts to make suboptimal decisions that favour personal ends
Performance evaluations and promotions	Attempts to use impression management to be viewed favourably

Source: Rice University, Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

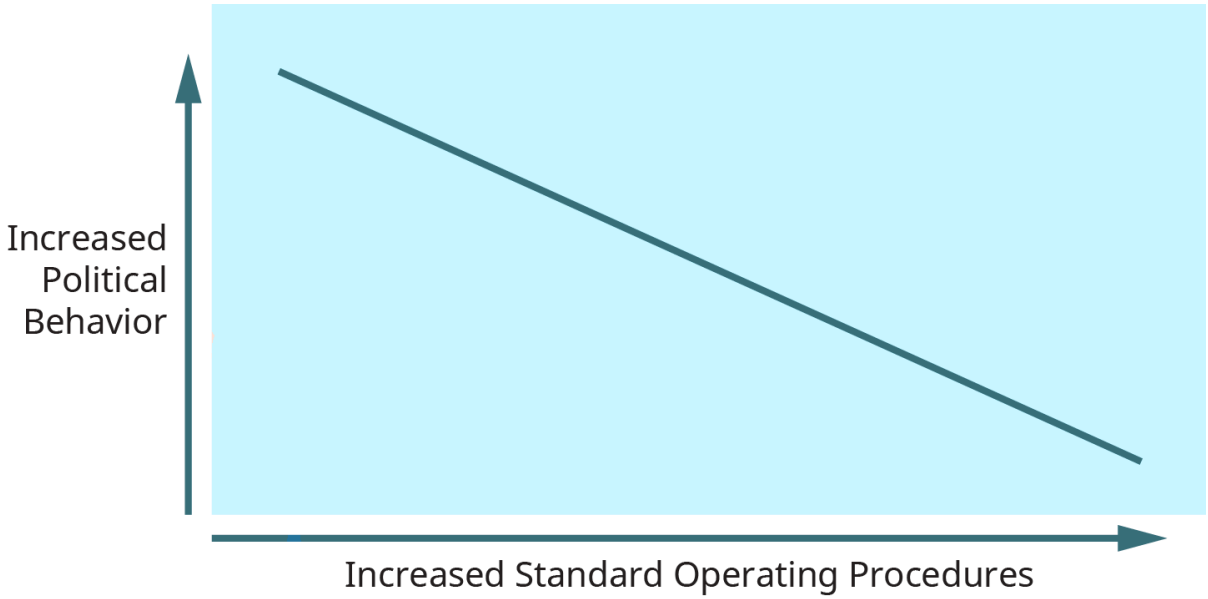

Figure 4.6 Relationship Between Company Standard Operating Procedures and Political Behavior. Rice University & OpenStax, Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

Influence

Starting at infancy, we all try to get others to do what we want. We learn early what works in getting us to our goals. Instead of crying and throwing a tantrum, we may figure out that smiling and using language causes everyone less stress and brings us the rewards we seek.

By the time you hit the workplace, you have had vast experience with influence techniques. You have probably picked out a few that you use most often. To be effective in a wide number of situations, however, it's best to expand your repertoire of skills and become competent in several techniques, knowing how and when to use them as well as understanding when they are being used on you. If

you watch someone who is good at influencing others, you will most probably observe that person switching tactics depending on the context. The more tactics you have at your disposal, the more likely it is that you will achieve your influence goals.

Self-Assessments

See Appendix B: Self-Assessments

- Do You Have the Characteristics of Powerful Influencers?
- What Are Your Power Bases?
- How Political are You?

Commonly Used Influence Tactics

Researchers have identified distinct influence tactics and discovered that there are few differences between the way managers, subordinates, and peers use them, which we will discuss at greater depth later on in this chapter. We will focus on nine influence tactics. Recall our previous discussion of power and responses. Influence tactics can also produce responses of resistance, compliance, or commitment. Resistance occurs when the influence target does not wish to comply with the request and either passively or actively repels the influence attempt. Compliance occurs when the target does not necessarily want to obey, but they do. Commitment occurs when the target not only agrees to the request but also actively supports it as well. Within organizations, commitment helps to get things done, because others can help to keep initiatives alive long after compliant changes have been made or resistance has been overcome. Let's talk about these influence tactics.

Rational Persuasion

Rational persuasion includes using facts, data, and logical arguments to try to convince others that your point of view is the best alternative. This is the most commonly applied influence tactic. One experiment illustrates the power of reason. People were lined up at a copy machine and another person, after joining the line asked, "May I go to the head of the line?" Amazingly, 63% of the people in the line agreed to let the requester jump ahead. When the line jumper makes a slight change in the request by asking, "May I go to the head of the line because I have copies to make?" the number of people who agreed jumped to over 90%. The word *because* was the only difference. Effective rational persuasion includes the presentation of information that is clear and specific, relevant, and timely.

Across studies summarized in a meta-analysis, rationality was related to positive work outcomes (Higgens et al., 2003).

Inspirational Appeals

Inspirational appealsseek to tap into our values, emotions, and beliefs to gain support for a request or course of action. Effective inspirational appeals are authentic, personal, big-thinking, and enthusiastic.

Consultation

Consultation refers to the influence agent's asking others for help in directly influencing or planning to influence another person or group. Consultation is most effective in organizations and cultures that value democratic decision making.

Ingratiation

Ingratiation refers to different forms of making others feel good about themselves. Ingratiation includes any form of flattery done either before or during the influence attempt. Research shows that ingratiation can affect individuals. For example, in a study of résumés, those résumés that were accompanied with a cover letter containing ingratiating information were rated higher than résumés without this information. Other than the cover letter accompanying them, the résumés were identical (Varma et al., 2006). Effective ingratiation is honest, infrequent, and well intended.

Personal Appeals

Personal appeals refers to helping another person because you like them and they asked for your help. We enjoy saying yes to people we know and like. A famous psychological experiment showed that in dorms, the most well-liked people were those who lived by the stairwell—they were the most often seen by others who entered and left the hallway. The repeated contact brought a level of familiarity and comfort. Therefore, personal appeals are most effective with people who know and like you.

Exchange

Exchange refers to give-and-take in which someone does something for you, and you do something for them in return. The rule of reciprocation says that "we should try to repay, in kind, what another person has provided us"(Cialdini, 2000, p. 20). The application of the rule obliges us and makes

us indebted to the giver. One experiment illustrates how a small initial gift can open people to a substantially larger request at a later time. One group of subjects was given a bottle of Coke. Later, all subjects were asked to buy raffle tickets. On the average, people who had been given the drink bought twice as many raffle tickets as those who had not been given the unsolicited drinks.

Coalition Tactics

Coalition tacticsrefer to a group of individuals working together toward a common goal to influence others. Common examples of coalitions within organizations are unions that may threaten to strike if their demands are not met. Coalitions also take advantage of peer pressure. The influencer tries to build a case by bringing in the unseen as allies to convince someone to think, feel, or do something. A well-known psychology experiment draws upon this tactic. The experimenters stare at the top of a building in the middle of a busy street. Within moments, people who were walking by in a hurry stop and also look at the top of the building, trying to figure out what the others are looking at. When the experimenters leave, the pattern continues, often for hours. This tactic is also extremely popular among advertisers and businesses that use client lists to promote their goods and services. The fact that a client bought from the company is a silent testimonial.

Pressure

Pressure refers to exerting undue influence on someone to do what you want or else something undesirable will occur. This often includes threats and frequent interactions until the target agrees. Research shows that managers with low referent power tend to use pressure tactics more frequently than those with higher referent power (Yukl et al., 1996). Pressure tactics are most effective when used in a crisis situation and when they come from someone who has the other's best interests in mind, such as getting an employee to an employee assistance program to deal with a substance abuse problem.

Legitimating

Legitimating tactics occur when the appeal is based on legitimate or position power. This tactic relies upon compliance with rules, laws, and regulations. It is not intended to motivate people but to align them behind a direction. Obedience to authority is filled with both positive and negative images. Position, title, knowledge, experience, and demeanor grant authority, and it is easy to see how it can be abused. If someone hides behind people's rightful authority to assert themselves, it can seem heavy-handed and without choice. You must come across as an authority figure by the way you act, speak, and look. Think about the number of commercials with doctors, lawyers, and other professionals who look and sound the part, even if they are actors. People want to be convinced that the person is an authority worth heeding. Authority is often used as a last resort. If it does not work, you will not have much else to draw from in your goal to persuade someone.

Each of these influence tactics vary with the degree to which they are used and the outcomes that they provide. View Table 4.2 below To learn more.

Table 4.2 Influence Tactics Use and Outcomes

Original Data Source: Kipnis, D., Schmidt, S. M., & Wilkinson, J. (1980). Interorganizational influence tactics: Explorations in getting one's way. Journal of Applied Psychology, 65, 440–452; Schriescheim, C. A., & Hinkin, T. R. (1990). Influence tactics used by subordinates: A theoretical and empirical analysis and refinement of Kipnis, Schmidt, and Wilkinson subscales. Journal of Applied Psychology, 75, 132–140; Yukl, G., & Falbe, C. M. (1991). The Importance of different power sources in downward and lateral relations. Journal of Applied Psychology, 76, 416–423.

	Frequency of Use	Resistance	Compliance	Commitment
Rational Persuasion	54%	47%	30%	23%
Legitimating	13%	44%	56%	0%
Personal Appeals	7%	25%	33%	42%
Exchange	7%	24%	41%	35%
Ingratiation	6%	41%	28%	31%
Pressure	6%	56%	41%	3%
Coalitions	3%	53%	44%	3%
Inspirational Appeals	2%	0%	10%	90%
Consultation	2%	18%	27%	55%

Source: Adapted from information in Falbe, C. M., & Yukl, G. (1992). Consequences for managers of using single influence tactics and combinations of tactics. Academy of Management Journal, 35, 638–652.: Reproduced from Saylor Academy, Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Converted to a table from an image.

Consider This: Making OB Connections

"You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you. "- Dale Carnegie

Dale Carnegie. (November 24, 1888 to November 1, 1955). Image: Wikipedia.

How to Win Friends and Influence People was written by Dale Carnegie in 1936 and has sold millions of copies worlwide. While this book first appeared over 70 years ago, the recommendations still make a great deal of sense regarding power and influence in modern-day organizations. For example, he recommends that in order to get others to like you, you should remember six things:

1. Become genuinely interested in other people.
2. Smile.
3. Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.
4. Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves.
5. Talk in terms of the other person's interests.
6. Make the other person feel important—and do it sincerely.

This book relates to power and politics in a number of important ways. Carnegie specifically deals with enhancing referent power. Referent power grows if others like, respect, and admire you. Referent power is more effective than formal power bases and is positively related to employees' satisfaction with supervision, organizational commitment, and performance. One of the keys to these recommendations is to engage in them in a genuine manner. This can be the difference between being seen as political versus understanding politics.

Direction of Influence

The type of influence tactic used tends to vary based on the target. For example, you would probably use different influence tactics with your boss, with employees working under you, or with a peer.

Upward Influence

Upward influence, as its name implies, is the ability to influence your manager and others in positions higher than yours. Upward influence may include appealing to a higher authority or citing the firm's goals as an overarching reason for others to follow your cause. Upward influence can

also take the form of an alliance with a higher status person (or with the perception that there is such an alliance) (Farmer & Maslyn, 1999; Farmer et al., 1997). As complexity grows, the need for this upward influence grows as well—the ability of one person at the top to know enough to make all the decisions becomes less likely. Moreover, even if someone did know enough, the sheer ability to make all the needed decisions fast enough is no longer possible. This limitation means that individuals at all levels of the organization need to be able to make and influence decisions. By helping higher-ups be more effective, employees can gain more power for themselves and their unit as well. On the flip side, allowing yourself to be influenced by those reporting to you may build your credibility and power as a leader who listens. Then, during a time when you do need to take unilateral, decisive action, others will be more likely to give you the benefit of the doubt and follow. Research establishes that subordinates' use of rationality, assertiveness, and reciprocal exchange was related to more favorable outcomes such as promotions and raises, while self-promotion led to more negative outcomes (Orpen, 1996; Wayne et al., 1997).

Downward Influence

Downward influence is the ability to influence employees lower than you in the institutional hierarchy. This is best achieved through an inspiring vision. By articulating a clear vision, you help people see the end goal and move toward it. You often don't need to specify exactly what needs to be done to get there—people will be able to figure it out on their own. An inspiring vision builds buy-in and gets people moving in the same direction. Research conducted within large savings banks shows that managers can learn to be more effective at influence attempts. The experimental group of managers received a feedback report and went through a workshop to help them become more effective in their influence attempts. The control group of managers received no feedback on their prior influence attempts. When subordinates were asked 3 months later to evaluate potential changes in their managers' behavior, the experimental group had much higher ratings of the appropriate use of influence (Seifer et al., 2003). Research also shows that the better the quality of the relationship between the subordinate and their supervisor, the more positively resistance to influence attempts are seen (Tepper et al., 2006). In other words, managers who like their employees are less likely to interpret resistance as a problem.

Peer Influence

Peer influence occurs all the time. But, to be effective within organizations, peers need to be willing to influence each other without being destructively competitive (Cohen & Bradford, 2002). Research shows that across all functional groups of executives, finance or human resources as an example, rational persuasion is the most frequently used influence tactic (Enns et al., 2003). There are times to support each other and times to challenge—the end goal is to create better decisions and results for the organization and to hold each other accountable.

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4.3 Ethical Use of Power and Politics

In this section:

- The Ethical Use of Power
- The Ethical Use of Politics

The Ethical Use of Power

People are often uncomfortable discussing the topic of power, which implies that somehow they see the exercise of power as unseemly. On the contrary, the question is not whether power tactics are or are not ethical; rather, the question is which tactics are appropriate and which are not. The use of power in groups and companies is a fact of organizational life that all employees must accept. In doing so, however, all employees have a right to know that the exercise of power within the organization will be governed by ethical standards that prevent abuse or exploitation.

Several guidelines for the ethical use of power can be identified. These can be arranged according to some of the previous bases of power that we discussed. Several techniques, summarized in Table 4.2 are available that accomplish aims without compromising ethical standards. For example, a manager using reward power can verify subordinate compliance with work directives, ensure that all requests are both feasible and reasonable, make only ethical or proper requests, offer rewards that are valued by employees, and ensure that all rewards for good performance are credible and reasonably attainable.

Table 4.3 The Ethical Use of Power

Basis of Power	Guidelines for Use
	Treat subordinates fairly
	Defend subordinates' interests
Referent power	Be sensitive to subordinates' needs, feelings
	Select subordinates similar to oneself
	Engage in role modeling
	Promote image of expertise
	Maintain credibility
	Act confident and decisive
Expert power	Keep informed
	Recognize employee concerns
	Avoid threatening subordinates' self-esteem
	Be cordial and polite
	Be confident
	Be clear and follow up to verify understanding
	Make sure request is appropriate
Legitimate power	Explain reasons for request
	Follow proper channels
	Exercise power regularly
	Enforce compliance
	Be sensitive to subordinates' concerns
	Verify compliance
	Make feasible, reasonable requests
Reward power	Make only ethical, proper requests
	Offer rewards desired by subordinates
	Offer only credible rewards
	Inform subordinates of rules and penalties
	Warn before punishing
	Administer punishment consistently and uniformly
Coercive power	Understand the situation before acting
	Maintain credibility
	Fit punishment to the infraction
	Punish in private

Source: Rice University, Organizational Behavior,CC BY 4.0.

Original Source: adapted from Gary A. Yukl, Leadership in Organizations, 8th edition 2013 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; Pearson), pp. 44–58.

Even coercive power can be used without jeopardizing personal integrity. For example, a manager can make sure that all employees know the rules and penalties for rule infractions, provide warnings before punishing, administer punishments fairly and uniformly, and so forth. The point here is that managers have at their disposal numerous tactics that they can employ without crossing over into questionable managerial behavior. In view of the increasing number of lawsuits filed by employees for harmful practices, it seems wise for a manager to consider his behaviors before acting; this will help ensure the highest ethical standards.

Let's Focus: Power Position

As mentioned earlier, the idea of "power" often seems negative, but we can use power in an appropriate way when getting ahead in our organizations. This is called power position. Power position comes from the concept of feng shui, where the power position is the physical position in the room for a business meeting.

In this position, the person can see all entrances to the room and is seated against a wall. Because of this, they are said to be the center of attention and thus in the power position. Our meaning here refers to your ability to use conscientious techniques that can lead to personal and professional organizational growth; these also happen to be the characteristics needed for career success. Techniques that may help increase your power position at work include the following:

- **Be authentic.** Be yourself. Stay true to your values and those things you find important.
- **Refuse to let people push your buttons.** This can result in conflict, which does not increase your position power. Make an effort to try and get along with others.
- **Develop esteem and confidence.** Esteem and confidence will give you the ability to take on difficult tasks, help others, and contribute to the organization.
- **Be a team player.** Do all the things necessary to be part of a team. Get along with and help others. Helping others shows leadership, ability, and good citizenship. It can put you in a position of not only earning the respect of others but also showing your value to the organization.
- **Be someone that makes others feel good.** Make others feel good when they are around you—for example, by being genuinely interested in them.
- **Develop your communication skills.** Work on your written, oral, and nonverbal language skills. Learn to read and understand others' body language.
- **Be visible in the workplace.** Don't take credit for others' work, but do take credit for your own work. Choose high-profile projects that can put you in a position where others see your work.
- **Don't complain.** Unless you can also provide a solution, don't offer a complaint!
- **Be goal oriented and willing to take risks.** Focus on goal setting personally and professionally.

Show managers and colleagues how you can help them meet goals.

- **Have positive psychological capital.** There are four aspects to positive psychological capital: hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resiliency. Self-efficacy refers to belief in your own abilities while optimism means to have a positive outlook. Resiliency is the ability to make it through difficult circumstances. In a study by the Leadership Institute (Luthans et al., 2007) on psychological capital, there was a clear relationship between positive psychological capital and job performance/job satisfaction—two very important components for good human relations!

Source: Luthans et al., (2007).

The Ethical Use of Politics

Similar to power, there is not inherent good or bad in politics. Politics in organizations cannot be eliminated. Yet to some extent, the negative aspects of it can be neutralized if managers carefully monitor the work environment and take remedial action where necessary. Several strategies can be identified that can help manage organizational politics. As shown in Table 4.3, four basic strategies can be used (Beeman & Sharkey, 1987).

First, managers can try to reduce interpersonal or intergroup competition by using impartial standards for resource allocation and by emphasizing the superordinate goals of the entire organization—toward which all members of the organization should be working. Similarly, efforts can be made to reduce the uncertainty in the organization through clarifying job responsibilities, bases for evaluations and rewards, and so forth. The less ambiguity in the system, the less room there is for dysfunctional political behavior. Third, managers can attempt to break up existing political fiefdoms through personnel reassignment or transfer or by changing the reward system to encourage interunit cooperation. Finally, managers can work to prevent the development of future fiefdoms through training programs, selection and promotion, and reward distribution.

To the extent that employees see the organization as a fair place to work and to the extent that clear goals and resource allocation procedures are present, office politics should subside, though not disappear. In organizations where politics prosper, in fact, you are likely to find a reward system that encourages and promotes such behavior. The choice is up to the organization.

Table 4.4. Limiting the Effects of Political Behavior

To Reduce System Uncertainty

Make clear what are the bases and processes for evaluation.

Differentiate rewards among high and low performers.

Make sure the rewards are as immediately and directly related to performance as possible.

To Reduce Competition

Try to minimize resource competition among managers.

Replace resource competition with externally oriented goals and objectives.

To Break Existing Political Empires/Coalitions

Where highly cohesive political empires exist, break them apart by removing or splitting the most dysfunctional subgroups.

If you are an executive, be keenly sensitive to managers whose mode of operation is the personalization of political patronage. First, approach these persons with a directive to stop the political maneuvering. If it continues, remove them from the positions and preferably from the company.

To Prevent Future Political Empires/Coalitions

Make one of the most important criteria for promotion an apolitical attitude that puts organizational ends ahead of personal power ends.

Source: Rice University, Organizational Behavior, CC BY 4.0.

Original Source:: adapted from "The Use and Abuse of Corporate Politics," by Don R. Beeman and Thomas W. Sharkey. Reprinted from Business Horizons, March–April 1987 by the Foundation for the School of Business at Indiana University.

Adapted Works

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4.4 Bullying, Violence, and Harassment

Harassment, bullying, and violence are examples of psychosocial hazards that negatively affect worker health and safety. These behaviours are unacceptable and illegal, but nonetheless, still occur. These abuses are often grounded in misuse of power and are often visible during dysfunctional and escalating conflicts.

In this section:

- Bullying and Harassment
- Workplace Violence

Bullying and Harassment

A growing concern in workplaces is the issue of workplace harassment and bullying. **Workplace harassment** is behaviour aimed at an individual (or group) that is belittling or threatening in nature. This can include actions (e.g., unwanted touching) or words (e.g., insults, jokes) that have the effect of causing psychological harm to victim(s). Harassment can take a variety of forms, including racial/ethnic harassment, sexual harassment, and general workplace harassment.

Bullying is similar to harassment and comprises repeated actions or verbal comments that lead to mental harm, isolation, or humiliation of a worker (or group), often with the intent to wield power over them. Often harassment and bullying are used interchangeably and, indeed, the definitions are highly similar. In this book, we differentiate the terms for two reasons. First, harassment is often associated with specific grounds protected under human rights legislation, such as gender, race, age, and religion. Bullying applies more broadly to any set of behaviours that create harm. Second, it is accepted that harassment can occur unintentionally, while bullying is a more intentional process. Both are ways for the harasser/bully to exercise control and power over the harassed/bullied through fear, humiliation, embarrassment, and denigration.

Harassment and bullying can involve physical contact but are distinguished from violence in that the purpose is not physical harm but emotional and psychological harm. Harassment and bullying can also include acts that indirectly affect the targeted worker(s), such as undesirable shift scheduling, unreasonable workloads, spreading rumours, or denying leave requests. Harassment,

bullying, and violence can occur concurrently. There is debate about how to best conceptualize harassment and bullying. Many argue that it is a human rights issue and should be treated through human rights processes, usually meaning independent tribunals or the courts. Others suggest that harassment and bullying are instances of individual misconduct best resolved through human resources processes such as better selection, training, and disciplinary practices. Harassment and bullying can also be viewed through the lens of occupational health and safety (OHS). As OHS issues they can be controlled by the employer and have clear health effects for the targeted worker(s).

The psychological effects of harassment and bullying can be extensive and include anxiety, panic attacks, depression, shame, and anger. The physical effects mirror those of stress and can include inability to sleep, stomach pain or headaches, high blood pressure, heart palpitations, and loss of concentration/memory, as well as eating and digestive disorders. Further, workers exposed to harassment are found to be more at risk of illness, injury, and assault (Rospenda et al., 2005). The negative health outcomes and increased risk of illness and injury can persist well after the harassment has ceased. In extreme cases, bullying and harassment can cause post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is typically brought on by a terrifying event, and symptoms include flashbacks, severe anxiety, and uncontrollable thoughts about the event.

While all workers can be victims of harassment and bullying, certain groups of workers are more likely to be the targets, because of their respective statuses in society at large. Two such groups include women and racialized workers (see the example below), who are often targeted because the bullying and harassment are consistent with widely held prejudices (e.g., consider how common race and gender jokes are). Recent research has shown that experiencing multiple forms of harassment—gender and ethnic harassment along with general workplace harassment—compounds the negative health effects compared to experiencing one form, putting racialized women at particular risk of negative health effects from harassment (Raver & Nishii, 2010).

Consider This: Harassment and Racialized Workers

Discussing issues such as race can be challenging. As we know, race is a social construction. Society imbues certain characteristics (e.g., skin colour) with meaning and not others (e.g., eye colour) and as a result ascribes significance to them. The trait in itself is not significant but is given importance through social convention. The ascribed meaning leads people to experience the world differently based upon these perceived characteristics. Society not only ascribes significance to these traits but structures social relations around them. People are differentiated and distinguished according to the characteristics. This is the process of racialization (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992).

All people are racialized; society implies meaning to being "White" for example. Our experiences of the world are thus shaped by this social construction. However, the ascription of characteristics is not

neutral. Some “races” are imbued with positive qualities and some negative. Whether society ascribes negative or positive qualities shapes a person’s status in society. In this book we utilize the term racialized workers to apply to individuals perceived to be a part of a race or ethnicity to which particular, often negative, characteristics are ascribed by social structures. We also recognize that race intersects with other characteristics, including gender, age, sexual orientation, and ability, to form a matrix of human experience in society.

Types of Bullying Behaviours

There is no clear profile of who might be a harasser. The range of tactics, behaviours, and approaches used by bullies and harassers is extensive and reflective of specific contexts. This is not surprising, given that bullying and harassment are ways to wield power over another person. Managers, because of their role in an organization, already possess power over workers. Attempts to exercise this power can lead to management approaches that rely upon bullying. Some researchers suggest that employers may overtly or covertly encourage bullying by managers as a way to maximize the work the employer can extract from its workers (Beale, 2011).

There are several typologies of bullying. In research conducted with nurses, a typology of bullying was created that is particularly comprehensive (Hutchinson et al., 2010). The typology of these researchers includes the bullying behavior and related tactics. Workplace bullying behaviour involve a wide range of tactics shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Workplace bullying behaviors

Behaviors	Tactics
Isolation and exclusion	Being ignored
	Being excluded from conversation
	Being isolated from supportive peers
	Being excluded from activities
Intimidation and threats	Raised voices or raised hands
	Being stared at, watched and followed
	Tampering with or destroying personal belongings
	Compromising or obstructing patient care
	Being singled out, scrutinized and monitored
Verbal threats	Being yelled at or verbally abused
	Being stood over, pushed or shoved
	Belittlement and humiliation
	Verbal put-downs, insults or humiliation
	Spreading gossip
	Being given a denigrating nickname
Damaging professional identity	Blamed, made to feel stupid or incompetent
	Suggestions of madness and mental instability
	Mistakes highlighted publicly
	Public denigration of ability or achievements
	Questioning skills and ability
	Being given demeaning work
	Unsubstantiated negative performance claims
	Spreading rumors, slander, and character slurs
	Questioning competence or credentials
Limiting career opportunities	Denial of opportunities that lead to promotion
	Being overlooked for promotion
	Excluded from committees and activities
	Exclusion from educational opportunities
	Rostered to erode specialist skills
Obstructing work or making work-life difficult	Relocation to make job difficult
	Removal of administrative support
	Excluded from routine information
	Work organized to isolate
	Removal of necessary equipment
	Given excessive or unreasonable workload
	Sabotaging or hampering work

Behaviors	Tactics
Denial of due process and natural justice	Varying targets and deadlines Excessive scrutiny of work Denial of due process in meetings Denial of meal breaks Compiling unsubstantiated written records Denial of sick, study or conference leave Unfair rostering practices Economic sanctions Rostering to lower-paid shift work Limiting the opportunity to work Dismissal from position Reclassifying position to lower status

Source: Interpersonal Communication, Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

Responses to Bullying and Harassment

The line between "tough" management and "bullying" management can be difficult to ascertain, especially if the bullying takes the form of misuse of managerial prerogatives such as scheduling, work assignments, and the like. Usually bullying as a management technique is reflective of the organizational culture that has developed in a workplace. For their part, workers respond to threats such as bullying with a range of behaviours that include **exit, voice, patience, and neglect**. These responses are explained more fully below.

Let's Focus: Responses to Harmful Work Environments

When a worker experiences any OHS hazard, including harassment, bullying, or a toxic workplace, the worker can respond in a range of ways. In examining individual behaviour in response to deteriorating conditions, Albert Hirschman (1970) first developed the notion that people respond either through exit or voice, and the choice is determined by attitudes toward the situation. Others later added to Hirschman's theory by positing two other options, patience (sometimes referred to as loyalty) and neglect:

- **Exit:** The worker decides to get away from the undesired situation, either by quitting the employer or transferring to another location or job within the same employer.
- **Voice:** The worker decides to speak up in an attempt to change the situation. Voice can take a number of forms, including attempting to repair the situation directly, lodging a complaint, filing a grievance or, less constructively, retaliating with their own inappropriate behaviour.
- **Patience:** The worker decides to do nothing in the hopes that the situation will eventually improve. Workers adopt a patience approach when their loyalty to the organization or the cost of exiting is greater than the price of experiencing the negative situation.
- **Neglect: T**he worker does nothing, based on the belief that the situation will not change or might grow worse. The worker might try to avoid the source of the situation but will generally take no action to change the situation. Workers choose this option when the costs of exiting are too high and their relationship to the organization is sufficiently damaged to prevent either voice or patience (Leck & Saunders, 1992; Rusbult et al., 1988).

Workers may adopt different strategies when confronted with bullying behaviour or may cycle through the various options. For example, a group of workers facing a co-worker who undermines them in meetings, makes false claims about their work performance, and verbally attacks them may react in different ways. Those workers who are not very invested in the workplace (e.g., they are new or they feel they have options elsewhere) may simply start looking for a new job.

Other workers may at first choose patience (in the hope the worker's behaviour will change) and then move to voicing their concerns (e.g., filing a complaint or by socially excluding the bully). If the issue remains unresolved, some workers (e.g., those close to retirement) may choose neglect while others will move to exit the workplace.

Recognizing that workers might respond in four different ways to the same negative situation reminds us that there is no single "sign" of a poor workplace environment. Employers interested in preventing harassment and bullying must be careful to observe the myriad ways in which workers react to deteriorating situations.

Reducing the Incidence of Harassment and Bullying

There are several ways to address harassment and bullying in the workplace. First, an employer should (and, in some jurisdictions, must) develop policies regarding harassment in the workplace. The administrative controls should outline acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and actions, indicate employer and worker responsibilities, and create a process for investigating and resolving complaints. Any investigation must proceed in a manner that is transparent, fair to both parties, and as confidential as is possible. Investigations should also identify the root cause of the incident and how to prevent similar incidents in the future.

Workplace policies are important, but they are only as effective as the degree of their implementation and enforcement. Effective policy implementation requires the employer to train all workers, including managers, on how to prevent and address harassment. Training for managers is particularly important. It can help managers spot possible harassment and teach them the

difference between legitimate management discretion and bullying management techniques. Training workers around respectful interactions and cultural sensitivity can help distinguish between legitimate interpersonal conflict and bullying and harassment.

Finally, research shows that the leading indicator of workplace bullying and harassment is the organization's climate. In workplaces where workers feel unsafe, incidents of bullying and harassment are more frequent. Conversely, creating a safe and respectful climate increases workers' sense of safety and lowers the negative consequences of bullying and harassment (Law et al., 2011). Creating a safe workplace climate is a multi-levelled process, requiring a high degree of commitment to respectful interactions, clear communication, transparent management, and individual and collective accountability.

Workplace Violence

Workplace violence is any act in which a person is abused, threatened, intimidated, or assaulted in their employment. It can include physical attack, threats of physical attack, threatening language or behaviour (e.g., shaking a fist), or physically aggressive behaviour. The data around the prevalence of workplace violence is mixed. If judged by workers' compensation claims, workplace violence is quite rare: only 2.5% of all Canadian lost-time injury claims in 2012 were related to incidents of violence (about 6000 incidents)(AWCD, 2014). That said, Statistics Canada reports that 17% of all acts of criminal violence (violence illegal under the *Criminal Code*) occurred at a workplace. They calculate that this amounts to more than 350,000 acts of workplace violence in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2008). The discrepancy is partially explained by the fact that many of those criminal acts did not result in the acute injury of a worker and, therefore, no workers' compensation claim was filed. This discrepancy reinforces the limited value of workers' compensation claim data as an indicator of hazardousness in the workplace.

Whether more or less prevalent, workplace violence can extract a significant toll on workers, leading to injury and psychological ill health (e.g., post-traumatic stress disorder). Health-care workers are most likely to experience workplace violence, followed by social workers and workers in retail or food service. It is notable that these occupations tend to be female-dominated. Customers, clients, and patients are the most common perpetrators of workplace violence, although violence from co-workers or supervisors remains prevalent.

Consider This: The Myth of the Disgruntled Employee?

In February 2014, Jayme Pasieka, an employee at the Loblaw's Distribution Centre in northwest Edmonton, Alberta, burst into his workplace and attacked several workers (Klingbeil et al., 2014). The incident sparked extensive media coverage, much of it focused on Pasieka's history of mental illness and erratic behaviour. Many commentators speculated that he was a "disgruntled employee."

These types of incidents tend to receive a lot of media coverage, most of which focuses on the mental state of the perpetrator. The notion of the "disgruntled employee" returning to their place of work to exact revenge for some perceived grievance is well embedded in public mindset. Consider the popularity of the term "going postal"—coined after a postal worker shot a number of co-workers in the United States.

Our familiarity with the disgruntled-employee frame means journalists and employers often use it to quickly explain what caused a workplace incident. In a commentary on a raft of workplace shootings in the United States in 2010, Richard Denenberg and Tia Schneider-Denenberg make this observation:

> In sum, the Missouri and Georgia cases exemplify a media tendency to reach for facile explanations—notably the vague concept of disgruntlement—obscuring the complexities that may lie behind an outbreak of workplace violence. Such generic assumptions often conflict with the specific facts, once they are revealed in second-day and third-day accounts. The notion that an aggressor feels aggrieved is essentially a tautology, yielding little insight, unless the reasons for the extreme behavior are adequately explored.

Attention should focus not only on the person but also on any defects in policies, procedures, or judgment that may have allowed rage to fester and ultimately explode. Examining the characteristics of the workplace may enhance our ability to prevent violence as much as probing the character, personality, and belief systems of the offender (Denenberg & Schneider-Denenberg, 2012).

In short, newspaper reporters' use of the disgruntled-worker frame simplifies the (likely complex) circumstances that led to the violence. This can obscure root causes of the incident by hiding the effect of employer behaviour or inaction.

Risk of Violence

A variety of factors can increase the risk of violence in the workplace. Common concerns are the presence of money, drugs, and alcohol (which make workplaces targets for theft and robbery). Late operating hours and extensive access to the public are also factors that heighten the risk of violence. One of the reasons health-care workers are at greatest risk is their close proximity to people under physical or mental stress. The workplace environment can also play a role leading to violence.

Stressful work situations, insecure and precarious employment arrangements, work overload, and unhealthy interpersonal dynamics can also increase the risk of violence.

While acts of violence are unpredictable, an employer can take steps to develop a violence-prevention plan to minimize both the risk of a violent act and the harm caused by the act. Violence prevention should be a part of the organizational policies. Particular actions to consider include workplace design to restrict access, increasing visibility and communication, and creating escape routes for workers. Administrative policies and work practices can reduce some of the common risks: these might include reducing the use of cash, eliminating the use of working alone, and implementing a buddy system. A prevention program should also incorporate training for managers to spot warning signs of violence, and steps to reduce stress levels in the workplace. Governments can also take action by expanding the definition of violence as a workplace hazard.

Consider This: Family Violence

In November 2015, the Alberta Family Violence Death Review Committee, a government committee mandated to investigate deaths due to family violence, reported on its investigation into the 2011 murder of a woman by her spouse at her workplace. The husband had called and visited her repeatedly at work, threatening violence. The employer, co-workers, and security guards at the site were aware of the threats but did little. The woman did not press charges at any time, in part due to cultural pressures. No one attempted to prevent the husband from accessing the workplace on the day he killed her (Sinnema, 2015).

In its report the Committee made the following recommendation:

> The Alberta Government amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act and Code to recognize and include family violence as a workplace hazard. Family violence is to be defined as it is in the Protection Against Family Violence Act and must include: direct family violence (where the family violence is at the workplace) and indirect family violence (where the family violence is outside of the workplace) and it directly affects the workplace through employee's performance or by creating an unsafe work environment (Alberta Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2015, p. 3).

Recommending that violence as a safety hazard be defined to include violence that may take place outside the workplace (but has workplace consequences) is a significant shift from traditional approaches to violence as a safety issue, which tend to focus only on workplace-based violence. An interesting follow-on question is whether injuries occurring at work that stem from family violence will now be deemed compensable injuries by the Workers' Compensation Board. At present, such injuries are not considered to arise from the course of work and are thus non-compensable.

Adapted Works

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4.5 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms

Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **Power is the ability to influence the behavior of others** to get what you want. It is often visible to others within organizations.
- **Power is distinct from both leadership and authority.** Authority represents the right to seek compliance by others; the exercise of authority is backed by legitimacy. Leadership is the ability of one individual to elicit responses from another person that go beyond required or mechanical compliance.
- **Symbols of managerial power include** access to key people and resources within an organization.
- **Power is closely tied to dependency.** The more dependent someone is on you, the more power you have over them. Dependency is increased when you possess something that is considered scarce, important, and non-substitutable by others.
- **There are many bases of power**, including legitimate, reward, coercive, expert, information, and referent power.
- **Depending upon which kind of power is employed**, the recipient of a power effort can respond with commitment, compliance, or resistance.
- **Common power tactics include** controlling access to information, controlling access to persons, the selective use of objective criteria, controlling the agenda, using outside experts, bureaucratic gamesmanship, and forming coalitions and alliances.
- **Organizational politics is a natural part of organizational life.** Organizations that are driven by unhealthy levels of political behavior suffer from lowered employee organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and performance as well as higher levels of job anxiety and depression.
- **Individual antecedents of political behavior include** political skill, internal locus of control, high investment in the organization, and expectations of success.
- **Organizational antecedents include** scarcity of resources, role ambiguity, frequent performance evaluations and promotions, and democratic decision making.
- **Political behavior is more likely to occur when** there are scarce resources, ambiguity, performance evaluations/promotions, and democratic and/or nonprogrammed decisions.
- **Influence tactics are the way that individuals attempt to influence one another in organizations.** Rational persuasion is the most frequently used influence tactic, although it is frequently met with resistance. Inspirational appeals result in commitment 90% of the time, but the tactic is utilized only 2% of the time. The other tactics include legitimizing, personal appeals,

exchanges, ingratiation, pressure, forming coalitions, and consultation.

- **Influence attempts may be upward, downward, or lateral in nature.**
- **Workplace harassment is behaviour aimed at an individual (or group) that is belittling or threatening in nature.** This can include actions (e.g., unwanted touching) or words (e.g., insults, jokes) that have the effect of causing psychological harm to victim(s). Harassment can take a variety of forms, including racial/ethnic harassment, sexual harassment, and general workplace harassment.
- **Bullying is similar to harassment and comprises repeated actions or verbal comments that lead to mental harm, isolation, or humiliation** of a worker (or group), often with the intent to wield power over them.

Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/conflictmanagement/?p=100#h5p-6

Key Terms

Key terms from this chapter include:

- **Power**
- **Authority**
- **Leadership**
- **Legitimate power**
- **Reward power**
- **Coercive power**
- **Expert power**
- **Politics**
- **Political skill**
- **Rational persuasion**
- **Inspirational appeals**
- **Consultation**
- **Ingratiation**
- **Personal appeals**
- **Exchange**
- **Coalition tactics**
- **Pressure**
- **Legitimating tactics**
- **Upward influence**
- **Downward influence**
- **Peer influence**
- **Workplace harassment**
- **Bullying**
- **Exit**
- **Voice**
- **Patience**
- **Neglect**
- **Workplace violence**

CHAPTER 5: INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND GROUP DYNAMICS

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

- Identify the communication patterns in the supervisor-subordinate relationship.
- Describe the function and types of peer coworker relationships.
- Explain the process of friendship development and strategies for disengagement.
- Define and provide examples of sexual harassment in the workplace, as well as strategies for how to eliminate it.
- Recognize the potential challenges and benefits of work in teams compared to as individuals.
- Describe different positive and negative team roles.
- Explain the relationship between status and power in groups.
- Review qualities of toxic leadership and strategies to handle working with a toxic leader.
- Explore strategies for cultivating a positive group climate.
- Compare cooperative and collaborative group work.
- List the process of problem solving in teams.
- Summarize strategies for improving group decisions.

In this chapter, we will explore the functions and types of relationships that exist in organizations between supervisors, subordinates, and coworkers in interpersonal and group settings.

5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work

Although some careers require less interaction than others, all jobs require interpersonal communication skills. Televisions shows like *The Office* offer glimpses into the world of workplace relationships. These humorous examples often highlight the dysfunction that can occur within a workplace. Since many people spend as much time at work as they do with their family and friends, the workplace becomes a key site for relation development. In this section, we will discuss relationships between supervisors and subordinates and also among coworkers. We will also address consensual workplace romantic relationships between coworkers and sexual harassment.

In this section:

- Supervisor-Subordinate Relationships
- Coworker Relationships
- Romantic Relationships
- Sexual Harassment

Supervisor-Subordinate Relationships

Given that most workplaces are based on hierarchy, it is not surprising that relationships between supervisors and their subordinates develop (Sias, 2009). The **supervisor-subordinate relationships** can be primarily based in mentoring, friendship, or romance and includes two people, one of whom has formal authority over the other. In any case, these relationships involve some communication challenges and rewards that are distinct from other workplace relationships.

Information exchange is an important part of any relationship, whether it is self-disclosure about

personal issues or disclosing information about a workplace to a new employee. Supervisors are key providers of information, especially for newly hired employees who have to negotiate through much uncertainty as they are getting oriented. The role a supervisor plays in orienting a new employee is important, but it is not based on the same norm of reciprocity that many other relationships experience at their onset. On a first date, for example, people usually take turns communicating as they learn about each other. Supervisors, on the other hand, have information power because they possess information that the employees need to do their jobs. The imbalanced flow of communication in this instance is also evident in the supervisor's role as evaluator.

Most supervisors are tasked with giving their employees formal and informal feedback on their job performance. In this role, positive feedback can motivate employees, but what happens when a supervisor has negative feedback? Research shows that supervisors are more likely to avoid giving negative feedback if possible, even though negative feedback has been shown to be more important than positive feedback for employee development. This can lead to strains in a relationship if behavior that is in need of correcting persists, potentially threatening the employer's business and the employee's job.

We're all aware that some supervisors are better than others and may have even experienced working under good and bad bosses. So what do workers want in a supervisor? Research has shown that employees more positively evaluate supervisors when they are of the same gender and race (Sias, 2009). This isn't surprising, given that we've already learned that attraction is often based on similarity. In terms of age, however, employees prefer their supervisors be older than them, which is likely explained by the notion that knowledge and wisdom come from experience built over time. Additionally, employees are more satisfied with supervisors who exhibit a more controlling personality than their own, likely because of the trust that develops when an employee can trust that their supervisor can handle his or her responsibilities. Obviously, if a supervisor becomes coercive or is an annoying micromanager, the controlling has gone too far. High-quality supervisor-subordinate relationships in a workplace reduce employee turnover and have an overall positive impact on the organizational climate (Sias, 2005). Another positive effect of high-quality supervisor-subordinate relationships is the possibility of mentoring.

The **mentoring relationship** can be influential in establishing or advancing a person's career, and supervisors are often in a position to mentor select employees. In a mentoring relationship, one person functions as a guide, helping another navigate toward career goals (Sias, 2009). Through workplace programs or initiatives sponsored by professional organizations, some mentoring relationships are formalized. Informal mentoring relationships develop as shared interests or goals bring two people together. Unlike regular relationships between a supervisor and subordinate that focus on a specific job or tasks related to a job, the mentoring relationship is more extensive. In fact, if a mentoring relationship succeeds, it is likely that the two people will be separated as the mentee is promoted within the organization or accepts a more advanced job elsewhere—especially if the mentoring relationship was formalized. Mentoring relationships can continue in spite of geographic distance, as many mentoring tasks can be completed via electronic communication or through planned encounters at conferences or other professional gatherings. Supervisors aren't the only source of mentors, however, as peer coworkers can also serve in this role.

Coworker Relationships

According to organizational workplace relationship expert Patricia Sias (2009), **peer coworker relationships** exist between individuals who exist at the same level within an organizational hierarchy and have no formal authority over each other. According to Sias, we engage in these coworker relationships because they provide us with mentoring, information, power, and support. Let's look at all four of these reasons for workplace relationships further.

Sias' Reasons for Coworker Relationships

Mentoring

First, our coworker relationships are a great source for mentoring within any organizational environment. It's always good to have that person who is a peer that you can run to when you have a question or need advice. Because this person has no direct authority over you, you can informally interact with this person without fear of reproach if these relationships are healthy.

Sources of Information

Second, we use our peer coworker relationships as sources for information. One important caveat to all of this involves the quality of the information we are receiving. By information quality, Sias refers to the degree to which an individual perceives the information they are receiving as accurate, timely, and useful. Ever had that one friend who always has great news, that everyone else heard the previous week? Yeah, not all information sources provide you with quality information. As such, we need to establish a network of high-quality information sources if we are going to be successful within an organizational environment.

Issues of Power

Third, we engage in coworker relationships as an issue of power. Although two coworkers may exist in the same run within an organizational hierarchy, it's important also to realize that there are informal sources of power as well. Recall from our previous chapter, power can be useful and helps us influence what goes on within our immediate environments. However, power can also be used to control and intimidate people, which is a huge problem in many organizations.

Social Support

The fourth reason we engage in peer coworker relationships is social support. For our purposes, let's

define social support as the perception and actuality that an individual receives assistance, care, and help from those people within their life. Even the best organization in the world can be trying at times. The best manager in the world will eventually get under your skin about something. We're humans; we're flawed. As such, no organization is perfect, so it's always important to have those peer coworkers we can go to who are there for us. Even if you love your job, sometimes you need to vent about something that has occurred. For the most part, we don't want a coworker to solve a problem; just wants someone to listen.

Other Characteristics of Coworker Relationships

In addition to these four reasons for workplace relationships discussed by Sias, Jessica Methot (2010) argued that three other features are important to understand coworker relationships: trust, relational maintenance, and ability to focus. Let's talk about each of these characteristics.

Trust

Methot (2010) defines **trust** as "the willingness to be vulnerable to another party with the expectation that the other party will behave with the best interest of the focal individual" (p. 45). In essence, in the workplace, we eventually learn how to make ourselves vulnerable to our coworkers believing that our coworkers will do what's in our best interests. Now, trust is an interesting and problematic concept because it's both a function of workplace relationships but also an outcome. For coworker relationships to work or operate as they should, we need to be able to trust our coworkers. However, the more we get to know our coworkers and know they have our best interests at heart, then the more we will ultimately trust our coworkers. Trust develops over time and is not something that is not just a bipolar concept of trust or doesn't trust. Instead, there are various degrees of trust in the workplace. At first, you may trust your coworkers just enough to tell them surface level things about yourself (e.g., where you went to college, major, hometown, etc.), but over time, as we've discussed before in this book, we start to self-disclose as deeper levels as our trust increases. Now, most coworker relationships will never be intimate relationships or even actual friendships, but we can learn to trust our coworkers within the confines of our jobs.

Relational Maintenance

Kathryn Dindia and Daniel J. Canary (1993) wrote that definitions of the term "relational maintenance" could be broken down into four basic types:

1. To keep a relationship in existence;
2. To keep a relationship in a specified state or condition;
3. To keep a relationship in a satisfactory condition; and
4. To keep a relationship in repair.

Mithas argues that **relational maintenance** is difficult task in any context. Still, coworker relationships can have a range of negative outcomes if organizational members have difficulty maintaining their relationships with each other. For this reason, Mithas defines **maintenance difficulty** as "the degree of difficulty individuals experience in interpersonal relationships due to misunderstandings, incompatibility of goals, and the time and effort necessary to cope with disagreements" (Merthot, 2010, p. 49). Imagine you have two coworkers who tend to behave in an inappropriate fashion nonverbally. Maybe he sits there and rolls his eyes at everything his coworker says, or perhaps she uses exaggerated facial expressions to mock her coworker when he's talking.

Having these types of coworkers will cause us (as a third party witnessing these problems) to spend more time trying to maintain relationships with both of them. On the flip side, the relationship between our two coworkers will take even more maintenance to get them to a point where they can just be collegial in the same room with each other. The more time we have to spend trying to decrease tension or resolve interpersonal conflicts in the workplace, the less time we will ultimately have on our actual jobs. Eventually, this can leave you feeling exhausted feeling and emotionally drained as though you just don't have anything else to give. When this happens, we call this having inadequate resources to meet work demands.

All of us will eventually hit a wall when it comes to our psychological and emotional resources. When we do hit that wall, our ability to perform job tasks will decrease. As such, it's essential that we strive to maintain healthy relationships with our coworkers ourselves, but foster an environment that encourages our coworkers to maintain healthy relationships with each other. However, it's important to note that some people will simply never play well in the sandbox others. Some coworker relationships can become so toxic that minimizing contact and interaction can be the best solution to avoid draining your psychological and emotional resources.

Ability to Focus

Have you ever found your mind wandering while you are trying to work? One of the most important things when it comes to getting our work done is having the ability to focus. Within an organizational context, Methot (2010) defines **ability to focus** as "the ability to pay attention to value-producing activities without being concerned with extraneous issues such as off-task thoughts or distractions" (p. 47). When individuals have healthy relationships with their coworkers, they are more easily able to focus their attention on the work at hand. On the other hand, if your coworkers always play politics, stabbing each other in the back, gossiping, and engaging in numerous other counterproductive workplace (or deviant workplace) behaviors, then it's going to be a lot harder for you to focus on your job.

Types of Coworker Relationships

Relationships with coworkers in a workplace can range from someone you say hello to almost

daily without knowing their name, to an acquaintance in another department, to your best friend that you go on vacations with. We've already learned that proximity plays an important role in determining our relationships, and most of us will spend much of our time at work in proximity to and sharing tasks with particular people. However, we do not become friends with all our coworkers.

As with other relationships, perceived similarity and self-disclosure play important roles in workplace relationship formation. Most coworkers are already in close proximity, but they may break down into smaller subgroups based on department, age, or even whether or not they are partnered or have children (Sias, 2005). As individuals form relationships that extend beyond being acquaintances at work, they become peer coworkers. A peer coworker relationship refers to a workplace relationship between two people who have no formal authority over the other and are interdependent in some way. This is the most common type of interpersonal workplace relationship, given that most of us have many people we would consider peer coworkers and only one supervisor (Sias, 2005).

Even though we might not have a choice about whom we work with, we do choose who our friends at work will be. Coworker relationships move from strangers to friends much like other friendships. Perceived similarity may lead to more communication about workplace issues, which may lead to self-disclosure about non-work-related topics, moving a dyad from acquaintances to friends. Coworker friendships may then become closer as a result of personal or professional problems. For example, talking about family or romantic troubles with a coworker may lead to increased closeness as self-disclosure becomes deeper and more personal. Increased time together outside of work may also strengthen a workplace friendship (Sias & Cahill, 1998). Interestingly, research has shown that close friendships are more likely to develop among coworkers when they perceive their supervisor to be unfair or unsupportive. In short, a bad boss apparently leads people to establish closer friendships with coworkers, perhaps as a way to get the functional and relational support they are missing from their supervisor.

Friendships between peer coworkers have many benefits, including making a workplace more intrinsically rewarding, helping manage job-related stress, and reducing employee turnover. Peer friendships may also supplement or take the place of more formal mentoring relationships (Sias & Cahill, 1998). Coworker friendships also serve communicative functions, creating an information chain, as each person can convey information they know about what's going on in different areas of an organization and let each other know about opportunities for promotion or who to avoid. Friendships across departmental boundaries in particular have been shown to help an organization adapt to changing contexts. Workplace friendships may also have negative effects. Obviously information chains can be used for workplace gossip, which can be unproductive. Additionally, if a close friendship at work leads someone to continue to stay in a job that they don't like for the sake of the friendship, then the friendship is not serving the interests of either person or the organization. Although this section has focused on peer coworker friendships, some friendships have the potential to develop into workplace romances.

Now that we've looked at some of the characteristics of coworker relationships, let's talk about the three different types of coworkers research has categorized. Kram and Isabelle (1985) found that there are essentially three different types of coworker relationships in the workplace: information

peer, collegial peer, and special peer. Figure 5.1 illustrates the basic things we get from each of these different types of peer relationships.

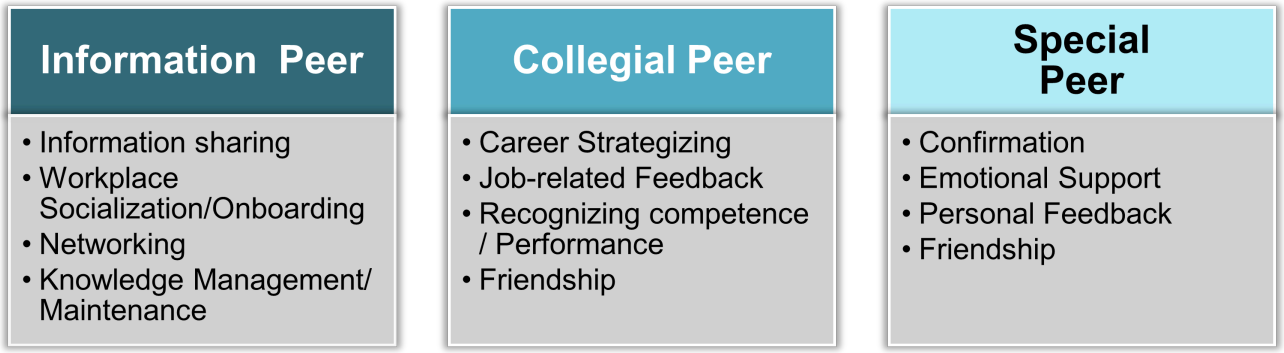

Figure 5.1 Types of Coworker Relationships. Material adapted from Interpersonal Communication by Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Image: Fanshawe College, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. [Click to enlarge].

Information Peers

Information peers are so-called because we rely on these individuals for information about job tasks and the organization itself. As you can see from Figure 5.1 there are four basic types of activities we engage information peers for information sharing, workplace socialization/onboarding, networking, and knowledge management/maintenance.

Information Sharing

First, we share information with our information peers. Of course, this information is task-focused, so the information is designed to help us complete our job better.

Workplace Socialization and Onboarding

Second, information peers are vital during workplace socialization or onboarding. Recall from our discussion on organizational culture, workplace socialization can be defined as the process by which new organizational members learn the rules (e.g., explicit policies, explicit procedures, etc.), norms (e.g., when you go on break, how to act at work, who to eat with, who not to eat with, etc.), and culture (e.g., innovation, risk-taking, team orientation, competitiveness, etc.) of an organization. Onboarding is the formal process of socialization when an organization helps new members get acquainted with the organization, its members, its customers, and its products/services.

Networking

>Third, information peers help us network within our organization or a larger field. Half of being successful in any organization involves getting to know the key players within the organization. Our information peers will already have existing relationships with these key players, so they can help make introductions. Furthermore, some of our peers may connect with others in the field (outside the organization), so they could help you meet other professionals as well.

Knowledge Management/Maintenance

Lastly, information peers help us manage and maintain knowledge. During the early parts of workplace socialization, our information peers will help us weed through all of the noise and focus on the knowledge that is important for us to do our jobs. As we become more involved in an organization, we can still use these information peers to help us acquire new knowledge or update existing knowledge. When we talk about knowledge, we generally talk about two different types: explicit and tacit. **Explicit knowledge** is information that is kept in some retrievable format. For example, you'll need to find previously written reports or a list of customers' names and addresses. These are examples of the types of information that physically (or electronically) may exist within the organization. **Tacit knowledge,** on the other hand, is the knowledge that's difficult to capture permanently (e.g., write down, visualize, or permanently transfer from one person to another) because it's garnered from personal experience and contexts. Informational peers who have been in an organization for a long time will have a lot of tacit knowledge. They may have an unwritten history of why policies and procedures are the way they are now, or they may know how to "read" certain clients because they've spent decades building relationships. For obvious reasons, it's much easier to pass on explicit knowledge than implicit knowledge.

Collegial Peers

The second class of relationships we'll have in the workplace are **collegial peers** or relationships that have moderate levels of trust and self-disclosure and is different from information peers because of the more openness that is shared between two individuals. Collegial peers may not be your best friends, but they are people that you enjoy working with. Some of the hallmarks of collegial peers include career strategizing, job-related feedback, recognizing competence/performance, friendship.

Career Strategizing

First, collegial peers help us with career strategizing. **Career strategizing** is the process of creating a plan of action for one's career path and trajectory. First, notice that career strategizing is a process, so it's marked by gradual changes that help you lead to your ultimate result. Career strategizing isn't something that happens once, and we stay on that path for the rest of our lives. Often or intended career paths take twists and turns we never expected nor predicted. However, our collegial peers are

often great resources for helping us think through this process either within a specific organization or a larger field.

Job-Related Feedback

Second, collegial peers also provide us with job-related feedback. We often turn to those who are around us the most often to see how we are doing within an organization. Our collegial peers can provide us this necessary feedback to ensure we are doing our jobs to the utmost of our abilities and the expectations of the organization. Under this category, the focus is purely on how we are doing our jobs and how we can do our jobs better. We will talk more about giving and receiving feedback in future chapters of this book.

Recognizing Competence/Performance

Third, collegial peers are usually the first to recognize our competence in the workplace and recognize us for excellent performance. Generally speaking, our peers have more interactions with us on the day-to-day job than does middle or upper management, so they are often in the best position to recognize our competence in the workplace. Our competence in the workplace can involve having valued attitudes (e.g., liking hard work, having a positive attitude, working in a team, etc.), cognitive abilities (e.g., information about a field, technical knowledge, industry-specific knowledge, etc.), and skills (e.g., writing, speaking, computer, etc.) necessary to complete critical work-related tasks. Not only do our peers recognize our attitudes, cognitive abilities, and skills, they are also there to pat us on the backs and tell us we've done a great job when a task is complete.

Friendship

Lastly, collegial peers provide us a type of friendship in the workplace. They offer us a sense of camaraderie in the workplace. They also offer us someone we can both like and trust in the workplace. Now, it's important to distinguish this level of friendships from other types of friendships we have in our lives. Collegial peers are not going to be your "best friends," but they will offer you friendships within the workplace that make work more bearable and enjoyable. At the collegial level, you may not associate with these friends outside of work beyond workplace functions (e.g., sitting next to each other at meetings, having lunch together, finding projects to work on together, etc.). It's also possible that a group of collegial peers will go to events outside the workplace as a group (e.g., going to happy hour, throwing a holiday party, attending a baseball game, etc.).

Special Peers

The final group of peers we work with are called **special peers**. Kram and Isabella (1985)note that special peer relationships "involves revealing central ambivalences and personal dilemmas in work and family realms. Pretense and formal roles are replaced by greater self-disclosure and self-

expression" (p. 121) Special peer relationships are marked by confirmation, emotional support, personal feedback, and friendship.

Confirmation

First, special peers provide us with confirmation. When we are having one of our darkest days at work and are not sure we're doing our jobs well, our special peers are there to let us know that we're doing a good job. They approve of who we are and what we do. These are also the first people we go to when we do something well at work.

Emotional Support

Second, special peers provide us with emotional support in the workplace. Emotional support from special peers comes from their willingness to listen and offer helpful advice and encouragement. Kelly Zellars and Pamela Perrewé (2001) have noted there are four types of emotional social support we get from peers: positive, negative, non-job-related, and empathic communication. Positive emotional support is when you and a special peer talk about the positive sides to work. For example, you and a special peer could talk about the joys of working on a specific project. Negative emotional support, on the other hand, is when you and a special peer talk about the downsides to work. For example, maybe both of you talk about the problems working with a specific manager or coworker. The third form of emotional social support is non-job-related or talking about things that are happening in your personal lives outside of the workplace itself. These could be conversations about friends, family members, hobbies, etc. A good deal of the emotional social support we get from special peers has nothing to do with the workplace at all. The final type of emotional social support is empathic communication or conversations about one's emotions or emotional state in the workplace. If you're having a bad day, you can go to your special peer, and they will reassure you about the feelings you are experiencing. Another example is talking to your special peer after having a bad interaction with a customer that ended with the customer yelling at you for no reason. After the interaction, you seek out your special peer, and they will confirm your feelings and thoughts about the interaction.

Personal Feedback

Third, special peers will provide both reliable and candid feedback about you and your work performance. One of the nice things about building an intimate special peer relationship is that both of you will be honest with one another. There are times we need confirmation, but then there are times we need someone to be bluntly honest with us. We are more likely to feel criticized and hurt when blunt honesty comes from someone when we do not have a special peer relationship. Special peer relationships provide a safe space where we can openly listen to feedback even if we're not thrilled to receive that feedback.

Friendship

Lastly, special peers also offer us a sense of deeper friendship in the workplace. You can almost think of special peers as your best friend(s) within the workplace. Most people will only have one or maybe two people they consider a special peer in the workplace. You may be friendly with a lot of your peers (i.g., collegial peers), but having that special peer relationship is deeper and more meaningful.

A Further Look at Workplace Friendships

At some point, a peer coworker relationship may, or may not, evolve into a workplace friendship. According to Patricia Sias, there are two key hallmarks of a workplace friendship: voluntariness and personalistic focus. First, workplace friendships are voluntary. Someone can assign you a mentor or a mentee, but that person cannot make you form a friendship with that person. Most of the people you work with will not be your friends. You can have amazing working relationships with your coworkers, but you may only develop a small handful of workplace friendships. Second, workplace friendships have a personalistic focus. Instead of just viewing this individual as a coworker, we see this person as someone who is a whole individual who is a friend. According to research, workplace friendships are marked by higher levels of intimacy, frankness, and depth than those who are peer coworkers (Sias, & Cahill, 1998).

Friendship Development in the Workplace

According to Patricia Sias and Daniel Cahill (1998), workplace friendships are developed by a series of influencing factors: individual/personal factors, contextual factors, and communication changes. First, some friendships develop because we are drawn to the other person. Maybe you're drawn to a person in a meeting because she has a sense of humor that is similar to yours, or maybe you find that another coworker's attitude towards the organization is exactly like yours. Whatever the reason we have, we are often drawn to people that are like us. For this reason, we are often drawn to people who resemble ourselves demographically (e.g., age, sex, race, religion, etc.).

A second reason we develop relationships in the workplace is because of a variety of different contextual factors. Maybe your office is right next to someone else's office, so you develop a friendship because you're next to each other all the time. Perhaps you develop friendships because you're on the same committee or put on the same work project with another person. In large organizations, we often end up making friends with people simply because we get to meet them. Depending on the size of your organization, you may end up meeting and interact with a tiny percentage of people, so you're not likely to become friends with everyone in the organization equally. Other organizations provide a culture where friendships are approved of and valued. In the realm of workplace friendship research, two important factors have been noticed concerning contextual factors controlled by the organization: opportunity and prevalence (Nielsen et al., 2000). Friendship opportunity refers to the degree to which an organization promotes and enables workers

to develop friendships within the organization. Does your organization have regular social gatherings for employees? Does your organization promote informal interaction among employees, or does it clamp down on coworker communication? Not surprisingly, individuals who work in organizations that allow for and help friendships tend to be satisfied, more motivated, and generally more committed to the organization itself.

Friendship prevalence, on the other hand, is less of an organizational culture and more the degree to which an individual feels that they have developed or can develop workplace friendships. You may have an organization that attempts to create an environment where people can make friends, but if you don't think you can trust your coworkers, you're not very likely to make workplace friends. Although the opportunity is important when seeing how an individual responds to the organization, friendship prevalence is probably the more important factor of the two. If I'm a highly communicative apprehensive employee, I may not end up making any friends at work, so I may see my workplace place as just a job without any commitment at all. When an individual isn't committed to the workplace, they will probably start looking for another job (Nielsen et al., 2000).

Lastly, as friendships develop, our communication patterns within those relationships change. For example, when we move from being just an acquaintance to being a friend with a coworker, we are more likely to increase the amount of communication about non-work and personal topics. When we transition from friend to close friend, Sias and Cahill note that this change is marked by decreased caution and increased intimacy. Furthermore, this transition in friendship is characterized by an increase in discussing work-related problems. The final transition from a close friend to "almost best" friend. According to Sias and Cahill, "Because of the increasing amount of trust developed between the coworkers, they felt freer to share opinions and feelings, particularly their feelings about work frustrations. Their discussion about both work and personal issues became increasingly more detailed and intimate" (Sias & Cahill, 1998, p. 288).

Relationship Disengagement

Thus far, we've talked about workplace friendships as positive factors in the workplace, but any friendship can sour. Some friendships sour because one person moves into a position of authority of the other, so there is no longer perceived equality within the relationship. Some friendships devolve because of conflicting expectations of the relationship. Maybe one friend believes that giving him a heads up about insider information in the workplace is part of being a friend, and the other person sees it as a violation of trust given to her by her supervisors. When we have these conflicting ideas about what it means to "be a friend," we can often see a schism that gets created. So, how does an individual get out of workplace friendships? Patricia Sias and Tarra Perry (2004) were the first researchers to discuss how colleagues disengage from relationships with their coworkers. Sias and Perry found three distinct tools that coworkers use: state-of-the-relationship talk, cost escalation, and depersonalization. Before explaining them, we should mention that people use all three and do not necessarily progress through the three in any order.

State-of-the-Relationship Talk

The first strategy people use when disengaging from workplace friendships involves state-of-the-relationship talk. **State-of-the-relationship talk** is exactly what it sounds like; you officially have a discussion that the friendship is ending. The goal of state-of-the-relationship talk is to engage the other person and inform them that ending the friendship is the best way to ensure that the two can continue a professional, functional relationship. Ideally, all workplace friendships could end in a situation where both parties agree that it's in everyone's best interest for the friendship to stop. Still, we all know this isn't always the case, which is why the other two are often necessary.

Cost Escalation

The second strategy people use when ending a workplace friendship involves cost escalation. **Cost escalation** involves tactics that are designed to make the cost of maintaining the relationship higher than getting out of the relationship. For example, a coworker could start belittling a friend in public, making the friend the center of all jokes, or talking about the friend behind the friend's back. All of these behaviors are designed to make the cost of the relationship too high for the other person.

Depersonalization

The final strategy involves **depersonalization**. Depersonalization can come in one of two basic forms. First, an individual can depersonalization a relationship by stopping all the interaction that is not task-focused. When you have to interact with the workplace friend, you keep the conversation purely business and do not allow for talk related to personal lives. The goal of this type of behavior is to alter the relationship from one of closeness to one of professional distance. The second way people can depersonalize a relationship is simply to avoid that person. If you know a workplace friend is going to be at a staff party, you purposefully don't go. If you see the workplace friend coming down the hallway, you go in the opposite direction or duck inside a room before they can see you. Again, the purpose of this type of depersonalization is to put actual distance between you and the other person. According to Sias and Perry's (2004) research, depersonalization tends to be the most commonly used tactic.

Romantic Relationships

Workplace romances involve two people who are emotionally and physically attracted to one

another (Sias, 2009). We don't have to look far to find evidence that this relationship type is the most controversial of all the workplace relationships (Boyd, 2010). So what makes these relationships so problematic?

Some research supports the claim that workplace romances are bad for business, while other research claims workplace romances enhance employee satisfaction and productivity. Despite this controversy, workplace romances are not rare or isolated, as research shows 75 to 85 percent of people are affected by a romantic relationship at work as a participant or observer (Sias, 2009). People who are opposed to workplace romances cite several common reasons. More so than friendships, workplace romances bring into the office emotions that have the potential to become intense. This doesn't mesh well with a general belief that the workplace should not be an emotional space. Additionally, romance brings sexuality into workplaces that are supposed to be asexual, which also creates a gray area in which the line between sexual attraction and sexual harassment is blurred (Sias, 2009). People who support workplace relationships argue that companies shouldn't have a say in the personal lives of their employees and cite research showing that workplace romances increase productivity. Obviously, this is not a debate that we can settle here. Instead, let's examine some of the communicative elements that affect this relationship type.

Individuals may engage in workplace romances for many reasons, three of which are job motives, ego motives, and love motives (Sias, 2009). **Job motives** include gaining rewards such as power, money, or job security. **Ego motives** include the "thrill of the chase" and the self-esteem boost one may get. **Love motives** include the desire for genuine affection and companionship. Despite the motives, workplace romances impact coworkers, the individuals in the relationship, and workplace policies. Romances at work may fuel gossip, especially if the couple is trying to conceal their relationship. This could lead to hurt feelings, loss of trust, or even jealousy. If coworkers perceive the relationship is due to job motives, they may resent the appearance of favoritism and feel unfairly treated. The individuals in the relationship may experience positive effects such as increased satisfaction if they get to spend time together at work and may even be more productive. Romances between subordinates and supervisors are more likely to slow productivity. If a relationship begins to deteriorate, the individuals may experience more stress than other couples would, since they may be required to continue to work together daily.

Over the past couple decades, there has been a national discussion about whether or not organizations should have policies related to workplace relationships, and there are many different opinions. Company policies range from complete prohibition of romantic relationships, to policies that only specify supervisor-subordinate relationships as off-limits, to policies that don't prohibit but discourage love affairs in the workplace (Sias, 2009). One trend that seeks to find middle ground is the "love contract" or "dating waiver" (Boyd, 2010). This requires individuals who are romantically involved to disclose their relationship to the company and sign a document saying that it is consensual and they will not engage in favoritism. Some businesses are taking another route and encouraging workplace romances. Southwest Airlines, for example, allows employees of any status to date each other and even allows their employees to ask passengers out on a date. Other companies like AT&T and Ben and Jerry's have similar open policies (Boyd, 2010). Some organizations require a consensual romance agreement to be signed by two romantically–involved employees

representing that their relationship is entirely consensual and acknowledging the employer's anti-harassment policies and rules. Parties are also often reminded in these documents the standards for appropriate behavior (e.g., limiting displays of affection), conflict of interest, preferential treatment, etc that might arise as a result of the relationship. Finally, the document may also outline expectations for behaviour if the relationship ends.

Sexual Harassment

Image: Fundamentals Of Business Communication by Venecia Williams and Jordan Smith. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0,. [Click to enlarge].

While we just discussed consensual romantic relationships in the workplace, it is also important to acknowledge the fact that many romantic advances that occur in the workplace are unsolicited and unwanted. It is important for everyone to be aware of what sexual harassment is, what types of behaviours that it entails, and what to do you if you are the subject of unwanted advances at work or if you witness an incidence of sexual harassment against another individual in your place of work.The *Canada Labour Code*'s definition of sexual harassment is quite broad, but oriented more toward the perception of the person offended than the intentions of the offender. Though there is nothing wrong with discrete flirtation between two consenting adults on break at work, a line is crossed as soon as one of them—or third-party observers—feels uncomfortable with actions or talk of sexual nature. According to Provision 241.1 of the *Code*,**sexual harassment** means any conduct, comment, gesture or contact of a sexual nature that is likely to cause offence or humiliation to any employee, or that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived by that employee as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or on any opportunity for training or promotion. (Government of Canada, 1985, p. 214)The *Code* clarifies that all employees have a right to conduct their work without being harassed (241.2), but what does that look like in practice?

Let's Focus: What Constitute Sexual harassments

For help with understanding what specific behaviours constitute sexual harassment, the City of Toronto's Human Rights Office's 2017 "Sexual Harassment in the Workplace" guide lists the following 21 examples of offenses that have had their day in court:

- Making unnecessary physical contact, including unwanted touching (e.g., stroking hair, demanding hugs, or rubbing a person's back)
- Invading personal space
- Using language that puts someone down because of their sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression
- Using sex-specific derogatory names, homophobic or transphobic epithets, slurs, or jokes
- Leering or inappropriate staring
- Gender related comments about a person's physical characteristics or mannerisms, comments that police or reinforce traditional heterosexual gender norms

Image: Fundamentals Of Business Communication by Venecia Williams and Jordan Smith. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0,. [Click to enlarge].

- Targeting someone for not following sex-role stereotypes (e.g., comments made to a female for being in a position of authority)
- Showing or sending pornography, sexual images, etc. (e.g., pinning up an image of a naked man in the bathroom)
- Making sexual jokes, including forwarding sexual jokes by email
- Rough or vulgar language related to gender (e.g., "locker-room talk")
- Spreading sexual rumours, "outing" or threatening to out someone who is LGBTQ2S (e.g., sending an email to colleagues about an affair between a supervisor and another employee)
- Making suggestive or offensive comments about members of a specific gender
- Sexually propositioning a person
- Bragging about sexual prowess
- Asking questions about sexual preferences, fantasies, or activities

- Demanding dates or sexual favours
- Verbally abusing, threatening, or taunting someone based on gender
- Threatening to penalize or punish a person who refuses to comply with sexual advances
- Intrusive comments, questions or insults about a person's body, physical characteristics, gender-related medical procedures, clothing, mannerisms, or other forms of gender expression
- Refusing to refer to a person by their self-identified name or proper personal pronoun, or requiring a person to prove their gender
- Circulating or posting of homophobic, transphobic, derogatory or offensive signs, caricatures, graffiti, pictures, or other materials

The guide explains that any such behaviours involving professional colleagues in the physical or online workspace, as well as offsite outside of normal hours (e.g., work parties or community events), should be reported without fear of reprisal (City of Toronto, 2017, pp. 2-3).

According to *Doing Our Duty: Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace* by the Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA, 2018), "sexual harassment in the workplace is an epidemic that has been allowed to persist" for too long (p. 5). In a survey of nearly a thousand HRPA members in Ontario, 43% of women said they've been sexually harassed in the workplace, and about four-fifths said they didn't report it to their employers (p. 12). In a separate online survey of 2000 Canadians nationwide, 34% of women reported experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace and 12% of men, and nearly 40% of those say it involved someone who had a direct influence over their career success (Navigator, 2018, p. 5). These perceptions are completely out of step with what top executives believe, with 95% of 153 surveyed Canadian CEOs and CFOs confirming that sexual harassment is not a problem in their workplaces (Gandalf Group, 2017, p. 9). Clearly there are differences of opinion between those who experience sexual harassment on the floor and those in the executive suites who are responsible for the safety of their employees, and much of the confusion may have to do with how sexual harassment is defined.

How to Make Workplaces More Respectful

Though the *Canada Labour Code* places the responsibility of ensuring a harassment-free workplace squarely on the employer (Provision 247.3), all employees must do their part to uphold one another's right to work free of harassment. At the very least, everyone should avoid any of the 21 specific examples of sexual harassment listed above, even in the context of lighthearted banter. Employees everywhere should be held to a higher standard, however, which the HRPA advocates in the following recommendations:

- **All companies must have a stand-alone sexual harassment and assault policy,** as required by the *Labour Code*.
- **All employees must familiarize themselves with their company's sexual harassment policy**, which should include guidance on how to report instances of harassment.

- **All companies must conduct training sessions on their sexual harassment policy,** including instruction on what to do when harassed or witnessing harassment, and all employees must participate.

Of course, experiencing harassment places the victim in a difficult position with regard to their job security, as does witnessing it and the duty to report. The situation is even more complicated if the perpetrator has the power to promote, demote, or terminate the victim's or witness's employment. If you find yourself in such a situation, seeking the confidential advice of an ombudsperson or person in a similar counselling role should be your first recourse. Absent these internal protections, consider seeking legal counsel.

If you witness sexual or other types of harassment, what should you do? The following guide may help:

1. If it's safe for you to do so, try recording video the incident on your smartphone. The mere presence of the phone may act as a deterrent to further harassment. If not, however, a record of the incident will be valuable in the post-incident pursuit of justice.
2. If you can play any additional role in stopping the harassment before it continues, try to get the attention of the person being harassed and ask them if they want support and what exactly you can do.
3. If it's welcome from the victim and safe for both you and them, try to place yourself between them and the attacker. If the victim is handling the attack in their own way, respect their choice.
4. If the harassment continues, try to de-escalate the situation non-violently by explaining to the offender that the one being harassed has a right to work in peace. Only resort to violence if it's defensive.
5. After a safe resolution, follow up with the person being harassed about what you can do for them (American Friends Service Committee, 2016).

Of course, every harassment situation is different and requires quick-thinking action that maintains the safety of all involved. The important thing, however, is to be act as an ally to the person being harassed. The biggest takeaway from the development of the #MeToo and Time's Up movements is that a workplace culture that permits sexual harassment will only end if we all do our part to ensure that offenses no longer go unreported and unpunished.

Case Study

See Appendix A: Case Studies

- Case Study 5: Uber Pays the Price

Adapted Works

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5.2 Small Group Dynamics

In this section:

- Small Group Dynamics
- Power and Status in Groups
- Toxic Leadership in Groups
- Cultivating a Supportive Group Climate

Small Group Dynamics

Almost every posting for a job opening in a workplace location lists teamwork among the required skills. Why? Is it because every employer writing a job posting copies other job postings? No, it's because every employer's business success absolutely depends on people working well in teams to get the job done. A high-functioning, cohesive, and efficient team is essential to workplace productivity anywhere you have three or more people working together. Effective teamwork means working together toward a common goal guided by a common vision, and it's a mighty force.

Compared with several people working independently, teams maximize productivity through collaborative problem solving. When each member brings a unique combination of skills, talents, experience, and education, their combined efforts make the team synergistic—i..e, more than the sum of its parts. Collaboration can motivate and result in creative solutions not possible in single-contractor projects. The range of views and diversity can energize the process, helping address creative blocks and stalemates. While the "work" part of "teamwork" may be engaging or even fun, it also requires effort and commitment to a production schedule that depends on the successful completion of individual and group responsibilities for the whole project to finish in a timely manner. Like a chain, the team is only as strong as its weakest member.

Teamwork is not without its challenges. The work itself may prove to be difficult as members juggle competing assignments and personal commitments. The work may also be compromised if team members are expected to conform and pressured to follow a plan, perform a procedure, or use a product that they themselves have not developed or don't support. **Groupthink**, or the tendency to accept the group's ideas and actions in spite of individual concerns, can also compromise the process and reduce efficiency. Personalities, competition, and internal conflict can factor into a team's failure to produce, which is why care must be taken in how teams are assembled and managed.

Establishing a Team

John Thill and Courtland Bovee (2002) advocate for the following considerations when setting up a team:

- Select team members wisely
- Select a responsible leader
- Promote cooperation
- Clarify goals
- Elicit commitment
- Clarify responsibilities
- Instill prompt action
- Apply technology
- Ensure technological compatibility
- Provide prompt feedback

Source: Thill & Bovee, (2002).

Group dynamics involve the interactions and processes of a team and influence the degree to which members feel a part of the goal and mission. A team with a strong identity can prove to be a powerful force. One that exerts too much control over individual members, however, runs the risk or reducing creative interactions, resulting in tunnel vision. A team that exerts too little control, neglecting all concern for process and areas of specific responsibility, may go nowhere. Striking a balance between motivation and encouragement is key to maximizing group productivity.

A skilled communicator creates a positive team by first selecting members based on their areas of skill and expertise. Attention to each member's style of communication also ensures the team's smooth operation. If their talents are essential, introverts who prefer working alone may need additional encouragement to participate. Extroverts may need encouragement to listen to others and not dominate the conversation. Both are necessary, however, so the selecting for a diverse group of team members deserves serious consideration.

Positive and Negative Team Roles

When a manager selects a team for a particular project, its success depends on its members filling various positive roles. There are a few standard roles that must be represented to achieve the team's goals, but diversity is also key. Without an initiator-coordinator stepping up into a leadership position, for instance, the team will be a non-starter because team members such as the elaborator will just wait for more direction from the manager, who is busy with other things. If all the team

members commit to filling a leadership role, however, the group will stall from the get-go with power struggles until the most dominant personality vanquishes the others, who will be bitterly unproductive relegated to a subordinate worker-bee role. A good manager must therefore be a good psychologist in building a team with diverse personality types and talents. Table 5.1 below captures some of these roles.

Table 5.1 Positive Group Roles

Role	Actions
Initiator-coordinator	Suggests new ideas or new ways of looking at the problem
Elaborator	Builds on ideas and provides examples
Coordinator	Brings ideas, information, and suggestions together
Evaluator-critic	Evaluates ideas and provides constructive criticism
Recorder	Records ideas, examples, suggestions, and critiques
Comic relief	Uses humour to keep the team happy

Source: Communication at Work by Jordan Smith, CC BY 4.0.

Of course, each team member here contributes work irrespective of their typical roles. The groupmate who always wanted to be recorder in high school because they thought that all they had to do what jot down some notes about what other people said and did, and otherwise contributed nothing, would be a liability as a slacker in a workplace team. We must therefore contrast the above roles with negative roles, some of which are captured in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2 Negative Group Roles

Role	Actions
Dominator	Dominates discussion so others can't take their turn
Recognition seeker	Seeks attention by relating discussion to their actions
Special-interest pleader	Relates discussion to special interests or personal agenda
Blocker	Blocks attempts at consensus consistently
Slacker	Does little-to-no work, forcing others to pick up the slack
Joker or clown	Seeks attention through humour and distracting members

Source: Communication at Work by Jordan Smith, CC BY 4.0.

Original Source: Beene & Sheats, 1948; McLean, 2005

Whether a team member has a positive or negative effect often depends on context. Just as the class clown can provide some much-needed comic relief when the timing's right, they can also impede

productivity when they merely distract members during work periods. An initiator-coordinator gets things started and provides direction, but a dominator will put down others' ideas, belittle their contributions, and ultimately force people to contribute little and withdraw partially or altogether.

Perhaps the worst of all roles is the slacker. If you consider a game of tug-o-war between two teams of even strength, success depends on everyone on the team pulling as hard as they would if they were in a one-on-one match. The tendency of many, however, is to slack off a little, thinking that their contribution won't be noticed and that everyone else on the team will make up for their lack of effort. The team's work output will be much less than the sum of its parts, however, if everyone else thinks this, too. Preventing slacker tendencies requires clearly articulating in writing the expectations for everyone's individual contributions. With such a contract to measure individual performance, each member can be held accountable for their work and take pride in their contribution to solving all the problems that the team overcame on its road to success.

Power and Status in Groups

Recall back to our discussion of power and its bases. In a group or team, members with higher status are apt to command greater respect and possess more prestige and power than those with lower status. **Status** an be defined as a person's perceived level of importance or significance within a particular context.

Our status is often tied to our identities and their perceived value within our social and cultural context. Groups may confer status upon their members on the basis of their age, wealth, gender, race or ethnicity, ability, physical stature, perceived intelligence, and/or other attributes. Status can also be granted through title or position. In professional circles, for instance, having earned a "terminal" degree such as a Ph.D. or M.D. usually generates a degree of status. The same holds true for the documented outcomes of schooling or training in legal, engineering, or other professional fields. Likewise, people who've been honored for achievements in any number of areas may bring status to a group by virtue of that recognition if it relates to the nature and purpose of the group. Once a group has formed and begun to sort out its norms, it will also build upon the initial status that people bring to it by further allocating status according to its own internal processes and practices. For instance, choosing a member to serve as an officer in a group generally conveys status to that person.

Consider This: High Stakes in Action

What Does High Status Look Like in Action?

Let's say you've either come into a group with high status or have been granted high status by the other members. What does this mean to you, and how are you apt to behave? Here are some predictions based on research from several sources (Beebe & Masterson, 2015; Bormann, 1989; Brilhart & Galanes, 1997; Homans, 1992).

First, the volume and direction of your speech will differ from those of others in the group. You'll talk more than the low-status members do, and you'll communicate more with other high-status members than you will with lower-status individuals. In addition, you'll be more likely to speak to the whole group than will members with lower status.

Second, some indicators of your participation will be particularly positive. Your activity level and self-regard will surpass those of lower-status group members. So will your level of satisfaction with your position. Furthermore, the rest of the group is less likely to ignore your statements and proposals than it is to disregard what lower-status individuals say.

Finally, the content of your communication will probably be different from what your fellow members discuss. Because you may have access to special information about the group's activities and may be expected to shoulder specific responsibilities because of your position, you're apt to talk about topics which are relevant to the central purposes and direction of the group. Lower-status members, on the other hand, are likely to communicate more about other matters.

There's no such thing as a "status neutral" group—one in which everyone always has the same status as everyone else. Differences in status within a group are inevitable and can be dangerous if not recognized and managed. For example, someone who gains status without possessing the skills or attributes required to use it well may cause real damage to other members of a group, or to a group as a whole. A high-status, low-ability person may develop an inflated self-image, begin to abuse power, or both. One of us worked for the new president of a college who acted as though his position entitled him to take whatever actions he wanted. In the process of interacting primarily with other high-status individuals who shared the majority of his viewpoints and goals, he overlooked or rejected concerns and complaints from people in other parts of the organization. Turmoil and dissension broke out. Morale plummeted. The president eventually suffered votes of no confidence from his college's faculty, staff, and students and was forced to resign.

Toxic Leadership in Groups

We've focused for the most part on effective leadership, but what happens if you find yourself working under a horrible manager or team leader? It happens. Plenty of people assume positions of authority who are effective in some areas of management (e.g., they are shrewd business people and good with money) but aren't so good with people, or vice versa. There are even managers who are bad at everything and it's only a matter of time before they are fired or ruin the operation with incompetence, or they may continue to be propped up by cronyism, nepotism, or some other kind of corruption. Some people are even offensive to the point of committing harassment along a spectrum of misbehaviour ranging from inappropriate jokes or rude remarks to outright predatory sexual harassment or assault and violence. Whatever the case, nothing good comes of toxic leadership. Employees just aren't productive when fearing abuse from their managers or worrying about the their leadership running the operation into the ground.

If the mismanagement is severe—especially if it is physically or emotionally abusive—the best way of dealing with the situation is to leave it. A person at work who makes you feel unsafe may suffer from a personality disorder that makes them dangerous, and there's no fixing that. If you're in immediate danger, of course you must leave immediately. From there, figure out your options. For starters, you could consider the following:

- familiarize yourself with the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA, 1990) via a guide such as *Workplace Violence and Harassment: Understanding the Law* (Ontario Ministry of Labour, 2016).
- know that all workplaces are required to have procedures in place for reporting incidents perpetrated by a manager or supervisor to a neutral authority without compromising your employment (*OHSA*, 1990, sec. 32.0.6. [2] [b]).
- make a *Human Rights Code* (1990) complaint (called an application) to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario following advice from the Human Rights Legal Support Centre.

If you're not in immediate danger but the situation is too toxic to continue, you must leave as soon as possible. A major red flag is if most of your co-workers agree that your boss is terrible. If leaving is easier said than done because you live paycheque to paycheque and can't afford to be out of work even for a short while, a well-devised exit strategy is in order. This Lining up your next stable employment is the best you can do, though it may take time and you may have to do it without a reference from your current employer.

If the toxicity is relatively minor, perhaps the result of some nasty things said here and bad moves there, using internal procedures required of employers by law to address managerial misconduct is the most ethical course of action. It is ultimately the employer's responsibility to ensure a non-toxic work environment, and if that means disciplinary action going up the chain of command, then it's worth it to have people doing their best work without hating the people they're working for. Any OHSA-compliant workplace will have such reporting procedures in place, including provisions to prevent employment-compromising retaliation. With pressure from above and below in the

workplace hierarchy, some offending managers may improve their behaviour knowing their job depends on it.

Of course, you must also be good about picking your battles if your leadership isn't perfect but not horrible either. Managers are under plenty of pressure—especially middle managers who feel it from above and below—and can easily make mistakes such as being gruff when a softer approach would be more appropriate. If you have the type of boss who only talks to you about the one thing you did wrong in a day while saying nothing about the hundred things you did right, this may be a sign of someone who lacks good people skills. It may also be that they're extremely busy and have time only for quality assurance rather than boosting morale. If your manager isn't a complete monster, exercising some understanding about the reasons why will make your life and work more tolerable.

Cultivating a Supportive Group Climate

Any time a group of people comes together, new dynamics are put into place that differ from the dynamics present in our typical dyadic interactions. The impressions we form about other people's likeability and the way we think about a group's purpose are affected by the climate within a group that is created by all members.

When something is cohesive it sticks together, and the cohesion within a group helps establish an overall group climate. **Group climate** refers to the relatively enduring tone and quality of group interaction that is experienced similarly by group members. To better understand cohesion and climate, we can examine two types of cohesion: task and social.

Task cohesion refers to the commitment of group members to the purpose and activities of the group. **Social cohesion** refers to the attraction and liking among group members. Ideally, groups would have an appropriate balance between these two types of cohesion relative to the group's purpose, with task-oriented groups having higher task cohesion and relational-oriented groups having higher social cohesion. Even the most task-focused groups need some degree of social cohesion, and vice versa, but the balance will be determined by the purpose of the group and the individual members. For example, a team of workers from the local car dealership may join a local summer softball league because they're good friends and love the game. They may end up beating the team of faculty members from the community college who joined the league just to get to know each other better and have an excuse to get together and drink beer in the afternoon. In this example, the players from the car dealership exhibit high social and task cohesion, while the faculty exhibit high social but low task cohesion. Cohesion benefits a group in many ways and can be assessed through specific group behaviors and characteristics. Groups with an appropriate level of cohesiveness (Hargie, 2011):

- set goals easily;
- exhibit a high commitment to achieving the purpose of the group;
- are more productive;
- experience fewer attendance issues;

- have group members who are willing to stick with the group during times of difficulty;
- have satisfied group members who identify with, promote, and defend the group;
- have members who are willing to listen to each other and offer support and constructive criticism; and
- experience less anger and tension.

Appropriate levels of group cohesion usually create a positive group climate, since group climate is affected by members' satisfaction with the group. Climate has also been described as group morale. The following are some qualities that contribute to a positive group climate and morale (Marston & Hecht, 1988):

- **Participation.** Group members feel better when they feel included in the discussion and a part of the functioning of the group.
- **Messages.** Confirming messages help build relational dimensions within a group, and clear, organized, and relevant messages help build task dimensions within a group.
- **Feedback.** Positive, constructive, and relevant feedback contribute to the group climate.
- **Equity.** Aside from individual participation, group members also like to feel as if participation is managed equally within the group and that appropriate turn-taking is used.
- **Clear and accepted roles.** Group members like to know how status and hierarchy operate within a group. Knowing the roles isn't enough to lead to satisfaction, though—members must also be comfortable with and accept those roles.
- **Motivation.** Member motivation is activated by perceived connection to and relevance of the group's goals or purpose.

Group cohesion and climate are also demonstrated through symbolic convergence (Bormann, 1985). Have you ever been in a group that had 'inside jokes' that someone outside the group just would not understand? **Symbolic convergence** refers to the sense of community or group consciousness that develops in a group through non-task-related communication such as stories and jokes. The originator of symbolic convergence theory, Ernest Bormann, claims that the sharing of group fantasies creates symbolic convergence. *Fantasy*, in this sense, doesn't refer to fairy tales, sexual desire, or untrue things. In group communication, **group fantasies** are verbalized references to events outside the "here and now" of the group, including references to the group's past, predictions for the future, or other communication about people or events outside the group (Griffin, 2009).

In any group, you can tell when symbolic convergence is occurring by observing how people share such fantasies and how group members react to them. If group members react positively and agree with or appreciate the teller's effort or other group members are triggered to tell their own related stories, then convergence is happening and cohesion and climate are being established. Over time, these fantasies build a shared vision of the group and what it means to be a member that creates a shared group consciousness. By reviewing and applying the concepts in this section, you can hopefully identify potential difficulties with group cohesion and work to enhance cohesion when needed to create more positive group climates and enhance your future group interactions.

Adapted Works

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5.3 Collaboration, Decision-Making and Problem Solving in Groups

In this section:

- Cooperation and Collaboration
- Problem Solving and Decision-Making in Groups and Teams
- Group Decision-Making Techniques

Cooperation and Collaboration

When it comes to how groups work, they can be cooperative, collaborative, or a combination of both. What is the difference between cooperation and collaboration? The two terms are often used interchangeably but the distinction between them can be important. In *The Construction of Shared Knowledge in Collaborative Problem Solving*, Roschelle and Teasley define **cooperative group work** as "the division of labour among participants, as an activity where each person is responsible for a portion of the problem solving" and **collaborative work** is "a coordinated, synchronous activity that is the result of a continued attempt to construct and maintain a shared conception of a problem" (1995, p. 70). In many classes, students will cooperate on an assignment and one person will work on the visual aid, another will do the research, and someone else will do the writing.

If a group works collaboratively, everyone shares ideas and contributes to all aspects of the project. The advantage of this is that everyone can have input, have a chance to point out weaknesses, and make the end result better. The disadvantages of this are that it can take more time because the group has to make decisions together which can be chaotic and lead to interpersonal conflicts. This can be minimized by following the guidelines on how to deal with conflict in this textbook. In reality, most groups do a combination of cooperation and collaboration but in most cases, groups should try to be as collaborative as possible.

Lynn Power (2016) puts it well when she writes:

> The reality is that true collaboration is hard — and it doesn't mean compromise or consensus-building. It means giving up control to other people. It means being vulnerable. It means needing to know when to fall on your sword and when to back down. Collaboration is inherently messy. Great ideas need some tension; otherwise, they would be easy to make. And

ultimately, members need to be respectful of other people's roles, thoughts and what they bring to the table. And there also needs to be trusted.

Problem Solving and Decision-Making in Groups and Teams

No matter who you are or where you live, problems are an inevitable part of life. This is true for groups as much as for individuals. Some especially work teams are formed specifically to solve problems. Other groups encounter problems for a wide variety of reasons. A problem might be important to the success of the operation, such as increasing sales or minimizing burnout, or it could be dysfunctional group dynamics such as some team members contributing more effort than others yet achieving worse results. Whatever the problem, having the resources of a group can be an advantage as different people can contribute different ideas for how to reach a satisfactory solution.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Groups when Solving Problems and Making Decisions

Groups can make higher quality decisions and come up with more creative solutions to problems compared to individuals making decisions alone.

However, it is important to recognize that group decision-making is not without challenges. Some groups get bogged down by conflict, while others go to the opposite extreme and push for agreement at the expense of quality discussions. Groupthink occurs when group members choose not to voice their concerns or objections because they would rather keep the peace and not annoy or antagonize others. Sometimes groupthink occurs because the group has a positive team spirit and camaraderie, and individual group members don't want that to change by introducing conflict. It can also occur because past successes have made the team complacent.

Often, one individual in the group has more power or exerts more influence than others and discourages those with differing opinions from speaking up (suppression of dissent) to ensure that only their own ideas are implemented. If members of the group are not really contributing their ideas and perspectives, however, then the group is not getting the benefits of group decision-making.

Characteristics of the Problem

When a group approaches a new problem, it is important to consider contextual factors as well as the characteristics of the group and the problem itself. When it comes to the nature of the problem, five common and important characteristics to consider are task difficulty, number of

possible solutions, group member interest in problem, group member familiarity with problem, and the need for solution acceptance (Adams & Galanes, 2009).

1. **Task difficulty.** Difficult tasks are also typically more complex. Groups should be prepared to spend time researching and discussing a difficult and complex task in order to develop a shared foundational knowledge. This typically requires individual work outside of the group and frequent group meetings to share information.
2. **Number of possible solutions.** There are usually multiple ways to solve a problem or complete a task, but some problems have more potential solutions than others or may be creatively based.
3. **Group member interest in problem.** When group members are interested in the problem, they will be more engaged with the problem-solving process and invested in finding a quality solution. Groups with high interest in and knowledge about the problem may want more freedom to develop and implement solutions, while groups with low interest may prefer a leader who provides structure and direction.
4. **Group familiarity with problem.** Some groups encounter a problem regularly, while other problems are more unique or unexpected. Many groups that rely on funding have to revisit a budget every year, and in recent years, groups have had to get more creative with budgets as funding has been cut in nearly every sector. When group members aren't familiar with a problem, they will need to do background research on what similar groups have done and may also need to bring in outside experts.
5. **Need for solution acceptance.**I n this step, groups must consider how many people the decision will affect and how much "buy-in" from others the group needs in order for their solution to be successfully implemented. Some small groups have many stakeholders on whom the success of a solution depends. Other groups are answerable only to themselves. When a small group is planning on implementing a new policy in a large business, it can be very difficult to develop solutions that will be accepted by all. In such cases, groups will want to poll those who will be affected by the solution and may want to do a pilot implementation to see how people react. Imposing an excellent solution that doesn't have buy-in from stakeholders can still lead to failure.

Steps in the Rational Decision-Making Process

Once a group encounters a problem, questions that come up range from "Where do we start?" to "How do we solve it?" While there are many approaches to a problem, the steps in the rational decision-making model are a good start.

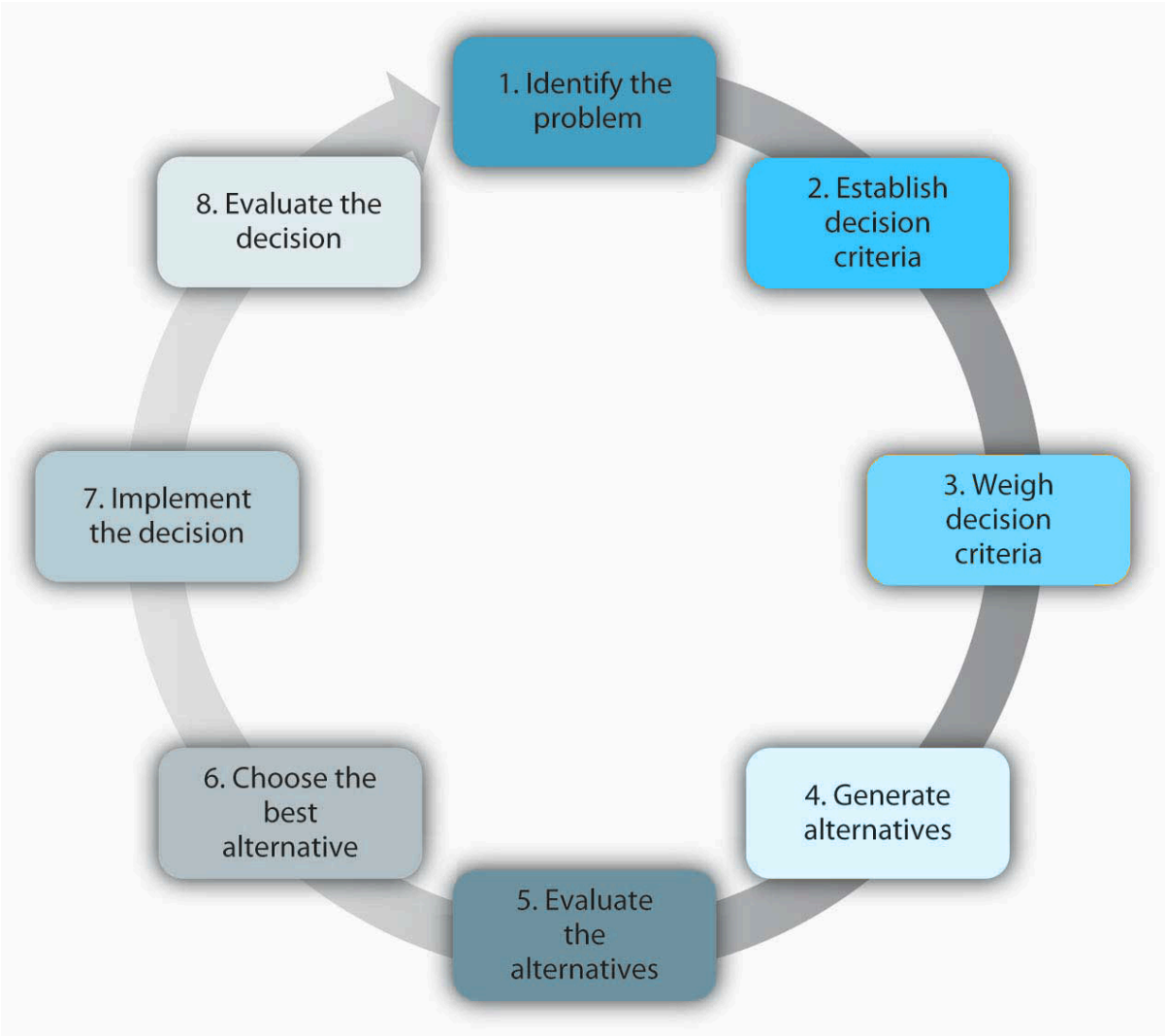

Figure 5.2. Steps in the Rational Decision-making Model. While decision makers can get off track during any of these steps, research shows that searching for alternatives in the fourth step can be the most challenging and often leads to failure. In fact, one researcher found that no alternative generation occurred in 85 percent of the decisions he studied. Nutt, P. C. (1994). Conversely, successful managers know what they want at the outset of the decision-making process, set objectives for others to respond to, carry out an unrestricted search for solutions, get key people to participate, and avoid using their power to push their perspective. Nutt, P. C. (1998). Surprising but true: Half the decisions in organizations fail. Image: Saylor Academy. Human Relations, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

Group Decision-Making Techniques

Some decision-making techniques involve determining a course of action based on the level of agreement among the group members. In the rational decision-making model, this is represented in Stage 6 – choosing the best alternative. Common ways to reach make this decision include majority, expert, authority, and consensus rule.

Majority Rule

Majority rule is a commonly used decision-making technique in which a majority (one-half plus one) must agree before a decision is made. A show-of-hands vote, a paper ballot, or an electronic voting system can determine the majority choice.. Of course, other individuals and mediated messages can influence a person's vote, but since the voting power is spread out over all group members, it is not easy for one person or party to take control of the decision-making process.

Minority Rule

Minority rule is a decision-making technique in which a designated authority or expert has final say over a decision and may or may not consider the input of other group members. When a designated expert makes a decision by minority rule, there may be buy-in from others in the group, especially if the members of the group didn't have relevant knowledge or expertise. When a designated authority makes decisions, buy-in will vary based on group members' level of respect for the authority. For example, decisions made by an elected authority may be more accepted by those who elected them than by those who didn't. As with majority rule, this technique can be time saving. Unlike majority rule, one person or party can have control over the decision-making process. This type of decision making is more similar to that used by monarchs and dictators. An obvious negative consequence of this method is that the needs or wants of one person can override the needs and wants of the majority. A minority deciding for the majority has led to negative consequences throughout history. The quality of the decision and its fairness really depends on the designated expert or authority.

Consensus Rule

Consensus rule is a decision-making technique in which all members of the group must agree on the same decision. On rare occasions, a decision may be ideal for all group members, which can lead to unanimous agreement without further debate and discussion. Although this can be positive, be cautious that this isn't a sign of groupthink. More typically, consensus is reached only after lengthy discussion. On the plus side, consensus often leads to high-quality decisions due to the time and effort it takes to get everyone in agreement. Group members are also more likely to be committed to the decision because of their investment in reaching it. On the negative side, the ultimate decision is often one that all group members can live with but not one that's ideal for all members. Additionally, the process of arriving at consensus also includes conflict, as people debate ideas and negotiate the interpersonal tensions that may result.

Commonly used methods of decision making such as majority vote can help or hurt conflict management efforts. While an up-and-down vote can allow a group to finalize a decision and move on, members whose vote fell on the minority side may feel resentment toward other group

members. This can create a win/lose climate that leads to further conflict. Having a leader who makes ultimate decisions can also help move a group toward completion of a task, but conflict may only be pushed to the side and left not fully addressed. Third-party mediation can help move a group past a conflict and may create less feelings of animosity, since the person mediating and perhaps making a decision isn't a member of the group. In some cases, the leader can act as an internal third-party mediator to help other group members work productively through their conflict. The pros and cons of each of these decision-making techniques are summarized in Table 5.3 below.

Table 5.3 Pros and Cons of Agreement-Based Decision-Making Techniques

Decision-Making Technique	Pros	Cons
Majority rule	Quick	Close decisions (5/4) may reduce internal and external buy-in
	Efficient in large groups	Doesn't take advantage of group synergy to develop alternatives that more members can support
	Each vote counts equally	Minority may feel alienated
Minority rule by expert	Quick	Expertise must be verified
	Decision quality is better than what less knowledgeable people could produce	Experts can be difficult to find / pay for
	Experts are typically objective and less easy to influence	Group members may feel useless
Minority rule by authority	Quick	Authority may not be seen as legitimate, leading to less buy-in
	Buy-in could be high if authority is respected	Group members may try to sway the authority or compete for his or her attention
		Unethical authorities could make decisions that benefit them and harm group members
Consensus rule	High-quality decisions due to time invested	Time consuming
	Higher level of commitment because of participation in decision	Difficult to manage idea and personal conflict that can emerge as ideas are debated
	Satisfaction with decision because of shared agreement	Decision may be OK but not ideal

Source: *Communication in the Real World by University of Minnesot, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

Let's Focus: The Nominal Group Technique

Discussion before Decision Making

The **nominal group technique** guides decision making through a four-step process that includes idea generation and evaluation and seeks to elicit equal contributions from all group members (Delbecq & Ven de Ven, 1971). This method is useful because the procedure involves all group members systematically, which fixes the problem of uneven participation during discussions. Since everyone contributes to the discussion, this method can also help reduce instances of social loafing. To use the nominal group technique, do the following:

1. Silently and individually list ideas.
2. Create a master list of ideas.
3. Clarify ideas as needed.
4. Take a secret vote to rank group members' acceptance of ideas.

During the first step, have group members work quietly, in the same space, to write down every idea they have to address the task or problem they face. This shouldn't take more than twenty minutes. Whoever is facilitating the discussion should remind group members to use brainstorming techniques, which means they shouldn't evaluate ideas as they are generated. Ask group members to remain silent once they've finished their list so they do not distract others.

During the second step, the facilitator goes around the group in a consistent order asking each person to share one idea at a time. As the idea is shared, the facilitator records it on a master list that everyone can see. Keep track of how many times each idea comes up, as that could be an idea that warrants more discussion. Continue this process until all the ideas have been shared. As a note to facilitators, some group members may begin to edit their list or self-censor when asked to provide one of their ideas. To limit a person's apprehension with sharing his or her ideas and to ensure that each idea is shared, I have asked group members to exchange lists with someone else so they can share ideas from the list they receive without fear of being personally judged.

During step three, the facilitator should note that group members can now ask for clarification on ideas on the master list. Do not let this discussion stray into evaluation of ideas. To help avoid an unnecessarily long discussion, it may be useful to go from one person to the next to ask which ideas need clarifying and then go to the originator(s) of the idea in question for clarification.

During the fourth step, members use a voting ballot to rank the acceptability of the ideas on the master list. If the list is long, you may ask group members to rank only their top five or so choices. The facilitator then takes up the secret ballots and reviews them in a random order, noting the rankings of each idea. Ideally, the highest ranked idea can then be discussed and decided on. The nominal group technique does not carry a group all the way through to the point of decision; rather, it sets the group up for a roundtable discussion or use of some other method to evaluate the merits of the top ideas.

Improving the Quality of Group Decisions

An advantage to involving groups in decision-making is that you can incorporate different perspectives and ideas. For this advantage to be realized, however, you need a diverse group. In a diverse group, the different group members will each tend to have different preferences, opinions, biases, and stereotypes. Because a variety of viewpoints must be negotiated and worked through, group decision-making creates additional work for a manager, but (provided the group members reflect different perspectives) it also tends to reduce the effects of bias on the outcome. For example, a hiring committee made up of all men might end up hiring a larger proportion of male applicants (simply because they tend to prefer people who are more similar to themselves). But with a hiring committee made up of an equal number of men and women, the bias should be cancelled out, resulting in more applicants being hired based on their qualifications rather than their physical attributes.

Having more people involved in decision-making is also beneficial because each individual brings unique information or knowledge to the group, as well as different perspectives on the problem. Additionally, having the participation of multiple people will often lead to more options being generated and to greater intellectual stimulation as group members discuss the available options. **Brainstorming** is a process of generating as many solutions or options as possible and is a popular technique associated with group decision-making.

All of these factors can lead to superior outcomes when groups are involved in decision-making. Furthermore, involving people who will be affected by a decision in the decision-making process will allow those individuals to have a greater understanding of the issues or problems and a greater commitment to the solutions.

Effective managers will try to ensure quality group decision-making by forming groups with diverse members so that a variety of perspectives will contribute to the process. They will also encourage everyone to speak up and voice their opinions and thoughts prior to the group reaching a decision. Sometimes groups will also assign a member to play the devil's advocate in order to reduce groupthink. The **devil's advocate** intentionally takes on the role of critic. Their job is to point out flawed logic, to challenge the group's evaluations of various alternatives, and to identify weaknesses in proposed solutions. This pushes the other group members to think more deeply about the advantages and disadvantages of proposed solutions before reaching a decision and implementing it.

The methods we've just described can all help ensure that groups reach good decisions, but what can a manager do when there is too much conflict within a group? In this situation, managers need to help group members reduce conflict by finding some common ground—areas in which they can agree, such as common interests, values, beliefs, experiences, or goals. Keeping a group focused on a common goal can be a very worthwhile tactic to keep group members working with rather than against one another. Table 5.4 summarizes the techniques to improve group decision-making.

Table 5.4 Summary of Techniques That May Improve Group

Decision-Making

Type of Decision	Technique	Benefit
Group decisions	Have diverse members in the group.	Improves quality: generates more options, reduces bias
	Assign a devil's advocate.	Improves quality: reduces groupthink
	Encourage everyone to speak up and contribute.	Improves quality: generates more options, prevents suppression of dissent
	Help group members find common ground.	Improves quality: reduces personality conflict

Source: *Organizational Behavior, Rice University, CC-BY 4.0.*

Case Study

See Appendix A: Case Studies

- Case Study 6: Diverse Teams Hold Court

Adapted Works

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5.4 Working in Diverse Teams

In this section:

- The Benefits of Team Diversity
- Developing Cultural Intelligence
- Hofstede's Divergent Cultural Dimensions

Decision-making and problem-solving can be much more dynamic and successful when performed in a diverse team environment. The multiple diverse perspectives can enhance both the understanding of the problem and the quality of the solution. Yet, working in diverse teams can be challenging given different identities, cultures, beliefs, and experiences. In this chapter, we will discuss the effects of team diversity on group decision-making and problem-solving, identify best practices and challenges for working in and with multicultural teams, and dig deeper into divergent cultural characteristics that teams may need to navigate.

The Benefits of Team Diversity

In the *Harvard Business Review* article "Why Diverse Teams are Smarter," David Rock and Heidi Grant (2016) support the idea that increasing workplace diversity is a good business decision. A 2015 McKinsey report on 366 public companies found that those in the top quartile for ethnic and racial diversity in management were 35% more likely to have financial returns above their industry mean, and those in the top quartile for gender diversity were 15% more likely to have returns above the industry mean. Similarly, in a global analysis conducted by Credit Suisse, organizations with at least one female board member yielded a higher return on equity and higher net income growth than those that did not have any women on the board.

Teams made up of diverse members tend to perform better than teams of similar backgrounds. Here, the Women of Color in Technology work on a project. The tech industry has been criticized for the lack of diversity among its ranks, and groups like the Women of Color in Technology are looking to change that. Image: "wocintech (microsoft) – 134" by Women of Color in Tech Chat, CC BY 2.0. [Click to enlarge}

Additional research on diversity has shown that diverse teams are better at decision-making and problem-solving because they tend to focus more on facts, per the Rock and Grant article. A study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* showed that people from diverse backgrounds "might actually alter the behavior of a group's social majority in ways that lead to improved and more accurate group thinking." It turned out that in the study, the diverse panels raised more facts related to the case than homogeneous panels and made fewer factual errors while discussing available evidence. Another study noted in the article showed that diverse teams are "more likely to constantly reexamine facts and remain objective. They may also encourage greater scrutiny of each member's actions, keeping their joint cognitive resources sharp and vigilant.

By breaking up workforce homogeneity, you can allow your employees to become more aware of their own potential biases—entrenched ways of thinking that can otherwise blind them to key information and even lead them to make errors in decision-making processes." In other words, when people are among homogeneous and like-minded (non-diverse) teammates, the team is susceptible to groupthink and may be reticent to think about opposing viewpoints since all team members are in alignment. In a more diverse team with a variety of backgrounds and experiences, the opposing viewpoints are more likely to come out and the team members feel obligated to research and

address the questions that have been raised. Again, this enables a richer discussion and a more in-depth fact-finding and exploration of opposing ideas and viewpoints to solve problems.
Diversity in teams also leads to greater innovation. A Boston Consulting Group article entitled "The Mix that Matters: Innovation through Diversity" explains a study in which they sought to understand the relationship between diversity in managers (all management levels) and innovation (Lorenzo et al., 2017). The key findings of this study show that:

- The positive relationship between management diversity and innovation is statistically significant—and thus companies with higher levels of diversity derive more revenue from new products and services.
- The innovation boost isn't limited to a single type of diversity. The presence of managers who are either female or are from other countries, industries, or companies can cause an increase in innovation.
- Management diversity seems to have a particularly positive effect on innovation at complex companies—those that have multiple product lines or that operate in multiple industry segments.
- To reach its potential, gender diversity needs to go beyond tokenism. In the study, innovation performance only increased significantly when the workforce included more than 20% women in management positions. Having a high percentage of female employees doesn't increase innovation if only a small number of women are managers.
- At companies with diverse management teams, openness to contributions from lower-level workers and an environment in which employees feel free to speak their minds are crucial for fostering innovation.

When you consider the impact that diverse teams have on decision-making and problem-solving—through the discussion and incorporation of new perspectives, ideas, and data—it is no wonder that the BCG study shows greater innovation. Team leaders need to reflect upon these findings during the early stages of team selection so that they can reap the benefits of having diverse voices and backgrounds.

Challenges and Best Practices for Working with Multicultural Teams

As globalization has increased over the last decades, workplaces have felt the impact of working within multicultural teams. The earlier section on team diversity outlined some of the benefits of working on diverse teams, and a multicultural group certainly qualifies as diverse. However, some key practices are recommended to those who are leading multicultural teams to navigate the challenges that these teams may experience.

People may assume that communication is the key factor that can derail multicultural teams, as participants may have different languages and communication styles. In the *Harvard Business Review* article "Managing Multicultural Teams," Brett et al. (2006) outline four key cultural differences that can cause destructive conflicts in a team. The first difference is direct versus indirect

communication, also known as high-context vs low-context orientation. Some cultures are very direct and explicit in their communication, while others are more indirect and ask questions rather than pointing out problems. This difference can cause conflict because, at the extreme, the direct style may be considered offensive by some, while the indirect style may be perceived as unproductive and passive-aggressive in team interactions.

The second difference that multicultural teams may face is trouble with accents and fluency. When team members don't speak the same language, there may be one language that dominates the group interaction—and those who don't speak it may feel left out. The speakers of the primary language may feel that those members don't contribute as much or are less competent. The next challenge is when there are differing attitudes toward hierarchy. Some cultures are very respectful of the hierarchy and will treat team members based on that hierarchy. Other cultures are more egalitarian and don't observe hierarchical differences to the same degree. This may lead to clashes if some people feel that they are being disrespected and not treated according to their status. The final difference that may challenge multicultural teams is conflicting decision-making norms. Different cultures make decisions differently, and some will apply a great deal of analysis and preparation beforehand. Those cultures that make decisions more quickly (and need just enough information to make a decision) may be frustrated with the slow response and relatively longer thought process.

These cultural differences are good examples of how everyday team activities (decision-making, communication, interaction among team members) may become points of contention for a multicultural team if there isn't an adequate understanding of everyone's culture. The authors propose that there are several potential interventions to try if these conflicts arise. One simple intervention is *adaptation*, which is working with or around differences. This is best used when team members are willing to acknowledge the cultural differences and learn how to work with them. The next intervention technique is*structural intervention*, or reorganizing to reduce friction on the team. This technique is best used if there are unproductive subgroups or cliques within the team that need to be moved around. *Managerial intervention* is the technique of making decisions by management and without team involvement. This technique should be used sparingly, as it essentially shows that the team needs guidance and can't move forward without management getting involved. Finally, *exit* is an intervention of last resort and is the *voluntary or involuntary removal* of a team member. If the differences and challenges have proven to be so great that an individual on the team can no longer work with the team productively, then it may be necessary to remove the team member in question.

Developing Cultural Intelligence

Some people seem to be innately aware of and able to work with cultural differences on teams and in their organizations. These individuals might be said to have cultural intelligence. **Cultural intelligence** is a competency and a skill that enables individuals to function effectively in cross-cultural environments. It develops as people become more aware of the influence of culture and more capable of adapting their behavior to the norms of other cultures. In the *IESE Insight* article

entitled "Cultural Competence: Why It Matters and How You Can Acquire It," Lee and Liao (2015) assert that "multicultural leaders may relate better to team members from different cultures and resolve conflicts more easily. Their multiple talents can also be put to good use in international negotiations." Multicultural leaders don't have a lot of "baggage" from any one culture, and so are sometimes perceived as being culturally neutral. They are very good at handling diversity, which gives them a great advantage in their relationships with teammates.

To help people become better team members in a world that is increasingly multicultural, there are a few best practices that the authors recommend for honing cross-cultural skills. The first is to "broaden your mind"— expand your own cultural channels (travel, movies, books) and surround yourself with people from other cultures. This helps to raise your own awareness of the cultural differences and norms that you may encounter. Another best practice is to "develop your cross-cultural skills through practice" and experiential learning. You may have the opportunity to work or travel abroad — but if you don't, then getting to know some of your company's cross-cultural colleagues or foreign visitors will help you to practice your skills. Serving on a cross-cultural project team and taking the time to get to know and bond with your global colleagues is an excellent way to develop skills.

Once you have a sense of the different cultures and have started to work on developing your cross-cultural skills, another good practice is to "boost your cultural metacognition" and monitor your own behavior in multicultural situations. When you are in a situation in which you are interacting with multicultural individuals, you should test yourself and be aware of how you act and feel. Observe both your positive and negative interactions with people, and learn from them. Developing cognitive complexity" is the final best practice for boosting multicultural skills. This is the most advanced, and it requires being able to view situations from more than one cultural framework. To see things from another perspective, you need to have a strong sense of emotional intelligence, empathy, and sympathy, and be willing to engage in honest communications.

In the *Harvard Business Review* article "Cultural Intelligence," Earley and Mosakowski (2004) describe three sources of cultural intelligence that teams should consider if they are serious about becoming more adept in their cross-cultural skills and understanding. These sources, very simply, are head, body, and heart. One first learns about the beliefs, customs, and taboos of foreign cultures via the **head**. Training programs are based on providing this type of overview information—which is helpful but obviously isn't experiential. This is the **cognitive component** of cultural intelligence. The second source, the **body**, involves more commitment and experimentation with the new culture. It is this **physical component** (demeanor, eye contact, posture, accent) that shows a deeper level of understanding of the new culture and its physical manifestations. The final source, the **heart**, deals with a person's own confidence in their ability to adapt to and deal well with cultures outside of their own. Heart really speaks to one's own level of **emotional commitment and motivation** to understand the new culture.

Earley and Mosakowski have created a quick assessment to diagnose cultural intelligence, based on these cognitive, physical, and emotional/motivational measures (i.e., head, body, heart). Please refer to the Self-Assessment: Assessing Your Cultural Intelligence below for a short diagnostic that allows you to assess your cultural intelligence.

Self-assessment

See Appendix B: Self-Assessments

- Working in Diverse Teams – Assessing Your Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence is an extension of emotional intelligence. An individual must have a level of awareness and understanding of the new culture so that he or she can adapt to the style, pace, language, nonverbal communication, etc., and work together successfully with the new culture. A multicultural team can only find success if its members take the time to understand each other and ensure that everyone feels included. Multiculturalism and cultural intelligence are traits that are taking on increasing importance in the business world today. By following best practices and avoiding the challenges and pitfalls that can derail a multicultural team, a team can find great success and personal fulfillment well beyond the boundaries of the project or work engagement.

Hofstede's Divergent Cultural Dimensions

Let's dig in deeper by examining several points of divergence across cultures and consider how these dimensions might play out in organizations and in groups or teams.

Low-Power vs High-Power Distance

How comfortable are you with critiquing your manager's decisions? If you are from a low-power distance culture, your answer might be "no problem." In **low-power distance cultures**, according to Dutch researcher Geert Hofstede, people relate to one another more as equals and less as a reflection of dominant or subordinate roles, regardless of their actual formal roles as employee and manager, for example.

In a **high-power distance culture,** you would probably be much less likely to challenge the decision, to provide an alternative, or to give input. If you are working with people from a high-power distance culture, you may need to take extra care to elicit feedback and involve them in the discussion because their cultural framework may preclude their participation. They may have learned that less powerful people must accept decisions without comment, even if they have a concern or know there is a significant problem. Unless you are sensitive to cultural orientation and power distance, you may lose valuable information.

Individualistic vs Collectivistic Cultures

People in **individualistic cultures** value individual freedom and personal independence, and cultures always have stories to reflect their values. Through personal ingenuity, despite challenges, one person rises successfully to conquer or vanquish those obstacles. Sometimes there is an assist, as in basketball or football, where another person lends a hand, but still the story repeats itself again and again, reflecting the cultural viewpoint.

When Hofstede explored the concepts of individualism and collectivism across diverse cultures (Hofstede, 1982, 2001, 2005), he found that in individualistic cultures like the United States and Canada, people perceived their world primarily from their own viewpoint. They perceived themselves as empowered individuals, capable of making their own decisions, and able to make an impact on their own lives.

Cultural viewpoint is not an either/or dichotomy, but rather a continuum or range. You may belong to some communities that express individualistic cultural values, while others place the focus on a collective viewpoint. **Collectivist cultures** (Hofstede, 1982), including many in Asia and South America, focus on the needs of the nation, community, family, or group of workers. Ownership and private property is one way to examine this difference. In some cultures, property is almost exclusively private, while others tend toward community ownership. The collectively owned resource returns benefits to the community. Water, for example, has long been viewed as a community resource, much like air, but that has been changing as businesses and organizations have purchased water rights and gained control over resources. Public lands, such as parks, are often considered public, and individual exploitation of them is restricted. Copper, a metal with a variety of industrial applications, is collectively owned in Chile, with profits deposited in the general government fund. While public and private initiatives exist, the cultural viewpoint is our topic. How does someone raised in a culture that emphasizes the community interact with someone raised in a primarily individualistic culture? How could tensions be expressed and how might interactions be influenced by this point of divergence?

Masculine vs Feminine Orientation

Hofstede describes the masculine-feminine dichotomy not in terms of whether men or women hold the power in a given culture, but rather the extent to which that culture values certain traits that may be considered **masculine** or **feminine**. Thus, "the assertive pole has been called 'masculine' and the modest, caring pole 'feminine.' The women in feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as the men; in the masculine countries, they are somewhat assertive and competitive, but not as much as the men, so that these countries show a gap between men's values and women's values" (Hofstede, 2009).

We can observe this difference in where people gather, how they interact, and how they dress. We can see it during business negotiations, where it may make an important difference in the

success of the organizations involved. Cultural expectations precede the interaction, so someone who doesn't match those expectations may experience tension. Business in the United States has a masculine orientation—assertiveness and competition are highly valued. In other cultures, such as Sweden, business values are more attuned to modesty (lack of self-promotion) and taking care of society's weaker members. This range of differences is one aspect of intercultural communication that requires significant attention when the business communicator enters a new environment.

Uncertainty-Accepting Cultures vs Uncertainty-Rejecting Cultures

When we meet each other for the first time, we often use what we have previously learned to understand our current context. We also do this to reduce our uncertainty. Some cultures, such as the United States and Britain, are **highly tolerant of uncertainty**, while others go to great lengths to reduce the element of surprise. Other cultures are high in uncertainty avoidance; they tend to be resistant to change and reluctant to take risks. Whereas a Canadian business negotiator might enthusiastically agree to try a new procedure, an Egyptian counterpart may be less likely to get involved until all the details are worked out. (Though it's important to remember that, in addition to cultural considerations, there are wide individual differences in tolerance for risk-taking).

Short-Term vs Long-Term Orientation

Do you want your reward right now or can you dedicate yourself to a long-term goal? You may work in a culture whose people value immediate results and grow impatient when those results do not materialize. Geert Hofstede discusses this relationship of time orientation to a culture as a "time horizon," and it underscores the perspective of the individual within a cultural context. Many countries in Asia, influenced by the teachings of Confucius, value a long-term orientation, whereas other countries, including the United States, have a more short-term approach to life and results. Native American cultures are known for holding a long-term orientation, as illustrated by the proverb attributed to the Iroquois Confederacy that decisions require contemplation of their impact seven generations removed.

If you work within a culture that has a **short-term orientation**, you may need to place greater emphasis on reciprocation of greetings, gifts, and rewards. For example, if you send a thank-you note the morning after being treated to a business dinner, your host will appreciate your promptness. While there may be respect for tradition, there is also an emphasis on personal representation and honor, a reflection of identity and integrity. Personal stability and consistency are also valued in a short-term-oriented culture, contributing to an overall sense of predictability and familiarity.

Long-term orientation is often marked by persistence, thrift and frugality, and an order to relationships based on age and status. A sense of shame for the family and community is also observed across generations. What an individual does reflects on the family and is carried by immediate and extended family members.

Time Orientation

Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall (1987) state that monochronic time-oriented cultures consider one thing at a time, whereas polychronic time-oriented cultures schedule many things at one time, and time is considered in a more fluid sense. In **monochromatic tim**e, interruptions are to be avoided, and everything has its own specific time. Even the multitasker from a monochromatic culture will, for example, recognize the value of work first before play or personal time. The Canada, United States, Germany, and Switzerland are often noted as countries that value a monochromatic time orientation.

Polychromatic time looks a little more complicated, with business and family mixing with dinner and dancing. Greece, Italy, Chile, and Saudi Arabia are countries where one can observe this perception of time; business meetings may be scheduled at a fixed time, but when they actually begin may be another story.

When in doubt, always ask before the event; many people from polychromatic cultures will be used to foreigner's tendency to be punctual, even compulsive, about respecting established times for events. The skilled business communicator is aware of this difference and takes steps to anticipate it. The value of time in different cultures is expressed in many ways, and your understanding can help you communicate more effectively.

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5.5 Conflict Management Strategies for Groups and Teams

In this section:

- Conflict in Groups and Teams
- Preventing Conflict in Groups
- Managing Conflict in Groups
- Resolving Conflict in Groups – The GRIT Method

Conflict in Groups and Teams

Remember that a complete lack of conflict in a group is a bad sign, as it indicates either a lack of activity or a lack of commitment on the part of the members (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Conflict, when properly handled, can lead a group to have a better understanding of the issues they face. For example, substantive conflict brings voice to alternative perspectives that may not have been heard otherwise. Additionally, when people view conflict as healthy, necessary, and productive, they can enter into a conflict episode with an open mind and an aim to learn something. This is especially true when those who initiate substantive conflict are able to share and defend their views in a competent and civil manner. Group cohesion can also increase as a result of well-managed conflict. Occasional experiences of tension and unrest followed by resolutions makes groups feel like they have accomplished something, which can lead them to not dread conflict and give them the confidence to more productively deal with it the next time.

Conflict that goes on for too long or is poorly handled can lead to decreased cohesiveness. Group members who try to avoid a conflict can still feel anger or frustration when the conflict drags on. Members who consistently take task-oriented conflict personally and escalate procedural or substantive conflict to interpersonal conflict are especially unpopular with other group members. Mishandled or chronic conflict can eventually lead to the destruction of a group or to a loss in members as people weigh the costs and rewards of membership (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Hopefully a skilled leader or other group members can take on conflict resolution roles in order to prevent these disadvantages of conflict.

Primary and Secondary Tensions

Relevant to this topic is distinguishing between the primary and secondary tensions that emerge in every group (Bormann & Borman, 1988). When the group first comes together, members experience **primary tension**, which is tension based on uncertainty that is a natural part of initial interactions. It is only after group members begin to "break the ice" and get to know each other that the tension can be addressed and group members can proceed with the forming stage of group development. Small talk and politeness help group members manage primary tensions, and there is a relatively high threshold for these conflicts because we have all had experiences with such uncertainty when meeting people for the first time and many of us are optimistic that a little time and effort will allow us to get through the tensions. Since some people are more comfortable initiating conversation than others, it's important for more extroverted group members to include less talkative members. Intentionally or unintentionally excluding people during the negotiation of primary tensions can lead to unexpected secondary tensions later on. During this stage people are also less direct in their communication, using more hedges and vague language than they will later in the group process. The indirect communication and small talk that characterize this part of group development aren't a waste of time, as they help manage primary tensions and lay the foundation for future interactions that may involve more substantive conflict.

Secondary tension emerges after groups have passed the forming stage of group development and begin to have conflict over member roles, differing ideas, and personality conflicts. These tensions are typically evidenced by less reserved and less polite behavior than primary tensions. People also have a lower tolerance threshold for secondary tensions, because rather than being an expected part of initial interaction, these conflicts can be more negative and interfere with the group's task performance. Secondary tensions are inevitable and shouldn't be feared or eliminated. It's not the presence or absence of secondary tension that makes a group successful or not; it's how it handles the tensions when they emerge. A certain level of secondary tension is tolerable, not distracting, and can actually enhance group performance and avoid groupthink. When secondary tensions rise above the tolerance threshold and become distracting, they should be released through direct means such as diplomatic confrontation or indirect means such as appropriate humor or taking a break. While primary tensions eventually disappear (at least until a new member arrives), secondary tensions will come and go and may persist for longer periods of time. For that reason, we will now turn to a discussion of how to prevent and manage conflict in group interaction.

Preventing Conflict in Groups

As well as being able to handle conflict when it arises, teams need to develop ways of preventing conflict from becoming damaging. Team members can learn skills and behavior to help this. Here are some of the key ones to work on:

- Dealing with conflict immediately – avoid the temptation to ignore it.
- Being open – if people have issues, they need to be expressed immediately and not allowed to

fester.
- Practicing clear communication – articulate thoughts and ideas clearly.
- Practicing active listening – paraphrasing, clarifying, questioning.
- Practicing identifying assumptions – asking yourself "why" on a regular basis.
- Not letting conflict get personal – stick to facts and issues, not personalities.
- Focusing on actionable solutions – don't belabor what can't be changed.
- Encouraging different points of view – insist on honest dialogue and expressing feelings.
- Not looking for blame – encourage ownership of the problem and solution.
- Demonstrating respect – if the situation escalates, take a break and wait for emotions to subside.
- Keeping team issues within the team – talking outside allows conflict to build and fester, without being dealt with directly.

Managing Conflict in Groups

When conflict does arise, here are some techniques for managing conflict in group interactions:

- "Test the waters" for new ideas without making it seem that you're so attached to them that you'll fight to impose them on others.
- If an ego clash erupts, see if you can identify something that the disagreeing individuals *can* agree on. Perhaps this will be a superordinate goal. It could also be a common opposing force, since the idea that "my enemy's enemy is my friend" can serve to bind people together.
- Employ active listening. Strive to fully understand other people's viewpoints before stating your own.
- If people's comments meander to topics that aren't germane, steer the discussion back to the key issues under discussion.
- Frame the situation as a problem to be solved, rather than as a struggle which must be won.
- Treat everyone as partners on a common quest. Invite continued frank interchanges and assure group members that they may speak out without fear of reprisal.
- Consider carefully how important it is for you to prevail in a particular conflict or even just to express your views. Ask yourself whether the potential negative consequences of your action will be worth it.
- Unless a disagreement is over an essential point, consider whether it might be best to "agree to disagree" and move on.

Resolving Conflicts in Groups – The GRIT Method

When conflict is serious enough that it causes a rift within the workplace culture, the kind that pollutes the work atmosphere and threatens irreparable damage, a methodical, collaborative

approach conflict resolution can help lead to an amicable solution. Standard procedure in negotiations is a method called GRIT that was developed by Charles E. Osgood (1962) at the height of the Cold War. In a situation where two opposing sides are deadlocked. GRIT stands for **Graduated Reciprocation in Tension-reduction**, sometimes watered down into Gradual Reduction in Tension. It involves one side initiating a breakthrough in the form of a concession or compromise on one of its demands. The norm of reciprocity obligates the other side to return the favour with a concession of its own, giving up one of its demands. Both sides build trust by reciprocal compromises back and forth till they reach an amicable solution. Though Osgood's intention was to thaw Cold War relations between superpowers, GRIT has proven useful in other international peace processes (e.g., between Israel and Egypt in 1977) and even in minor workplace squabbles (Psychology, 2016).

Let's say you find yourself getting between two conflict parties at your job; on one side is a trusted co-worker, Dave, and the other is the manager, Karin, whom you like very much. They don't see eye-to-eye on the way a major aspect of the operation is set up, and it's caused a rift that is starting to draw other employees in to take sides. Team Dave doesn't miss opportunities to take pot-shots at anyone on Team Karin for being management lackies, and Team Karin has been dismissive of Team Dave's concerns and it's members have been threatening to get Team Dave members fired. It doesn't look like this will end well. Your sympathies go to both sides, so you propose to mediate between them. Applying GRIT in this situation would look like the following:

1. Get both sides to **agree to talk formally** with one another in the meeting room with the goal of resolving the conflict. Reasonable human beings will recognize that the toxic environment is hindering productivity and is bad for business. Team Dave knows that it will be a hassle having to look for and secure new jobs, and Team Karin knows it'll likewise be a lot of work to let everyone go and re-hire half the operation, which will take time and will meanwhile slow operations down even further. No one want this despite everyone taking sides and digging into their chosen positions till now. The willingness to participate in a conflict resolution process requires that both parties show a concern for rescuing the relationship.
2. After sitting down to talk to one another, actually **listen to one another's concerns**. Much of conflict in the workplace happens when two sides don't understand each other's thinking. Sharing each other's thoughts in a mature and controlled way will dispel some of the misunderstandings that led to the conflict. One side gets a certain amount of time to state their case uninterrupted. The other gets the same. Then they take turns responding to each other's points.
3. **Establish common ground**. When two sides are locked in a dispute, they usually share more in common than they realize. After discussing their differences, movement forward toward a resolution must involve establishing points of agreement. If both parties agree that the success of their operation is in their best interests, then you can start with such common goals and then work your way down to more specific points of agreement. These may begin to suggest solutions.
4. **Discuss innovative solutions** to the conflict. With everyone in the room representing their various interests within the organization and listening to one another's concerns, truly cooperative collaboration can begin in identifying solutions to operational problems.
5. Take turns **exchanging concessions GRIT-style**. After establishing common ground and

considering pathways towards operational solutions, address the lingering differences by getting both sides to prioritize them and offer up the lowest-priority demands as a sacrifice to the deal you want them to strike. If the other side like this, the principle of reciprocity compels them to drop their lowest priority demand as well. Then both sides go back and forth like this with each condition until they reach an agreement.

The agreement reached through such a collaborative process is a productive and reconciling one. Both sides can learn from each other and develop professional from the process. Of course, if you find yourself on one side of such a conflict, you can certainly represent those interests while also playing the mediator.

If negotiations stall as both sides dig in and won't budge on contentious demands, however, calling in a mediator to conduct the negotiations and possibly an arbitrator to decide on what's fair for both parties is the best way forward. These may be found within an organization if it's staffed with people properly trained to mediate or arbitrate neutrally, or perhaps outside. Whatever the case, conflict resolution starts with you, so getting practice in following this method builds excellent group problem-solving skills.

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5.6 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms

Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **The supervisor-subordinate relationship includes much information exchange that usually benefits the subordinate.** However, these relationships also have the potential to create important mentoring opportunities.
- **People engage in workplace relationships for several reasons:** mentoring, information, power, and support. Methot's further suggested that we engage in coworker relationships for trust, relational maintenance, and the ability to focus.
- **There are three different types of workplace relationships:** information peer, collegial peer, and special peer. Information peers are coworkers we rely on for information about job tasks and the organization itself. Collegial peers are coworkers with whom we have moderate levels of trust and self-disclosure and more openness that is shared between two individuals. Special peers, on the other hand, are coworkers marked by high levels of trust and self-disclosure, like a "best friend" in the workplace.
- **Workplace relationships can transform into friendships.** However, for a variety of reasons, individuals might no longer wish to be friends with a coworker. Patricia Sias and Tarra Perry describe three different ways that coworkers can disengage from coworker relationships in the workplace. First, individuals can engage in state-of-the-relationship talk with a coworker, or explain to a coworker that a workplace friendship is ending. Second, individuals can make the cost of maintaining the relationship higher than getting out of the relationship, which is called cost escalation. The final and most common disengagement strategy coworkers can use is depersonalization -when an individual stops all the interaction with a coworker that is not task-focused or simply to avoids the coworker.
- **Group members can occupy a number of roles.** Depending on the situation and the composition of the team, these roles can serve a positive or negative function.
- **Toxic leadership can impair team effectiveness.** Some behaviours can be ignored or managed with tact. Others constitute harassment and employees can find recourse for these inappropriate behaviours through organizational policies and Ontario laws.
- **Status can be defined as a person's perceived level of importance or significance within a particular context.** In a group, members with higher status are apt to command greater respect and possess more prestige and power than those with lower status within the group.
- **Group climate refers to the relatively enduring tone and quality of group interaction that is**

experienced similarly by group members. The degree of each type of cohesion affects the group's climate. Groups can be very close socially but not perform well if they do not have an appropriate level of task cohesion. Groups that are too focused on the task can experience interpersonal conflict or a lack of motivation if the social cohesion, which helps enhance the feeling of interdependence, is lacking.

- **Cooperation occurs when each group member completes their assigned tasks.** Collaboration occurs when everyone shares ideas and contributes to all aspects of the project.
- **There are many ways for groups to approach problem solving and decision-making.** Strategies such as promoting common goals and assigning a "devil's advocate" can help the group to keep conflict functional and focussed on producing positive solutions.
- **Groups can make better decisions than individuals because group members can contribute more knowledge and a diversity of perspectives.** Challenges can also arise due to differences in perception.
- **Developing cultural intelligence skills can help individuals manage cultural differences** when working in diverse teams.

Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/conflictmanagement/?p=120#h5p-7

Key Terms

Key terms from this chapter include:

- **Ability to focus**
- **Career strategizing**
- **Collaborative group work**
- **Collegial peers**
- **Consensus rule**
- **Cooperative group work**
- **Cost escalation**
- **Cultural intelligence** (cognitive, physical, and emotional components)
- **Depersonalization**
- **Devil's advocate**
- **Ego motives**
- **Explicit knowledge**
- **Graduated Reciprocal in Tension-reduction (GRIT)**
- **Groupthink**
- **Group climate**
- **Group fantasies**
- **Individualistic vs collectivistic cultures**
- **Information peers**
- **Job motives**
- **Love motives**
- **Low-power distance vs high-power distance**
- **Maintenance difficulty**
- **Majority rule**
- **Masculine vs feminine orientation**
- **Mentoring relationship**
- **Minority rule**
- **Monochromatic vs polychromatic**
- **Nominal group technique**
- **Peer coworker relationship**
- **Primary tension**
- **Relational maintenance**
- **Secondary tension**
- **Sexual harassment**
- **Short-term vs long-term orientation**
- **Social cohesion**
- **Special peers**
- **State-of-the-relationship talk**

- **Status**
- **Symbolic convergence**
- **Supervisor-subordinate relationships**
- **Tacit knowledge**
- **Task cohesion**
- **Trust**
- **Uncertainty-accepting vs uncertainty-rejecting cultures**
- **Workplace romances**

CHAPTER 6: VALUES, PERCEPTIONS AND ATTRIBUTIONS

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

- Define values.
- Describe how values influence our behaviours.
- Define perception.
- Identify how salience influences the selection of perceptual information.
- Recognize ways in which we organize perceptual information.
- Describe the role of schemata in the interpretation of perceptual information.
- Define attribution.
- Compare between internal and external attributions.
- Explain the fundamental attribution error and the self-serving bias.
- Identify the influence that our values have on our behaviours.
- Review strategies for perceiving the self and others more accurately.
- Use perception checking to improve perception of self and others.

In this chapter, we will turn our attention away from organizational level factors and begin to explore the influence of our own behaviours and perceptions on conflict. We will start with how our personal values guide our behaviours. Next, we will review of the process of perception – how we select, organize and interpret information. We will discuss how we assign meaning to the behaviour of ourselves and others by making attributions. As you will learn, we make very different attributions for our own behaviours compared to the actions of other people. Finally, we will review perception checking and other considerations for making perceptions during conflict.

6.1 Values

In this section:

- Values
- Values and Workplace Behaviour

Most of this chapter will be devoted to perception and attribution. However, before we discuss those topics, we are going to discuss our personal values and how values can guide our behaviour in the workplace.

Values

A **value** may be defined as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence." (Rokeach, 1973, p. 5).

In other words, a value represents a judgment by an individual that certain things are "good" or "bad," "important" or "unimportant," and so forth. As such, values serve a useful function in providing guidelines or standards for choosing one's own behavior and for evaluating the behavior of others.

Characteristics of Values

The values people have tend to be relatively stable over time. The reason for this lies in the manner in which values are acquired in the first place. That is, when we first learn a value (usually at a young age), we are taught that such-and-such behavior is always good or always bad. For instance, we may be taught that lying or stealing is always unacceptable. Few people are taught that such behavior is acceptable in some circumstances but not in others. Hence, this definitive quality of learned values tends to secure them firmly in our belief systems. This is not to say that values do not change over time. As we grow, we are increasingly confronted with new and often conflicting situations. Often, it

is necessary for us to weigh the relative merits of each and choose a course of action. Consider, for example, the worker who has a strong belief in hard work but who is pressured by her colleagues not to outperform the group. What would you do in this situation? Your answer might different depending on your core values.

We will talk about two different frameworks for understanding values from Rokeach and Swartz.

Rokeach's Personal Values

Rokeach (1973) has identified two fundamental types of values: instrumental and terminal. **Instrumental values** represent those values concerning the way we approach end-states. That is, do we believe in ambition, cleanliness, honesty, or obedience? What factors guide your everyday behavior? **Terminal values**, on the other hand, are those end-state goals that we prize. Included here are such things as a comfortable life, a sense of accomplishment, equality among all people, and so forth. Both sets of values have significant influence on everyday behavior at work.

Self-assessment

See Appendix B: Self-Assessments

You can assess your own instrumental and terminal values by completing the self-assessment in the end-of-chapter assignments. Simply rank-order the two lists of values, and then refer to the reference for scoring procedures.

- Which Values Are Most Important to You?

Schwartz's Values Inventory

A second useful frameworks for examining values is Schwart'z (1992) ten values. These values are summarized in Table 6.1

Table 6.1 - Values Included in Schwartz's (1992) Value Inventory

Values	Definitions
Achievement	The desire for personal success
Benevolence	The desire to protect the well-being of people who are close to the person.
Conformity	Being motivated by being self-disciplined and obedient. Conforming to others.
Hedonism	The desire for pleasure in life.
Power	The desire for control over others, attaining power and prestige.
Security	Valuing safety and stability.
Self-direction	The desire to be free and independent.
Stimulation	The desire for a stimulating and exciting life.
Tradition	Acceptance of social customs and traditional ideas in society.
Universalism	The desire to protect the well-being of all people. Caring about social justice.

Source: *Principles of Management by University of Minnesota, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

Values and Workplace Behaviour

Values a person holds will affect their employment. For example, someone who values stimulation highly may seek jobs that involve fast action and high risk, such as firefighter, police officer, or emergency medicine. Someone who values achievement highly may be likely to become an entrepreneur or intrapreneur. And an individual who values benevolence and universalism may seek work in the nonprofit sector with a charitable organization or in a "helping profession," such as nursing or social work. Like personality, values have implications for organizing activities, such as assigning duties to specific jobs or developing the chain of command; employee values are likely to affect how employees respond to changes in the characteristics of their jobs.

In terms of work behaviors, a person is more likely to accept a job offer when the company possesses the values he or she cares about. A firm's values are often described in the company's mission and vision statements, an element of the Planning function (Judge & Bretz, 1992; Ravlin & Meglino, 1987). Value attainment is one reason people stay in a company. When a job does not help them attain their values, they are likely to decide to leave if they are also dissatisfied with the job (George & Jones, 1996).

Personal values represent an important force in organizational behavior for several reasons. In fact, at least three purposes are served by the existence of personal values in organizations: values serve as standards of behavior for determining a correct course of action; values serve as an influence on employee motivation; and values serve as guidelines for decision-making and conflict resolution. Let us consider each of these functions.

Standards of Behavior

First, values help us determine appropriate standards of behavior. They place limits on our behavior both inside and outside the organization. In such situations, we are referring to what is called ethical behavior. Employees at all levels of the organization have to make decisions concerning what to them is right or wrong, proper or improper. For example, would you conceal information about a hazardous product made by your company, or would you feel obliged to tell someone? How would you respond to petty theft on the part of a supervisor or coworker in the office? To some extent, ethical behavior is influenced by societal values. Societal norms tell us it is wrong to engage in certain behaviors. In addition, however, individuals must often determine for themselves what is proper and what is not. This is particularly true when people find themselves in "gray zones"—situations where ethical standards are ambiguous or unclear. In many situations, a particular act may not be illegal. Moreover, one's colleagues and friends may disagree about what is proper. In such circumstances, people have to determine their own standards of behavior.

Influence on Motivation

Values affect employee motivation by determining what rewards or outcomes are sought. Employees are often offered overtime work and the opportunity to make more money at the expense of free time and time with their families. Which would you choose? Would you work harder to get a promotion to a perhaps more stressful job or "lay back" and accept a slower and possibly less rewarding career path? Value questions such as these confront employees and managers every day.

Guidelines for Decision-Making and Conflict Resolution

In addition, values serve as guidelines for making decisions and for attempting to resolve conflicts. Managers who value personal integrity are less likely to make decisions they know to be injurious to someone else. Relatedly, values can influence how someone approaches a conflict. For example, if your boss asks your opinion about a report she wrote that you don't like, do you express your opinion candidly or be polite and flatter her?

As we have just learned, values have an important influence on our behaviours. In Chapter 1, we identified differences in values as a possible source of conflict. When it comes to the workplace, it may be important for you for your personal values to align with the organization's values. For example, a person is more likely to accept a job offer when the company possesses the values he or she cares about (Judge & Bretz, 1992; Ravlin & Meglino, 1987). Value attainment is one reason people stay in a job. When a job does not help them attain their values, they are likely to decide to leave if they are dissatisfied with the job (George & Jones, 1996).

Imagine, for example, someone who identifies family as a core value. When something gets in the way of living this value, conflict is more likely to occur. For example, imagine that a manager expects an employee to work overtime, but they already have family obligations to attend to outside of work..

If family is the number one value, this employee may express to their manager the importance of family over work and refuse overtime. To keep relationships functional, this employee might consider exploring other ways to help my team that didn't impact their family. It's important to note that for some people, the way they live family as a value would be different. Some folks might go work the overtime so that they can provide more income for their family.

Understanding your values is an important step in understanding the conflict you experience in your life. Often, conflicts that are directly connected to your core values are the conflicts that are the most intense and cause us the most stress.

In addition, values serve as guidelines for making decisions and for attempting to resolve conflicts. Managers who value personal integrity are less likely to make decisions they know to be injurious to someone else. Relatedly, values can influence how someone perceives a situation and approaches a conflict.

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6.2 Perceptions

In this section:

- The Perception Process
  - Selection
  - Organization
  - Interpretation

The Perception Process

Our behavior is not only a function of our personality, values, and preferences, but also of the situation. We interpret our environment, formulate responses, and act accordingly.

Perception is the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting information.

This process, which is shown in Figure 6.1, includes the perception of select stimuli that pass through our perceptual filters, are organized into our existing structures and patterns, and are then interpreted based on previous experiences.

What makes human perception so interesting is that we do not solely respond to the stimuli in our environment. We go beyond the information that is present in our environment, pay selective attention to some aspects of the environment, and ignore other elements that may be immediately apparent to other people. Our perception of the environment is not entirely rational. For example, have you ever noticed that while glancing at a newspaper or a news website, information that is interesting or important to you jumps out of the page and catches your eye? If you are a sports fan, while scrolling down the pages you may immediately see a news item describing the latest success of your team. What we see in the environment is a function of what we value, our needs, our fears, and our emotions (Higgins & Bargh, 1987; Keltner et al., 1993). In fact, what we see in the environment may be objectively, flat-out wrong because of our personality, values, or emotions. Our reality, and appreciating that it can be drastically different than the reality of others, can be an invaluable skill in conflict situations.

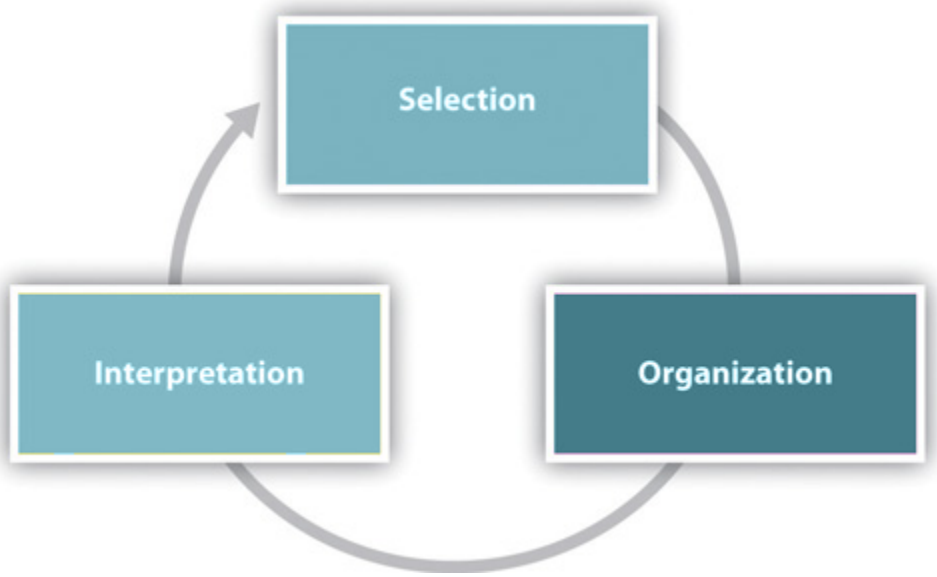

Figure 6.1 The Perception Process. Image: A Primer on Communication Studies, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

Selection

We take in information through all five of our senses, but our perceptual field (the world around us) includes so many stimuli that it is impossible for our brains to process and make sense of it all. So, as information comes in through our senses, various factors influence what actually continues on through the perception process (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). **Selection** is the first part of the perception process, in which we focus our attention on certain incoming sensory information. Think about how, out of many other possible stimuli to pay attention to, you may hear a familiar voice in the hallway, see a pair of shoes you want to buy from across the mall, or smell something cooking for dinner when you get home from work. We quickly cut through and push to the background all kinds of sights, smells, sounds, and other stimuli, but how do we decide what to select and what to leave out?

We tend to pay attention to information that is salient. **Salience** is the degree to which something attracts our attention in a particular context. The thing attracting our attention can be abstract, like a concept, or concrete, like an object. The degree of salience depends on three features: visually or aurally stimulating; things that meet our needs or interests. Lastly, expectations affect what we find salient (Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

Visual and Aural Stimulation

It is probably not surprising to learn that visually and/or aurally stimulating things become salient in our perceptual field and get our attention. Creatures ranging from fish to hummingbirds are

attracted to things like silver spinners on fishing poles or red and yellow bird feeders. Having our senses stimulated isn't always a positive thing though. Think about the couple that won't stop talking during the movie or the upstairs neighbor whose subwoofer shakes your ceiling at night. In short, stimuli can be attention-getting in a productive or distracting way. As communicators, we can use this knowledge to our benefit by minimizing distractions when we have something important to say. It's probably better to have a serious conversation with a significant other in a quiet place rather than a crowded food court. During all communication, but especially during conflict, it is important to be mindful of your rate, volume, and pitch of your voice, gestures, and other nonverbal behaviours . Nonverbal adaptors, or nervous movements we do to relieve anxiety like pacing or twirling our hair, can be distracting.

Needs and Interests

We tend to pay attention to information that we perceive to meet our needs or interests in some way. This type of selective attention can help us meet instrumental needs and get things done. When you need to speak with a financial aid officer about your scholarships and loans, you sit in the waiting room and listen for your name to be called. Paying close attention to whose name is called means you can be ready to start your meeting and hopefully get your business handled. When we don't think certain messages meet our needs, stimuli that would normally get our attention may be completely lost. Imagine you are in the grocery store and you hear someone say your name. You turn around, only to hear that person say, "Finally! I said your name three times. I thought you forgot who I was!" A few seconds before, when you were focused on figuring out which kind of orange juice to get, you were attending to the various pulp options to the point that you tuned other stimuli out, even something as familiar as the sound of someone calling your name. Again, as communicators, especially in persuasive contexts like negotiations, we can use this to our advantage by making it clear how our message or proposition meets the needs of the other party. We will talk more about our own needs and the needs of others in conflict in an upcoming chapter on motivation.

We also find salient information that interests us. Of course, many times, stimuli that meet our needs are also interesting, but it's worth discussing these two items separately because sometimes we find things interesting that don't necessarily meet our needs. I'm sure we've all gotten sucked into a television show, video game, or random project and paid attention to that at the expense of something that actually meets our needs like cleaning or spending time with a significant other. Paying attention to things that interest us but don't meet specific needs seems like the basic formula for procrastination that we are all familiar with.

In many cases we know what interests us and we automatically gravitate toward stimuli that match up with that. For example, as you filter through music playlists, you likely already have an idea of what kind of music interests you and will select something in your preferred genre while skipping right past playlists that you aren't interested in. Because of this tendency, we often have to end up being forced into or accidentally experiencing something new in order to create or discover new interests. As communicators, you can take advantage of this perceptual tendency by adapting your

topic and content to the interests of your audience. We can also use this information to be aware of our own tendency to look only at information that interests us and challenge ourselves to push outside of our comfort zone.

Expectations

The relationship between salience and expectations is a little more complex. Basically, we can find expected things salient and find things that are unexpected salient. While this may sound confusing, a couple examples should illustrate this point. If you are expecting a package to be delivered, you might pick up on the slightest noise of a truck engine or someone's footsteps approaching your front door. Since we expect something to happen, we may be extra tuned in to clues that it is coming. In terms of the unexpected, if you have a shy and soft-spoken friend who you overhear raising the volume and pitch of his voice while talking to another friend, you may pick up on that and assume that something out of the ordinary is going on. For something unexpected to become salient, it has to reach a certain threshold of difference. If you walked into your regular class and there were one or two more students there than normal, you may not even notice. If you walked into your class and there was someone dressed up as a wizard, you would probably notice. So, if we expect to experience something out of the routine, like a package delivery, we will find stimuli related to that expectation salient. If we experience something that we weren't expecting and that is significantly different from our routine experiences, then we will likely find it salient. We can also apply this concept to our communication.

There is a middle area where slight deviations from routine experiences may go unnoticed because we aren't expecting them. To go back to the earlier example, if you aren't expecting a package, and you regularly hear vehicle engines and sidewalk foot traffic outside your house, those pretty routine sounds wouldn't be as likely to catch your attention, even if it were slightly more or less traffic than expected. This is because our expectations are often based on previous experience and patterns we have observed and internalized, which allows our brains to go on "autopilot" sometimes and fill in things that are missing or overlook extra things. These expectations can also lead to self-fulfilling prophecies. We will talk about those expectations later in this next section on self-perception.

Organization

Organizing is the second part of the perception process, in which we sort and categorize information that we perceive based on innate and learned cognitive patterns. Three ways we sort things into patterns are by using proximity, similarity, and differences (Coren, 1980). In terms of proximity, we tend to think that things that are close together go together. For example, have you ever been waiting to be helped in a business and the clerk assumes that you and the person standing beside you are together? The slightly awkward moment usually ends when you and the other person in line look at each other, then back at the clerk, and one of you explains that you are not together. Even

though you may have never met that other person in your life, the clerk used a basic perceptual organizing cue to group you together because you were standing in proximity to one another.

We also group things together based on similarity. We tend to think similar-looking or similar-acting things belong together. I have a couple of friends that I go out with. We are all around the same age, with brown hair and glasses. Aside from that, we don't really look alike, but on more than one occasion a server at a restaurant has assumed that we're sisters. Despite the fact that many of our other features are different, the salient features are organized based on similarity and the three of us are suddenly related.

We also organize information that we take in based on difference. In this case, we assume that the item that looks or acts different from the rest doesn't belong with the group. Perceptual errors involving people and assumptions of difference can be especially awkward, if not offensive. My friend's mother, who is Vietnamese American, was attending a conference at which another attendee assumed she was a hotel worker and asked her to throw something away for her. In this case, my friend's mother was a person of color at a convention with mostly white attendees, so an impression was formed based on the other person's perception of this difference.

These strategies for organizing information are so common that they are built into how we teach our children basic skills and how we function in our daily lives. We simplify information and look for patterns to help us more efficiently communicate and get through life. Simplification and categorizing based on patterns isn't necessarily a bad thing. In fact, without this capability we would likely not have the ability to speak, read, or engage in other complex cognitive/behavioral functions. Our brain innately categorizes and files information and experiences away for later retrieval, and different parts of the brain are responsible for different sensory experiences. In short, it is natural for things to group together in some ways. There are differences among people, and looking for patterns helps us in many practical ways. However, the judgments we place on various patterns and categories are not natural; they are learned and culturally and contextually relative. Our perceptual patterns do become unproductive and even unethical when the judgments we associate with certain patterns are based on stereotypical or prejudicial thinking.

Punctuation

We also organize interactions and interpersonal experiences based on our firsthand experiences. When two people experience the same encounter differently, misunderstandings and conflict may result. **Punctuation** refers to the structuring of information into a timeline to determine the cause (stimulus) and effect (response) of our communication interactions (Sillars, 1980). Applying this concept to interpersonal conflict can help us see how the perception process extends beyond the individual to the interpersonal level. This concept also helps illustrate how organization and interpretation can happen together and how interpretation can influence how we organize information and vice versa.

Where does a conflict begin and end? The answer to this question depends on how the people

involved in the conflict punctuate, or structure, their conflict experience. Punctuation differences can often escalate conflict, which can lead to a variety of relationship problems (Watzlawick et al., 1967). For example, Nasha and Jia are on a project team at work and have a deadline approaching. Nasha has been working on the project over the weekend in anticipation of her meeting with Jia first thing Monday morning. She has had some questions along the way and has e-mailed Jia for clarification and input, but he hasn't responded. On Monday morning, Nasha walks into the meeting room, sees Jia, and says, "I've been working on this project all weekend and needed your help. I emailed you three times! What were you doing?" Jia responds, "I had no idea you emailed me. I was gone all weekend on a camping trip." In this instance, the conflict started for Nasha two days ago and has just started for Jai. So, for the two of them to most effectively manage this conflict, they need to communicate so that their punctuation, or where the conflict started for each one, is clear and matches up. In this example, Nasha made an impression about Jia's level of commitment to the project based on an interpretation she made after selecting and organizing incoming information. Being aware of punctuation is an important part of perception checking, which we will discuss later. Let's now take a closer look at how interpretation plays into the perception process.

Interpretation

Although selecting and organizing incoming stimuli happens very quickly, and sometimes without much conscious thought, interpretation can be a much more deliberate and conscious step in the perception process. **Interpretation** the third part of the perception process, in which we assign meaning to our experiences using mental structures known as schemata. **Schemata** are like databases of stored, related information that we use to interpret new experiences. We all have fairly complicated schemata that have developed over time as small units of information combine to make more meaningful complexes of information.

We have an overall schema about education and how to interpret experiences with teachers and classmates. This schema started developing before we even went to preschool based on things that parents, peers, and the media told us about school. For example, you learned that certain symbols and objects like an apple, a ruler, a calculator, and a notebook are associated with being a student or teacher. You learned new concepts like grades and recess, and you engaged in new practices like doing homework, studying, and taking tests. You also formed new relationships with teachers, administrators, and classmates. As you progressed through your education, your schema adapted to the changing environment.

Schema reevaluation and revision is varies from situation to situation and person to person. For example, some students adapt their schema relatively easily as they move from elementary, to middle, to high school, and on to college and are faced with new expectations for behavior and academic engagement. Other students don't adapt as easily, and holding onto their old schema creates problems as they try to interpret new information through old, incompatible schema. We've all been in a similar situation at some point in our lives, so we know that revising our schemata can be stressful and that such revision takes effort and usually involves some mistakes, disappointments,

and frustrations. But being able to adapt our schemata is a sign of cognitive complexity, which is an important part of communication competence. So, even though the process may be challenging, it can also be a time for learning and growth.

It's important to be aware of schemata because our interpretations affect our behavior. For example, if you are doing a group project for class and you perceive a group member to be shy based on your schema of how shy people communicate, you may avoid giving that person presentation responsibilities in your group project because you do not think shy people make good public speakers. Schemata also guide our interactions, providing a script for our behaviors. We know, in general, how to act and communicate in a waiting room, in a classroom, on a first date, and in the classroom.

Schemata are used to interpret others' behavior and form impressions about who they are as a person. To help this process along, we often solicit information from people to help us place them into a pre-existing schema. In Canada and many other Western cultures, people's identities are often closely tied to what they do for a living. When we introduce others, or ourselves, occupation is usually one of the first things we mention. Think about how your communication with someone might differ if they were introduced to you as an artist versus a doctor. We make similar interpretations based on where people are from, their age, their race, and other social and cultural factors.

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6.3 Attributions

A major influence on how people behave is the way they interpret the events around them. People who feel they have control over what happens to them are more likely to accept responsibility for their actions than those who feel control of events is out of their hands. The cognitive process by which people interpret the reasons or causes for their behavior is described by attribution theory (Kelley, 1980; Fosterling, 1985; Weiner, 1980).

> Specifically, "**attribution theory** concerns the process by which an individual interprets events as being caused by a particular part of a relatively stable environment" (Kelly, 1980, p. 193).

Attribution theory is based largely on the work of Fritz Heider. Heider argues that behavior is determined by a combination of internal forces (e.g., abilities or effort) and external forces (e.g., task difficulty or luck). Following the cognitive approach of Lewin and Tolman, he emphasizes that it is perceived determinants, rather than actual ones, that influence behavior. Hence, if employees perceive that their success is a function of their own abilities and efforts, they can be expected to behave differently than they would if they believed job success was due to chance.

The Attribution Process

The underlying assumption of attribution theory is that people are motivated to understand their environment and the causes of particular events. If individuals can understand these causes, they will then be in a better position to influence or control the sequence of future events. This process is diagrammed in Figure 6.2. Specifically, attribution theory suggests that particular behavioral events (e.g., the receipt of a promotion) are analyzed by individuals to determine their causes. This process may lead to the conclusion that the promotion resulted from the individual's own effort or, alternatively, from some other cause, such as luck.

Based on such cognitive interpretations of events, individuals revise their cognitive structures and rethink their assumptions about causal relationships. For instance, an individual may infer that performance does indeed lead to promotion. Based on this new structure, the individual makes choices about future behavior. In some cases, the individual may decide to continue exerting high levels of effort in the hope that it will lead to further promotions. On the other hand, if an individual concludes that the promotion resulted primarily from chance and was largely unrelated to performance, a different cognitive structure might be created, and there might be little reason to continue exerting high levels of effort. In other words, the way in which we perceive and interpret events around us significantly affects our future behaviors.

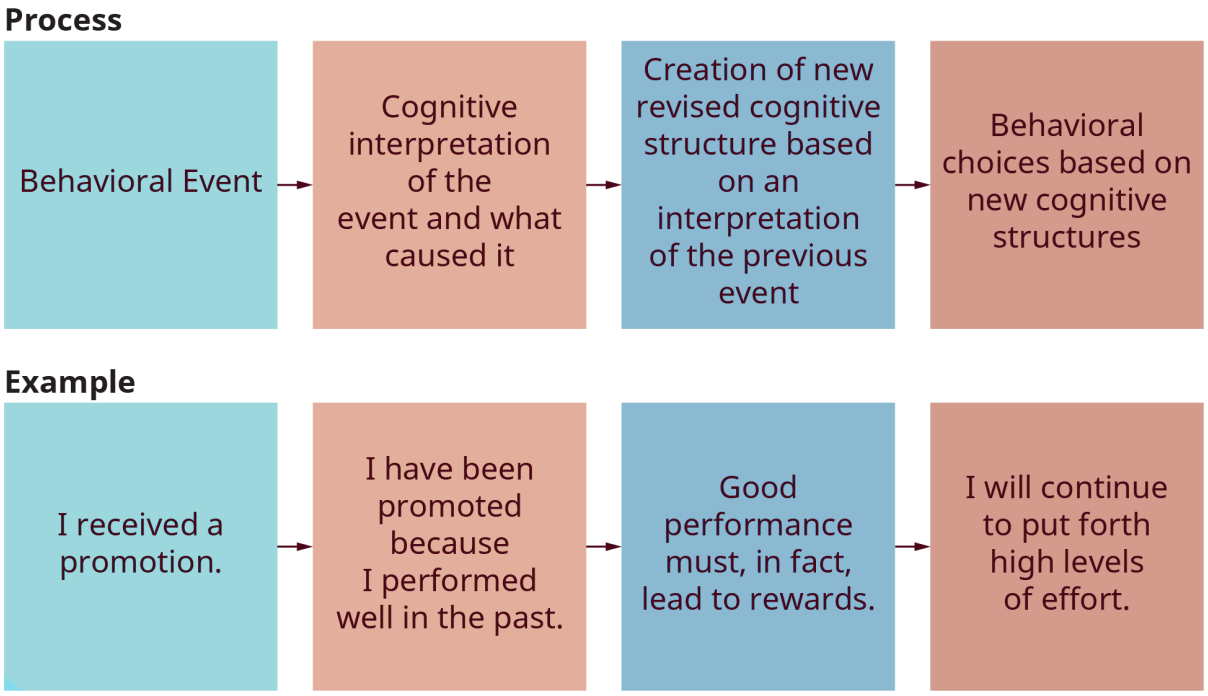

Figure 6.2 The General Attribution Process. Image: Rice University & OpenStax, Organizational Behavior, CC BY 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

Internal and External Causes of Behavior

Building upon the work of Heider, Harold Kelley attempted to identify the major antecedents of internal and external attributions. He examined how people determine—or, rather, how they actually perceive—whether the behavior of another person results from internal or external causes. Internal causes include ability and effort, whereas external causes include luck and task ease or difficulty. Kelley's conclusion, illustrated in Figure 6.6, is that people actually focus on three factors when making causal attributions:

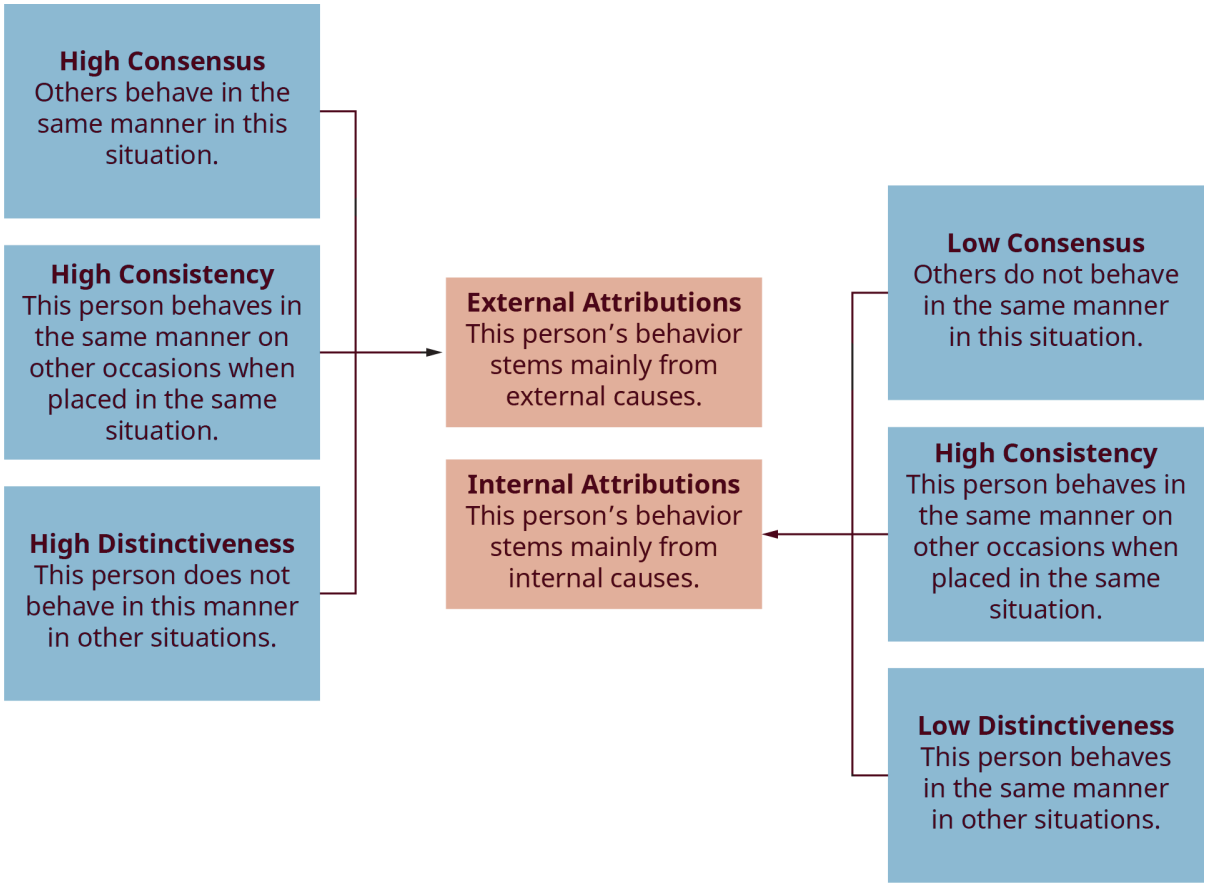

Figure 6.3 Causes of Internal and External Attributions. Adapted from Nyla Branscombe and Robert A. Baron. Social Psychology. Fourteenth Edition, 2016, Pearson. Image: Rice University & OpenStax, Organizational Behavior, CC BY 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

Consensus

The first factor is **consensus** – the extent to which you believe that the person being observed is behaving in a manner that is consistent with the behavior of his or her peers. High consensus exists when the person's actions reflect or are similar to the actions of the group; low consensus exists when the person's actions do not.

Consistency

The second factor influencing whether attributions are internal or external is the **consistency** of the behaviour. That is to say, the extent to which you believe that the person being observed behaves consistently—in a similar fashion—when confronted on other occasions with the same or similar situations. High consistency exists when the person repeatedly acts in the same way when faced with similar stimuli.

Distinctiveness

Distinctiveness is the extent to which you believe that the person being observed would behave consistently when faced with different situations. Low distinctiveness exists when the person acts in a similar manner in response to different stimuli; high distinctiveness exists when the person varies their response to different situations.

How do these three factors interact to influence whether one's attributions are internal or external? As seen in Figure 6.2, under conditions of high consensus, high consistency, and high distinctiveness, we would expect the observer to make external attributions about the causes of behavior. That is, the person would attribute the behavior of the observed (say, winning a hockey tournament) to good fortune or some other external event. On the other hand, when consensus is low, consistency is high, and distinctiveness is low, we would expect the observer to attribute the observed behavior (winning the hockey tournament) to internal causes (the winner's skill).

In other words, we tend to attribute the reasons behind the success or failure of others to either internal or external causes according to how we interpret the underlying forces associated with the others' behavior. Consider the example of the first female sales manager in a firm to be promoted to an executive rank. How do you explain her promotion—luck and connections or ability and performance? To find out, follow the model. If she, as a sales representative, had sold more than her (male) counterparts (low consensus in behavior), consistently sold the primary product line in different sales territories (high consistency), and was also able to sell different product lines (low distinctiveness), we would more than likely attribute her promotion to her own abilities.

On the other hand, if her male counterparts were also good sales representatives (high consensus) and her sales record on secondary products was inconsistent (high distinctiveness), people would probably attribute her promotion to luck or connections, regardless of her sales performance on the primary product line (high consistency).

Attributional Bias

One final point should be made with respect to the attributional process. In making attributions concerning the causes of behavior, people tend to make certain errors of interpretation. Two such errors, or attribution biases, are the fundamental attribution error and self-serving bias.

The Fundamental Attribution Error

In most interactions, we are constantly running an attribution script in our minds, which essentially tries to come up with explanations for what is happening. Why did my neighbor slam the door when she saw me walking down the hall? Why is my partner being extra nice to me today? Why did my officemate miss our project team meeting this morning? In general, we seek to attribute the cause of others' behaviors to internal or external factors. Attributions are important to consider

in conflict situations because our reactions to others' behaviors are strongly influenced by the explanations we reach about the causes of behaviours. One of the most common perceptual errors is the **fundamental attribution error**, which refers to our tendency to explain others' behaviors using internal rather than external attributions (Sillars, 1980).

Imagine two coworkers, Gurpreet and Aria. One day, Aria gets frustrated and raises her voice to Gurpreet. Gurpreet may find that behavior more offensive if she attributes the cause of the blow up to Aria's personality, since personality traits are usually fairly stable and difficult to control or change. Conversely, Gurpreet may be more forgiving if she attributes the cause of Aria's behavior to situational factors beyond her control, since external factors are usually temporary. If she makes an internal attribution, Gurpreet may think, "Wow, this person is really aggressive?" If she makes an external attribution, she may think, "Aria has been under a lot of pressure to meet deadlines at work and hasn't been getting much sleep. Once this project is over, I'm sure she'll be more relaxed." This process of attribution is ongoing, and, as with many aspects of perception, we are sometimes aware of the attributions we make, and sometimes they are automatic and/or unconscious. Attribution has received much scholarly attention because it is in this part of the perception process that some of the most common perceptual errors or biases occur.

Self-Serving Bias

Perceptual errors can also be biased, and in the case of the self-serving bias, the error works out in our favor. Just as we tend to attribute others' behaviors to internal rather than external causes, we do the same for ourselves, especially when our behaviors have led to something successful or positive. When our behaviors lead to failure or something negative, we tend to attribute the cause to external factors. Thus the **self-serving bias** is a perceptual error through which we attribute the cause of our successes to internal personal factors while attributing our failures to external factors beyond our control. When we look at the fundamental attribution error and the self-serving bias together, we can see that we are likely to judge ourselves more favorably than another person, or at least less personally.

The professor-student relationship offers a good case example of how these concepts can play out. I have sometimes heard students who earned an unsatisfactory grade on an assignment attribute that grade to the strictness, unfairness, or incompetence of their professor. I have also heard professors attribute a poor grade to the student's attitude or lack of effort. In both cases, the behavior is explained using an internal attribution and is an example of the fundamental attribution error. Students may further attribute their poor grade to their busy schedule or other external, situational factors rather than their lack of motivation, interest, or preparation (internal attributions). On the other hand, when students gets a good grade on a paper, they will likely attribute that cause to their intelligence or hard work rather than an easy assignment or an "easy grading" professor. Both of these examples illustrate the self-serving bias. These psychological processes have implications for our communication because when we attribute causality to another person's personality, we tend to have a stronger emotional reaction and tend to assume that this personality characteristic is stable, which may lead us to avoid communication with the person or to react

negatively. Now that you aware of these common errors, you can monitor them more and engage in perception checking, which we will learn more about later, to verify your attributions.

Adapted Works

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6.4 Examining our Perceptions in Conflict

In this section:

- Barriers to Accurate Perception
- Perception Checking
- Some Additional Suggestions for Examining Perception in Conflict

Barriers to Accurate Perceptions

In the perceptual process, several barriers can be identified that inhibit the accuracy of our perception. These barriers are biases, selective perception, and perceptual defense. These barriers to accurate perceptions can be present in many situations, including conflict. Being aware of our own biases can help us to critically examine our own perceptions.

Biases

Biases are shortcuts our brain forms based on culture, our own experiences, things other people tell us, and institutional influences.

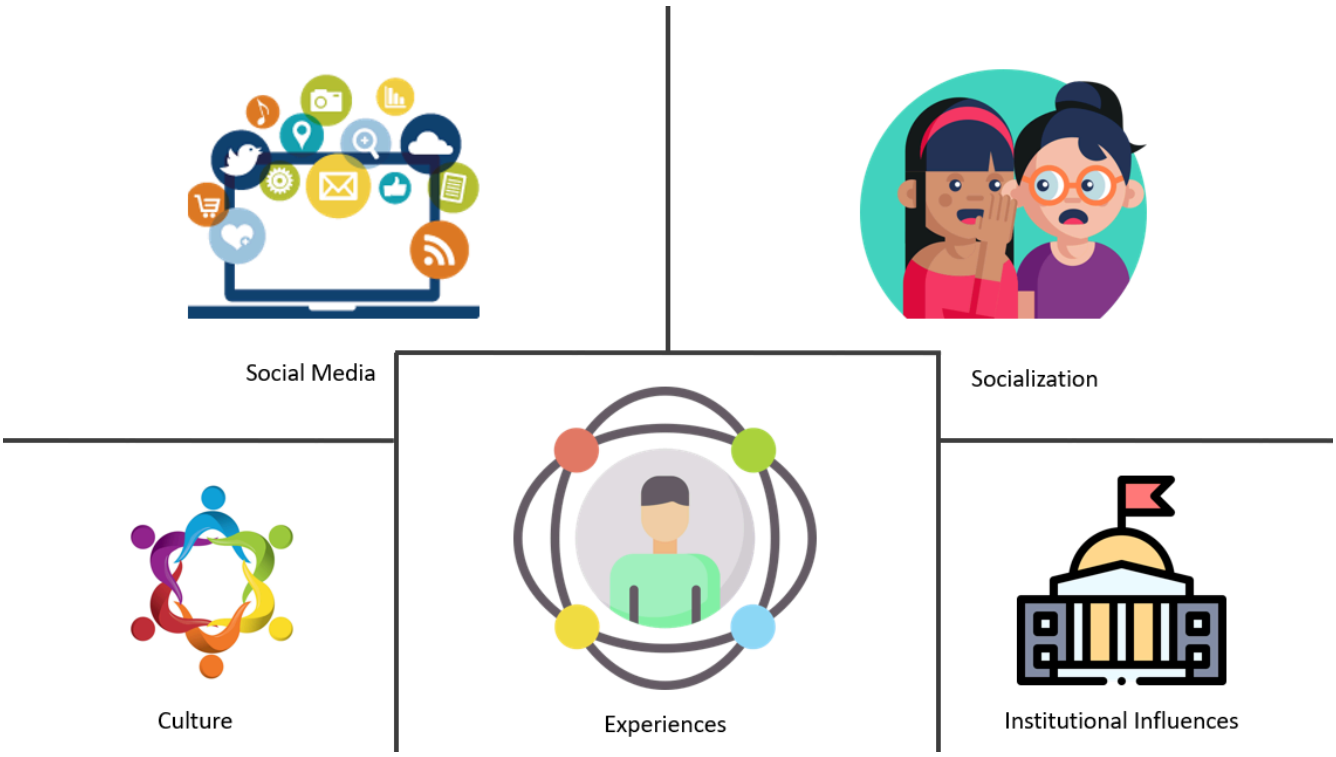

Figure 6.4 How are Biases Formed? Image: Trecia McLennon. Intercultural Awareness and Competence, 2021. CC BY 4.0. [Click to enlarge].

Often, unconscious bias can be difficult to spot because it is not the same as explicit bias or blatant bigotry. For instance, perhaps you consider yourself to be a very open-minded, liberal person who would never use pejorative language about any group of people, but you would still quickly cross the street when you see this group. Or, maybe when providing anecdotes to friends and family regarding people who have annoyed or irritated you in some way, you make sure to mention the race or ethnicity of those who are different from that of your own.

Stereotyping

One of the most common barriers in perceiving others at work is stereotyping. **A stereotype** is a widely held generalization about a group of people. Stereotyping is particularly likely to occur when one meets new people since very little is known about them at that time. On the basis of a few prominent characteristics such as sex, race, or age, we tend to place people into a few general categories. We ascribe a series of traits to them based upon the attributes of the category in which we have put them. We assume that older people are old-fashioned, conservative, obstinate, and perhaps senile. We view professors as absentminded, impractical, idealistic, or eccentric.

One explanation for the existence of stereotypes has been suggested by Jain et al. (2010). They argue that stereotypes may be to some extent based upon fact. People tend to compare other groups with

their own group, accentuating minor differences between groups to form a stereotype. For example, older people as a group may indeed be more conservative or more old-fashioned. These traits then become emphasized and attributed to particular older individuals.

At least three types of stereotype can be found in organizations: those dealing with age, race, and gender. Age stereotypes can be found throughout organizations. A recent study by von Hippel et al. (2019) found that there are still clear stereotypes of older employees. They are thought to be (1) more resistant to organizational change, (2) less creative, (3) less likely to take calculated risks, (4) lower in physical capacity, (5) less interested in learning new techniques, and (6) less capable of learning new techniques. When asked to make personnel decisions concerning older people, the business students generally followed several trends. First, they gave older people lower consideration in promotion decisions. Older people also received less attention and fewer resources for training and development. Finally, older people tended to be transferred to other departments instead of confronted by their superiors when a problem with their performance emerged. Similar problems arise for people when they are stereotyped due to surface level characteristics such as race or gender.

Selective Perception

Recall, selective perception is the process by which we systematically screen out information we don't wish to hear, focusing instead on more salient information. Saliency here is obviously a function of our own experiences, needs, and orientations. The example of the Dearborn and Simon study of managers described earlier provides an excellent glimpse of selective perception. Production managers focused on production problems to the exclusion of other problems. Accountants, personnel specialists, and sales managers were similarly exclusive. Everyone saw their own specialty as more important in the company than other specialties.

Another example of selective perception in groups and organizations is provided by Miner (2015). Miner summarizes a series of experiments dealing with groups competing on problem-solving exercises. Consistently, the groups tended to evaluate their own solutions as better than the solutions proposed by others. Such findings resemble a syndrome found in many research organizations. There is a frequent tendency for scientists to view ideas or products originating outside their organization or department as inferior and to judge other researchers as less competent and creative than themselves. This is often referred to as the "Not-Invented-Here" syndrome. Similar patterns of behavior can be found among managers, service workers, and administrative assistants.

Perceptual Defense

A final barrier to social perception is perceptual defense (Levine & Sefner). Perceptual defense is founded on three related principles:

1. Emotionally disturbing or threatening stimuli have a higher recognition threshold than neutral stimuli.
2. Such stimuli are likely to elicit substitute perceptions that are radically altered so as to prevent recognition of the presented stimuli.
3. These critical stimuli arouse emotional reactions even though the stimuli are not recognized.

In other words, through **perceptual defense** we tend to distort or ignore information that is either personally threatening or culturally unacceptable. Because emotionally disturbing stimuli have a higher recognition threshold, people are less likely to fully confront or acknowledge the threat. Instead, they may see entirely different or even erroneous stimuli that are safer. Even so, the presence of the critical stimulus often leads to heightened emotions despite the lack of recognition. For instance, suppose that during a contract negotiation for an assembly plant, word leaked out that because of declining profits, the plant might have to close down permanently. Anxious workers might ignore this message and instead choose to believe the company management is only starting false rumors to increase their leverage during wage negotiations. Even if the leverage claim is accepted by the workers as truth, strong emotional reactions against the company can be expected.

One effect of perceptual defense is to save us from squarely facing events that we either do not wish to handle or may be incapable of handling. We dissipate our emotions by directing our attention to other (substitute) objects and hope the original event that distressed us will eventually disappear. Perceptual defense is especially pronounced when people are presented with a situation that contradicts their long-held beliefs and attitudes.

Perceptual defense makes any situation in which conflict is likely to be present more difficult. It creates blind causes us to fail to hear and see events as they really are. The challenge for managers is to reduce or minimize the perception of threat in a situation so these defenses are not immediately called into play. This can be accomplished by reassuring people that things that are important to them will not be tampered with, or by accentuating the positive.

Perception Checking

As humans, we often assume that we are aware of, and even understand, what other people are thinking and feeling — of that our own perceptions of others are correct and updated. In truth, though, we usually do not take the time to clearly attempt to ascertain in a nonjudgmental and clarifying way through perception checking questions: “You seem upset;” “Are you?;” or “I get the impression that this exchange has hurt your feelings in some way. Is this true?” (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005). Gudykunst & Kim (1995) points out that one of the ways to reduce ambiguity and facilitate the process of (intercultural) communication is through frequent perception checking. Simply put, through **perception checking**, we describe what we perceive the other person to be thinking or feeling and then request clearly and in a non-threatening manner that the other person confirms or corrects our perception. According to Brookfield and Preskill (2005), perception checks send the valuable message that you truly want to listen, observe, and then understand their communication,

verbal or nonverbal. This process is valuable in everyday interactions and during both formal and informal conflicts.

Perception-checking is vital to making sure that all involved are interpreting the meaning and message fully and accurately. Importantly, this process gives those whose voice is habitually misunderstood and are victims of miscommunication, for a number of reasons. Such a process, then, allows individuals who may feel persecuted or misunderstood to express their narrative or story in a dignified, humane fashion, thus giving them an opportunity to express their felt human experience.

Let's Focus: Steps in the Perception Checking Process

When creating a perception check, you will use three steps:

- **Step 1:** Describe the behavior or situation without evaluating or judging it. Perception checks include "I" language and a clearly stated observation or fact: *"I heard you mention ____.*
- **Step 2:** Think of some possible interpretations of the behavior, being aware of attributions and other influences on the perception process. This is followed by 2 possible interpretations: "*I am wondering if ___ or ___ is the case for you?"*
- **Step 3:** Verify what happened and ask for clarification from the other person's perspective. Be aware of punctuation, since the other person likely experienced the event differently than you.
- The perception check is completed with a clarification request: *"Can you clarify?"*

Source: *Communication in the Real World: An Introduction to Communication Studies* (2016) OER

Some Additional Suggestions for Examining Perception in Conflict

Our perceptions of ourselves and of other people can and does change. Context-specific self-perceptions vary depending on the person with whom we are interacting, our emotional state, and the subject matter being discussed. Becoming aware of the process of self-perception and the various components of our self-concept will help you understand and improve your ability to understand yourself and others during conflict. In addition to using perception checking, let's examine some common barriers to avoid as they can interfere with accurate perception.

Avoid Relying on Rigid Schemata

As discussed earlier in the chapter, schemata are sets of information based on cognitive and

experiential knowledge that guide our interaction. We rely on schemata almost constantly to help us make sense of the world around us. Sometimes schemata become so familiar that we use them as scripts, which prompts mindless communication and can lead us to overlook new information that may need to be incorporated into the schema. So it's important to remain mindful of new or contradictory information that may warrant revision of a schema

Be Critical of Socializing Forces

Family, friends, sociocultural norms, and the media are just some of the socializing forces that influence our thinking and therefore influence our self-perception. These powerful forces serve positive functions but can also set into motion negative patterns of perception toward self or others. Being aware of these socializing forces and how they have helped shape how you view the world can be a powerful tool for thinking critically about how you view yourself and others in conflict.

Create and Maintain Supporting Interpersonal Relationships

Although most people have at least some supportive relationships, many people also have people in their lives who range from negative to toxic. When people find themselves in negative relational cycles, whether it is with friends, family, or coworkers, it is difficult to break out of those cycles. When we find ourselves in conflict at work, these supportive relationships can often provide emotional support, a listening ear, and sometimes helpful advice.

Beware of Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

Our expectations have the potential to shape how conflict unfolds. You already know from our discussion of attribution errors that we all have perceptual biases that distort our thinking. Many of these are common, and we often engage in distorted thinking without being conscious of it. Learning about some of the typical negative patterns of thinking and acting may help us acknowledge and intervene in them. One such pattern involves self-esteem and overcompensation.

People can also get into a negative thought and action cycle by setting unrealistic goals and consistently not meeting them. Similar to a self-fulfilling prophecy, people who set unrealistic goals can end up with negative feelings of self-efficacy. Some people develop low self-esteem because they lack accurate information about themselves, which may be intentional or unintentional. A person can intentionally try to maintain high self-esteem by ignoring or downplaying negative comments and beliefs and focusing on positive evaluations. While this can be a good thing, it can also lead to a distorted self-concept. There is a middle ground between beating yourself up or dwelling on the negative and ignoring potentially constructive feedback about weaknesses and

missing opportunities to grow as a person. Conversely, people who have low self-esteem or negative self-concepts may discount or ignore positive feedback.

Develop Active Listening Skills

Our fast-paced lives and cultural values that emphasize speaking over listening sometimes make listening feel like a chore. But we shouldn't underestimate the power of listening to make someone else feel better and to open our perceptual field to new sources of information. Active listening can also help us expand our self- and social awareness by learning from other people's experiences and taking on different perspectives. Active listening is challenging because it requires cognitive and emotional investment that goes beyond the learning of a skill set. Everyone's reality is their own and when you can concede that someone's reality isn't like yours and you are OK with that, then you have overcome a significant barrier to becoming more aware of the perception process.

Beware of Stereotypes and Prejudice

Stereotypes are schemata that are taken too far, as they reduce and ignore a person's individuality and the diversity present within a larger group of people. Stereotypes can be based on cultural identities, physical appearance, behavior, speech, beliefs, and values, among other things, and are often caused by a lack of information about the target person or group (Guyll et al., 2010). Stereotypes can be positive, negative, or neutral, but all run the risk of lowering the quality of our communication.While the negative effects of stereotypes are pretty straightforward in that they devalue people and prevent us from adapting and revising our schemata, positive stereotypes also have negative consequences.

Since stereotypes are generally based on a lack of information, we must take it upon ourselves to gain exposure to new kinds of information and people, which will likely require us to get out of our comfort zones. When we do meet people, we should base the impressions we make on describable behavior rather than inferred or secondhand information. When stereotypes negatively influence our overall feelings and attitudes about a person or group, prejudiced thinking results.

Prejudice is negative feelings or attitudes toward people based on their identity or identities. Prejudice can have individual or widespread negative effects. At the individual level, a hiring manager may not hire a person with a physical disability (even though that would be illegal if it were the only reason), which negatively affects that one individual. However, if pervasive cultural thinking that people with physical disabilities are mentally deficient leads hiring managers all over the country to make similar decisions, then the prejudice has become a social injustice.

Engage in Self-Reflection

A good way to improve your perceptions and increase your communication competence in general is to engage in self-reflection. If a communication encounter doesn't go well and you want to know why, your self-reflection will be much more useful if you are aware of and can recount your thoughts and actions.

Self-reflection can also help us increase our cultural awareness. Our thought process regarding culture is often "other focused," meaning that the culture of the other person or group is what stands out in our perception. However, the old adage "know thyself" is appropriate, as we become more aware of our own culture by better understanding other cultures and perspectives. Developing cultural self-awareness often requires us to get out of our comfort zones. Listening to people who are different from us is a key component of developing self-knowledge. This may be uncomfortable, because our taken-for-granted or deeply held beliefs and values may become less certain when we see the multiple perspectives that exist.

We can also become more aware of how our self-concepts influence how we perceive others. We often hold other people to the standards we hold for ourselves or assume that their self-concept should be consistent with our own. For example, if you consider yourself a neat person and think that sloppiness in your personal appearance would show that you are unmotivated, rude, and lazy, then you are likely to think the same of a person you judge to have a sloppy appearance. So asking questions like "Is my impression based on how this person wants to be, or how I think this person should want to be?" can lead to enlightening moments of self-reflection. Asking questions in general about the perceptions you are making is an integral part of perception checking.

Adapted Works

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6.5 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms

Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **Values are relatively stable over time and guide our behaviour.** In the workplace, a person is more likely to accept a job that provides opportunities for value attainment. People are also more likely to remain in a job and career that satisfy their values.
- **Perception is the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting information.** This process affects our communication because we respond to stimuli differently, whether they are objects or persons, based on how we perceive them.
- **Given the massive amounts of stimuli taken in by our senses, we only select a portion of the incoming information to organize and interpret.** We select information based on salience. We tend to find salient things that are visually or aurally stimulating and things that meet our needs and interests. Expectations also influence what information we select.
- **We organize information that we select into patterns** based on proximity, similarity, and difference.
- **We interpret information using schemata,** which allow us to assign meaning to information based on accumulated knowledge and previous experience.
- **We use attributions to interpret perceptual information, specifically, people's behavior.** Internal attributions connect behavior to internal characteristics such as personality traits. External attributions connect behavior to external characteristics such as situational factors.
- **Two common perceptual errors that occur in the process of attribution are the fundamental attribution error and the self-serving bias.** The fundamental attribution error refers to our tendency to overattribute other people's behaviors to internal rather than external causes. The self-serving bias refers to our tendency to overattribute our successes to internal factors and overattribute our failures to external factors.
- **Barriers to accurate perception include** stereotyping, selective perception and perceptual defense.
- **Perception checking is a strategy that allows us to** monitor our perceptions of and reactions to others and communication.
- **We can improve our perceptions using a number of suggestions** including avoiding reliance on rigid schemata, thinking critically about socializing institutions, intervening in self-fulfilling prophecies, finding supportive interpersonal networks, becoming aware of cycles of thinking that

distort our self-perception, developing empathetic listening skills, becoming aware of stereotypes and prejudice, and engaging in self-reflection.

Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/conflictmanagement/?p=130#h5p-8

Key Terms

Key terms from this chapter include:

- **Attribution theory**
- **Fundamental attribution error**
- **Instrumental values**
- **Interpretation**
- **Organization**
- **Perception**
- **Perception checking**
- **Perceptual defense**
- **Punctuation**
- **Salience**
- **Schemata**

- **Selection**
- **Self-serving bias**
- **Stereotype**
- **Terminal values**
- **Value**

CHAPTER 7: EMOTIONS

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

- Define affect and emotion.
- Describe the physiology of emotions, including the actions of the sympathetic nervous system, the parasympathetic nervous system, and the amygdala.
- Differentiate the basic and secondary emotions and explain their functions.
- Explain the concept of emotional intelligence.
- Describe emotional awareness and its importance to interpersonal communication.
- Review the known about cultural differences in the experience and expression of emotion.
- Define stress.
- Identify types of stressors.
- Recognize the impact of acute and chronic stress on the body.
- Describe the general adaptation syndrome and how stress influences the HPA axis and the release of hormones.
- Review the negative outcomes of stress on health.
- Explore four different approaches to reduce the impact of stressors.
- Review a model of workplace stress.
- Summarize individual and organizational techniques for coping with stress at work.
- Appreciate the role of positive affect and emotional intelligence in stress and conflict management.

In this chapter, we will begin to considering the role of affect on behaviour, discussing the importance of emotional intelligence. Then we will consider how emotions and stress influence our mental and physical health. We will discuss how the experience of long-term *stress* causes illness and impacts behaviours at work. We will explore individual and organizational strategies for managing stress. Finally, we will turn our attention to research on *positive thinking* and what has been learned about the beneficial health effects of more positive emotions.

7.1 Emotions and Intelligence

In this section:

- The Components of Emotion
  - The Physiology of Emotion
  - Cognitive Components of Emotion
- Emotional Intelligence
  - Self-Awareness
  - Self-Management
  - Social Awareness
  - Relationship Management

Components of Emotion

The topic of this section is **affect**, defined as the experience of feeling or emotion. Affect is an essential part of the study of conflict. As we will see, affect guides behaviour, helps us make decisions, and has a major impact on our mental and physical health.

The two fundamental components of affect are emotions and motivation. Both of these words have the same underlying Latin root, meaning "to move." In contrast to cognitive processes that are calm, collected, and frequently rational, emotions and motivations involve arousal. Because they involve arousal, emotions and motivations are "hot" — they "charge," "drive," or "move" our behaviour. We will talk more about motivation in Chapter 8.

An **emotion** is a mental and physiological feeling state that directs our attention and guides our behaviour.

Whether it is the thrill of a roller-coaster ride that elicits an unexpected scream, the flush of embarrassment that follows a public mistake, or the feeling of anger rising when your coworker blames you for their mistake, emotions move our actions. Emotions normally serve an adaptive role: We care for infants because of the love we feel for them, we avoid making a left turn onto a

crowded highway because we fear that a speeding truck may hit us, and we are particularly nice to Mandy because we need her to email the end of month reports. But emotions may also be destructive, such as when a frustrating experience leads us to lash out at others who do not deserve it.

The Physiology of Emotion

Our emotions are determined in part by responses of the **sympathetic nervous system (SNS)**—the division of the autonomic nervous system that is involved in preparing the body to respond to threats by activating the organs and the glands in the endocrine system. The SNS works in opposition to the **parasympathetic nervous system** (PNS), the division of the autonomic nervous system that is involved in resting, digesting, relaxing, and recovering. When it is activated, the SNS provides us with energy to respond to our environment. The liver puts extra sugar into the bloodstream, the heart pumps more blood, our pupils dilate to help us see better, respiration increases, and we begin to perspire to cool the body. The sympathetic nervous system also acts to release stress hormones including epinephrine and norepinephrine. At the same time, the action of the PNS is decreased.

We experience the activation of the SNS as arousal—changes in bodily sensations, including increased blood pressure, heart rate, perspiration, and respiration. Arousal is the feeling that accompanies strong emotions. I'm sure you can remember a time when you were in love, angry, afraid, or very sad and experienced the arousal that accompanied the emotion. Perhaps you remember feeling flushed, feeling your heart pounding, feeling sick to your stomach, or having trouble breathing.

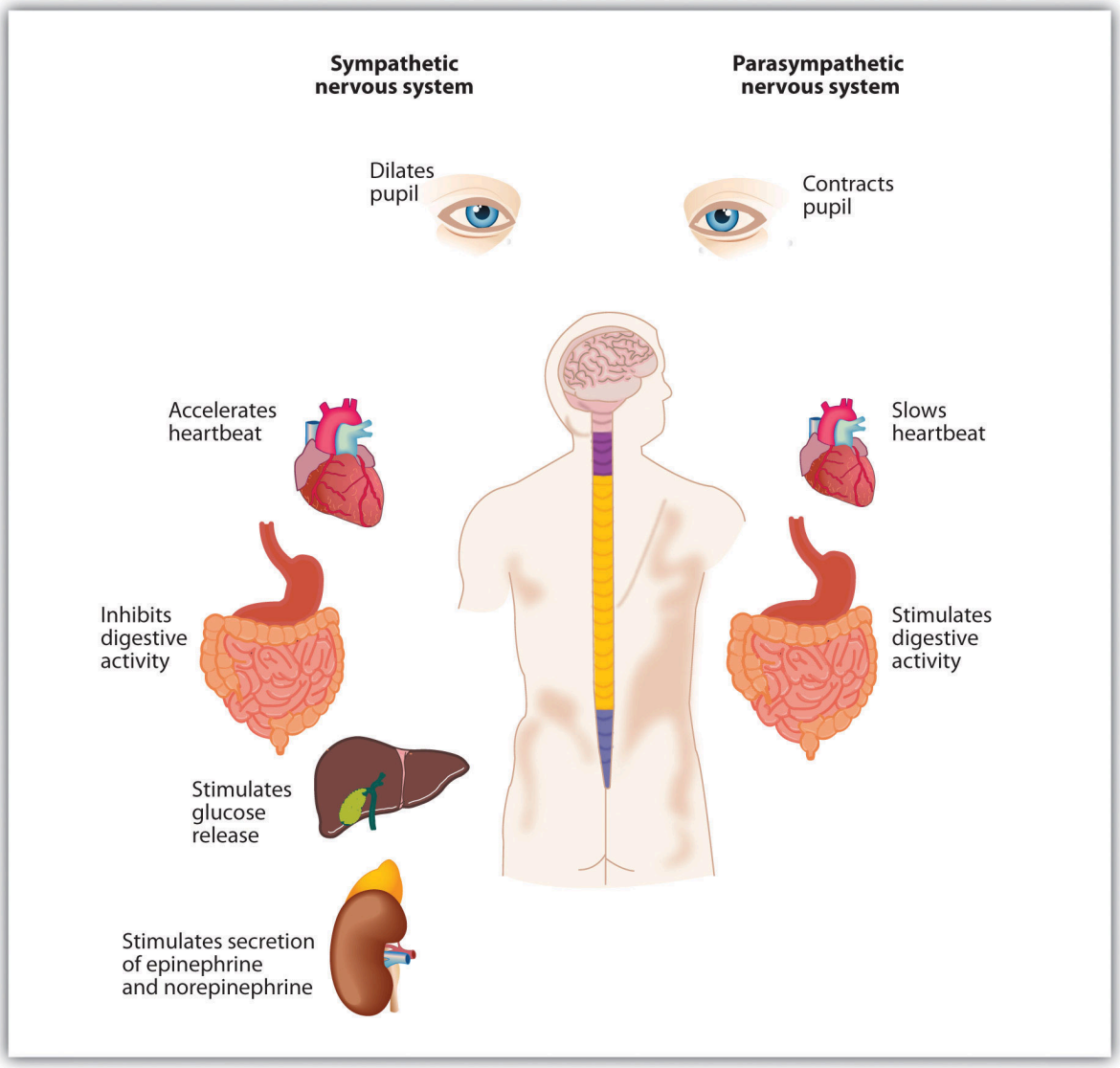

Figure 7.1 The arousal that we experience as part of our emotional experience is caused by the activation of the sympathetic nervous system. Image: University of Minnesota, Principles of Social Psychology, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. [Click to enlarge].

The arousal that we experience as part of our emotional experience is caused by the activation of the sympathetic nervous system. The experience of emotion is also controlled in part by one of the evolutionarily oldest parts of our brain—the part known as the **limbic system**—which includes several brain structures that help us experience emotion. Particularly important is the **amygdala**, the region in the limbic system that is primarily responsible for regulating our perceptions of, and reactions to, aggression and fear. The amygdala has connections to other bodily systems related to emotions, including the facial muscles, which perceive and express emotions, and it also regulates the release of neurotransmitters related to stress and aggression (Best, 2009). When we experience events that are dangerous, the amygdala stimulates the brain to remember the details of the situation so that we learn to avoid it in the future (Sigurdsson et al., 2007; Whalen et al., 2001).

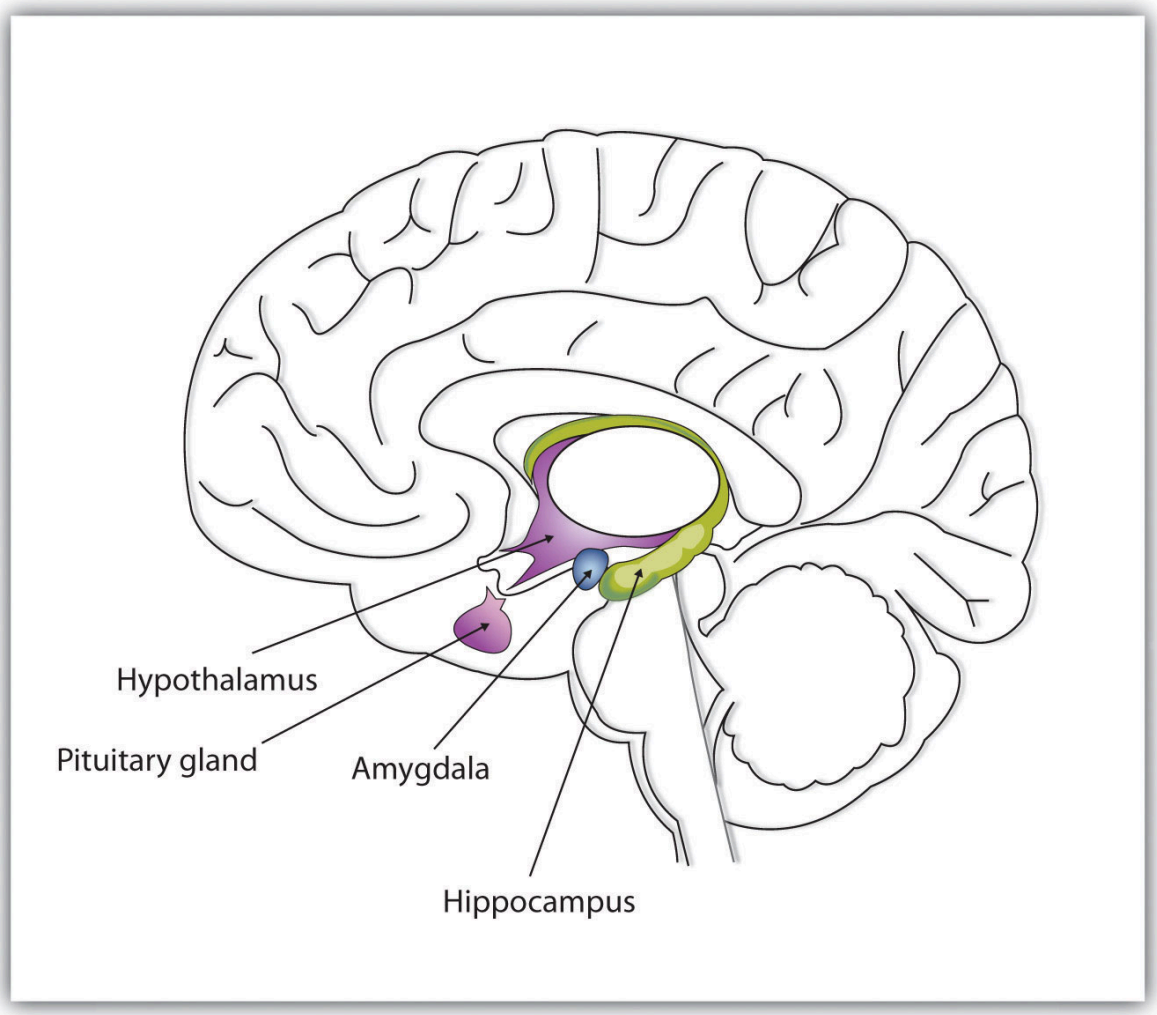

Figure 7.2 The limbic system is a part of the brain that includes the amygdala. The amygdala is an important regulator of emotions. Image: University of Minnesota, Principles of Social Psychology, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. [Click to enlarge].

The most fundamental emotions, known as the basic emotions, are those of anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise. The basic emotions have a long history in human evolution, and they have developed in large part to help us make rapid judgments about stimuli and to quickly guide appropriate behaviour (LeDoux, 2000). The basic emotions are determined in large part by one of the oldest parts of our brain, the limbic system, including the amygdala, the hypothalamus, and the thalamus. Because they are primarily evolutionarily determined, the basic emotions are experienced and displayed in much the same way across cultures (Ekman, 1992; Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002; Fridlund et al., 1987).

Cognitive Components of Emotions

Not all of our emotions come from the old parts of our brain; we also interpret our experiences to create a more complex array of emotional experiences. For instance, the amygdala may sense fear when it senses that the body is falling, but that fear may be interpreted completely differently, perhaps even as excitement, when we are falling on a roller-coaster ride than when we are falling from the sky in an airplane that has lost power. The cognitive interpretations that accompany emotions— known as **cognitive appraisal** — allow us to experience a much larger and more complex set of secondary emotions (see Figure 7.2). Although they are in large part cognitive, our experiences of the **secondary emotions** are determined in part by arousal, as seen on the vertical axis of Figure 7.3, and in part by their valence — that is, whether they are pleasant or unpleasant feelings — as seen on the horizontal axis of Figure 7.3.

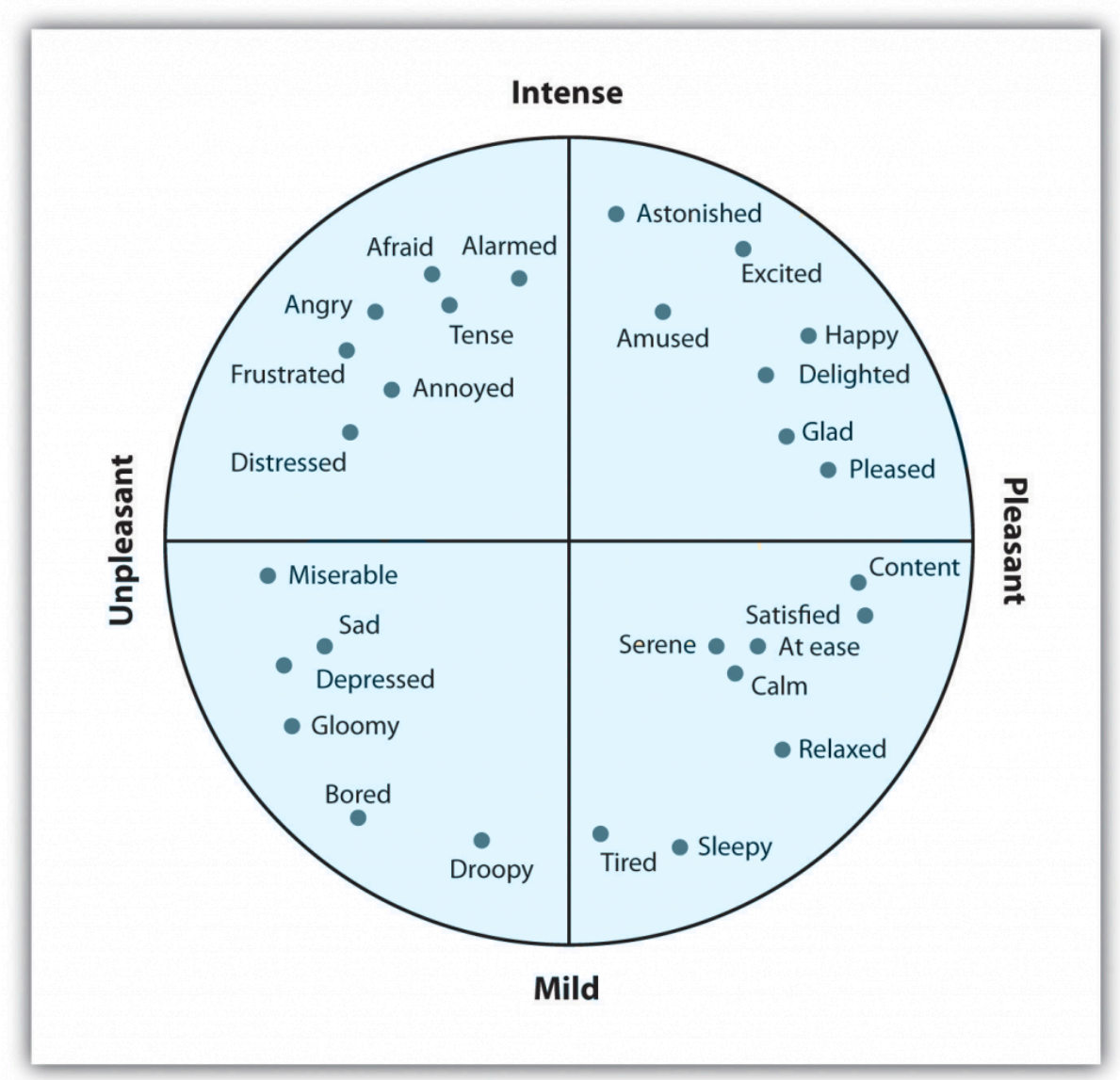

Figure 7.3 The secondary emotions are those that have a major cognitive component. They are determined by both their level of arousal, ranging from mild to intense, and their valence, ranging from pleasant to unpleasant (Russell, 1980). Image: Psychology – 1st Canadian Ed., Sally Walters, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original. View the long description for this figure. [Click to enlarge]

When you succeed in reaching an important goal, you might spend some time enjoying your secondary emotions, perhaps the experience of joy, satisfaction, and contentment, but when your close friend wins a prize that you thought you had deserved, you might also experience a variety of secondary emotions — in this case, the negative ones like feeling angry, sad, resentful, or ashamed. You might mull over the event for weeks or even months, experiencing these negative emotions each time you think about it (Martin & Tesser, 2006).

The distinction between the primary and the secondary emotions is paralleled by two brain pathways: a fast pathway and a slow pathway (Damasio, 2000; LeDoux, 2000; Ochsner et al., 2002).

The thalamus acts as the major gatekeeper in this process (see Figure 7.4). Our response to the basic emotion of fear, for instance, is primarily determined by the fast pathway through the limbic system. When a car pulls out in front of us on the highway, the thalamus activates and sends an immediate message to the amygdala. We quickly move our foot to the brake pedal. Secondary emotions are more determined by the slow pathway through the frontal lobes in the cortex. When we stew in jealousy over the loss of a partner to a rival or recollect our win in the big tennis match, the process is more complex. Information moves from the thalamus to the frontal lobes for cognitive analysis and integration, and then from there to the amygdala. We experience the arousal of emotion, but it is accompanied by a more complex cognitive appraisal, producing more refined emotions and behavioural responses.

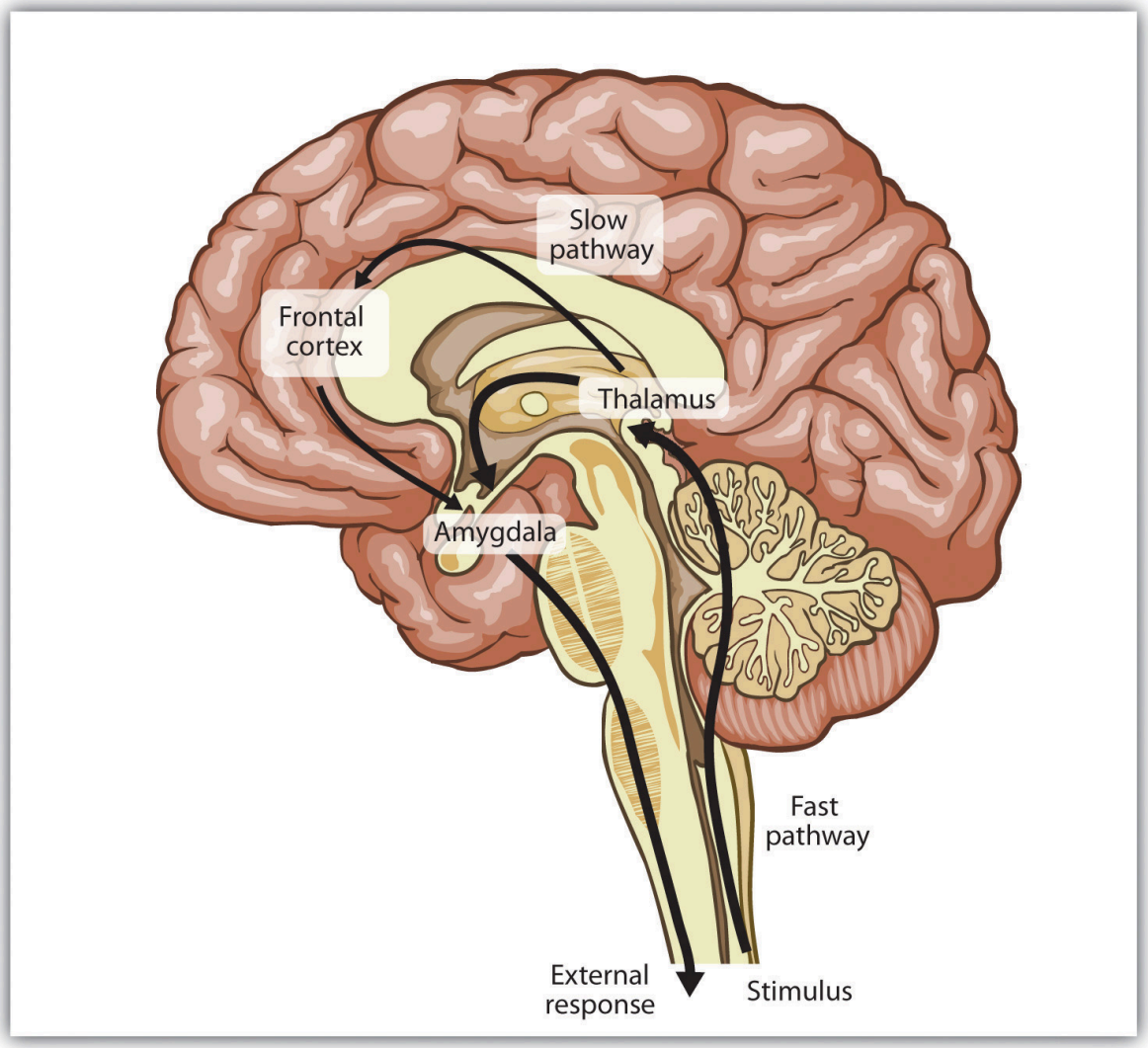

Figure 7.4. There are two emotional pathways in the brain — one slow and the other fast — both of which are controlled by the thalamus. Image: Psychology – 1st Canadian Ed., Sally Walters, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. [Click to enlarge]

Although emotions might seem to you to be more frivolous or less important in comparison to

our more rational cognitive processes, both emotions and cognitions can help us make effective decisions. In some cases, we take action after rationally processing the costs and benefits of different choices, but in other cases, we rely on our emotions. Emotions become particularly important in guiding decisions when the alternatives between many complex and conflicting alternatives present us with a high degree of uncertainty and ambiguity, making a complete cognitive analysis difficult. In these cases, we often rely on our emotions to make decisions, and these decisions may in many cases be more accurate than those produced by cognitive processing (Damasio, 1994; Dijksterhuis et al., 2006; Nordgren & Dijksterhuis, 2009; Wilson & Schooler, 1991).

Consider This: Dan Siegal on Flipping Your Lid

We've talked about the slow and fast routes in the brain for processing emotions. Remember, our emotions taking the fast route go to the limbic system. The amygdala in the brain can trigger our fight or flight reaction and make it difficult for the slow route to the cortex to take a more reasoned approach to a situation.

Dr. Dan Siegal is a researcher who examines emotions, trauma, and the brain. He uses the term "flipping your lid" to talk about how the brain acts differently when we are experiencing strong emotions like anger.

Please watch the video clip below to see this model in action:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/conflictmanagement/?p=134#oembed-1

Video: Dr. Dan Siegel's Hand Model of the Brain [8:15]. Captions are available on YouTube.

Siegal suggests a number of strategies for parents and children to "unflip their lid" and reintegrate these areas of our brain including "name it to tame it". He posits that awareness and communication about our emotional state is one of the first steps we can take to regain control and begin repair after we've lost control.

References

Siegal, D. (2021). Dr. Dan Siegal's hand model of the brain. Mind Your Brain. https://drdansiegel.com/hand-model-of-the-brain/

The Brain During Conflict

Have you ever had the experience, where after you've been in a conflict, you can't remember what you said OR you can't figure out why you said what you said? You are not alone. This occurs when we are experiencing a defensive response. The neuroscience of conflict and defensive responses is fascinating! For the purposes of this book we will only touch the surface of this concept, but I think that it is an important part of learning to recognize and manage our own behaviour in conflict.

When we experience conflict we all have some kind of physical tells that we are experiencing stress or being triggered. This could be rosy cheeks, sweaty palms or pits, queazy stomachs, or clenched teeth. If you aren't sure what your physical tells are, pay close attention the next time you feel frustrated, stressed out, or find yourself in the middle of a conflict. These are the physical symptoms of conflict. But what is going on in our brains?

When you **first** experience conflict, your limbic system (this system includes our amygdala which plays an important part in regulating emotions and behaviors and is typically talked about as the place where our "Fight, Flight, or Freeze" responses live) scans the environment for threats or rewards. Depending on the intensity of conflict you are having, you could experience an **Amygdala Hijacking** where you can no longer access the **prefrontal cortex**, this is the part of the brain that regulates empathy, decision making, problem solving, and much more. You can often see people experience an amygdala hijacking, some people lash out (fight), some people run away (flight), and some people sink into themselves (freeze).

Next, the thalamus, your brains perception center starts to work on interpreting the stimuli created by the conflict. This is where our regularly wrong assumptions come from. From this, our brain creates a story or a narrative of the entire conflict from beginning, middle, to end (even if we don't have all the information necessary for the complete story).

Essentially, our brains are wired to react to conflict not to respond productively. It's important to understand that we are all allowed to be emotional beings. Being emotional is an inherent part of being a human. For this reason, it's important to avoid phrases like "don't feel that way" or "they have no right to feel that way." Again, our emotions are our emotions, and, when we negate someone else's emotions, we are negating that person as an individual and taking away their right to emotional responses. At the same time, though, no one else can make you "feel" a specific way. Our emotions are our emotions. They are how we interpret and cope with life. A person may set up a context where you experience an emotion, but you are the one who is still experiencing that emotion and allowing yourself to experience that emotion. If you don't like "feeling" a specific way, then change it. We all have the ability to alter our emotions. Altering our emotional states (in a proactive way) is how we get through life. Maybe you just broke up with someone, and listening to music helps you work through the grief you are experiencing to get to a better place. For others, they need to openly communicate about how they are feeling in an effort to process and work through emotions. The worst thing a person can do is attempt to deny that the emotion exists.

Think of this like a balloon. With each breath of air you blow into the balloon, you are bottling up

more and more emotions. Eventually, that balloon will get to a point where it cannot handle any more air in it before it explodes. Humans can be the same way with emotions when we bottle them up inside. The final breath of air in our emotional balloon doesn't have to be big or intense. However, it can still cause tremendous emotional outpouring that is often very damaging to the person and their interpersonal relationships with others. Other research has demonstrated that handling negative emotions during conflicts within a marriage can lead to faster de-escalations of conflicts and faster conflict mediation between spouses (Bloch et al., 2014).

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence(EQ) as an individual's appraisal and expression of their emotions and the emotions of others in a manner that enhances thought, living, and communicative interactions. EQ is built by four distinct emotional processes: perceiving, understanding, managing, and using emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 2000). All four components of emotional intelligence are important for our ability to manage conflict situations at work.

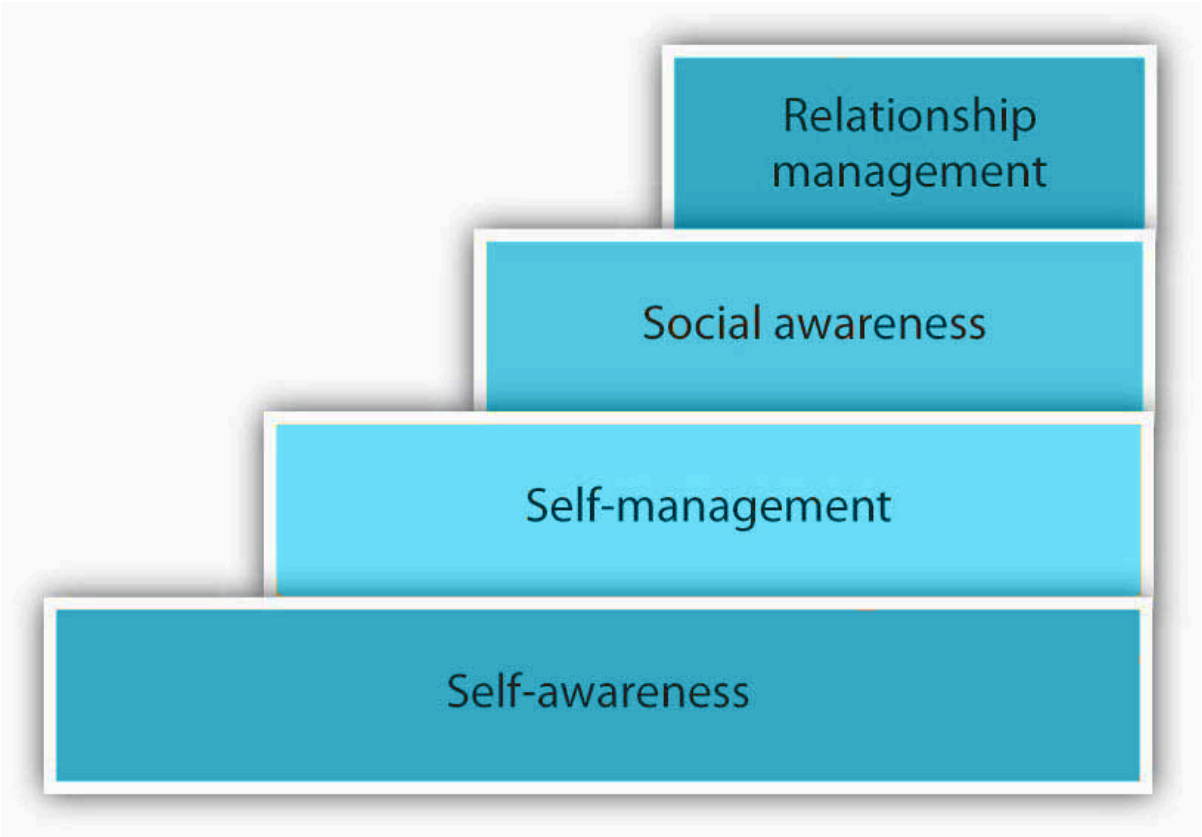

Figure 7.5 The four steps of emotional intelligence build upon one another. Image: University of Minnesota and NSCC, NSCC Organizational Behaviour. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

Let's discuss the four main components of EQ:

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness refers to a person's ability to understand their feelings from moment to moment. It might seem as if this is something we know, but we often go about our day without thinking or being aware of our emotions that impact how we behave in work or personal situations. Understanding our emotions can help us reduce stress and make better decisions, especially when we are under pressure. In addition, knowing and recognizing our own strengths and weaknesses is part of self-awareness. Assume that Patt is upset about a new process being implemented in the organization. Lack of self-awareness may result in her feeling angry and anxious, without really knowing why. High self-awareness EQ might cause Patt to recognize that her anger and anxiety stem from the last time the organization changed processes and fifteen people got laid off. Part of self-awareness is the idea of positive psychological capital, which can include emotions such as hope; optimism, which results in higher confidence; and resilience, or the ability to bounce back quickly from challenges (Luthens, 2002). Psychological capital can be gained through self-awareness and self-management, which is our next area of emotional intelligence.

Sadly, many people are just completely unaware of their own emotions. Emotional awareness, or an individual's ability to clearly express, in words, what they are feeling and why, is an extremely important factor in effective interpersonal communication and conflict management. Unfortunately, our emotional vocabulary is often quite limited. One extreme version of of not having an emotional vocabulary is called **alexithymia**, "a general deficit in emotional vocabulary—the ability to identify emotional feelings, differentiate emotional states from physical sensations, communicate feelings to others, and process emotion in a meaningful way" (Friedman et al., 2003). Furthermore, there are many people who can accurately differentiate emotional states but lack the actual vocabulary for a wide range of different emotions. For some people, their emotional vocabulary may consist of good, bad, angry, and fine. Learning how to communicate one's emotions is very important for effective interpersonal relationships (Rosenberg, 2003). First, it's important to distinguish between our emotional states and how we interpret an emotional state. For example, you can feel sad or depressed, but you really cannot feel alienated. Your sadness and depression may lead you to perceive yourself as alienated, but alienation is a perception of one's self and not an actual emotional state. There are several evaluative terms that people ascribe themselves (usually in the process of blaming others for their feelings) that they label emotions, but which are in actuality evaluations and not emotions. Table 7.1 presents a list of common evaluative words that people confuse for emotional states.

7.1 Common Evaluative Words Used Confused for Emotional States

Abandoned	Attacked	Bullied
Cornered	Humiliated	Let down
Mistreated	Patronized	Putdown
Scorned	Tortured	Unsupported
Abused	Belittled	Cheated
Devalued	Injured	Maligned
Misunderstood	Pressured	Rejected
Taken for granted	Unappreciated	Unwanted
Affronted	Betrayed	Coerced
Diminished	Interrupted	Manipulated
Neglected	Provoked	Ridiculed
Threatened	Unheard	Used
Alienated	Boxed-in	Co-opted
Distrusted	Intimidated	Mocked
Overworked	Put away	Ruined
Thwarted	Unseen	Wounded

Evaluative Words Confused for Emotions

Instead, people need to avoid these evaluative words and learn how to communicate effectively using a wide range of emotions. Tables 7.2 and 7.3 provide a list of both positive and negative feelings that people can express. Go through the list considering the power of each emotion. Do you associate light, medium, or strong emotions with the words provided on these lists? Why? There is no right or wrong way to answer this question. Still, it is important to understand that people can differ in their interpretations of the strength of different emotionally laden words. If you don't know what a word means, you should look it up and add another word to your list of feelings that you can express to others.

Positive Emotions

7.2 Positive Feelings People Can Express

Absorbed	Intense	Aroused	Mellow	Concerned
Eager	Satisfied	Euphoric	Thrilled	Glad
Happy	Amazed	Joyous	Carefree	Peaceful
Rapturous	Encouraged	Stimulated	Fascinated	Vibrant
Adventurous	Interested	Astonished	Merry	Confident
Ebullient	Secure	Excited	Tickled Pink	Gleeful
Helpful	Amused	Jubilant	Cheerful	Perky
Refreshed	Energetic	Sunny	Free	Warm
Affectionate	Intrigued	Blissful	Mirthful	Content
Ecstatic	Sensitive	Exhilarated	Touched	Glorious
Hopeful	Animated	Keyed-up	Comfortable	Pleasant
Relaxed	Engrossed	Surprised	Friendly	Wonderful
Aglow	Invigorated	Breathless	Moved	Cool
Effervescent	Serene	Expansive	Tranquil	Glowing
Inquisitive	Appreciative	Lively	Complacent	Pleased
Relieved	Enlivened	Tender	Fulfilled	Zippy
Alert	Involved	Buoyant	Optimistic	Curious
Elated	Spellbound	Expectant	Trusting	Good-humored
Inspired	Ardent	Loving	Composed	Proud
Sanguine	Enthusiastic	Thankful	Genial	Dazzled
Alive	Jovial	Calm	Overwhelmed	Grateful
Enchanted	Splendid	Exultant	Upbeat	Quiet
		Radiant	Gratified	Delighted

7.3 Negative Feelings People Can Express

Afraid	Sorry	Mean	Gloomy	Despairing
Disgusted	Anxious	Tepid	Numb	Hopeless
Impatient	Downhearted	Bitter	Unglued	Rancorous
Sensitive	Keyed-up	Fearful	Confused	Weepy
Aggravated	Spiritless	Melancholy	Grim	Despondent
Disheartened	Apathetic	Terrified	Overwhelmed	Horrified
Indifferent	Dull	Blah	Unhappy	Reluctant
Shaky	Lazy	Fidgety	Cool	Wistful
Agitated	Spiteful	Miserable	Grouchy	Detached
Dismayed	Appalled	Ticked off	Panicky	Horrible
Intense	Edgy	Blue	Unnerved	Repelled
Shameful	Leery	Forlorn	Crabby	Withdrawn
Alarmed	Startled	Mopey	Guilty	Disaffected
Displeased	Apprehensive	Tired	Passive	Hostile
Irate	Embarrassed	Bored	Unsteady	Resentful
Shocked	Lethargic	Frightened	Cranky	Woeful
Angry	Sullen	Morose	Harried	Disenchanted
Disquieted	Aroused	Troubled	Perplexed	Hot
Irked	Embittered	Brokenhearted	Upset	Restless
Skeptical	Listless	Frustrated	Cross	Worried
Anguished	Surprised	Mournful	Heavy	Disappointed
Disturbed	Ashamed	Uncomfortable	Pessimistic	Humdrum
Irritated	Exasperated	Chagrined	Uptight	Sad
Sleepy	Lonely	Furious	Dejected	Wretched
Annoyed	Suspicious	Nervous	Helpless	Discouraged
Distressed	Beat	Unconcerned	Petulant	Hurt
Jealous	Exhausted	Cold	Vexed	Scared
Sorrowful	Mad	Galled	Depressed	Sensitive
Antagonistic	Tearful	Nettled	Hesitant	Disgruntled
Downcast	Bewildered	Uneasy	Puzzled	Ill-Tempered
Jittery	Fatigued	Concerned	Weary	Seething
				Shaky

Self-Awareness and Anger in Conflict

Anger can also be described as a tip of the iceberg feeling. Just as an iceberg hides most of its bulk below the waterline, anger is a feeling with hidden deeper emotions. If one examines situations (triggers) that cause anger, it is easy to understand that those situations are really causing feelings of hurt, anxiety, shame, frustration, etc. However, it is quicker and less painful to describe them all as anger. Triggers are personal situations that are almost guaranteed to lead to anger. The situations usually refer to behavior directed toward us that is perceived as disrespectful in some way. Lying, stealing, condescending, patronizing, avoiding, and shaming are often mentioned as actions that trigger an anger response. It can be helpful to recognize your own triggers, notice how they feel in your body and assign them a label.

Self-Management

Self-management refers to our ability to manage our emotions and is dependent on our self-awareness ability. How do we handle frustration, anger, and sadness? Are we able to control our behaviors and emotions? Self-management also is the ability to follow through with commitments and take initiative at work. Someone who lacks self-awareness may project stress on others. For example, say that project manager Mae is very stressed about an upcoming Monday deadline. Lack of self-management may cause Mae to lash out at people in the office because of the deadline. Higher EQ in this area might result in Mae being calm, cool, and collected—to motivate her team to focus and finish the project on time.

It is important to understand how bodies display anger. Ask participants to remember a time when they were angry, and let them revisit that feeling. Then ask them how their bodies are telling them that they are angry. A rise in heartbeat and blood pressure, gritting one's teeth or clenching one's fists, becoming tense, sweating, grimacing, and feeling a knot in one's stomach are often mentioned. Body signals are the second clue that you are going to have to do something with your own anger.

What Doesn't Work: Distorting and Suppressing Negative Affect

Perhaps the most common approach to dealing with negative affect is to attempt to suppress, avoid, or deny it. You probably know people who seem to you to be stressed, depressed, or anxious but who cannot or will not see it in themselves. Perhaps you tried to talk to them about it, to get them to open up to you, but were rebuffed. They seem to act as if there is no problem at all, simply moving on with life without admitting or even trying to deal with the negative feelings. Or perhaps you have taken a similar approach yourself: Have you ever had an important test to study for or an important job interview coming up, and rather than planning and preparing for it, you simply tried put it out of your mind entirely?

Research has found that there are clear difficulties with an approach to negative events and feelings that involves simply trying to ignore them. For one, ignoring our problems does not make them go away. Not being able to get our work done because we are depressed, being too anxious to develop good relationships with others, or experiencing so much stress that we get sick will be detrimental to our life even if we cannot admit that it is occurring.

Suppressing our emotions is also not a very good option, at least in the long run, because it tends to fail (Gross & Levenson, 1997). If we know that we have a big exam coming up, we have to focus on the exam itself in order to suppress it. We can't really suppress or deny our thoughts because we actually have to recall and face the event in order to make the attempt to not think about it. Furthermore, we may continually worry that our attempts to suppress will fail. Suppressing our emotions might work out for a short while, but when we run out of energy, the negative emotions may shoot back up into consciousness, causing us to re-experience the negative feelings that we had been trying to avoid.

Daniel Wegner and his colleagues (1987) directly tested whether people would be able to effectively suppress a simple thought. They asked participants in a study to not think about a white bear for 5 minutes but to ring a bell in case they did. (Try it yourself—can you do it?) The participants were unable to suppress the thought as instructed—the white bear kept popping into mind, even when they were instructed to avoid thinking about it. You might have had a similar experience when you were staying home to study—the fun time you were missing by staying home kept popping into your mind, disrupting your work.

Another poor approach to attempting to escape from our problems is to engage in behaviors designed to distract us from them. Sometimes this approach will be successful in the short term—we might try distracting ourselves from our troubles by going for a run, watching TV, or reading a book, and perhaps this might be useful. But sometimes people go to extremes to avoid self-awareness when it might be better that they face their troubles directly. If we experience discrepancies between our ideal selves and our important self-concepts, if we feel that we cannot ever live up to our or others' expectations for us, or if we are just really depressed or anxious, we may attempt to escape ourselves entirely. Roy Baumeister (1991) has speculated that maladaptive behaviors such as drug abuse, sexual masochism, spiritual ecstasy, binge eating, and even suicide are all mechanisms by which people may attempt to escape the self.

A Better Approach: Self-Regulation

As we have seen, emotions are useful in warning us about potential danger and in helping us to make judgments quickly, so it is a good thing that we have them. However, we also need to learn how to control our emotions, to prevent our emotions from letting our behavior get out of control.

To be the best people that we possibly can, we have to work hard at it. Succeeding at school, at work, and at our relationships with others takes a lot of effort. When we are successful at self-regulation, we are able to move toward or meet the goals that we set for ourselves. When we fail at self-regulation, we are not able to meet those goals. People who are better able to regulate their

behaviors and emotions are more successful in their personal and social encounters (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1992).

Let's Focus: Self-control

Part of self-management is being able to exert self-control. The ability to exercise self-control has some important positive outcomes. Consider, for instance, research by Walter Mischel and his colleagues (Mischel et al., 1989). In their studies, they had 4- and 5-year-old children sit at a table in front of a yummy snack, such as a chocolate chip cookie or a marshmallow. The children were told that they could eat the snack right away if they wanted to. However, they were also told that if they could wait for just a couple of minutes, they'd be able to have two snacks—both the one in front of them and another just like it. However, if they ate the one that was in front of them before the time was up, they would not get a second.

Mischel found that some children were able to self-regulate—they were able to override the impulse to seek immediate gratification in order to obtain a greater reward at a later time. Other children, of course, were not—they just ate the first snack right away. Furthermore, the inability to delay gratification seemed to occur in a spontaneous and emotional manner, without much thought. The children who could not resist simply grabbed the cookie because it looked so yummy, without being able to cognitively stop themselves (Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999; Strack & Deutsch, 2007). It turns out that these emotional responses are determined in part by particular brain patterns that are influenced by body chemicals. For instance, preferences for small immediate rewards over large later rewards have been linked to low levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin in animals (Bizot et al., 1999; Wilkinson & Robbins, 2004), and low levels of serotonin are tied to violence, impulsiveness, and even suicide (Asberg et al., 1976).

The ability to self-regulate in childhood has important consequences later in life. When Mischel followed up on the children in his original study, he found that those who had been able to self-regulate as children grew up to have some highly positive characteristics—they got better SAT scores, were rated by their friends as more socially adept, and were found to cope with frustration and stress better than those children who could not resist the tempting first cookie at a young age. Effective self-regulation is therefore an important key to success in life (Ayduk et al., 2000; Eigsti et al., 2006; Mischel et al., 2003).

Letting Go of Negative Thoughts

Bach and Wyden (1968) discuss **gunnysacking** (or backpacking) as the imaginary bag we all carry, into which we place unresolved conflicts or grievances over time. If your organization has gone through a merger, and your business has transformed, there may have been conflicts that occurred during the transition. Holding onto the way things used to or to negative emotions related to past

conflict be can be like a stone in your gunnysack, and influence how you interpret your current context.

People may be aware of similar issues but might not know your history, and cannot see your backpack or its contents. For example, if your previous manager handled issues in one way, and your new manage handles them in a different way, this may cause you some degree of stress and frustration. Your new manager cannot see how the relationship existed in the past, but will still observe the tension. Bottling up your frustrations only hurts you and can cause your current relationships to suffer. By addressing, or unpacking, the stones you carry, you can better assess the current situation with the current patterns and variables.

We learn from experience, but can distinguish between old wounds and current challenges, and try to focus our energies where they will make the most positive impact. . You may be more successful in raising the issue if you are as specific as possible in describing the problem and how you are affected. If necessary, write your concerns down on paper.

Not only does research show that attempting to suppress our negative thoughts does not work, there is even evidence that the opposite is true—that when we are faced with troubles, it is healthy to let the negative thoughts and feelings out by expressing them, either to ourselves or to others. James Pennebaker and his colleagues (Pennebake et al., 1990; Watson & Pennebaker, 1989) have conducted many correlational and experimental studies that demonstrate the advantages to our mental and physical health of opening up versus bottling our feelings. This research team has found that simply talking about or writing about our emotions or our reactions to negative events provides substantial health benefits.

Pennebaker and Beall (1986) randomly assigned students to write about either the most traumatic and stressful event of their lives or to write about a trivial topic. Although the students who wrote about the traumas had higher blood pressure and more negative moods immediately after they wrote their essays, they were also less likely to visit the student health center for illnesses during the following 6 months in comparison to those who wrote about more minor issues. Something positive evidently occurred as a result of confronting their negative experiences. Other research studied individuals whose spouses had died in the previous year, finding that the more they talked about the death with others, the less likely they were to become ill during the subsequent year. Daily writing about one's emotional states has also been found to increase immune system functioning (Petrie et al., 2004), and Uysal and Lu (2011) found that self-expression was associated with experiencing less physical pain. Opening up probably helps in various ways. For one, expressing our problems allows us to gain information from others and may also bring support from them. And writing or thinking about one's experiences also seems to help people make sense of the events and may give them a feeling of control over their lives (Pennebaker & Stone, 2004).

Self-Management in Conflict

It is helpful to repeatedly make the point that one MUST do something with one's own anger before effectively interacting with other people. It is a truism that, "When anger is high, cognition

is low." Therefore, to be an effective problem solver, it is imperative to deal with one's own anger before interacting with others. People can often laugh at themselves when they are able to recount instances where they DID deal with other people through the filter of their own anger, and how ineffective the results were. It is irrelevant whether your anger is justified or righteous–it works against your own best interests because it makes you unable to negotiate effectively.

When you notice those first two clues, there are self-calming mechanisms and ways to get rid of the body's surging adrenaline so that it is again possible to think clearly and problem solve effectively. Counting to ten, taking deep breaths, taking a walk, venting, meditating, and hitting a pillow are some of the strategies that students often report using to calm themselves. These all have a physical reason for being successful–they release chemicals into the brain and body that help rid it of some of the extra adrenaline that makes a person want to either fight or flee. Consider the options in the animal kingdom. When an animal is threatened, its system releases adrenaline. The adrenaline gives the animal the extra energy needed to either flee (if the opponent is bigger or more ferocious), or remain and fight (if the opponent is smaller and/or weaker). These are the only choices that the animal has, and it comes from their instincts in assessing their chances of survival in both scenarios. As human beings, we have a third choice–talking or negotiating. However, to effectively use this third alternative, the adrenaline has to be dispersed so that we can think clearly, which is necessary for negotiation.

Self-regulation is particularly difficult when we are tired, depressed, or anxious, and it is under these conditions that we more easily lose our self-control and fail to live up to our goals (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). If you are tired and worried about an upcoming exam, you may find yourself getting angry and taking it out on your roommate, even though she really hasn't done anything to deserve it and you don't really want to be angry at her. It is no secret that we are more likely to fail at our diets when we are under a lot of stress or at night when we are tired.

Can we improve our emotion regulation? It turns out that training —just like physical training—can help. Students who practiced doing difficult tasks, such as exercising, avoiding swearing, or maintaining good posture, were later found to perform better in laboratory tests of self-regulation (Baumeister et al., 2006; Baumeister et al., 2007; Oaten & Cheng, 2006), such as maintaining a diet or completing a puzzle. And we are also stronger when we are in good moods—people who had watched a funny video clip were better at subsequent self-regulation tasks (Tice et al., 2007).

Consider This: Dealing with Anger

Conflicts cannot be effectively resolved if you cannot control your anger. If you are feeling angry:

- Take a few deep breaths to calm down
- Say that you are angry and explain why (without becoming abusive)
- Postpone the discussion if you cannot calm yourself
- Write down your key points and concerns before going into another session
- Move your discussion to a neutral location

If the other person is angry, acknowledge their feelings. For example, you might say, "I can see that you were really upset and angry when I said....." Acknowledging another person's feelings does not mean that you have to agree with them. It simply says to the person that you recognize what they have said or felt. If the person is unable to regain calm, suggest postponing the discussion.

No matter how healthy and happy we are in our everyday lives, there are going to be times when we experience stress, depression, and anxiety. Some of these experiences will be major and some will be minor, and some of us will experience these emotions more than others. Sometimes these feelings will be the result of clear difficulties that pose direct threats to us: We or those we care about may be ill or injured; we may lose our job or have academic difficulties. At other times, these feelings may seem to develop for no apparent reason.

Although it is not possible to prevent the experience of negative emotions entirely (in fact, given their importance in helping us understand and respond to threats, we would not really want to if we could), we can nevertheless learn to respond to and cope with them in the most productive possible ways. We do not need to throw up our hands in despair when things go wrong—rather, we can bring our personal and social resources to bear to help us. We have at our disposal many techniques that we can use to help us deal with negative emotions.

Social Awareness

Social awareness is our ability to understand social cues that may affect others around us. In other words, understanding how another is feeling, even if we do not feel the same way. Social awareness also includes having empathy for another, recognizing power structure and unwritten workplace dynamics. Most people high on social awareness have charisma and make people feel good with every interaction. For example, consider Erik's behavior in meetings. He continually talks and does not pick up subtleties, such as body language. Because of this, he can't understand (or even fathom) that his monologues can be frustrating to others. Erik, with higher EQ in social awareness, may begin

talking but also spend a lot of time listening and observing in the meeting, to get a sense of how others feel. He may also directly ask people how they feel. This demonstrates high social awareness.

Communicating Emotion

In addition to experiencing emotions internally, we also express our emotions to others, and we learn about the emotions of others by observing them. This communication process has evolved over time and is highly adaptive. One way that we perceive the emotions of others is through their nonverbal communication, that is, communication, primarily of liking or disliking, that does not involve words (Ambady & Weisbuch, 2010; Andersen, 2007).

The most important communicator of emotion is the face. The face contains 43 different muscles that allow it to make more than 10,000 unique configurations and to express a wide variety of emotions. For example, happiness is expressed by smiles, which are created by two of the major muscles surrounding the mouth and the eyes, and anger is created by lowered brows and firmly pressed lips. Nonverbal communication includes our tone of voice, gait, posture, touch, and facial expressions, and we can often accurately detect the emotions that other people are experiencing through these channels. Table 7. 1, shows some of the important nonverbal behaviours that we use to express emotion and some other information (particularly liking or disliking, and dominance or submission).

Table 7.4 Some Common Nonverbal Communicators

Nonverbal cue	Description	Examples
Proxemics	Rules about the appropriate use of personal space	Standing nearer to someone can express liking or dominance.
Body appearance	Expressions based on alterations to our body	Body building, breast augmentation, weight loss, piercings, and tattoos are often used to appear more attractive to others.
Body positioning and movement	Expressions based on how our body appears	A more “open” body position can denote liking; a faster walking speed can communicate dominance.
Gestures	Behaviours and signs made with our hands or faces	The peace sign communicates liking; the “finger” communicates disrespect.
Facial expressions	The variety of emotions that we express, or attempt to hide, through our face	Smiling or frowning and staring or avoiding looking at the other can express liking or disliking, as well as dominance or submission.
Paralanguage	Clues to identity or emotions contained in our voices	Pronunciation, accents, and dialect can be used to communicate identity and liking.

Source: *Introduction to Psychology - 1st Canadian Edition by Jennifer Walinga and Charles Stangor, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

Just as there is no universal spoken language, there is no universal nonverbal language. For instance, in Canada we express disrespect by showing the middle finger (the finger or the bird). But in Britain, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand, the V sign (made with back of the hand facing the recipient) serves a similar purpose. In countries where Spanish, Portuguese, or French are spoken, a gesture in which a fist is raised and the arm is slapped on the bicep is equivalent to the finger, and in Russia, Indonesia, Turkey, and China a sign in which the hand and fingers are curled and the thumb is thrust between the middle and index fingers is used for the same purpose.

Culture and Displaying Emotions

Culture can impact the way in which people understand and display emotion. A **cultural display rule** is one of a collection of culturally specific standards that govern the types and frequencies of displays of emotions that are acceptable (Malatesta & Haviland, 1982). Therefore, people from varying cultural backgrounds can have very different cultural display rules of emotion. For example, research has shown that individuals from the United States express negative emotions like fear, anger, and disgust both alone and in the presence of others, while Japanese individuals only do so while alone (Matsumoto, 1990). Furthermore, individuals from cultures that tend to emphasize social cohesion are more likely to engage in suppression of emotional reaction so they can evaluate which response is most appropriate in a given context (Matsumoto et al., 2008).

Research by Paul Ekman (1972) demonstrates that despite different emotional display rules, our ability to recognize and produce facial expressions of emotion appears to be universal. In fact, even congenitally blind individuals produce the same facial expression of emotions, despite their never having the opportunity to observe these facial displays of emotion in other people. This would seem to suggest that the pattern of activity in facial muscles involved in generating emotional expressions is universal, and indeed, this idea was suggested in the late 19th century in Charles Darwin's book The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals (1872). There is substantial evidence for seven universal emotions that are each associated with distinct facial expressions for happiness, surprise, sadness, fright, disgust, contempt, and anger. (Ekman & Keltner, 1997).

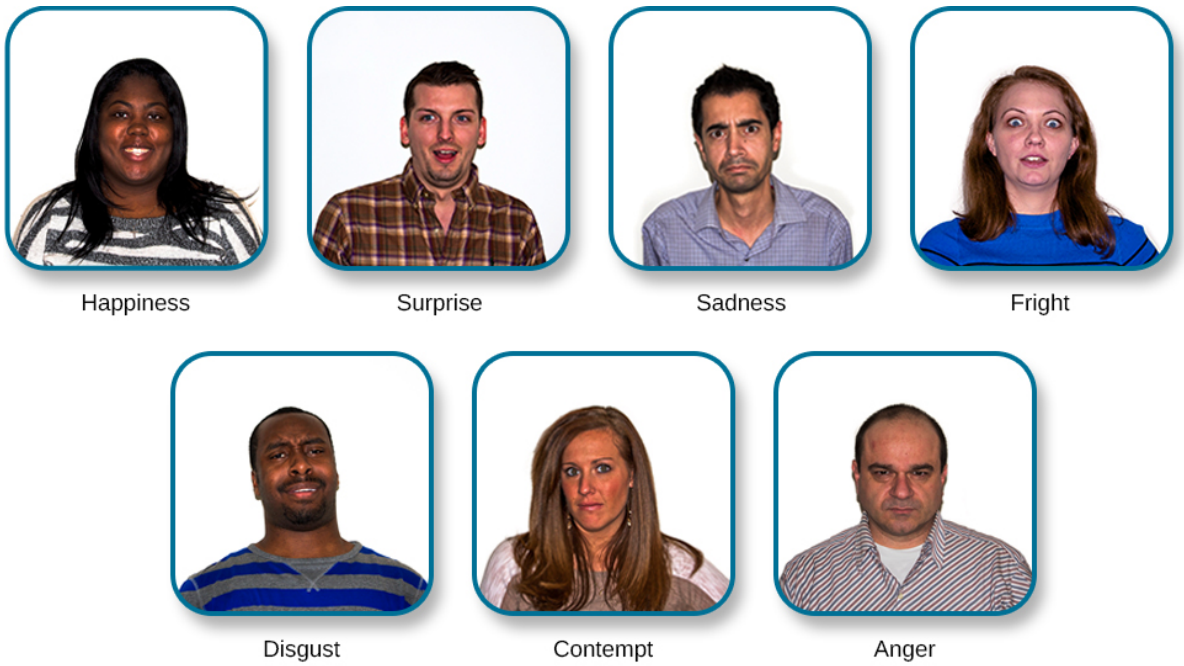

Figure 7.6 The seven universal facial expressions of emotion are shown. (credit: modification of work by Cory Zanker). Image: Psychology 2E, OpenStax, CC BY 4.0. [Click to enlarge].

Of course, emotion is not only displayed through facial expression. We also use the tone of our voices, various behaviors, and body language to communicate information about our emotional states. Body language is the expression of emotion in terms of body position or movement. Research suggests that we are quite sensitive to the emotional information communicated through body language, even if we're not consciously aware of it (de Gelder, 2006; Tamietto et al., 2009).

Relationship Management

Relationship management refers to our ability to communicate clearly, maintain good relationships with others, work well in teams, and manage conflict. Relationship management relies on your ability to use the other three areas of EQ to manage relationships effectively. Take Caroline, for example. Caroline is good at reading people's emotions and showing empathy for them, even if she doesn't agree. As a manager, her door is always open and she makes it clear to colleagues and staff that they are welcome to speak with her anytime. If Caroline has low EQ in the area of relationship management, she may belittle people and have a difficult time being positive. She may not be what is considered a good team player, which shows her lack of ability to manage relationships.

Finding Satisfaction Through Our Connections With Others

Well-being is determined in part by genetic factors, such that some people are naturally happier

than others (Braungart et al., 1992; Lykken, 2000), but also in part by the situations that we create for ourselves. Psychologists have studied hundreds of variables that influence happiness, but there is one that is by far the most important, and it is one that is particularly social psychological in nature: People who report that they have positive social relationships with others—the perception of social support—also report being happier than those who report having less social support (Diener et al., 1999; Diener et al., 2006). Married people report being happier than unmarried people (Pew, 2006), and people who are connected with and accepted by others suffer less depression, higher self-esteem, and less social anxiety and jealousy than those who feel more isolated and rejected (Leary, 1990).

Social support also helps us better cope with stressors. Koopman et al. (1998) found that women who reported higher social support experienced less depression when adjusting to a diagnosis of cancer, and Ashton et al. (2005) found a similar buffering effect of social support for AIDS patients. People with social support are less depressed overall, recover faster from negative events, and are less likely to commit suicide (Au, Lau, & Lee, 2009; Bertera, 2007; Compton et al., 2005; Skärsäter et al., 2005).

Relationship Management in Conflict

Research repeatedly demonstrates that how emotion is communicated will affect the outcome of the communication situation. Relationship partners are more satisfied when positive emotions are communicated rather than negative emotions. Four forms of anger expression have been identified (Guerrero, 1994). The four forms of anger expression range from direct and nonthreatening to avoidance and denial of angry feelings. Anger expression is more productive when the emotion is communicated directly and in a nonthreatening manner. In most circumstances, direct communication is more constructive.

Table 7.5 Forms of Anger Expression

Form of Expression	Explanation of Form
Assertion	Direct statements, nonthreatening, explaining anger
Aggression	Direct and threatening, may involve criticism
Passive Aggression	Indirectly communicate negative affect in a destructive manner – "the silent treatment"
Avoidance	Avoiding the issue, denying angry feelings, pretending not to feel anything

Source: Interpersonal Communication by Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

Furthermore, researchers have found that serious relationship problems arise when those in the relationship are unable to reach beyond the immediate conflict and include positive as well as negative emotions in their discussions. In a landmark study of newlywed couples, for example,

researchers attempted to predict who would have a happy marriage versus an unhappy marriage or a divorce, based on how the newlyweds communicated with each other. Specifically, they created a stressful conflict situation for couples. The researchers then evaluated how many times the newlyweds expressed positive emotions and how many times they expressed negative emotions in talking with each other about the situation.

When the marital status and happiness of each couple were evaluated over the next six years, the study found that the strongest predictor of a marriage that stayed together and was happy was the degree of positive emotions expressed during the conflict situation in the initial interview (Gottman et al., 1998).

In happy marriages, instead of always responding to anger with anger, the couples found a way to lighten the tension and to de-escalate the conflict. In long-lasting marriages, during stressful times or in the middle of conflict, couples were able to interject some positive comments and positive regard for each other. When this finding is generalized to other types of interpersonal relationships, it makes a strong case for having some positive interactions, interjecting some humor, some light-hearted fun, or some playfulness into your conversation while you are trying to resolve conflict

Consider This: Defusing Other People's Anger

This is a five-step developmental model for diffusing anger, which means that in order to be effective, one needs to begin at step one, and then go to step two, step three, step four, and step five, in that sequence. There is a temptation to cut to the chase and go directly to step five. However, when someone is angry, they are not ready to discuss an issue rationally. Therefore, the first four steps focus on defusing the anger, and it is only when we reach the fifth step that we can open the door to problem solving. Sometimes, the anger can be dissipated in one, two, or three steps, and in that case, it is possible to move to problem solving. However, it is the angry person who decides (when they are able to let go of their anger) when it is possible to move on to problem solving. The first step is to listen–which means paying attention to both the words and the feelings behind what your conflict partner is expressing. Many people interrupt the speaker (which re-escalates anger) because they are afraid that the person will vent forever. In reality, that does not happen. People stop venting if they believe you are listening because they want a reaction from you. If you do not interrupt, they will stop talking to get that reaction. Our perception of the passage of time is skewed in these kinds of scenario. Two minutes of an angry diatribe can seem like an eternity.

The second step is to acknowledge the anger. This means making a process observation about what you see (i.e., I can see that you are really upset) without any judgment attached. It is also important to stop after each step and allow time for processing. If you rush ahead to explain away the anger, the other person will not feel acknowledged.

The third step is to apologize. In our society this is often difficult for people because we feel that apology is synonymous with taking responsibility. Therefore, if something was not my fault, how can I take responsibility for it? However, what you are really saying is that you are sorry for the other person's pain (as when you pay a condolence call and tell someone you are sorry about the death–you do not believe that you caused it, but you are focusing on the feelings of the person in front of you). It is possible to be genuinely sorry for someone's pain without taking responsibility for causing the pain.

The fourth step is to agree with the truth. Again, this is difficult for people who are reluctant to own part of the problem (especially if you think the person is unreasonably angry). However, if everyone is right from their own perspective (which is what non-violent conflict resolution theory believes), then you are not saying their perspective is the only one, but that it is a legitimate perspective. Statements such as "If I were in your position, I'd be angry too" can help de-escalate the situation so that problem solving may occur. These statements have to be real, rather than platitudes. This process can be both time and energy consuming. However, if this process is not used, and the other person stays angry, effective problem solving cannot occur.

Finally, if the other person has calmed down somewhat they will be open when you invite criticism. This means involving the other person in a discussion of how the situation could have been handled differently. This is useful information for you, so that in the future, either in similar situations, or with this specific person, more options are available to you. Although this process may seem long, it is one that respects the feelings of the other person, and gives him or her the opportunity to regain his or her cognitive abilities by reducing anger. This process also engages the other person as an ally and refrains from blame or accusation.

Self-assessment

See Appendix B: Self-Assessments

Read the following questions and select the answer that corresponds with your perception.:

- Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire

Figure 7.3 Long Description

Level of Arousal	Unpleasant	Pleasant
Mild	Miserable, Sad, Depressed, Gloomy, Bored, Droopy	Content, Satisfied, At ease, Serene, Calm, Relaxed, Sleepy, Tired
Intense	Alarmed, Afraid, Angry, Intense, Annoyed, Frustrated, Distressed	Astonished, Excited, Amused, Happy, Delighted, Glad, Pleased

Adapted Works

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7.2 Stress

In this section:

- Stress and Stressors
- Responses to Stress
- Managing Stress

Stress and Stressors

Emotions matter because they influence our behavior. And there is no emotional experience that has a affect more powerful influence on us than stress.

Social psychologists define **stress** as the physical and psychological reactions that occur whenever we believe that the demands of a situation threaten our ability to respond to the threat (Lazarus, 2000; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Stress is a function of the objective environment but also of individuals' subjective interpretation of events and their consequences. Both body and mind are involved the process. It is important for both firms and individuals to take preventive measures before the cumulative effects of stress manifest themselves in ways that cost both the individual and the company. Stress can have a positive effect, making us more alert or more prepared to take on an important challenge. Stress can also have a negative effect, causing a range of physical and mental ailments.

Eustress is a term that signifies beneficial stress, either psychological, physical. The term was coined by using the Greek prefix "eu", meaning "good", and stress, literally meaning "good stress". Eustress was originally explored in a stress model by Richard Lazarus. It is the positive cognitive response to stress that is healthy, or gives one a feeling of fulfilment or other positive feelings (Nelson et al., 2004; Lazarus, 1966).

Under stress, individuals are unable to respond to environmental stimuli without undue psychological and/or physiological damage, such as chronic fatigue, tension, or high blood pressure. This damage resulting from experienced stress is usually referred to as **strain**.

Stressors

We all experience stress at some point in our lives. Situations causing stress are known as **stressors**. There are four types of stressors:

- **Acute stressors** are time-specific events of high intensity and short duration that occur infrequently, such as a performance review, a car accident, or unexpected encounter.
- **Episodic (or daily) stressors** may be similar to acute stressors but occur more frequently, have a longer duration, and may be of lower intensity. Making repeated requests of a worker to work overtime is an example of an episodic stressor.
- **Chronic stressors** are stressors that persist over a sustained period of time, and include job insecurity, work overload, or lack of control.
- **Catastrophic stressors** are a subset of acute stressors but differ in their intensity, threatening life, safety, or property. Robbery and physical assault are examples of catastrophic stressors.

Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe (1967) developed a measure of some everyday life events that might lead to stress. Rahe and his colleagues (1970) asked 2,500 members of the military to complete the rating scale and then assessed the health records of the soldiers over the following 6 months. The results were clear: The higher the scale score, the more likely the soldier was to end up in the hospital. Although some of the items on the Holmes and Rahe scale are major, even minor stressors add to the total score. Our everyday interactions with the environment that are essentially negative, known as daily stressors or hassles, can also create stress, as well as poorer health outcomes (Hutchinson & Williams, 2007). Events that may seem rather trivial altogether, such as having an argument with a friend or getting cut off by another car in rush-hour traffic, can produce stress (Fiksenbaum et al., 2006). Glaser (1985) found that medical students who were tested during, rather than several weeks before, their school examination periods showed lower immune system functioning. Other research has found that even more minor stressors, such as having to do math problems during an experimental session, can compromise the immune system (Cacioppo et al., 1998).

Self-assessment

See Appendix B: Self-Assessments

Place a check mark next to each event you experienced within the past year. Then add the scores associated with the various events to derive your total life stress score.

- How Stable Is Your Life?

Responses to Stress

Not all people experience and respond to stress in the same way, and these differences can be important. The cardiologists Meyer Friedman and R. H. Rosenman (1974) were among the first to study the link between stress and heart disease. In their research, they noticed that even though the partners in married couples often had similar lifestyles, diet, and exercise patterns, the husbands nevertheless generally had more heart disease than did the wives. As they tried to explain the difference, they focused on the personality characteristics of the partners, finding that the husbands were more likely than the wives to respond to stressors with negative emotions and hostility.

Recent research has shown that the strongest predictor of a physiological stress response from daily hassles is the amount of negative emotion that they evoke. People who experience strong negative emotions as a result of everyday hassles and who respond to stress with hostility experience more negative health outcomes than do those who react in a less negative way (McIntyre et al., 2008; Suls & Bunde, 2005). Williams and his colleagues (2001) found that people who scored high on measures of anger were three times more likely to suffer from heart attacks in comparison with those who scored lower on anger.

On average, men are more likely than are women to respond to stress by activating the **fight-or-flight response**, which is an emotional and behavioral reaction to stress that increases the readiness for action. The arousal that men experience when they are stressed leads them to either go on the attack, in an aggressive or revenging way, or else retreat as quickly as they can to safety from the stressor. The fight-or-flight response allows men to control the source of the stress if they think they can do so, or if that is not possible, it allows them to save face by leaving the situation. The fight-or-flight response is triggered in men by the activation of the HPA axis.

Women, on the other hand, are less likely to take a fight-or-flight response to stress. Rather, they are more likely to take a tend-and-befriend response (Taylor et al., 2000). The **tend-and-befriend response** is a behavioral reaction to stress that involves activities designed to create social networks that provide protection from threats. This approach is also self-protective because it allows the individual to talk to others about her concerns as well as to exchange resources, such as child care. The tend-and-befriend response is triggered in women by the release of the hormone oxytocin, which promotes affiliation. Overall, the tend-and-befriend response is healthier than the flight-or-flight response because it does not produce the elevated levels of arousal related to the HPA, including the negative results that accompany increased levels of cortisol. This may help explain why women, on average, have less heart disease and live longer than men.

The experience of long-term stress—and its potential negative impact on our physical and mental health—represents one example of the powerful influence of the social situation in our everyday lives. These findings represent social psychological principles in action: Our affect, cognition, and behavior are influenced in profound ways by the events that occur to us, and particularly by the people around us.

Stress and the Immune System

We experience stress when we find ourselves in situations where we are not sure how to respond or whether we are going to be able to adequately cope. Extreme social situations, such as being the victim of a terrorist attack, a natural disaster, or a violent crime, may produce an extreme form of stress known as **post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**,a medical syndrome that includes symptoms of anxiety, sleeplessness, nightmares, and social withdrawal.

Stress is accompanied by increases in arousal. When we experience stress, our heart rate, breathing, and blood pressure increase, and our body begins to secrete adrenaline and other hormones. Perspiration increases to cool down the body. In addition, sugar is released to provide energy, and the pupils dilate to improve our vision. At the same time, the less immediately essential body activities controlled by the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS), including digestion, are reduced in order to divert more energy to allow the body to react to the threat.

The experience of stress likely had positive aspects for human beings in an evolutionary sense. When we are attacked, afraid, or concerned about our welfare, the body signals us that we need to react, and the stress response is one of those signals. But problems begin when a threat continues over time. When it is extreme or prolonged, stress can create substantial negative mental and physical effects. In fact, when stress occurs for too long, it can lead to exhaustion and even death.

General Adaptation Syndrome

The physiologist Hans Seyle (1907–1982) studied stress by examining how rats responded to being exposed to stressors such as extreme cold, infection, shock, and excessive exercise. Seyle found that regardless of the source of the stress, the rats experienced the same series of physiological changes as they suffered the prolonged stress. Seyle created the term **general adaptation syndrome** to refer to the three distinct phases of physiological change that occur in response to long-term stress: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion. These phases are explained in Figure 7.7 below.

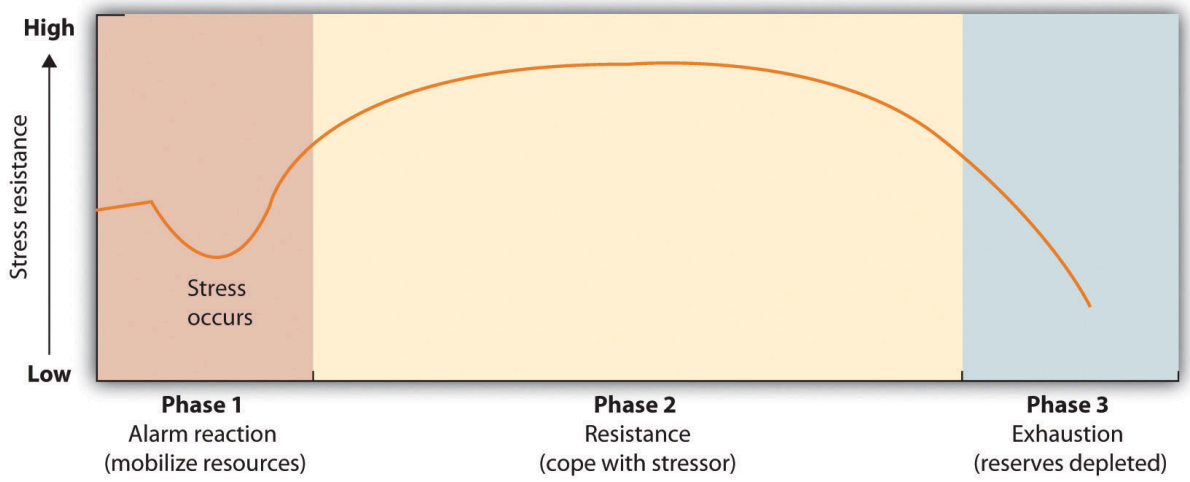

Figure 7.7 General Adaptation Syndrome. Hans Seyle's research on the general adaptation syndrome documented the stages of prolonged exposure to stress. Image: University of Minnesota, Principles of Social Psychology, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Modified from the original. Cropped for accessibility. [Click to enlarge].

Stage one:

- **General alarm reaction**. The first reaction to stress The body releases stress hormones, including cortisol

Stage two:

- **Resistance**. After a period of chronic stress the body adapts to the ongoing threat and tries to its normal function. Glucose levels increase to sustain energy, and blood pressure increases.

Stage three:

- **Exhaustion**. In this stage, the body has run out of its reserves of energy and immunity. Blood sugar levels decrease, leading to decreased stress tolerance, progressive mental and physical exhaustion, illness, and collapse. The body's organs being to fail, and eventually illness or death occurs.

The experience of stress creates both an increase in general arousal in the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and another, even more complex, system of physiological changes through the HPA axis. The **HPA axis** is a physiological response to stress involving interactions among the hypothalamus, the pituitary gland, and the adrenal glands. The HPA response begins when the hypothalamus secretes hormones that direct the pituitary gland to release the hormone ACTH. The ACTH then directs the adrenal glands to secrete more hormones, including epinephrine,

norepinephrine, and cortisol, a stress hormone that releases sugars into the blood to help prepare the body to respond to threat (Rodrigues et al., 2009).

Cortisol is frequently referred to as the "stress hormone," and it is commonly measured by researchers in order to assess the activation of the HPA axis in response to stress. Cortisol is measured by taking a sample of saliva, which is then analyzed to determine cortisol levels. Cortisol increases when people are stressed, for instance, when they are in dancing competitions (Edelstein et al., 2010), when they are experiencing public shame (Rohleder et al., 2008), and (I'm sure you won't be surprised) when taking school exams (Preuss et al., 2010).

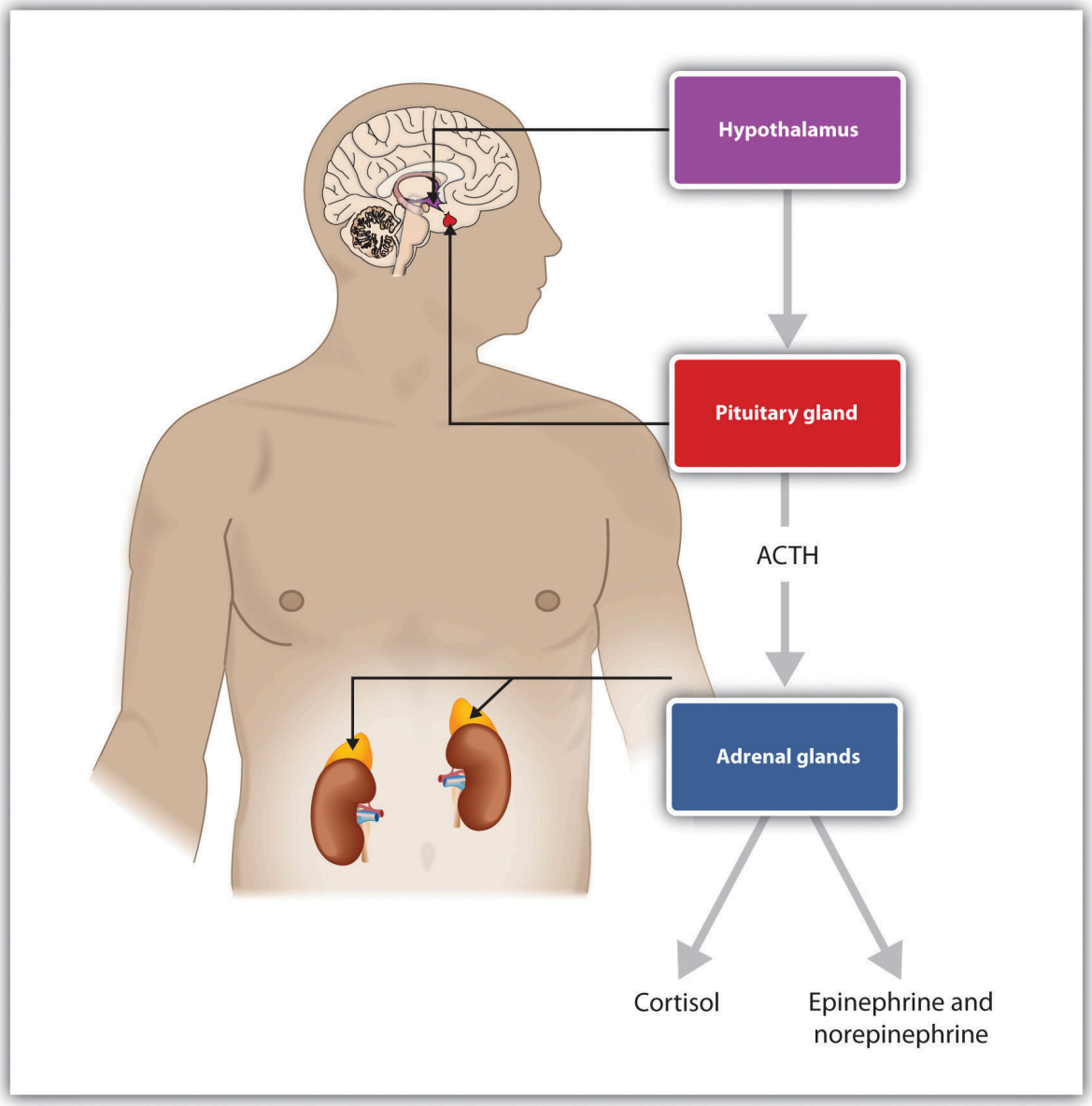

Figure 7.8 Stress activates the HPA axis. The result is the secretion of epinephrine, norepinephrine, and cortisol. Image: University of Minnesota, Principles of Social Psychology, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. [Click to enlarge].

The experience of prolonged stress has a direct negative influence on our physical health because at the same time that stress increases activity in the SNS, it also suppresses important activity in the PNS. When stress is long-term, the HPA axis remains active and the adrenals continue to produce cortisol. This increased cortisol production exhausts the stress mechanism, leading to fatigue and depression.

The HPA reactions to persistent stress lead to a weakening of the immune system, making us more susceptible to a variety of health problems, including colds and other diseases (Cohen & Herbert, 1996; Faulkner & Smith, 2009; Miller et al., 2009; Uchino et al., 2007). Stress also damages our DNA, making us less likely to be able to repair wounds and respond to the genetic mutations that cause disease (Epel et al., 2006). As a result, wounds heal more slowly when we are under stress, and we are more likely to get cancer (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 2002; Wells, 2006).

Sheldon Cohen and colleagues (1998) demonstrated experimentally that repeated exposure to threats and stress can increase susceptibility to the common cold virus, revealing the causal link between psychological stress and actual susceptibility to disease. To begin, the researchers had adult volunteers fill out several questionnaires about the stressful experiences in their lives. Then the researchers administered nose drops into each participant's nose. The control group (the lucky ones!) received a placebo saline solution; the experimental group received a solution containing a cold virus. Over the next week, the participants were examined daily by a nurse. None of the control group participants got a cold. But of those exposed to the cold virus, 82% did get a cold. Furthermore, within this condition, those participants who reported enduring long-term stressors—particularly those who felt that they were underemployed or who had enduring interpersonal difficulties with family or friends—were significantly more likely to catch colds than those who had only short-term stress.

As previously mentioned, chronic stress is also a major contributor to heart disease. Although heart disease is caused in part by genetic factors, as well as by high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and cigarette smoking, it is also caused by stress (Krantz & McCeney, 2002). Long-term stress creates two opposite effects on the coronary system. Stress increases cardiac output (i.e., the heart pumps more blood) at the same time that it reduces the ability of the blood vessels to conduct blood through the arteries, as the increase in levels of cortisol leads to a buildup of plaque on artery walls (Dekker et al., 2008). The combination of increased blood flow and arterial constriction leads to increased blood pressure (hypertension), which can damage the heart muscle, leading to heart attack and death.

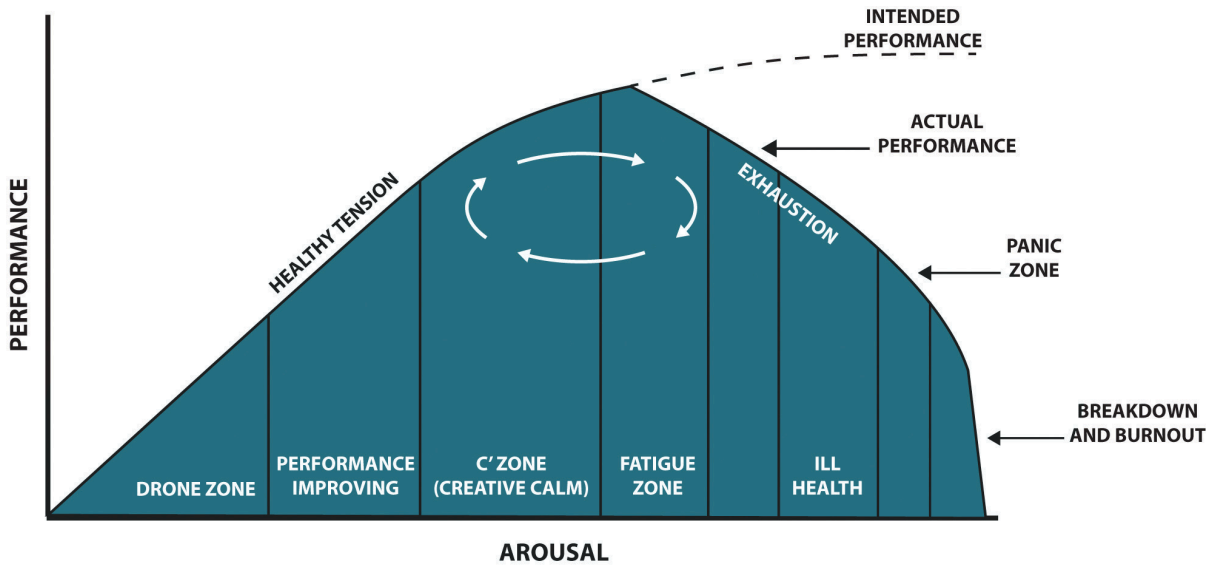

Figure 7.9 The Human Function Curve. As you can see, performance is actually improved with a certain amount of stress, but once that stress becomes episodic or chronic, our performance actually goes down. Image: Saylor Academy, Human Relations, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Color altered from the original. [Click to enlarge].

Managing Stress

We all experience stress at one time or another. However, we can take action to assess and relieve the stress in our life. First, we do some self-analysis to determine the stressors in our life and how we handle it. This emotional intelligence skill (self-awareness) allows us to see what we need to improve upon. Then, we can apply self-management tools to help us manage the stress in our lives. The benefit of this identification and management is that it allows us to relate better to others both in our work life and personal life.

Look at your habits and emotions and really think about what is causing the stress. For example, Julie may be stressed about a project due on Friday, but the real stress may be because she procrastinated in starting the project, and now there isn't enough time to complete it. Or perhaps Gene is stressed because his personality type causes him to put too many things on his to-do list, and he isn't able to get them done. Accepting responsibility for the role we play in our own stresses can be the first step in maintaining a life with mostly positive stress!

Next, we can look at the way we currently deal with stress. For example, when Emily is feeling stressed, she smokes a pack of cigarettes and tends to have several glasses of wine at night. When she isn't stressed, she doesn't smoke and may limit herself to just one or two glasses of wine every few days. Some people smoke cannabis or use other drugs to cope with the stress of everyday life. These substances seemingly help for a period of time but prevent us from actually dealing with the stress—and doesn't help us to gain skills in self-awareness. Understanding your current coping mechanisms for stress can help you determine what works to manage stress—and what doesn't.

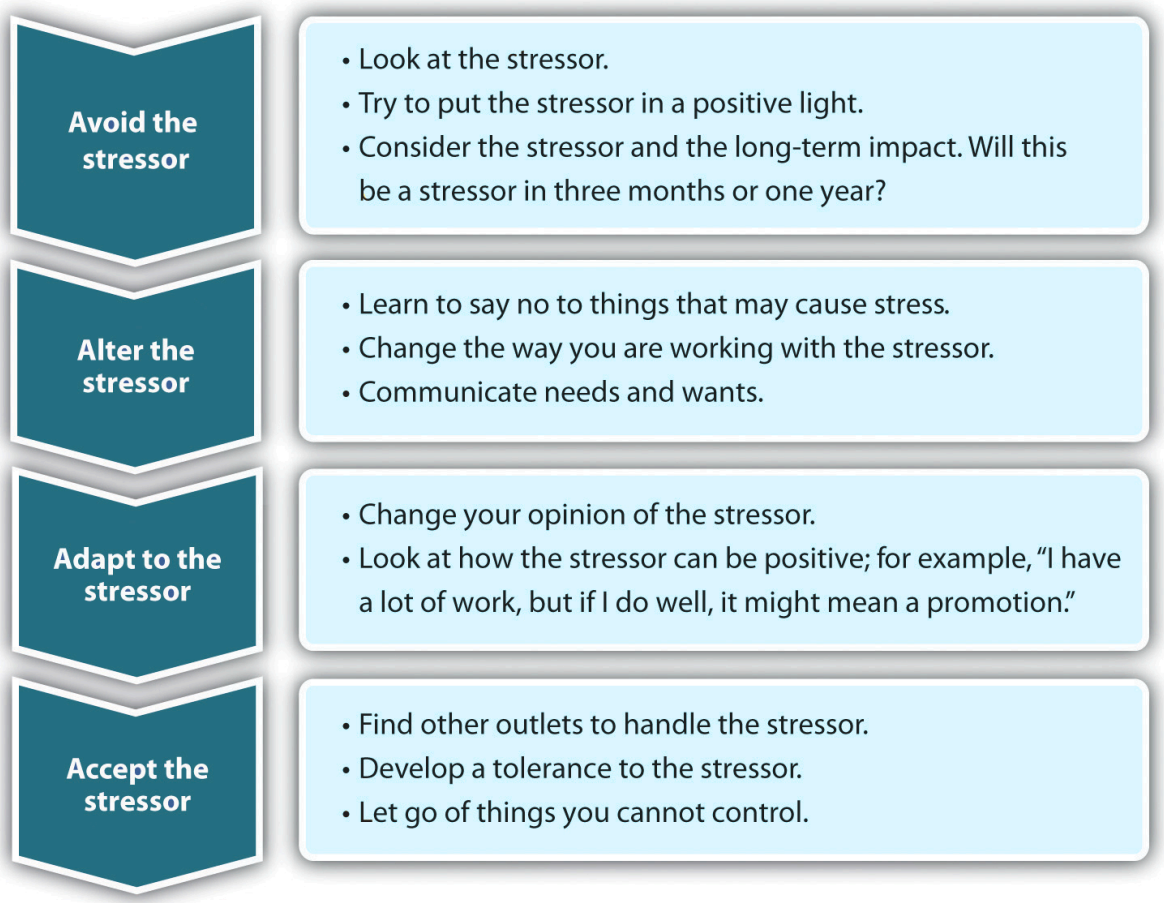

Figure 7.10 Dealing with Stressors. Image: Saylor Academy, Human Relations, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Color altered from the original. [Click to enlarge].

Once we do some self-analysis, we can use a method called the four As. The four As gives us four choices for dealing with a stressor:

Avoid the Stressor

We can try to avoid situations that stress us out. If watching certain television programs causes stress, stop watching them! Spend time with people who help you relax. We can also look at saying no more often if we do not have the time necessary to complete everything we are doing. As we have already learned, avoiding some problems and conflicts can be a temporary solution, but ultimately make the situation worse.

Alter the Stressor

Another option in dealing with stress is to try to alter it, if you can't avoid it. When changing a situation, you can be more assertive, manage time better, and communicate your own needs and wants better. For example, Karen can look at the things causing her stress, such as her home and school commitments; while she can't change the workload, she can examine ways to avoid a heavy workload in the future. If Karen is stressed about the amount of homework she has and the fact that she needs to clean the house, asking for help from roommates, for example, can help alter the stressor. Often this involves the ability to communicate well.

Adapt to the Stressor

If you are unable to avoid or change the stressor, getting comfortable with the stressor is a way to handle it. Creating your own coping mechanisms for the stress and learning to handle it can be an effective way to handle the stress. For example, we can try looking at stressful situations in a positive light, consider how important the stressor is in the long run, and adjust our standards of perfectionism.

Accept the Stressor

Some stressors are unavoidable. We all have to go to work and manage our home life. So, learning to handle the things we cannot change by forgiving, developing tolerances, and letting going of those things we cannot control is also a way to deal with a stressor. For example, if your mother-in-law's yearly visits and criticisms cause stress, obviously you are not able to avoid or alter the stress, but you can adapt to it and accept it. Since we cannot control another person, accepting the stressor and finding ways of dealing with it can help minimize some negative effects of the stress we may experience.

Now that we've explored the nature of stress, in general, let's turn our attention to stress and stressors in the workplace.

Adapted Works

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7.3 Stress at Work

In this section:

- Stress at Work
- A Model of Stress at Work
    - Organizational Influences on Stress
    - Personal Influences on Stress
    - Buffering Effects of Workplace Stress
    - Degrees of Experienced Stress
    - Stress and Counterproductive Behavior
- Stress, Burnout, Trauma, and Structural Violence
- Stress: An Occupational Health and Safety Perspective
    - Karasek's job demands-control model

Stress at Work

Our definition of stress points to a poor fit between individuals and their environments. Either excessive demands are being made, or reasonable demands are being made that individuals are ill-equipped to handle. Under stress, individuals are unable to respond to environmental stimuli without undue psychological and/or physiological damage, such as chronic fatigue, tension, or high blood pressure. This damage resulting from experienced stress is usually referred to as strain.

Before we examine the concept of work-related stress in detail, several important points need to be made. First, stress is pervasive in the work environment (McGrath, 1976). Most of us experience stress at some time. For instance, a job may require too much or too little from us. In fact, almost any aspect of the work environment is capable of producing stress. Stress can result from excessive noise, light, or heat; too much or too little responsibility; too much or too little work to accomplish; or too much or too little supervision.

Second, it is important to note that all people do not react in the same way to stressful situations, even in the same occupation. One individual (a high-need achiever) may thrive on a certain amount of job-related tension; this tension may serve to activate the achievement motive. A second individual may respond to this tension by worrying about her inability to cope with the situation.

Thus, it is important that we recognize the central role of individual differences in the determination of experienced stress.

Often the key reason for the different reactions is a function of the different interpretations of a given event that different people make, especially concerning possible or probable consequences associated with the event. For example, the same report is required of student A and student B on the same day. Student A interprets the report in a very stressful way and imagines all the negative consequences of submitting a poor report. Student B interprets the report differently and sees it as an opportunity to demonstrate the things she has learned and imagines the positive consequences of turning in a high-quality report. Although both students face essentially the same event, they interpret and react to it differently.

Third, all stress is not necessarily bad. Although highly stressful situations invariably have dysfunctional consequences, moderate levels of stress often serve useful purposes. A moderate amount of job-related tension not only keeps us alert to environmental stimuli (possible dangers and opportunities), but in addition often provides a useful motivational function. Some experts argue that the best and most satisfying work that employees do is work performed under moderate stress. Some stress may be necessary for psychological growth, creative activities, and the acquisition of new skills. Learning to drive a car or play a piano or run a particular machine typically creates tension that is instrumental in skill development. It is only when the level of stress increases or when stress is prolonged that physical or psychological problems emerge.

Types of Stress at Work: Frustration and Anxiety

Two common types of stress in the workplace are frustration and anxiety. **Frustration** refers to a psychological reaction to an obstruction or impediment to goal-oriented behavior. Frustration occurs when an individual wishes to pursue a certain course of action but is prevented from doing so. This obstruction may be externally or internally caused. Examples of people experiencing obstacles that lead to frustration include a salesperson who continually fails to make a sale, a machine operator who cannot keep pace with the machine, or even a person dealing with a team member who is not contributing to the group.

Whereas frustration is a reaction to an obstruction in instrumental activities or behavior, **anxiety** is a feeling of inability to deal with anticipated harm. Anxiety occurs when people do not have appropriate responses or plans for coping with anticipated problems. It is characterized by a sense of dread, a foreboding, and a persistent apprehension of the future for reasons that are sometimes unknown to the individual.

What causes anxiety in work organizations? Hamner and Organ (1979) suggest several factors:

> "Differences in power in organizations which leave people with a feeling of vulnerability to administrative decisions adversely affecting them; frequent changes in organizations, which make existing behavior plans obsolete; competition, which creates the inevitability that some

persons lose 'face,' esteem, and status; and job ambiguity (especially when it is coupled with pressure). To these may be added some related factors, such as lack of job feedback, volatility in the organization's economic environment, job insecurity, and high visibility of one's performance (successes as well as failures). Obviously, personal, nonorganizational factors come into play as well, such as physical illness, problems at home, unrealistically high personal goals, and estrangement from one's colleagues or one's peer group" (p. 202).

A Model of Stress at Work

We will now consider several factors that have been found to influence both frustration and anxiety; we will present a general model of stress, including its major causes and its outcomes. Following this, we will explore several mechanisms by which employees and their managers cope with or reduce experienced stress in organizations. The model presented here draws heavily on the work of several social psychologists at the Institute for Social Research of the University of Michigan, including John French, Robert Caplan, Robert Kahn, and Daniel Katz. In essence, the proposed model identifies two major sources of stress: organizational sources and individual sources. In addition, the moderating effects of social support and hardiness are considered. These factors contribute to the degrees of experienced stress. These influences are shown in the figure below.

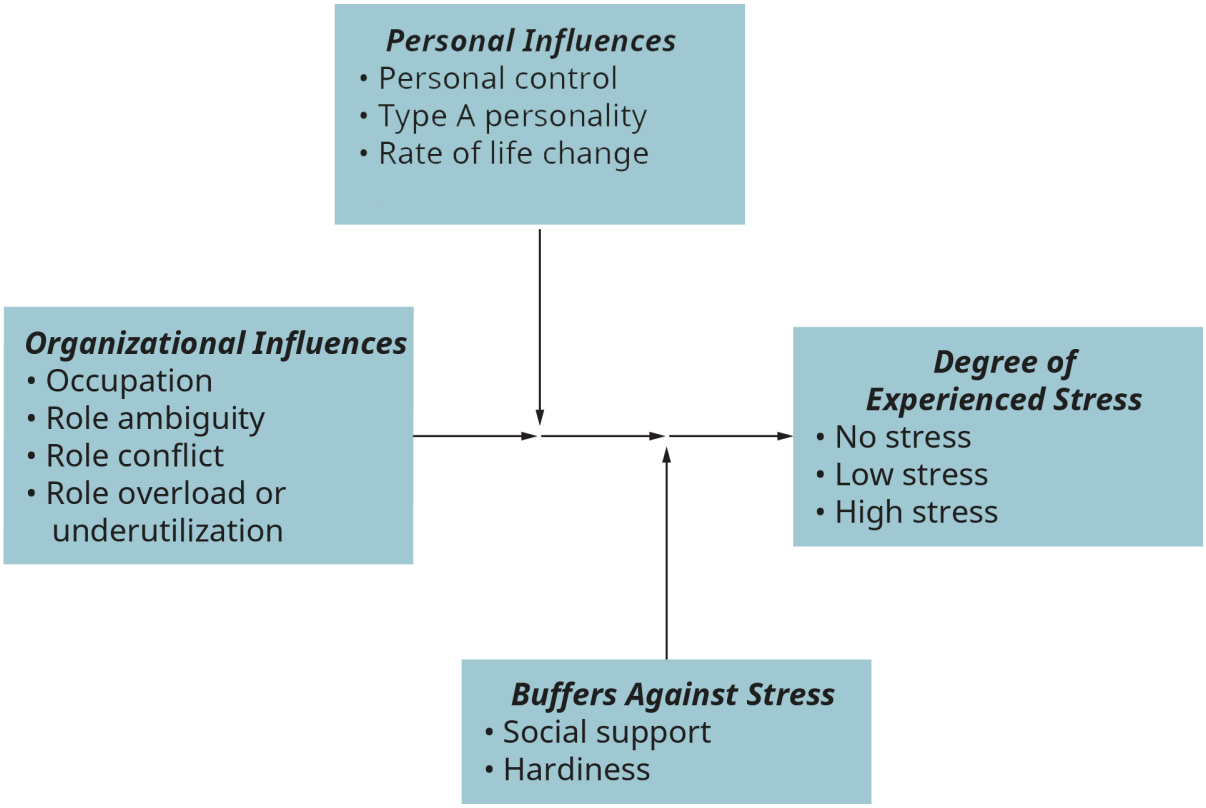

Figure 7.11 Major Influences on Job-Related Stress. Image: Rice University and OpenStax, Organizational Behavior, CC BY 4.0. Color and text altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

We begin with organizational influences on stress. Although many factors in the work environment have been found to influence the extent to which people experience stress on the job, four factors have been shown to be particularly strong. These are occupational differences, role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload and underutilization. We will consider each of these factors in turn.

Organizational Influences on Stress

Occupational Differences

Tension and job stress are prevalent in our contemporary society and can be found in a wide variety of jobs. Consider, for example, the following quotes from interviews with working people. The first is from a bus driver:

> "You have your tension. Sometimes you come close to having an accident, that upsets you. You just escape maybe by a hair or so. Sometimes maybe you get a disgruntled passenger on there who starts a big argument. Traffic. You have someone who cuts you off or stops in front of the bus. There's a lot of tension behind that. . . . Most of the time you have to drive for the other drivers, to avoid hitting them. So, you take the tension home with you. Most of the drivers, they'll suffer from hemorrhoids, kidney trouble, and such as that. I had a case of ulcers behind it" (Terkel, 1972, p. 275).

Or consider the plight of a bank teller:

> "Some days, when you're aggravated about something, you carry it after you leave the job. Certain people are bad days. (Laughs.) The type of person who will walk in and say, 'My car's double-parked outside. Would you hurry up, lady?' . . . you want to say, 'Hey, why did you double-park your car? So now you're going to blame me if you get a ticket, 'cause you were dumb enough to leave it there?' But you can't. That's the one hassle. You can't say anything back. The customer's always right" (Terkel, 1972, p. 348).

Stress is experienced by workers in many jobs: administrative assistants, assembly-line workers, servers and managers. In fact, it is difficult to find jobs that are without some degree of stress. We seldom talk about jobs without stress; instead, we talk about the degree or magnitude of the stress.

The work roles that people fill have a substantial influence on the degree to which they experience stress (Cooper & Payne, 1978; Hall & Savery, 1986). These differences do not follow the traditional blue-collar/white-collar dichotomy, however. In general, available evidence suggests that high-stress occupations are those in which incumbents have little control over their jobs, work under relentless time pressures or threatening physical conditions, or have major responsibilities for either human or financial resources.

A study by Kranz (1988) attempted to identify those occupations that were most (and least) stressful. The study results are presented in the table below. As shown, high-stress occupations (firefighter,

race car driver, and astronaut) are typified by the stress-producing characteristics noted above, whereas low-stress occupations (musical instrument repairperson, medical records technician, and librarian) are not. It can therefore be concluded that a major source of general stress emerges from the occupation at which one is working.

Table 7.6 The Most and Least Stressful Jobs

High-Stress Jobs	Low-Stress Jobs
1. Firefighter	1. Musical instrument repairperson
2. Race car driver	2. Industrial machine repairperson
3. Astronaut	3. Medical records technician
4. Surgeon	4. Pharmacist
5. NFL football player	5. Medical assistant
6. City police officer	6. Typist/word processor
7. Osteopath	7. Librarian
8. State police officer	8. Janitor
9. Air traffic controller	9. Bookkeeper
10. Mayor	10. Forklift operator

Source: *Adapted from The Jobs Rated Almanac by Les Krantz. 1988 Les Krantz. Reproduced from Rice University, Organizational Behavio, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

A second survey, by the American Psychological Association (2011), examined the specific causes of stress. The results of the study showed that the most frequently cited reasons for stress among administrative professionals are unspecified job requirements (38 percent), work interfering with personal time (36 percent), job insecurity (33 percent), and lack of participation in decision-making (33 percent). Finally, a study among managers found that they, too, are subject to considerable stress arising out of the nature of managerial work (Zauder & Fox, 1987). The more common work stressors for managers are shown in the table below.

Table 7.7 Typical Stressors Faced by Managers.

Stressor	Example
Role ambiguity	Unclear job duties
Role conflict	Manager is both a boss and a subordinate.
Role overload	Too much work, too little time
Unrealistic expectations	Managers are often asked to do the impossible.
Difficult decisions	Managers have to make decisions that adversely affect subordinates.
Managerial failure	Manager fails to achieve expected results.
Subordinate failure	Subordinates let the boss down.

Source: *Adapted from D. Zauderer and J. Fox, "Resiliency in the Face of Stress," Management Solutions, November 1987, pp. 32–33. Reproduced from Rice University, Organizational Behavio, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

Thus, a person's occupation or profession represents a major cause of stress-related problems at work. In addition to occupation, however, and indeed closely related to it, is the problem of one's role expectations in the organization. Three interrelated role processes will be examined as they relate to experienced stress: role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload or underutilization.

Role Ambiguity

The first role process variable to be discussed here is **role ambiguity**. When individuals have inadequate information concerning their roles, they experience role ambiguity. Uncertainty over job definition takes many forms, including not knowing expectations for performance, not knowing how to meet those expectations, and not knowing the consequences of job behavior. Role ambiguity is particularly strong among managerial jobs, where role definitions and task specification lack clarity. For example, the manager of accounts payable may not be sure of the quantity and quality standards for their department. The uncertainty of the absolute level of these two performance standards or their relative importance to each other makes predicting outcomes such as performance evaluation, salary increases, or promotion opportunities equally difficult. All of this contributes to increased stress for the manager. Role ambiguity can also occur among nonmanagerial employees—for example, those whose supervisors fail to make sufficient time to clarify role expectations, thus leaving them unsure of how best to contribute to departmental and organizational goals.

Role ambiguity has been found to lead to several negative stress-related outcomes. French and Caplan (1972) summarized their study findings as follows:

> "In summary, role ambiguity, which appears to be widespread, (1) produces psychological strain and dissatisfaction; (2) leads to underutilization of human resources; and (3) leads to feelings of futility on how to cope with the organizational environment" (p. 36)

In other words, role ambiguity has far-reaching consequences beyond experienced stress, including

employee turnover and absenteeism, poor coordination and utilization of human resources, and increased operating costs because of inefficiency. It should be noted, however, that not everyone responds in the same way to role ambiguity. Studies have shown that some people have a higher tolerance for ambiguity and are less affected by role ambiguity (in terms of stress, reduced performance, or propensity to leave) than those with a low tolerance for ambiguity (French & Caplan, 1972). Thus, again we can see the role of individual differences in moderating the effects of environmental stimuli on individual behavior and performance.

Role Conflict

The second role-related factor in stress is **role conflict**. This may be defined as the simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures or expectations; compliance with one would make it difficult to comply with the other. In other words, role conflict occurs when an employee is placed in a situation where contradictory demands are placed upon them. For instance, a factory worker may find himself in a situation where the supervisor is demanding greater output, yet the work group is demanding a restriction of output. Similarly, a secretary who reports to several supervisors may face a conflict over whose work to do first.

One of the best-known studies of role conflict and stress was carried out by Robert Kahn and his colleagues at the University of Michigan. Kahn studied 53 managers and their subordinates (a total of 381 people), examining the nature of each person's role and how it affected subsequent behavior. As a result of the investigation, the following conclusions emerged:

Contradictory role expectations give rise to opposing role pressures (role conflict), which generally have the following effects on the emotional experience of the focal person: intensified internal conflicts, increased tension associated with various aspects of the job, reduced satisfaction with the job and its various components, and decreased confidence in superiors and in the organization as a whole. The strain experienced by those in conflict situations leads to various coping responses, social and psychological withdrawal (reduction in communication and attributed influence) among them.

Finally, the presence of conflict in one's role tends to undermine a person's reactions with the individuals who dictate the role and to produce weaker bonds of trust, respect, and attraction. It is quite clear that role conflicts are costly for the person in emotional and interpersonal terms. They may be costly to the organization, which depends on effective coordination and collaboration within and among its parts (Kahn et al., 1964).

Other studies have found similar results concerning the serious side effects of role conflict both for individuals and organizations (Quick & Quick, 1984; Sutton & Rafaeli, 1987). It should again be recognized, however, that personality differences may serve to moderate the impact of role conflict on stress. In particular, it has been found that introverts and people who lack flexibility respond more negatively to role conflict than do others (French & Caplan). In any event, managers must be aware of the problem of role conflict and look for ways to avert negative consequences. One way this can be accomplished is by ensuring that their subordinates are not placed in contradictory positions

within the organization; that is, subordinates should have a clear idea of what the manager's job expectations are and should not be placed in "win-lose" situations.

Role Overload and Underutilization

Finally, in addition to role ambiguity and conflict, a third aspect of role processes has also been found to represent an important influence on experienced stress—namely, the extent to which employees feel either overloaded or underutilized in their job responsibilities. **Role overload** is a condition in which individuals feel they are being asked to do more than time or ability permits. Individuals often experience role overload as a conflict between quantity and quality of performance. **Quantitative overload** consists of having more work than can be done in a given time period, such as a clerk expected to process 1,000 applications per day when only 850 are possible. Overload can **be visualized as a continuum ranging from too little to do to too much to do.** Qualitative role overload, on the other hand, consists of being taxed beyond one's skills, abilities, and knowledge. It can be seen as a continuum ranging from too-easy work to too-difficult work. For example, a manager who is expected to increase sales but has little idea of why sales are down or what to do to get sales up can experience qualitative role overload. It is important to note that either extreme represents a bad fit between the abilities of the employee and the demands of the work environment. A good fit occurs at that point on both scales of workload where the abilities of the individual are relatively consistent with the demands of the job.

There is evidence that both quantitative and qualitative role overload are prevalent in our society. What induces this overload? As a result of a series of studies, French and Caplan concluded that a major factor influencing overload is the high achievement needs of many managers. Need for achievement correlated very highly both with the number of hours worked per week and with a questionnaire measure of role overload. In other words, much role overload is apparently self-induced.

Similarly, the concept of **role underutilization** should also be acknowledged as a source of experienced stress. Role underutilization occurs when employees are allowed to use only a few of their skills and abilities, even though they are required to make heavy use of them. The most prevalent characteristic of role underutilization is monotony, where the worker performs the same routine task (or set of tasks) over and over. Other situations that make for underutilization include total dependence on machines for determining work pace and sustained positional or postural constraint. Several studies have found that underutilization often leads to low self-esteem, low life satisfaction, and increased frequency of nervous complaints and symptoms (Gardell, 1976).

Both role overload and role underutilization have been shown to influence psychological and physiological reactions to the job. The inverted U-shaped relationship between the extent of role utilization and stress is shown in Figure 7.12. As shown, the least stress is experienced at that point where an employee's abilities and skills are in balance with the requirements of the job. This is where performance should be highest. Employees should be highly motivated and should have high energy levels, sharp perception, and calmness. (Recall that many of the current efforts to redesign

jobs and improve the quality of work are aimed at minimizing overload or underutilization in the workplace and achieving a more suitable balance between abilities possessed and skills used on the job.) When employees experience underutilization, boredom, decreased motivation, apathy, and absenteeism will be more likely. Role overload can lead to such symptoms as insomnia, irritability, increased errors, and indecisiveness.

Taken together, occupation and role processes represent a sizable influence on whether or not an employee experiences high stress levels.

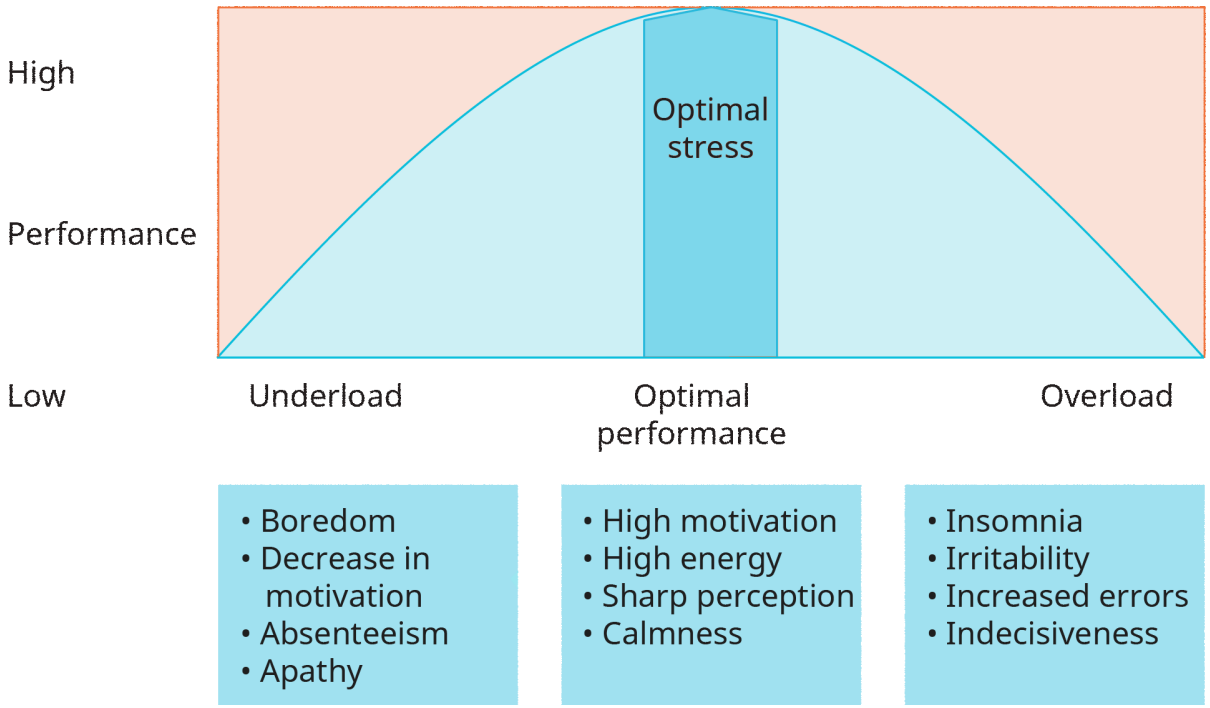

Figure 7.12 The Underload-Overload Continuum Source: Adapted from Organizations: Behavior, Structure, Processes 14th edition by James L. Gibson, John M. Ivancevich, and Robert Konopaske, McGraw Hill, 2013. Image: Rice University and OpenStax, Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from the original. [Click to enlarge].

Self -Assessment

See Appendix B: Self-Assessments

This instrument focuses on the stress level of your current (or previous) job.

- How Stressful Is Your Job?

Personal Influences on Stress

The second major influence on job-related stress can be found in the employees themselves. As such, we will examine three individual-difference factors as they influence stress at work: personal control, Type A personality, and rate of life change.

Personal Control

To begin with, we should acknowledge the importance of personal control as a factor in stress. **Personal control** represents the extent to which an employee actually has control over factors affecting effective job performance. If an employee is assigned a responsibility for something (landing an airplane, completing a report, meeting a deadline) but is not given an adequate opportunity to perform (because of too many planes, insufficient information, insufficient time), the employee loses personal control over the job and can experience increased stress. Personal control seems to work through the process of employee participation. That is, the more employees are allowed to participate in job-related matters, the more control they feel for project completion. On the other hand, if employees' opinions, knowledge, and wishes are excluded from organizational operations, the resulting lack of participation can lead not only to increased stress and strain, but also to reduced productivity.

The importance of employee participation in enhancing personal control and reducing stress is reflected in the French and Caplan study discussed earlier. After a major effort to uncover the antecedents of job-related stress, these investigators concluded:

> "Since participation is also significantly correlated with low role ambiguity, good relations with others, and low overload, it is conceivable that its effects are widespread, and that all the relationships between these other stresses and psychological strain can be accounted for in terms of how much the person participates. This, in fact, appears to be the case. When we control or hold constant, through statistical analysis techniques, the amount of participation a person reports, then the correlations between all the above stresses and job satisfaction and job-related threat drop quite noticeably. This suggests that low participation generates these related stresses, and that increasing participation is an efficient way of reducing many other stresses which also lead to psychological strain." (French & Caplan, 1972, p. 51).

On the bases of this and related studies, we can conclude that increased participation and personal control over one's job is often associated with several positive outcomes, including lower psychological strain, increased skill utilization, improved working relations, and more-positive attitudes. These factors, in turn, contribute toward higher productivity. These results are shown in Figure 7.10 (Schuler & Jackson, 1986).

Related to the issue of personal control—indeed, moderating its impact—is the concept of **locus of control**. It will be remembered that some people have an internal locus of control, feeling that much of what happens in their life is under their own control. Others have an external locus of

control, feeling that many of life's events are beyond their control. This concept has implications for how people respond to the amount of personal control in the work environment. That is, internals are more likely to be upset by threats to the personal control of surrounding events than are externals. Recent evidence indicates that internals react to situations over which they have little or no control with aggression—presumably in an attempt to reassert control over ongoing events (Carver & Glass, 1978; Fusilier et al., 1986). On the other hand, externals tend to be more resigned to external control, are much less involved in or upset by a constrained work environment, and do not react as emotionally to organizational stress factors. Hence, locus of control must be recognized as a potential moderator of the effects of personal control as it relates to experienced stress.

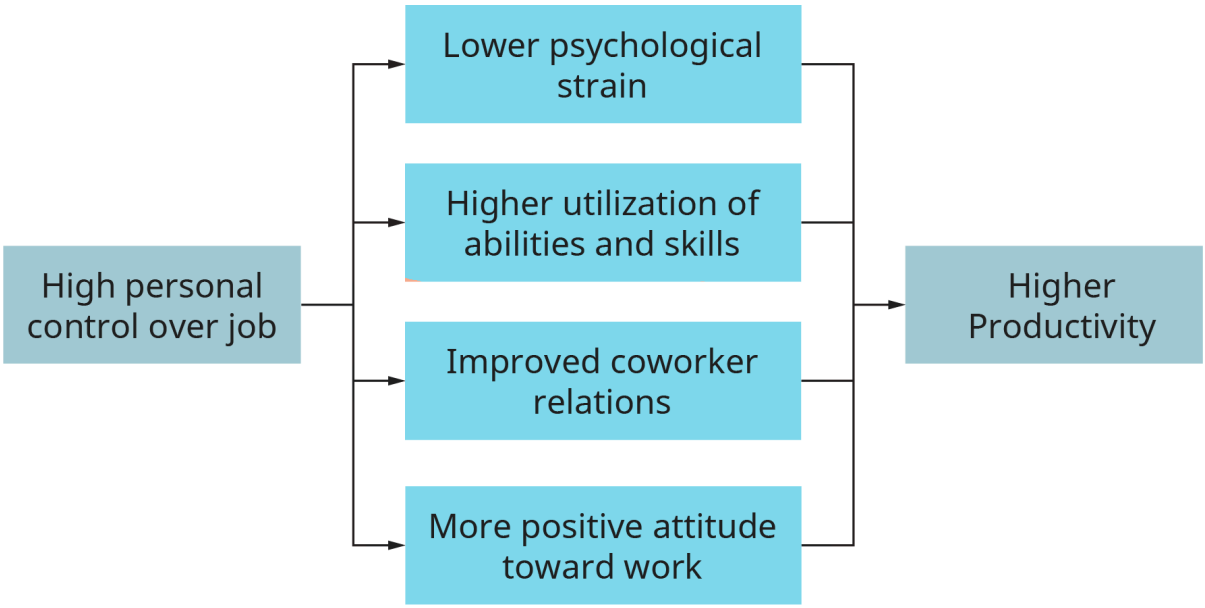

Figure 7.13 Consequences of High Personal Control. Image: Rice University and OpenStax, Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from the original. [Click to enlarge].

Type A Personality

Research has focused on what is perhaps the single most dangerous personal influence on experienced stress and subsequent physical harm. This characteristic was first introduced by Friedman and Rosenman (1974) and is called Type A personality. Type A and Type B personalities are felt to be relatively stable personal characteristics exhibited by individuals. Type A personality is characterized by impatience, restlessness, aggressiveness, competitiveness, polyphasic activities (having many "irons in the fire" at one time), and being under considerable time pressure. Work activities are particularly important to Type A individuals, and they tend to freely invest long hours on the job to meet pressing (and recurring) deadlines. Type B people, on the other hand, experience fewer pressing deadlines or conflicts, are relatively free of any sense of time urgency or hostility, and are generally less competitive on the job. These differences are summarized in Table 7.8.

Table 7.8 Profiles of Type A and Type B Personalities

Type A	Type B
Highly competitive	Lacks intense competitiveness
"Workaholic"	Work only one of many interests
Intense sense of urgency	More deliberate time orientation
Polyphasic behavior	Does one activity at a time
Strong goal-directedness	More moderate goal-directedness

Source: *Rice University, Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

Type A personality is frequently found in managers. Indeed, one study found that 60 percent of managers were clearly identified as Type A, whereas only 12 percent were clearly identified as Type B (Howard et al., 1976). It has been suggested that Type A personality is most useful in helping someone rise through the ranks of an organization.

The role of Type A personality in producing stress is exemplified by the relationship between this behavior and heart disease. Rosenman and Friedman (1974) studied 3,500 men over an 8 1/2-year period and found Type A individuals to be twice as prone to heart disease, five times as prone to a second heart attack, and twice as prone to fatal heart attacks when compared to Type B individuals. Similarly, Jenkins (1971) studied over 3,000 men and found that of 133 coronary heart disease sufferers, 94 were clearly identified as Type A in early test scores. The rapid rise of women in managerial positions suggests that they, too, may be subject to this same problem. Hence, Type A behavior very clearly leads to one of the most severe outcomes of experienced stress. One irony of Type A is that although this behavior is helpful in securing rapid promotion to the top of an organization, it may be detrimental once the individual has arrived. That is, although Type A employees make successful managers (and salespeople), the most successful top executives tend to be Type B. They exhibit patience and a broad concern for the ramifications of decisions.

The key is to know how to shift from Type A behavior to Type B. How does a manager accomplish this? The obvious answer is to slow down and relax. However, many Type A managers refuse to acknowledge either the problem or the need for change, because they feel it may be viewed as a sign of weakness. In these cases, several small steps can be taken, including scheduling specified times every day to exercise, delegating more significant work to subordinates, and eliminating optional activities from the daily calendar. Some companies have begun experimenting with retreats, where managers are removed from the work environment and engage in group psychotherapy over the problems associated with Type A personality.

Rate of Life Change

A third personal influence on experienced stress is the degree to which lives are stable or turbulent. Recall our previous discussion of the work of Holmes and Rahe (1967). As a result of their research, a

variety of life events were identified and assigned points based upon the extent to which each event is related to stress and illness. The death of a spouse was seen as the most stressful change and was assigned 100 points. Other events were scaled proportionately in terms of their impact on stress and illness. It was found that the higher the point total of recent events, the more likely it is that the individual will become ill.

Buffering Effects of Workplace Stress

We have seen in the previous discussion how a variety of organizational and personal factors influence the extent to which individuals experience stress on the job. Although many factors, or stressors, have been identified, their effect on psychological and behavioral outcomes is not always as strong as we might expect. This lack of a direct stressor-outcome relationship suggests the existence of potential moderator variables that buffer the effects of potential stressors on individuals. Recent research has identified two such buffers: the degree of social support the individual receives and the individual's general degree of what is called hardiness. Both are noted in Figure 7.11.

Social Support

First, let us consider social support. **Social support** is simply the extent to which organization members feel their peers can be trusted, are interested in one another's welfare, respect one another, and have a genuine positive regard for one another. When social support is present, individuals feel that they are not alone as they face the more prevalent stressors. The feeling that those around you really care about what happens to you and are willing to help blunts the severity of potential stressors and leads to less-painful side effects. For example, family support can serve as a buffer for executives on assignment in a foreign country and can reduce the stress associated with cross-cultural adjustment.

Much of the more rigorous research on the buffering effects of social support on stress comes from the field of medicine, but it has relevance for organizational behavior. In a series of medical studies, it was consistently found that high peer support reduced negative outcomes of potentially stressful events (surgery, job loss, hospitalization) and increased positive outcomes (Cohen & Wills, 1985). These results clearly point to the importance of social support to individual well-being. These results also indicate that managers should be aware of the importance of building cohesive, supportive work groups—particularly among individuals who are most subject to stress.

Hardiness

The second moderator of stress is hardiness. **Hardiness** represents a collection of personality characteristics that involve one's ability to perceptually or behaviorally transform negative stressors into positive challenges. These characteristics include a sense of commitment to the importance of

what one is doing, an internal locus of control, and a sense of life challenge. In other words, people characterized by hardiness have a clear sense of where they are going and are not easily deterred by hurdles. The pressure of goal frustration does not deter them, because they invest themselves in the situation and push ahead. Simply put, these are people who refuse to give up (Kobasa et al., 1982; Hull et al, 1987).

Several studies of hardiness support the importance of this variable as a stress moderator. One study among managers found that those characterized by hardiness were far less susceptible to illness following prolonged stress. And a study among undergraduates found hardiness to be positively related to perceptions that potential stressors were actually challenges to be met. Thus, factors such as individual hardiness and the degree of social support must be considered in any model of the stress process.

Degrees of Experienced Stress

In exploring major influences on stress, it was pointed out that the intensity with which a person experiences stress is a function of organizational factors and personal factors, moderated by the degree of social support in the work environment and by hardiness. We come now to an examination of major consequences of work-related stress. Here we will attempt to answer the "so what?" question. Why should managers be interested in stress and resulting strain?

As a guide for examining the topic, we recognize three intensity levels of stress—no stress, low stress, and high stress—and will study the outcomes of each level. These outcomes are shown schematically in Figure 7.14. Four major categories of outcome will be considered: (1) stress and health, (2) stress and counterproductive behavior, (3) stress and job performance, and (4) stress and burnout.

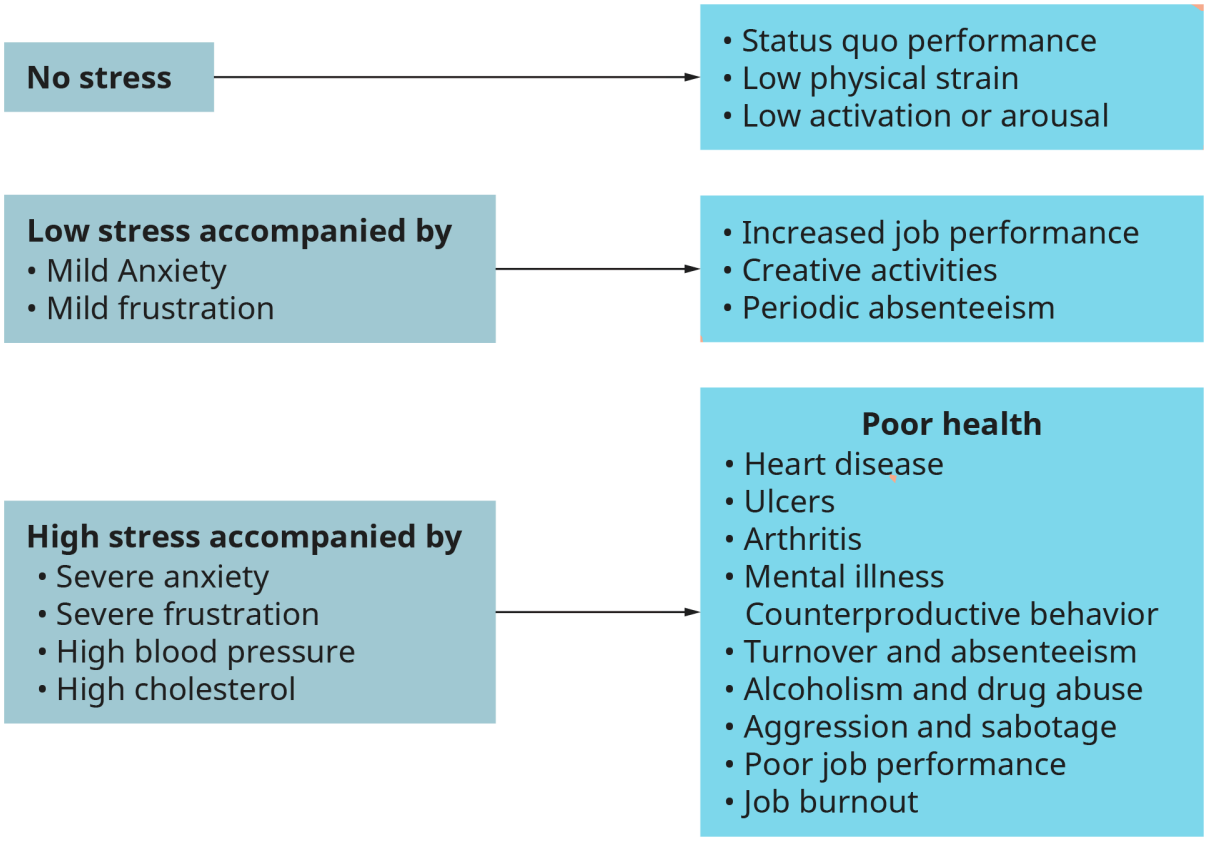

Figure 7.14 Major Consequences of Work-Related Stress. Image: Rice University and OpenStax, Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from the original. [Click to enlarge].

Stress and Health

High degrees of stress are typically accompanied by severe anxiety and/or frustration, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol levels. These psychological and physiological changes contribute to the impairment of health in several different ways. Most important, high stress contributes to heart disease (Cooper & Payne, 1986). The relationship between high job stress and heart disease is well established.

High job stress also contributes to a variety of other ailments, including peptic ulcers, arthritis, and several forms of mental illness. In a study by Cobb and Kasl, for example, it was found that individuals with high educational achievement but low job status exhibited abnormally high levels of anger, irritation, anxiety, tiredness, depression, and low self-esteem (Cobb & Kals, 1970).

In another study, Slote examined the effects of a plant closing in Detroit on stress and stress outcomes. Although factory closings are fairly common, the effects of these closings on individuals have seldom been examined. Slote found that the plant closing led to “an alarming rise in anxiety and illness,” with at least half the employees suffering from ulcers, arthritis, serious hypertension, alcoholism, clinical depression, and even hair loss (Slote, 1977). Clearly, this life change event took its toll on the mental and physical well-being of the workforce.

Finally, in a classic study of mental health of industrial workers, Kornhauser (1965) studied a sample of automobile assembly-line workers. Of the employees studied, he found that 40 percent had symptoms of mental health problems. His main findings may be summarized as follows:

- Job satisfaction varied consistently with employee skill levels. Blue-collar workers holding high-level jobs exhibited better mental health than those holding low-level jobs.
- Job dissatisfaction, stress, and absenteeism were all related directly to the characteristics of the job. Dull, repetitious, unchallenging jobs were associated with the poorest mental health.
- Feelings of helplessness, withdrawal, alienation, and pessimism were widespread throughout the plant. As an example, Kornhauser noted that 50 percent of the assembly-line workers felt they had little influence over the future course of their lives; this compares to only 17 percent for nonfactory workers.
- Employees with the lowest mental health also tended to be more passive in their nonwork activities; typically, they did not vote or take part in community activities.

In conclusion, Kornhauser noted:

> "Poor mental health occurs whenever conditions of work and life lead to continuing frustration by failing to offer means for perceived progress toward attainment of strongly desired goals which have become indispensable elements of the individual's self-esteem and dissatisfaction with life, often accompanied by anxieties, social alienation and withdrawal, a narrowing of goals and curtailing of aspirations—in short . . . poor mental health" (p. 342).

Managers need to be concerned about the problems of physical and mental health because of their severe consequences both for the individual and for the organization. Health is often related to performance, and to the extent that health suffers, so too do a variety of performance-related factors. Given the importance of performance for organizational effectiveness, we will now examine how it is affected by stress.

Stress and Counterproductive Behavior

It is useful from a managerial standpoint to consider several forms of counterproductive behavior that are known to result from prolonged stress. These counterproductive behaviors include turnover and absenteeism, alcoholism and drug abuse, and aggression and sabotage.

Turnover and Absenteeism

Turnover and absenteeism represent convenient forms of withdrawal from a highly stressful job. Results of several studies have indicated a fairly consistent, if modest, relationship between stress and subsequent turnover and absenteeism (Allen & Bryant, 2013; Mobley, 1982; Rhodes & Steers, 1990). In many ways, withdrawal represents one of the easiest ways employees have of handling

a stressful work environment, at least in the short run. Indeed, turnover and absenteeism may represent two of the less undesirable consequences of stress, particularly when compared to alternative choices such as alcoholism, drug abuse, or aggression. Although high turnover and absenteeism may inhibit productivity, at least they do little physical harm to the individual or coworkers. Even so, there are many occasions when employees are not able to leave because of family or financial obligations, a lack of alternative employment, and so forth. In these situations, it is not unusual to see more dysfunctional behavior.

Abuse of Drugs and Alcohol

It has long been known that stress is linked to substance use and abuse by employees at all levels in the organizational hierarchy. These two forms of withdrawal offer a temporary respite from severe anxiety and severe frustration. Both alcohol and drugs are used by a significant proportion of employees to escape from the rigors of a routine or stressful job. Although many companies have begun in-house programs aimed at rehabilitating chronic cases, these forms of withdrawal seem to continue to be on the increase, presenting another serious problem for modern managers. One answer to this dilemma involves reducing stress on the job that is creating the need for withdrawal from organizational activities.

Aggression and Sabotage

Severe frustration can also lead to overt hostility in the form of aggression toward other people and toward inanimate objects. Aggression occurs when individuals feel frustrated and can find no acceptable, legitimate remedies for the frustration. A frustrated employee may react by covert verbal abuse or an intentional slowdown on subsequent work. A more extreme example of aggression can be seen in the periodic reports in newspapers about a worker who violently attacks fellow employees.

One common form of aggressive behavior on the job is sabotage – intentionally causing problems such as failures, damage or conflict. The extent to which frustration leads to aggressive behavior is influenced by several factors, often under the control of managers. Aggression tends to be subdued when employees anticipate that it will be punished, the peer group disapproves, or it has not been reinforced in the past (that is, when aggressive behavior failed to lead to positive outcomes). Thus, it is incumbent upon managers to avoid reinforcing undesired behavior and, at the same time, to provide constructive outlets for frustration. In this regard, some companies have provided official channels for the discharge of aggressive tendencies. For example, many companies have experimented with ombudsmen, whose task it is to be impartial mediators of employee disputes. Results have proved positive. These procedures or outlets are particularly important for nonunion personnel, who do not have contractual grievance procedures.

Stress and Job Performance

A major concern of management is the effects of stress on job performance. The relationship is not as simple as might be supposed. The stress-performance relationship resembles an inverted J-curve, as shown in Figure 7.12. At very low or no-stress levels, individuals maintain their current levels of performance. Under these conditions, individuals are not activated, do not experience any stress-related physical strain, and probably see no reason to change their performance levels. Note that this performance level may be high or low. In any event, an absence of stress probably would not cause any change.

On the other hand, studies indicate that under conditions of low stress, people are activated sufficiently to motivate them to increase performance. For instance, salespeople and many managers perform best when they are experiencing mild anxiety or frustration. Stress in modest amounts, as when a manager has a tough problem to solve, acts as a stimulus for the individual. The toughness of a problem often pushes managers to their performance limits. Similarly, mild stress can also be responsible for creative activities in individuals as they try to solve difficult (stressful) problems.

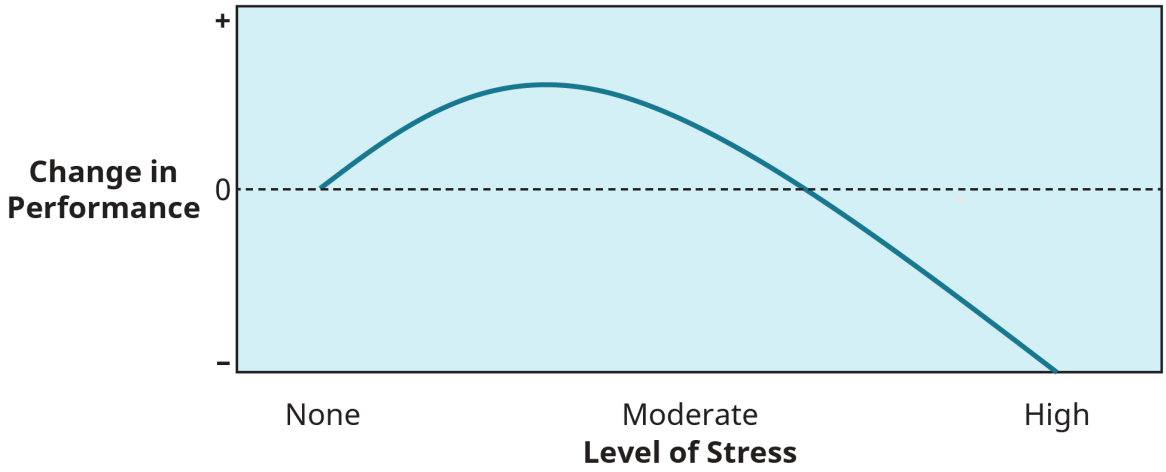

Figure 7.15 The Relationship Between Stress and Job Performance. Image: Rice University and OpenStax, Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from the original. [Click to enlarge].

Finally, under conditions of high stress, individual performance drops markedly. Here, the severity of the stress consumes attention and energies, and individuals focus considerable effort on attempting to reduce the stress (often employing a variety of counterproductive behaviors as noted below). Little energy is left to devote to job performance, with obvious results.

Stress and Burnout

When job-related stress is prolonged, poor job performance such as that described above often moves into a more critical phase, known as burnout. **Burnout** is a general feeling of exhaustion that can develop when a person simultaneously experiences too much pressure to perform and too few sources of satisfaction (Jackson et al., 1986).

Candidates for job burnout seem to exhibit similar characteristics. That is, many such individuals are idealistic and self-motivated achievers, often seek unattainable goals, and have few buffers against stress. As a result, these people demand a great deal from themselves, and, because their goals are so high, they often fail to reach them. Because they do not have adequate buffers, stressors affect them rather directly. This is shown in Figure 7.15. As a result of experienced stress, burnout victims develop a variety of negative and often hostile attitudes toward the organization and themselves, including fatalism, boredom, discontent, cynicism, and feelings of personal inadequacy. As a result, the person decreases their aspiration levels, loses confidence, and attempts to withdraw from the situation.

Research indicates that burnout is widespread among employees, including managers, researchers, and engineers, that are often hardest to replace by organizations. As a result, many companies offer stress reduction programs.

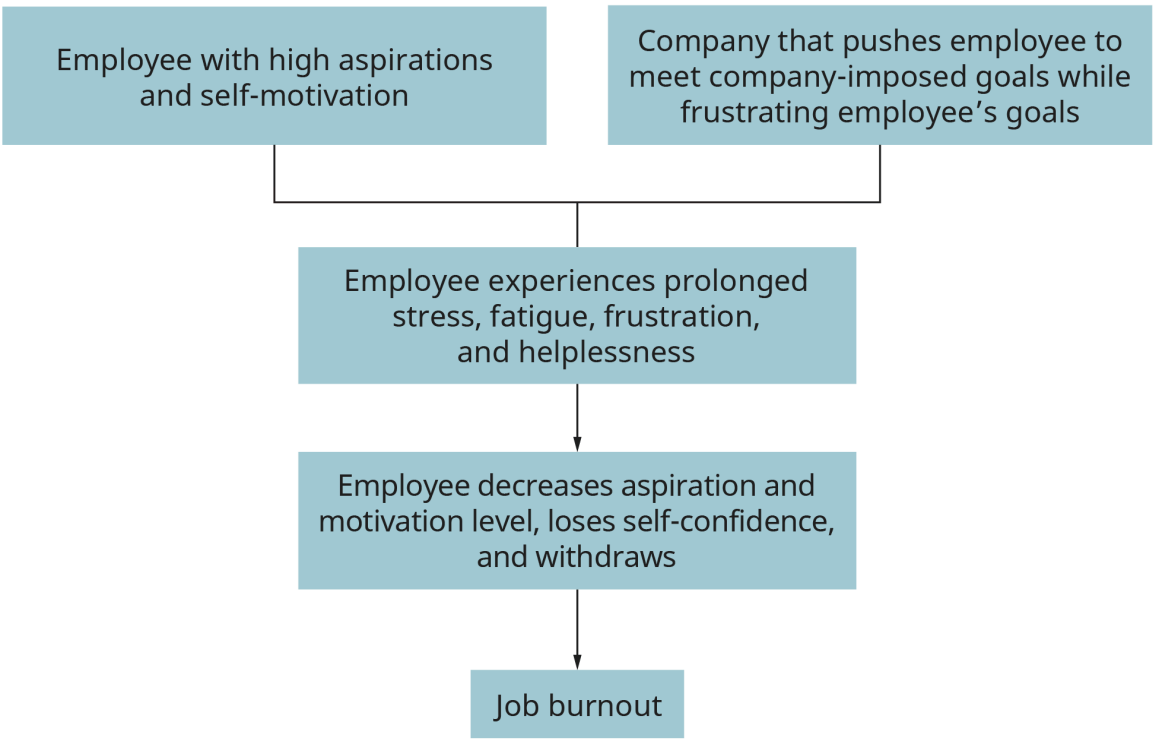

Figure 7.16 Influences Leading to Job Burnout. Image: Rice University and OpenStax, Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from the original. [Click to enlarge].

Stress, Burnout, Trauma, and Structural Violence

Much of the discussion of stress so far refers to personal and interpersonal factors, which does not account for the inextricable links between stress and institutions, systems, and structures that enable and/or enact harm. Structural violence was a term coined by Galtung (1969) to refer to "social injustice" (p. 171), particularly in the context of the negative and disproportionate impacts of some systems and institutions on marginalized communities.

Nagoski and Nagoski (2019) discuss stress and burnout within the context of inequitable systems, such as patriarchy and white supremacy; they offer the following analogy:

> "White men grow on an open, level field. White women grow on far steeper and rougher terrain because the field wasn't made for them. Women of color grow not just on a hill, but on a cliff-side over the ocean, battered by wind and waves. None of us chooses the landscape in which we're planted" (p. 94)

Further, Thompson (2021) proposes institutional trauma as a framework through which we can account for the situated and complex aspects of trauma that can be bound up with patriarchy, colonialism, white supremacy, and other systems of oppression. Overall, causes and responses to stress, burnout, and trauma can be complex and varied. As structural violence can be enacted and reproduced in organizational spaces, it is important to consider this in addressing stress, burnout, and trauma in workplaces.

What role can/should organizations play in helping to prevent/reduce employee stress and burnout?

Krista's Book Club

Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle is co-authored by sisters Amelia and Emily Nagoski. They examine various stressors that lead to burnout in women and factors (including structural and systemic barriers) that impact women's mental and physical health. This book helps readers understand the body's physiological responses to stress and how our thoughts and emotions relate to stress. Nagoski and Nagoski suggest awareness of our inner thoughts and feelings, rest, and connection can all serve as antidotes to burnout.

Students may also be interested in this audiocast from TED Health: The cure for burnout (hint: It isn't self-care).

References

Nagoski, E., & Nagoski, A. (2019) Burnout: The secret to unlocking the stress cycle. Ballatine Books.

Self-assessment

See Appendix B: Self-Assessments

Check whether each item is “mostly true” or “mostly untrue” for you.

- Are You Suffering from Burnout?

Stress: An Occupational Health and Safety Perspective

Psycho-social hazards are the social and psychological factors that negatively affect worker health and safety. Psycho-social hazards can be hard to isolate in the workplace because they reside in the dynamics of human interactions and within the internal world of an individual’s psyche. Yet it is increasingly recognized that social and psychological aspects of work have real and measurable effects on workers’ health. Harassment, bullying, and violence are examples of psycho-social hazards. Other forms include stress, fatigue, and overwork. Even the absence of social interaction, in the form of working alone, produces its own hazards. Much of the challenge is recognizing that these hazards pose real threats to workers’ health. This section examines stress from an occupational health and safety perspective.

We all experience stress at some point in our lives. As we learned in the previous section, stress can have a positive effect, making us more alert or more prepared to take on an important challenge. Stress can also have a negative effect, causing a range of physical and mental ailments. Stress can arise from all aspects of our lives, including our work. Workplace stress is stress that is brought on by work-related stressors. Canadians report work to be the biggest source of life stress. Almost three quarters of Canadian workers report that their work entails some stress, with 27% reporting that work is “quite a bit” or “extremely” stressful (Crompton, 2011). The most frequently identified workplace stressors are heavy workloads, low salaries, lack of opportunity, unrealistic or uncertain job expectations, and lack of control over work (APA, 2015). Researchers typically identify five factors contributing to workplace stress:

1. characteristics of the job being performed, such as workload, pace, autonomy, and physical working conditions,
2. a worker’s level of responsibility in the workplace, including the clarity of their role,
3. job (in)security, promotion, and career development opportunities,\
4. problematic interpersonal work relationships with supervisors, co-workers, or subordinates, including harassment and discrimination, and

5. overall organizational structure and climate, including organizational communication patterns, management style, and participation in decision making (job control).

These five factors demonstrate that workplace stress arises out of situations and events within the employer's control. This, in turn, makes the occurrence of workplace stress an occupational health and safety issue.

Workplace stress produces a range of physical and mental health effects. Early physical signs of negative stress include increased heart rate, sweating, and nausea, reddening of the skin, muscle tension, and headaches. Early emotional and mental effects of negative stress include anxiety, depression, apathy, sleep disturbance, and irritability. Long-lasting or intensifying stress results in a worsening of these symptoms as well as the appearance of new symptoms, such as lasting depression, heart disease, chronic digestive issues, reduced sex drive, uneven metabolism, and increased susceptibility to infectious diseases.

Research led by Robert Karasek has revealed that job control is a key factor in determining how work-related stress affects us. His **job demands-control model** is explained in Figure 7.16. It is also possible for negative effects of stress to manifest themselves in groups of workers and not just individuals, due to workplace dynamics and environment. Group manifestation can arise from so-called toxic workplaces. Toxic workplaces are characterized by "relentless demands, extreme pressure, and brutal ruthlessness," and represent the extreme of stressful workplace environments (Macklem, 2005).

Karasek's job demands-control model

Before Robert Karasek's groundbreaking work, most research into work-related stress focused on the effects of job demands, such as overload. Karasek discovered that the degree of control a worker has in her job plays a significant role in whether job-related stress will be positive or negative and whether ill health results (Karasek, 1979).

Karasek developed a model that analyzed the interaction of job demands with job control. He created a matrix that included four types of work, as illustrated below (adapted from Karasek, 1979).

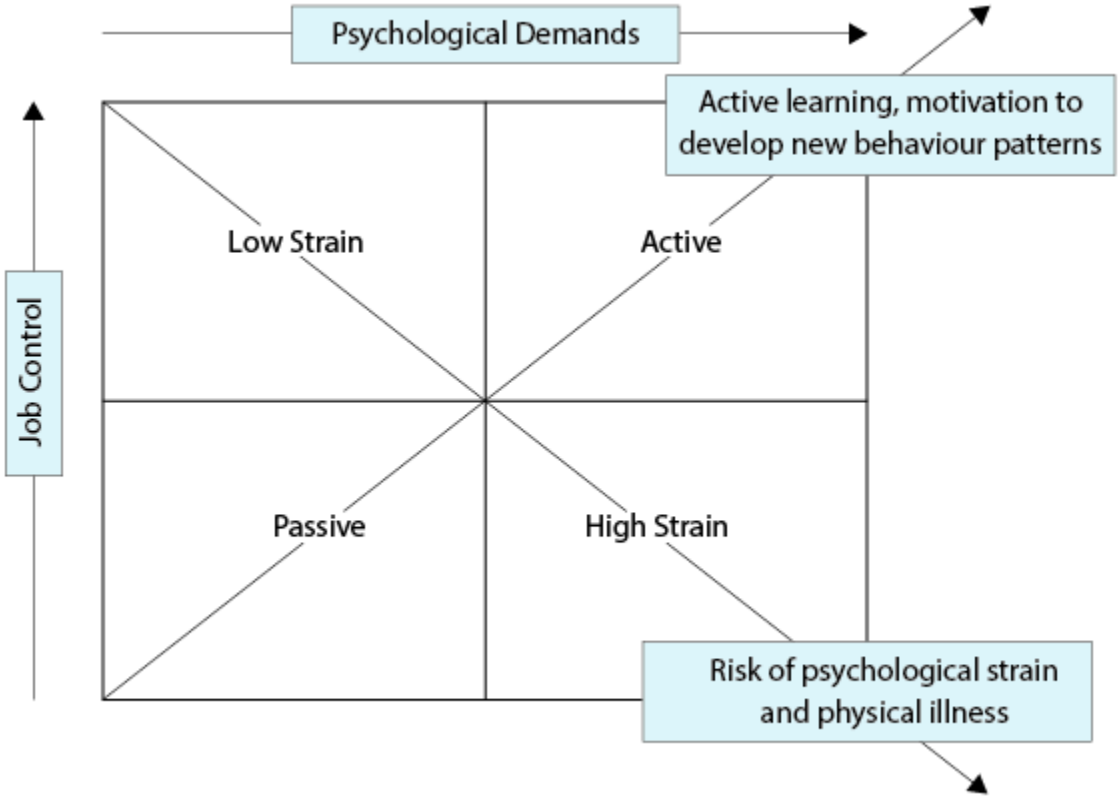

Figure 7.17 Karasek's job demands-control model. Image: Jason Foster and Bob Barnetson, Health and Safety in Canadian Workplaces, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from the original. [Click to enlarge].

Low-strain and passive jobs are associated with low stress, although passive jobs can lead to low motivation and dissatisfaction. The important boxes are active jobs, associated with high job demands but where workers possess a high degree of decision latitude (i.e., control) in the work, and high-strain jobs, which contain high demand but little job control. The cumulative effect of working in an active job is that workers builds their ability to cope with stress. Conversely, sustained exposure to high-strain work leads to psychological and physical illness.

Karasek and his research partner later added the concept of "social support" to the model. Social support is the degree of isolation or support provided by both supervisors and co-workers. They found that high levels of social support can mitigate some of the negative effects of high-strain work. They also note that the most hazardous form of work is work combining high demand, low control, and low social support (Karasek & Theorell, 1992). Karasek found the effects most acute for workers in blue-collar occupations, which typically give workers little job control.

Research into the model has found links between high-strain jobs and high incidence of heart disease, hypertension, mental health issues, and other negative health outcomes. While men and women experience job strain in similar ways, some recent research suggests that the presence of social support has a stronger effect in ameliorating negative stress effects for women than for men

(Rivera-Torres et al., 2013). Also, the stress-buffering effects of job control have a greater impact on older workers than younger workers, suggesting older workers have developed coping techniques that younger workers have yet to discover (Shutlz et al., 2010).

Karasek's groundbreaking work reveals that job design, work environment, and worker autonomy are significant factors in determining whether work stressors will lead to negative health effects for workers. This finding suggests that HR tasks such as job design can profoundly affect the workplace hazards faced by workers.

There are two main challenges associated with recognizing workplace stress as a hazard. First, stress is often perceived as an individual's response to a situation, and any two individuals can react differently to the same stressor. This perception can lead managers to identify the issue with the individual rather than the stressor itself. This response is an example of an employer blaming the worker for an injury. Faced with an explanation that blames the worker, it is important to be cognizant of the difference between root and proximate cause. "Stress is not merely a physiological response to a stressful situation. Stress is an interaction between that individual and source of demand within their environment" (Colligan & Higgins, 2006, p. 92). In other words, while individuals may respond differently to stressors (which is the proximate cause of the health effect), the root cause of the reaction is the workplace dynamics that create the stressor.

Second, isolating workplace stressors can be difficult, especially chronic stressors. Non-work stressors do affect workers and can also be used by employers as an excuse to deny that stress-related health effects have workplace causes. Also, as with other types of ill health, individuals have different tolerances for stress, meaning the same stressors may affect one worker more than another. As a result, it can be difficult to have chronic stress recognized as a workplace hazard or the cause of a workplace injury or ill health. A workers' compensation board, for example, is more likely to accept claims resulting in catastrophic or acute stress (e.g., post-traumatic stress disorder) than chronic stress.

Consider This: Workers' Compensation and Chronic Stress

In January 2007, Parks Canada employee Douglas Martin filed a claim with Alberta's WCB for chronic stress. For the previous seven years, Martin had spearheaded an effort to have park wardens armed while they were performing their duties (an ongoing health and safety issue in Parks Canada). This effort was stressful and conflict-ridden, and Martin felt he had experienced reprisals by his employer in the form of lack of promotion, training, and work.

The previous month, Martin had received a letter threatening him with disciplinary action over an unrelated matter. Martin "already had a written reprimand on his file and feared that the next disciplinary action would be dismissal. He alleged the letter, following the stress of years of conflict over

the health and safety issue, triggered a psychological condition. He took medical leave beginning December 23, 2006, consulted medical professionals for treatment, and initiated a claim for compensation for chronic onset stress the following month."

Martin's workers' compensation claim was refused and he lost his appeals of the decision. Alberta's WCB policy stated that it accepts claims for chronic stress only if the worker meets each of four criteria:

- there is a confirmed psychological or psychiatric diagnosis as described in the psychiatric manual of mental disorders (commonly called DSM),
- the work-related events or stressors are the predominant cause of the injury; predominant cause means the prevailing, strongest, chief, or main cause of the chronic onset stress,
- the work-related events are excessive or unusual in comparison to the normal pressures and tensions experienced by the average worker in a similar occupation, and
- there is objective confirmation of the events.

The WCB accepted that Martin was experiencing psychological effects and that the stressors were predominantly work-related. They denied the claim on the grounds that the events were not excessive or unusual in comparison to normal pressures and that there was not objective confirmation of the events.

As in all WCB cases, the decision revolves around the specifics of Martin's situation. Nevertheless, it demonstrates how the bar to successfully establish a WCB claim for chronic stress can be set so high as to be unreachable by most workers. Further, the requirement that the events be "excessive or unusual in comparison to the normal pressures and tensions experienced by the average worker" marginalizes workers who may have a heightened sensitivity to stress. Finally, the decision, by arguing that fear of dismissal is not unusual in the workplace, downplays the role of management in creating an unusually stressful situation.

Workplace stress is the result of workplace factors. Consequently, preventing the negative effects of workplace stress requires changes to job design, workload, organizational culture, and interpersonal dynamics. These factors are both broadly known to employers and within their control. What the persistence of stressful workplaces reveals is that employers in such workplaces prioritize maintaining profitability, productivity, and control of the work process over workers' health.

Related to stress is the experience of fatigue. Fatigue is the state of feeling tired, weary, or sleepy caused by insufficient sleep, prolonged mental or physical work, or extended periods of stress or anxiety. Acute, or short-term, fatigue can be caused by failure to get adequate sleep in the period before a work shift and is resolved quickly through appropriate sleep. Chronic fatigue can be the result of a prolonged period of sleep deficit and may require more involved treatment. Chronic fatigue syndrome is an ongoing, severe feeling of tiredness not relieved by sleep. The causes of chronic fatigue syndrome are unknown.

While lack of sleep is the primary cause of fatigue, it can be enhanced by other factors, including drug or alcohol use, high temperatures, boring or monotonous work, loud noise, dim lighting, extended shifts, or rotating shifts. As with other conditions, workers have differing sensitivity to fatigue. Fatigue can also make workers more susceptible to stress and illness. Fatigue is a legitimate

health and safety concern because workers who are experiencing fatigue are more likely to be involved in workplace incidents. Lack of alertness and reduced decision-making capacity can have negative effects on safety. Research has shown that fatigue can impair judgment in a manner similar to alcohol.

Most cases of fatigue are resolved through adequate sleep. The average person requires 7.5 to 8.5 hours of sleep a night (remember, this is an average—some require more, some less). While an employer cannot control how well a worker sleeps, they can adjust the workplace to mitigate fatigue. Shift scheduling is one of the most important administrative controls of fatigue: employers can ensure shifts are not too long or too close together as well as avoiding dramatic shift rotations. Employers can also ensure that workplace temperatures are not too high, work is interesting and engaging without being too strenuous, and adequate opportunities for resting, eating, and sleeping (if necessary) are provided.

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7.4 Coping with Stress

In this section:

- Coping with Stress at Work
- Developing Emotional Intelligence
- The Power of Positive Emotions

Coping with Stress at Work

In terms of addressing and mitigating the effects of stress at work, there are many evidence-based suggestions. We will review some from both the individual level (that is to say, what a person can do to manage their own stress) and at the level of the organization.

Individual Strategies for Managing Stress

There are many things people can do to help eliminate the level of experienced stress or, at the very least, to help cope with continuing high stress. Consider the following:

Developing Self-Awareness

Individuals can increase awareness of how they behave on the job. They can learn to know their own limits and recognize signs of potential trouble. Employees should know when to withdraw from a situation (known to some as a "mental health day" instead of absenteeism) and when to seek help from others on the job in an attempt to relieve the situation.

Developing Outside Interests

In addition, individuals can develop outside interests to take their minds off work. This solution is particularly important for Type A people, whose physical health depends on toning down their drive for success. Employees can ensure that they get regular physical exercise to relieve pent-up stress.

Many companies sponsor athletic activities, and some have built athletic facilities on company premises to encourage employee activity.

Leaving the Organization

Sometimes an employee may be unable to improve her situation and, as a result, may find it necessary (i.e., healthful) simply to leave the organization and find alternative employment. Although this is clearly a difficult decision to make, there are times when turnover is the only answer.

Finding a Personal or Unique Solution.

Another means individuals can use to cope with stress is through a variety of personal or unique solutions. If an employee cannot leave a stressful situation (e.g., a nurse helping a patient), this may be a good temporary way out of it.

Physical Exercise

Because part of the cause of the fatigue resulting from stress is the body's physical reaction, exercise can be an effective means of enabling the body to more effective deal with the physical components of stress. Regular exercise can be an important and effective individual strategy.

Cognitive Perspective

Finally, because stress is in part a function of how events are perceived and interpreted, controlling one's cognitive perspective of events can also be an effective strategy. Positively framing situations as well as distinguishing factors that are within as well as outside your control and influence can be effective means of reducing stress.

Organizational Strategies for Managing Stress

Because managers usually have more control over the working environment than do subordinates, it seems only natural that they have more opportunity to contribute to a reduction of work-related stress. Among their activities, managers may include the following eight strategies.

Personnel Selection and Placement

First, managers can pay more attention in the selection and placement process to the fit between

job applicants, the job, and the work environment. Current selection and placement procedures are devoted almost exclusively to preventing qualitative role overload by ensuring that people have the required education, ability, experience, and training for the job. Managers could extend these selection criteria to include a consideration of the extent to which job applicants have a tolerance for ambiguity and can handle role conflict. In other words, managers could be alert in the job interview and subsequent placement process to potential stress-related problems and the ability of the applicant to deal successfully with them.

Skills Training

Second, stress can be reduced in some cases through better job-related skills training procedures, where employees are taught how to do their jobs more effectively with less stress and strain. For instance, an employee might be taught how to reduce overload by taking shortcuts or by using new or expanded skills. These techniques would only be successful, however, if management did not follow this increased effectiveness by raising work quotas. Along with this could go greater effort by managers to specify and clarify job duties to reduce ambiguity and conflict. Employees could also be trained in human relations skills in order to improve their interpersonal abilities so that they might encounter less interpersonal and intergroup conflict.

Job Redesign

Third, managers can change certain aspects of jobs or the ways people perform these jobs. Much has been written about the benefits of job redesign. Enriching a job may lead to improved task significance, autonomy, responsibility, and feedback. For many people, these jobs will present a welcome challenge, which will improve the job-person fit and reduce experienced stress. It should be noted, however, that all people do not necessarily want an enriched job. Enriching the job of a person with a very low need for achievement or external locus of control may only increase anxiety and fear of failure. Care must be taken in job enrichment to match these efforts to employee needs and desires.

In addition to job enrichment, a related technique aimed at reducing stress is job rotation. Job rotation is basically a way of spreading stress among employees and providing a respite—albeit temporary—from particularly stressful ore tedious jobs.

Company-Sponsored Counseling Programs

Several companies have begun experimenting with counseling programs. Once again, much work-related stress can be reduced simply by encouraging managers to be more supportive and to provide the necessary tools for people to cope with stress.

Increased Participation and Personal Control

Fifth, managers can allow employees greater participation and personal control in decisions affecting their work. As noted above, participation increases job involvement and simultaneously reduces stress by relieving ambiguity and conflict. However, although the benefits of increased participation are many, it should be noted that being more participative is no easy task for some supervisors.

Work Group Cohesiveness

Sixth, managers can attempt to build work group cohesiveness. Team-building efforts are common in industry today. These efforts focus on developing groups that will be both more productive and mutually supportive. A critical ingredient in the extent to which stress is experienced is the amount of social support employees receive. Team building represents one way to achieve this support.

Improved Communication

Managers can open communication channels so employees are more informed about what is happening in the organization. With greater knowledge, role ambiguity and conflict are reduced. Managers must be aware, however, that communication is a two-way street; they should allow and be receptive to communication from subordinates. To the extent that subordinates feel their problems and complaints are being heard, they experience less stress and are less inclined to engage in counterproductive behavior.

Health Promotion Programs

Finally, many companies have recently embarked on a more systematic and comprehensive approach to stress reduction and wellness in the workplace. These programs are usually referred to as health promotion programs, and they represent a combination of diagnostic, educational, and behavior modification activities that are aimed at attaining and preserving good health (Matteson & Ivancevich, J A typical program includes risk assessment, educational and instructional classes, and counseling and referrals. Health promotion programs tackle a wide array of health-related concerns, including physical fitness, weight control, dietary and nutritional counseling, smoking cessation, blood pressure monitoring, alcohol and substance abuse problems, and general lifestyle modification.

Companies involved in such programs usually feel that the costs invested to run them are more than returned through higher levels of productivity and reduced absenteeism and stress-related illness (Roberts & Harris, 1989). Moreover, many companies have found that providing such services serves as an attractive incentive when recruiting employees in a tight job market.

Developing Emotional Intelligence

The importance of emotional intelligence, as we introduced at the start of this section, is imperative to being successful at work. Figuring out a plan on how we can increase our emotional intelligence skills can also benefit us personally in our relationships with others.

To increase our self-awareness skills, we should spend time thinking about our emotions to understand why we experience a specific emotion. We should look at those things that cause a strong reaction, such as anger to help us understand the underlying reasons for that reaction. By doing this, we can begin to see a pattern within ourselves that helps explain how we behave and how we feel in certain situations. This allows us to handle those situations when they arise.

To increase our self-management skills, we can focus on the positive instead of the negative. Taking deep breaths increases blood flow, which helps us handle difficult situations. Although seemingly childish, counting to ten before reacting can help us manage emotions such as anger. This gives us time to calm down and think about how we will handle the situation. Practicing positive self-talk can help increase our self-management. **Self-talk** refers to the thoughts we have about ourselves and situations throughout the day. Since we have over 50,000 thoughts per day, getting into the habit of managing those thoughts is important (Willax, 1999). By recognizing the negative thoughts, we can change them for the positive. The following are some examples:

Table 7.9 Positive and Negative Thoughts

Positive	Negative
I made a mistake.	I am, or that was, dumb.
I need some work on xx skills.	I am an idiot.
It may take a bit more effort to show them what I have to offer.	They will never accept me.
I need to reprioritize my to do list.	I will never be able to get all of this done.
Let me see what seminars and training is available.	I just don't have the knowledge required to do this job.

Source: *Saylor Academy, Human Relations, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0.*

Increasing social awareness means to observe others' actions and to watch people to get a good sense of how they are reacting. We can gain social awareness skills by learning people's names and making sure we watch body language. Living in the moment can help our interactions with others as well. Practicing listening skills and asking follow-up questions can also help improve our social awareness skills.

Strategies for relationship management might include being open, acknowledging another's feelings, and showing that you care. Being willing to listen to colleagues and employees and understanding them on a personal level can help enhance relationship management skills. Being

willing to accept feedback and grow from that feedback can help people be more comfortable talking with you.

The Power of Positive Emotions

In 1998, Seligman, who was then president of the American Psychological Association, urged psychologists to focus more on understanding how to build human strength and psychological well-being. In deliberately setting out to create a new direction and new orientation for psychology, Seligman helped establish a growing movement and field of research called positive psychology (Compton, 2005). In a very general sense, **positive psychology** can be thought of as the science of happiness; it is an area of study that seeks to identify and promote those qualities that lead to greater fulfillment in our lives. This field looks at people's strengths and what helps individuals to lead happy, contented lives, and it moves away from focusing on people's pathology, faults, and problems. According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), positive psychology, at the subjective level is about valued subjective experiences: well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and... happiness (in the present). At the individual level, it is about positive individual traits: the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skill, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future mindedness, spirituality, high talent, and wisdom. (p. 5)

Some of the topics studied by positive psychologists include altruism and empathy, creativity, forgiveness and compassion, the importance of positive emotions, enhancement of immune system functioning, savoring the fleeting moments of life, and strengthening virtues as a way to increase authentic happiness (Compton, 2005). Recent efforts in the field of positive psychology have focused on extending its principles toward peace and well-being at the level of the global community. In a war-torn world in which conflict, hatred, and distrust are common, such an extended "positive peace psychology" could have important implications for understanding how to overcome oppression and work toward global peace (Cohrs, Christie, White, & Das, 2013).

Although stress is an emotional response that can kill us, other emotions can help us cope with and protect ourselves from stress. The stress of the Monday through Friday grind can be offset by the fun that we can have on the weekend, and the concerns that we have about our upcoming chemistry exam can be offset by a positive attitude toward school, life, and other people. Put simply, the best antidote for stress is a happy one: Think positively, have fun, and enjoy the company of others.

Adapted Works

"The Pursuit of Happiness" in Psychology 2e by Rose M. Spielman, William J. Jenkins, Marilyn D.

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7.5 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms

Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **Affect helps us engage in behaviors** that are appropriate to our perceptions of a social situation.
- **Our emotions are determined in part by responses of the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and the limbic system (particularly the amygdala)**. The outcome of the activation of the SNS is the experience of arousal.
- **The basic emotions of anger, contempt, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise are expressed and experienced consistently across many different cultures.** Cultural display rules help dictate when and how to show emotions to others. These display rules are different across cultures.
- **There are also a large number of secondary emotions, such as guilt, shame, and embarrassment, that provide us with more complex feelings about our social worlds and that are more cognitively based**. Cognitive appraisal also allows us to experience a variety of secondary emotions.
- **We express our emotions to others through nonverbal behaviours**, and we learn about the emotions of others by observing them.
- **Emotional intelligence is the degree to which an individual has the ability to** perceive (recognizing emotions when they occur – self-awareness), understand (the ability to understand why emotions and feelings arise – self-management), communicate (articulating one's emotions and feelings to another person – social awareness), and manage emotions and feelings (being able to use emotions effectively during interpersonal relationships – relationship management).
- **Emotional awareness involves an individual's ability to recognize their feelings and communicate about them effectively**. One of the common problems that some people have with regards to emotional awareness is a lack of a concrete emotional vocabulary for both positive and negative feelings. When people cannot adequately communicate about their feelings, they will never get what they need out of a relationship.
- **Stress as the physical and psychological reactions that occur whenever we believe that the demands of a situation threaten our ability to respond to the threa**t
- **Situations causing stress are known as stressors**. Stressors can vary in length and intensity.
- **People who have recently experienced extreme negative situations experience stress**, but everyday minor hassles can also create stress.

- **The general adaptation syndrome is the common pattern of events that characterizes someone who experiences stress**. The three stages of the syndrome are alarm, resistance, and exhaustion.
- **The experience of prolonged stress creates** an increase in general arousal in the SNS and physiological changes through the HPA axis.
- **Not all people experience and respond to stress in the same way**, and these differences can be important. One difference in response is between the fight-or-flight response and the tend-and-befriend response.
- **The four As of stress reduction can help us reduce stress**. They include: avoid, alter, adapt, and accept. By using the four As to determine the best approach to deal with a certain stressor, we can begin to have a more positive outlook on the stressor and learn to handle it better.
- **Two common types of stress at work are frustration when goals are impeded and anxiety if an individual feels that they are not capable of dealing with future problems**. The damage resulting from stress is called strain.
- **Four organization influences on stress can be identified**: occupational differences, role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload or underutilization.
- **Three personal influences on stress are:** personal control, or the desire to have some degree of control over one's environment; rate of life change; and Type A personality.
- **The effects of potential stress can be buffered by two factors**: social support from one's coworkers or friends and hardiness, or the ability to perceptually and behaviorally transform negative stressors into positive challenges.
- **Sustained stress can lead to health problems**; counterproductive behavior, such as turnover, absenteeism, drug abuse, and sabotage; poor job performance; and burnout.
- **Burnout is defined as a general feeling of exhaustion** that can develop when a person simultaneously experiences too much pressure to perform and too few sources of satisfaction.
- **Individual strategies to reduce stress include** developing one's self-awareness about how to behave on the job, developing outside interests, leaving the organization, and finding a unique solution.
- **Organizational strategies to reduce stress include** improved personnel selection and job placement, skills training, job redesign, company-sponsored counseling programs, increased employee participation and personal control, enhanced work group cohesiveness, improved communication, and health promotion programs.
- **Developing emotional intelligence and using positive self-talk** can help us to better manage stressors.

Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/conflictmanagement/?p=143#h5p-9

Key Terms

Key terms from this chapter include:

- **Acute stressors**
- **Affect**
- **Alexithymia**
- **Amygdala**
- **Amygdala hijacking**
- **Anxiety**
- **Burnout**
- **Catastrophic stressors**
- **Chronic stressors**
- **Cognitive appraisal**
- **Cortisol**
- **Cultural display rules**
- **Emotion**
- **Emotional intelligence (EQ)**
- **Episodic (or daily) stressors**
- **Eustress**
- **Fight or flight response**

- **Frustration**
- **General adaptation syndrome**
- **Gunnysacking**
- **Hardiness**
- **HPA axis**
- **Karasek's job demands-control model**
- **Limbic system**
- **Parasympathetic nervous system (PNS)**
- **Personal control**
- **Positive psychology**
- **Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**
- **Prefrontal cortex**
- **Primary (basic) emotions**
- **Psycho-social hazards**
- **Qualitative role overload**
- **Quantitative overload**
- **Relationship management**
- **Role ambiguity**
- **Role overload**
- **Role underutilization**
- **Secondary emotions**
- **Self-awareness**
- **Self-management**
- **Self-talk**
- **Social awareness**
- **Social support**
- **Strain**
- **Stress**
- **Stressors**
- **Sympathetic nervous system (SNS)**
- **Tend-and-befriend response**
- **Thalamus**
- **Type A personality**

CHAPTER 8: MOTIVATION

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

- Define motivation.
- Identify the relationship between needs, equity and conflict at work.
- Recognize how strategies like job enrichment, job enlargement and employee empowerment can help fulfill esteem needs.
- Review principles of communication climate.
- Explore types of confirming and disconfirming messages.
- Describe characteristics of supportive and defensive communication climates.
- Explain styles of communication on the passive-assertive-aggressive continuum.
- Compare using I and You statements.
- List steps in the assertion process.
- Analyze how framing and reframing can help assert needs and boundaries.
- Review goals in conflict and the SCARF model.

In this chapter, we will examine how our needs and goals can lead to conflict. In particular, we will examine two popular theories of motivation (Maslow's hierarchy of needs and equity theory) as they relate to conflict. We will also explore how organizational strategies like job enrichment and communication strategies can be used to create an environment that fills an employees needs for safety, belonging, and esteem. Next, we will contrast strategies for asserting our needs from passivity to aggression and explore the process of asserting our needs in a way that honours our own boundaries while also respecting the other person. Finally, we will explore two additional frameworks that can help us to understand our goals and needs in conflict situations.

8.1 Theories of Motivation

Motivation

Motivation refers to an internally generated drive to achieve a goal or follow a particular course of action. Highly motivated employees focus their efforts on achieving specific goals. Motivated employees call in sick less frequently, are more productive, and are less likely to convey bad attitudes to customers and coworkers. They also tend to stay in their jobs longer, reducing turnover and the cost of hiring and training employees.

You might be wondering: what is the connection is between motivation and conflict? In Chapter 7 we learned that both affect and emotion drive our behaviours. If we perceive that someone is the source of our inability to meet our needs or goals, a conflict may arise. In this section we will discuss two theories of motivation and how they might help us to understand conflict at work.

In this section:

- Hierarchy of Needs Theory
- Equity Theory

Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1943, 1954), proposed that we are motivated by the five initially unmet needs, arranged in the hierarchical order shown below, which also lists specific examples of each type of need in both the personal and work spheres of life. Look, for instance, at the list of personal needs in the middle column. At the bottom are physiological needs (such life-sustaining needs as food and shelter). Working up the hierarchy we experience safety needs (financial stability, freedom from physical harm), social needs (the need to belong and have friends), esteem needs (the need for self-respect and status), and self-actualization needs (the need to reach one's full potential or achieve some creative success).

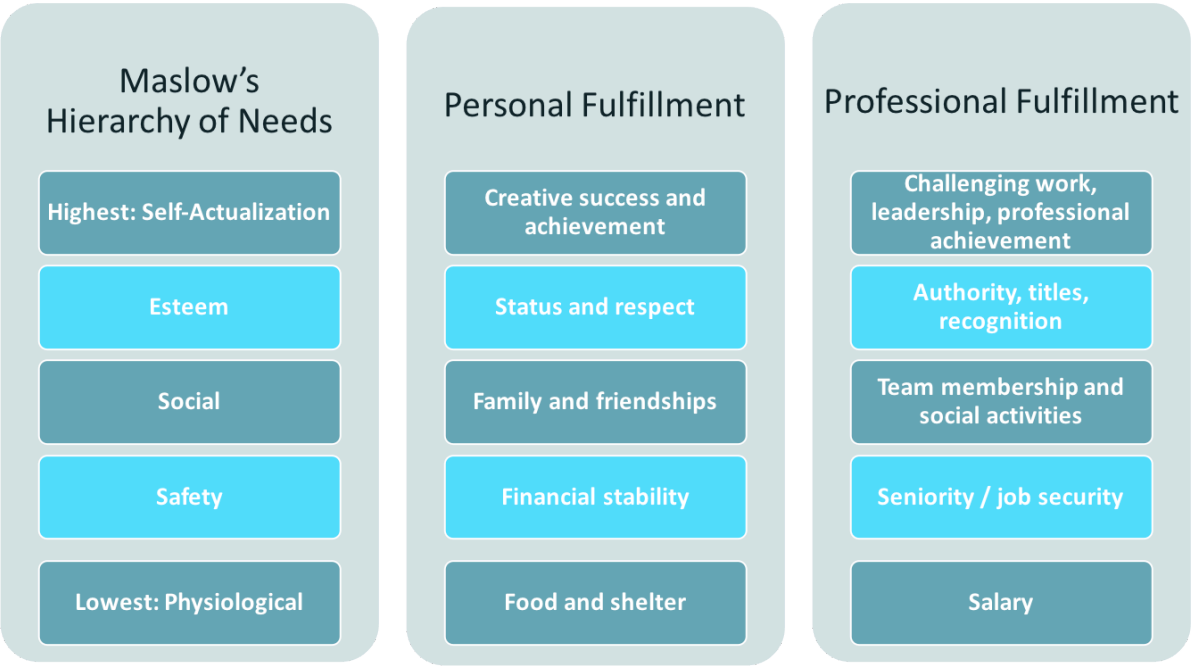

Figure 8.1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Image: Pamplin College of Business and Virginia Tech Libraries, Fundamentals of Business: Canadian Edition, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color alerted from the original. [Click to enlarge].

Let's say, for example, that for a variety of reasons that aren't your fault, you're broke, hungry, and homeless. Because you'll probably take almost any job that will pay for food and housing (physiological needs), you go to work at a local recycling plant. Fortunately, your student loan finally comes through, and with enough money to feed yourself, you can go back to school and look for a job that's not so risky (a safety need). You find a job as a night janitor in the library, and though you feel secure, you start to feel cut off from your friends, who are active during daylight hours. You want to work among people, not books (a social need). So now you join several of your friends selling pizza in the student centre. This job improves your social life, but even though you're very good at making pizzas, it's not terribly satisfying. You'd like something that your friends will respect enough to stop teasing you about the pizza job (an esteem need). So you study hard and land a job as an intern in a PR firm. On graduation, you move up through a series of department. When you get promoted to the head of your department, you realize that you've reached your full potential (a self-actualization need) and you comment to yourself, "It doesn't get any better than this."

What implications does Maslow's theory have for the workplace? There are two key points: (1) Not all employees are driven by the same needs, and (2) the needs that motivate individuals can change over time. Managers should consider which needs different employees are trying to satisfy and should structure rewards and other forms of recognition accordingly. For example, when you got your first job, you were motivated by the need for money to buy food. If you'd been given a choice between a raise or a plaque recognizing your accomplishments, you'd undoubtedly have opted for

the money. As department head with a good paying salary, you may prefer public recognition of work well done to a pay raise.

Needs Theory and Conflict

The idea of meeting these needs at work ties into many of the ideas discussed in previous chapters of this book. For example, I think that it's fair to say that most of us are not functioning at our best when our most basic human physiological needs are unmet. If you find yourself irritable and having difficulty controlling your emotions, it can be helpful to reflect on whether you are hungry, sick, or tired. If this is the case, taking a break and ensuring your basic bodily needs are met can be important to address before trying to work out a conflict. At work, we can recognize the importance of safety needs in the form of job security. As we have discussed in previous chapters, lack of emotional safety (e.g., bullying and harassment) can also have a negative impact on an individual's health and ability to deal with stressors at work. Social needs at work can be understood in terms of the quality of our interpersonal relationships at work, team dynamics, and even organizational culture. In this way, we can look at meeting basic needs as a way to prevent and manage conflict.'

Meeting Esteem Needs through Job Design, Job Enlargement, and Empowerment

As we have discussed previously, one of the reasons for job dissatisfaction and conflict is the job itself. Ensuring our skills set and what we enjoy doing matches with the job is important. Some companies will use a change in job design, enlarge the job or empower employees to motivate them and help people to meet their esteem needs.

Job enrichment means to enhance a job by adding more meaningful tasks to make our work more rewarding. For example, if we as retail salespersons are good at creating eye-catching displays, allowing us to practice these skills and assignment of tasks around this could be considered job enrichment.

Job enrichment can fulfill our higher level of human needs while creating job satisfaction at the same time. In fact, research in this area by Richard Hackman and Greg Oldham (Ford, 1969; Paul et al., 1969) found that we, as employees, need the following to achieve job satisfaction:

- Skill variety, or many different activities as part of the job
- Task identity, or being able to complete one task from beginning to end
- Task significance, or the degree to which the job has an impact on others, internally or externally
- Autonomy, or freedom to make decisions within the job
- Feedback, or clear information about performance

In addition, **job enlargement**, defined as the adding of new challenges or responsibilities to a

current job, can create job satisfaction. Assigning us to a special project or task is an example of job enlargement.

Employee empowerment involves management allowing us to make decisions and act upon those decisions, with the support of the organization. When we are not micromanaged and have the power to determine the sequence of our own workday, we tend to be more satisfied than those employees who are not empowered. Empowerment can include the following:

- Encourage innovation or new ways of doing things.
- Make sure we, as employees, have the information we need to do our jobs; for example, we are not dependent on managers for information in decision making.
- Management styles that allow for participation, feedback, and ideas from employees.

Equity Theory

A second theory of motivation that we will discuss in relationship to conflict at work is **equity theory**, which focuses on our perceptions of how fairly we're treated relative to others. Applied to the work environment, this theory proposes that employees analyze their contributions or job inputs (hours worked, education, experience, work performance) and their rewards or job outcomes (salary, bonus, promotion, recognition). Then they create a contributions/rewards ratio and compare it to those of other people. The basis of comparison can be any one of the following:

- Someone in a similar position
- Someone holding a different position in the same organization
- Someone with a similar occupation
- Someone who shares certain characteristics (such as age, education, or level of experience)
- Oneself at another point in time

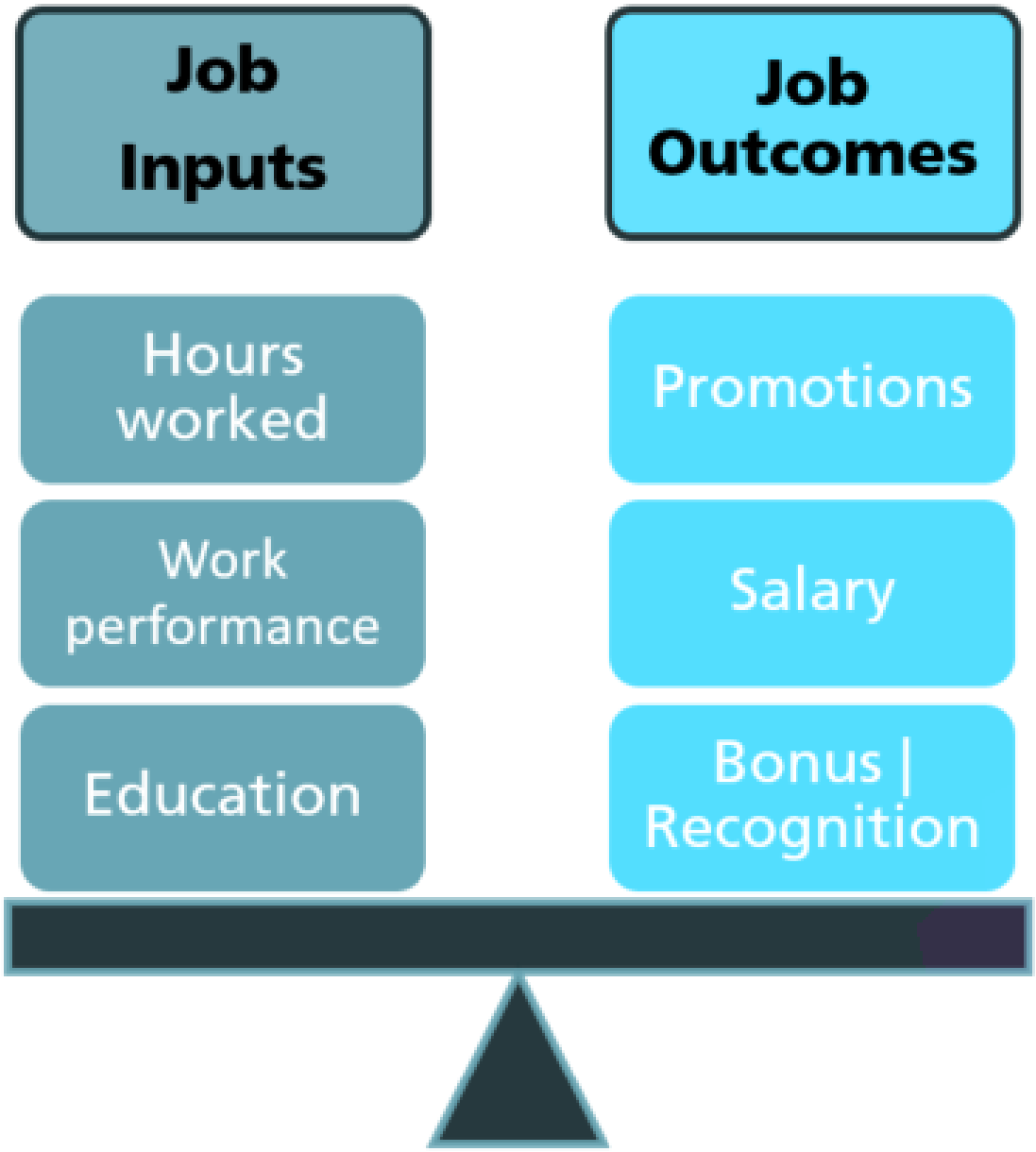

Figure 8.2 Equity Theory. Image: Pamplin College of Business and Virginia Tech Libraries, Fundamentals of Business: Canadian Edition, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color alerted from the original. [Click to enlarge].

When individuals perceive that the ratio of their contributions to rewards is comparable to that of others, they perceive that they're being treated fairly or equitably; when they perceive that the ratio is out of balance, they perceive inequity. Occasionally, people will perceive that they're being treated better than others. More often, however, they conclude that others are being treated better (and that they themselves are being treated worse).

What will an employee do if they perceives an inequity? The individual might try to bring the ratio into balance, either by decreasing inputs (working fewer hours, not taking on additional tasks) or by increasing outputs (asking for a raise). If this strategy fails, an employee might complain to a supervisor, transfer to another job, leave the organization, or rationalize the situation (e.g., deciding that the situation isn't so bad after all). Equity theory advises managers to focus on treating workers fairly, especially in determining compensation, which is, naturally, a common basis of comparison.

Let's Focus: Conflict Management and Fairness

Perceptions on fairness and how organizations handle conflict can be a contributing factor to our motivation at work. **Outcome fairness** refers to the judgment that we make with respect to the outcomes we receive versus the outcomes received by others with whom we associate with. When we are deciding if something is fair, we will likely look at **procedural justice**, or the process used to determine the outcomes received. There are six main areas we use to determine the outcome fairness of a conflict:

1. **Consistency.** We will determine if the procedures are applied consistently to other persons and throughout periods of time.
2. **Bias suppression**. We perceive the person making the decision does not have a bias or vested interest in the outcome.
3. **Information accuracy**. The decision made is based on correct information.
4. **Correctability.** The decision is able to be appealed and mistakes in the decision process can be corrected.
5. **Representativeness**. We feel the concerns of all stakeholders involved have been taken into account.
6. **Ethicality.** The decision is in line with moral societal standards.

For example, let's suppose Shyla just received a bonus and recognition at the company party for her contributions to an important company project. However, you might compare your inputs and outputs and determine it was unfair that Shyla was recognized because you had worked on bigger projects and not received the same recognition or bonus. As you know, this type of unfairness can result in being unmotivated at work and also the root of conflict.

Adapted Works

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8.2 Meeting Needs Through Communication Climate

Needs and Communication Climate

One way that we can help ensure that safety, social and esteem needs are being consistently met in the workplace is by creating a positive communication climate in which people feel seen, heard and valued. In this section, we will talk more about the nature of communication climate and how to generate messages that help others meet their needs.

In this section:

- Principles of Communication Climate
- Confirming and Disconfirming Messages
- Supportive and Defensive Communication Climates

Principles of Communication Climate

Communication climate is the "overall feeling or emotional mood between people" (Wood, 1999). If you dread going to visit your family during the holidays because of tension between you and your sister, or you look forward to dinner with a particular set of friends because they make you laugh, you are responding to the communication climate—the overall mood that is created because of the people involved and the type of communication they bring to the interaction.

In this section we will discuss the five principles of communication climate: messages contain relational subtexts that can be felt; climate is conveyed through words, action, and non-action; climate is perceived; climate is determined by social and relational needs; and relational messages are multi-leveled.

Messages Contain Relational Subtexts That Can Be Felt

In addition to generating and perceiving meaning in communicative interactions, we also subtly

(and sometimes not so subtly) convey and perceive the way we feel about each other. Almost all messages operate on two levels: content and relational. As a reminder, the content is the substance of what's being communicated (the what of the message). The relational dimension isn't the actual thing being discussed and instead can reveal something about the relational dynamic existing between you and the other person (the who of the message). We can think of it as a kind of subtext, an underlying (or hidden) message that says something about how the parties feel toward one another. For example, when deciding on a topic for a group project at school, your group member might politely suggest, "I'd like to study agile project management, how about you?" The content of the message is about what they want to study. The relational subtext is subtle but suggests your group values your input and wants to share decision-making control. The climate of this interaction is likely to be neutral or warm. However, consider how the relational subtext changes if group member insists (with a raised voice and a glare): "We are RESEARCHING AGILE PROJECT MANAGEMENT!" The content is still about what they want to study. But what is the subtext now? In addition to the content, they seem to be sending a relational message of dominance, control, and potential disrespect for your needs and wants. You might be hearing an additional message of "I don't care about you," which is likely to feel cold, eliciting a negative emotional reaction such as defensiveness or sadness.

Climate is Conveyed through Words, Action, and Non-Action

Relational subtexts can be conveyed through direct words and actions. A student making a complaint to an instructor can be worded with respect, as in "Would you have a few minutes after class to discuss my grade?" or without, as in "I can't believe you gave me such a terrible grade, and we need to talk about it right after class!" We can often find more of the relational meaning in the accompanying and more indirect nonverbals—in the way something is said or done. For example, two of your coworkers might use the exact same words to make a request of you, but the tone, emphasis, and facial expression will change the relational meaning, which influences the way you feel. The words "can you get this done by Friday" will convey different levels of respect and control depending upon the nonverbal emphasis, tone, and facial expressions paired with the verbal message. For example, the request can be made in a questioning tone versus a frustrated or condescending one. Additionally, a relational subtext might also be perceived by what is NOT said or done. For example, one coworker adds a "thanks" or a "please" and the other doesn't. Or, one coworker shows up to your birthday coffee meetup and the other doesn't. What do these non-actions suggest to you about the other person's feelings or attitude towards you? Consider for a moment some past messages (and non-messages) that felt warm or cold to you.

Climate is Perceived

Relational meanings are not inherent in the messages themselves. They are not literal, and they are not facts. The subtext of any communicative message is in the eye of the beholder. The relational

meaning can be received in ways that were unintentional. Additionally, like content messages, relational messages can be influenced by what we attend to and by our expectations. They also stand out more if they contrast with what you normally expect or prefer.

You might interpret your project partner's insistence on researching a certain topic to mean they are bossy. However, your partner might have perceived you to be the bossy one and is attempting to regain the loss of decision control. Control could be exerted because doing so is the accepted relational dynamic between you, or it could be a frustrated reaction to a frequent loss of decision control, which they want to regain. Here, it needs to be noted that the relational message someone hears at any given time is a perception and doesn't necessarily mean the message received was the message intended. Meanings will depend on who is delivering it and in what context. Cultural and co-cultural context will also impact the way a message is interpreted.

Climate is Determined by Social and Relational Needs

While relational messages can potentially show up in dozens of different communicative forms, they generally fall into categories that align with specific types of human social needs that vary from person to person and situation to situation. In addition to physical needs, such as food and water, human beings have social and relational needs that can have negative consequences if ignored. Negative consequences can range from frustrating work days to actual death (in cases of infants not getting human touch and attention and the elderly who suffer in isolation). Scholars categorize social needs in many different ways. We are more likely to develop relationships with people who meet one or more of three basic interpersonal needs: affection, control, and belonging. We want to be liked or loved. We want to be able to influence others and our own environments (at least somewhat). We want to feel included. Each need exists on a continuum from low to high, with some people needing only a little of one and more of another. The level of need also varies by context, with some situations calling for more affection (e.g., romantic relationships) and others calling for less (e.g., workplace).

Another framework for categorizing needs comes from a nonviolent communication approach used by mediators, negotiators, therapists, and businesses across the world. This approach focuses on compassion and collaboration and categorizes human needs with more detail and scope. For example, categories include freedom, connection, community, play, integrity, honesty, peace, and the needs to matter and be understood. Some of these needs are summarized in the table below. When people from all cultures and all walks of life all over the world are asked "Do you need these to thrive?" the answer—with small nuances—is always "yes" (Sofer, 2018).

Table 8.1 Nonviolent Communication Approach

Area	Need
Autonomy	to choose one's dreams, goals, values
	to choose one's plan for fulfilling one's dreams, goals, values
Celebration	to celebrate the creation of life and dreams fulfilled
	to celebrate losses: loved ones, dreams, etc. (mourning)
Play	fun
	laughter
Spiritual Communion	beauty
	harmony
	inspiration
	order
	peace
Physical Nurturance	air
	food
	movement, exercise
	protection from life-threatening forms of life: viruses, bacteria, insects, predatory animals
	rest
	sexual expression
	shelter
	touch
	water
Integrity	authenticity
	creativity
	meaning
	self-worth
Interdependence	acceptance
	appreciation
	closeness
	community
	consideration
	contribution to the enrichment of life (to exercise one's power by giving that which contributes to life)
	emotional safety
	empathy
	honesty (the empowering honest that enables us to learn from our limitations)
	love

Area	Need
	reassurance
	respect
	support
	trust
	understanding
	warmth

Source: *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life 2nd Ed by Dr. Marshall B. Rosenberg, 2003 – published by PuddleDancer Press and Used with Permission. For more information visit www.CNVC.org and www.NonviolentCommunication.com. Reproduced from Interpersonal Communication by Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

During interactions, we detect on some level whether the person with whom we are communicating is meeting a particular need, such as the need for respect. We may not really be aware, on a conscious level, of why we feel cold toward a coworker. But, it is likely that the coworker's jokes, eye rolls, and criticisms toward you feel like a relational message of inferiority or disrespect. In this case, your unmet need for dignity, competence, respect, or belonging may be contributing to your cold reaction toward this person. When other people's messages don't meet our needs in whole or in part, we tend to have an emotionally cold reaction. When messages do meet our needs, we tend to feel warm.

Consider how needs may be met (or not met) when you are in a disagreement of opinion with someone else. For example, needs may be met if we feel heard by the other and not met if we feel disrespected when we present our opinion. In a different example, consider all the different ways you could request that someone turn the music down. You could do both of these things with undertones (relational subtexts) of superiority, anger, dominance, ridicule, coldness, distance, etc. Or you could do them with warmth, equality, playfulness, shared control, respect, trust, etc.

Relational Messages are Multi-Leveled

On one level, we want to feel that our social needs are met and we hope that others in our lives will meet them through their communication, at least in part. On another level, though, we are concerned with how we are perceived; the self-image we convey to others is important to us. We want it to be apparent to others that we belong, matter, are respected, understood, competent, and in control of ourselves. Some messages carry relational subtexts that harm or threaten our self-image, while others confirm and validate it.

To help better understand this second level of relational subtexts, let's discuss the concept of "face needs." Face refers to our self-image when communicating with others (Ting-Toomey, 2005; Brown and Levinson, 1987; Lim and Bowers, 1991). It does not refer to our physical face, but more of an unsaid portrayal of the image that we want to project to others, and sometimes even to ourselves. Most of us are probably unaware of the fact that we are frequently negotiating this face as we interact

with others. However, on some level, whether we are aware of it or not, many of our social needs relate to the way we want to be perceived by others. Specifically, we not only want to feel included in particular groups, we also want to be seen as someone who belongs. We want to feel capable and competent, but we also want others to think we are capable and competent. We want to experience a certain level of autonomy, but we also want to be seen as free from the imposition of others.

Communication subtexts such as disrespect tend to threaten our face needs, while other behaviors such as the right amount of recognition support them. Once again, we can apply the temperature analogy here. When we perceive our "face" to be threatened, we may feel cold. When our face needs are honored, we may feel warm. Effective communication sometimes requires a delicate dance that involves addressing, maintaining, and restoring our own face and that of others simultaneously.

Because both our own needs and the needs of others play an important role in communication climate, throughout the rest of this section we will utilize the following three general categories when we refer to social needs that can be addressed through communication:

- Need for Connection: belonging, inclusion, acceptance, warmth, kindness
- Need for Freedom: autonomy, control, freedom from imposition by others, space, privacy
- Need for Meaning: competence, capability, dignity, worthiness, respect, to matter, to be understood

Confirming and Disconfirming Messages

Positive and negative climates can be understood by looking at confirming and disconfirming messages. We experience positive climates when we receive messages that demonstrate our value and worth from those with whom we have a relationship. Conversely, we experience negative climates when we receive messages that suggest we are devalued and unimportant. Obviously, most of us like to be in positive climates because they foster emotional safety as well as personal and relational growth. However, it is likely that your relationships fall somewhere between the two extremes.

Confirming Messages

Let's start by looking at three types of **confirming messages**:

- **Recognition messages** either confirm or deny another person's existence. For example, if a friend enters your home and you smile, hug him, and say, "I'm so glad to see you" you are confirming his existence. On the other hand, if you say "good morning" to a colleague and they ignore you by walking out of the room without saying anything, they may create a disconfirming climate by not recognizing your greeting.
- **Acknowledgement messages** go beyond recognizing another's existence by confirming what

they say or how they feel. Nodding our head while listening, or laughing appropriately at a funny story, are nonverbal acknowledgment messages. When a friend tells you she had a really bad day at work and you respond with, "Yeah, that does sound hard, do you want to talk about it?", you are acknowledging and responding to her feelings. In contrast, if you were to respond to your friend's frustrations with a comment like, "That's nothing. Listen to what happened to me today," you would be ignoring her experience and presenting yours as more important.

- **Endorsement messages** go one step further by recognizing a person's feelings as valid. Suppose a friend comes to you upset after a fight with his girlfriend. If you respond with, "Yeah, I can see why you would be upset" you are endorsing his right to feel upset. However, if you said, "Get over it. At least you have a girlfriend" you would be sending messages that deny his right to feel frustrated at that moment. While it is difficult to see people we care about in emotional pain, people are responsible for their own emotions. When we let people own their emotions and do not tell them how to feel, we are creating supportive climates that provide a safe environment for them to work through their problems.

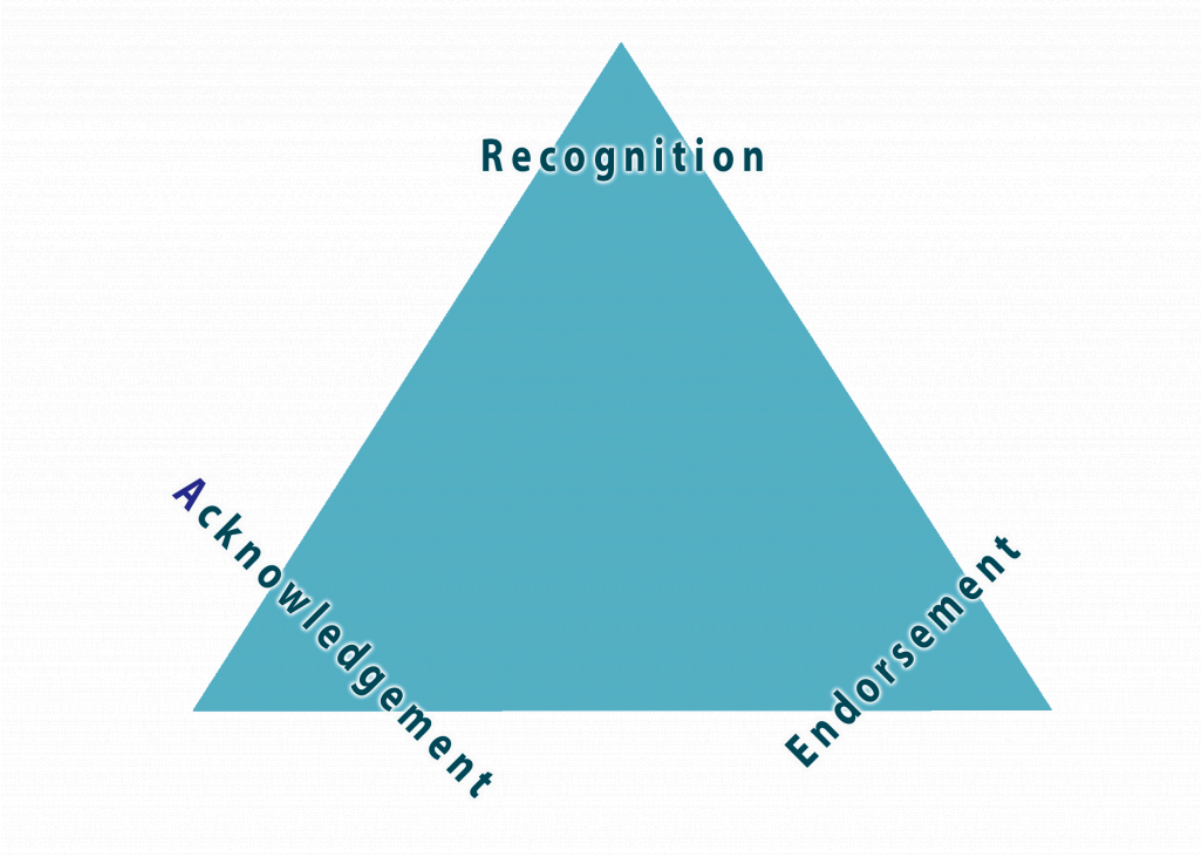

Figure 8.1 Three types of Confirming Messages. Image Maricopa Community College, Exploring Relationship Dynamics, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from the original. [Click to enlarge].

Disconfirming Messages

Unfortunately, sometimes when we are interacting with others, **disconfirming messages** are used. These messages imply, "You don't exist. You are not valued." There are seven types of disconfirming messages:

- **Impervious response** fails to acknowledge another person's communication attempt through either verbal or nonverbal channels. Failure to return phone calls, emails, and text messages are examples.
- In an **interrupting response**, one person starts to speak before the other person is finished.
- **Irrelevant responses** are comments completely unrelated to what the other person was just talking about. They indicate that the listener wasn't really listening at all, and therefore doesn't value with the speaker had to say. In each of these three types of responses**,** the speaker is not acknowledged.
- In a **tangential response**, the speaker is acknowledged, but with a comment that is used to steer the conversation in a different direction.
- In an **impersonal response**, the speaker offers a monologue of impersonal, intellectualized, and generalized statements that trivializes the other's comments (e.g., what doesn't kill you makes you stronger).
- **Ambiguous responses** are messages with multiple meanings, and these meanings are highly abstract, or are a private joke to the speaker alone.
- **Incongruous responses** communicate two messages that seem to conflict along the verbal and nonverbal channels. The verbal channel demonstrates support, while the nonverbal channel is disconfirming. An example might be complimenting someone's cooking, while nonverbally indicating you are choking.

Consider This

In a study published in the journal *Science*, researchers reported that the sickening feeling we get when we are socially rejected (being ignored at a party or passed over when picking teams) is real. When researchers measured brain responses to social stress they found a pattern similar to what occurs in the brain when our body experiences physical pain.

Specifically, "the area affected is the anterior cingulate cortex, a part of the brain known to be involved in the emotional response to pain" (Fox). The doctor who conducted the study, Matt Lieberman, a social psychologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, said, "It makes sense for humans to be programmed this way. Social interaction is important to survival." (Nishina et al., 2005).

Supportive and Defensive Climates

Communication is key to developing positive climates. This requires people to attend to the supportive and defensive communication behaviors taking place in their interpersonal relationships and groups. **Defensive communication** is defined as that communication behavior that occurs when an individual perceives threat or anticipates threat in the group. Those who behave defensively, even though they also give some attention to the common task, devote an appreciable portion of energy to defending themselves. Besides talking about the topic, they think about how they appear to others, how they may be seen more favorably, how they may win, dominate, impress or escape punishment, and/or how they may avoid or mitigate a perceived attack.

Such inner feelings and outward acts tend to create similarly defensive postures in others; and, if unchecked, the ensuing circular response becomes increasingly destructive. Defensive communication behavior, in short, engenders defensive listening, and this, in turn, produces postural, facial, and verbal cues which raise the defense level of the original communicator. Defense arousal prevents the listener from concentrating upon the message. Not only do defensive communicators send off multiple value, motive, and affect cues, but also defensive recipients distort what they receive. As a person becomes more and more defensive, he or she becomes less and less able to perceive accurately the motives, values, and emotions of the sender. Defensive behaviors have been correlated positively with losses in efficiency in communication.

The converse, moreover, also is true. The more "**supportive**" or defense-reductive the climate, the less the receiver reads into the communication distorted loadings that arise from projections of their own anxieties, motives, and concerns. As defenses are reduced, the receivers become better able to concentrate upon the structure, the content, and the cognitive meanings of the message.

Jack Gibb (1961) developed six pairs of defensive and supportive communication categories presented below. Behavior which a listener perceives as possessing any of the characteristics listed in the left-hand column arouses defensiveness, whereas that which he interprets as having any of the qualities designated as supportive reduces defensive feelings. The degree to which these reactions occur depends upon the person's level of defensiveness and the general climate in the group at the time.

Table 8.2 Communication in Defensive vs. Supportive Climates.

Defensive Climates	Supportive Climates
1. Evaluation	1. Description
2. Control	2. Collaboration/Problem Orientation
3. Strategy	3. Spontaneity
4. Neutrality	4. Empathy
5. Superiority	5. Equality
6. Certainty	6. Provisionalism

Source: *Problem Solving in Teams and Groups by Cameron W. Piercy, CC BY 4.0.*

Evaluation and Description

Speech or other behavior which appears evaluative increases defensiveness. If by expression, manner of speech, tone of voice, or verbal content the sender seems to be evaluating or judging the listener, the receiver goes on guard. Of course, other factors may inhibit the reaction. If the listener thought that the speaker regarded them as an equal and was being open and spontaneous, for example, the evaluativeness in a message would be neutralized and perhaps not even perceived. This same principle applies equally to the other five categories of potentially defense-producing climates. These six sets are interactive.

Because our attitudes toward other persons are frequently, and often necessarily, evaluative, expressions that the defensive person will regard as nonjudgmental are hard to frame. Even the simplest question usually conveys the answer that the sender wishes or implies the response that would fit into their value system.

Anyone who has attempted to train professionals to use information-seeking speech with neutral affect appreciates how difficult it is to teach a person to say even the simple "who did that?" without being seen as accusing. Speech is so frequently judgmental that there is a reality base for the defensive interpretations which are so common.

When insecure, group members are particularly likely to place blame, to see others as fitting into categories of good or bad, to make moral judgments of their colleagues, and to question the value, motive, and affect loadings of the speech which they hear. Since value loadings imply a judgment of others, a belief that the standards of the speaker differ from their own causes the listener to become defensive.

Descriptive speech, in contrast to that which is evaluative, tends to arouse a minimum of uneasiness. Speech acts which the listener perceives as genuine requests for information or as material with neutral loadings are descriptive. Specifically, the presentation of feelings, events, perceptions, or

processes which do not ask or imply that the receiver change behavior or attitude is minimally defense producing.

Table 8.3 Evaluation and Description Examples

Defensive	**Supportive**
Evaluation	**Description**
Vague, abstract, blaming, inflammatory, and judgmental language that indicates lack of regard for other. "You" statements.	Neutral, factual, concrete, precise, descriptions of what something looks or sounds like, and of your own reactions to it. Ownership of thoughts, feelings, and observations. "I" language. No. Judgment(s)
Examples of Messages and Behaviors	
"You're such a slob! sheesh!" [eye role]	"I get frustrated when I see your socks on the floor"
Recipient's Potential Perception	
Recipient may feel attacked, judged, disrespected, and/or defensive in addition to possible confusion over what the complaint is specifically addressing.	Recipient has clarity about what's specifically bothering the other and why. They may not like something negative being pointed out, but they may not feel as judged, attacked, or put down as with the opposing example.

Source: *"Frameworks for Identifying Types of Climate Messages" in Interpersonal Communication Abridged Textbook by Pamela J. Gerber and Heidi Murphy, CC BY-SA 3.0.*

Control and Problem Orientation

Speech that is used to control the listener evokes resistance. In most of our social interactions, someone is trying to do something to someone else—to change an attitude, to influence behavior, or to restrict the field of activity. The degree to which attempts to control produce defensiveness depends upon the openness of the effort, for a suspicion that hidden motives exist heightens resistance. For this reason, attempts of non-directive therapists and progressive educators to refrain from imposing a set of values, a point of view, or a problem solution upon the receivers meet with many barriers. Since the norm is control, non-controllers must earn the perception that their efforts have no hidden motives. A bombardment of persuasive “messages” in the fields of politics, education, special causes, advertising, religion, medicine, industrial relations, and guidance has bred cynical and paranoid responses in listeners.

Implicit in all attempts to alter another person is the assumption by the change agent that the person to be altered is inadequate. That the speaker secretly views the listener as ignorant, unable to make their own decisions, uninformed, immature, unwise, or possessed of wrong or inadequate attitudes is a subconscious perception that gives the latter a valid base for defensive reactions. A problem orientation looks to work collaboratively with the other party and find a solution that works for everyone.

Table 8.4 Control and Problem Orientation Examples

Defensive	Supportive
Control	**Problem Orientation**
Speaker forces solutions with little regard for receiver's needs or interests. Messages seems to suggest that speakers knows better than listener, and/or that listener is not capable of finding solution.	Focus is on finding a win-win solution that meets the needs of all parties involved. Conveys respect for the other person. Makes decisions "with" rather than "for." Asks rather than tells.
Examples of Messages and Behaviors	
"No! You do it this way!"	"Since you actually work the floor, what are your thoughts about the best way to set this up?"
Recipient's Potential Perception	
Recipient may feel controlled, disrespected, or that their expertise/effort isn't acknowledged or respected. They may feel hostile towards the speaker and competitive rather than collaborative.	Recipient feels needs and wants are seen, respected, and honored. They will likely want to work collaboratively with the other person.

Source: *"Frameworks for Identifying Types of Climate Messages" in Interpersonal Communication Abridged Textbook by Pamela J. Gerber and Heidi Murphy, CC BY-SA 3.0.*

Strategy and Spontaneity

When the sender is perceived as engaged in a stratagem involving ambiguous and multiple motivations, the receiver becomes defensive. No one wishes to be a guinea pig, a role player, or an impressed actor, and no one likes to be the victim of some hidden motivation. That which is concealed, also, may appear larger than it really is with the degree of defensiveness of the listener determining the perceived size of the element. Group members who are seen as "taking a role," as feigning emotion, as toying with their colleagues, as withholding information, or as having special sources of data are especially resented.

A large part of the adverse reaction to much of the so-called human relations training is a feeling against what are perceived as gimmicks and tricks to fool or to "involve" people, to make a person think they are making their own decision, or to make the listener feel that the sender is genuinely interested in them as a person. Particularly violent reactions occur when it appears that someone is trying to make a stratagem appear spontaneous. One person reported a group member who incurred resentment by habitually using the gimmick of "spontaneously" looking at his watch and saying "my gosh, look at the time—I must run to an appointment." The belief was that this person would create less irritation by honestly asking to be excused.

The aversion to deceit may account for one's resistance to politicians who are suspected of behind-the-scenes planning to get one's vote, to psychologists whose listening apparently is motivated by more than the manifest or content-level interest in one's behavior, or the sophisticated, smooth, or clever person whose one-upmanship is marked with guile. In training groups, the role-flexible person frequently is resented because their changes in behavior are perceived as strategic maneuvers.

In contrast, behavior that appears to be spontaneous and free of deception is defense reductive. If the communicator is seen as having a clean id, as having uncomplicated motivations, as being straightforward and honest, as behaving spontaneously in response to the situation, he or she is likely to arouse minimal defensiveness.

Table 8.5 Strategy and Spontaneity Examples

Defensive	**Supportive**
Strategy	**Spontaneity**
Dishonesty, manipulation, hidden agendas, passive-aggressiveness, guilt-making, score-keeping, tit-for-tat.	Honesty, respect, directness, openness.
Examples of Messages and Behaviors	
&$#@! Can't you EVER do what you promised?! I've been watching you do this all week and I'm fed up! [after observing from a silent pedestal and keeping score all week.]	"Honey, please wake up and let the dogs out."
Recipient's Potential Perception	
Recipient may feel attacked, judged, and controlled. They may feel distrustful or confused as to why the message was held back so long and not addressed.	Recipient may feel annoyed but appreciative that no judgment, extraneous complaints, or appeals to guilt were thrown in with the main point.

Source: *"Frameworks for Identifying Types of Climate Messages" in Interpersonal Communication Abridged Textbook by Pamela J. Gerber and Heidi Murphy, CC BY-SA 3.0.*

Superiority and Equality

When a person communicates to another that he or she feels superior in position, power, wealth, intellectual ability, physical characteristics, or other ways, she or he arouses defensiveness. Here, as with other sources of disturbance, whatever arouses feelings of inadequacy causes the listener to center upon the affect loading of the statement rather than upon the cognitive elements. The receiver then reacts by not hearing the message, by forgetting it, by competing with the sender, or by becoming jealous of him or her.

The person who is perceived as feeling superior communicates that he or she is not willing to enter into a shared problem-solving relationship, that he or she probably does not desire feedback, that he or she does not require help, and/or that he or she will be likely to try to reduce the power, the status, or the worth of the receiver.

Many ways exist for creating the atmosphere that the sender feels himself or herself equal to the listener. Defenses are reduced when one perceives the sender as being willing to enter into participative planning with mutual trust and respect. Differences in talent, ability, worth,

appearance, status, and power often exist, but the low defense communicator seems to attach little importance to these distinctions.

Table 8.6 Superiority and Equality Examples

Defensive	Supportive
Superiority	**Equality**
Condescending and superior attitude, ridicule, eye-rolls, huffs and puffs, patronizing, one-up approach, conveys perceived "greater-than-you" status.	Sees equal worth in all human beings, recognizes that all people have strengths and weaknesses, respectful, honors and valuables people as capable beings.
Examples of Messages and Behaviors	
"Move over! I'll fix this! Sheesh!" [eye rolls]	"Hey, no worries. I struggled with this too when I first learned. I'll show you some strategies and you'll get it soon."
Recipient's Potential Perception	
Recipient may feel defensive, angry, or hurt.	Recipient may feel respected and thought of as capable.

Source: *"Frameworks for Identifying Types of Climate Messages" in Interpersonal Communication Abridged Textbook by Pamela J. Gerber and Heidi Murphy, CC BY-SA 3.0.*

Certainty and Provisionalism

The effects of dogmatism in producing defensiveness are well known. Those who seem to know the answers, to require no additional data, and to regard themselves as teachers rather than as co-workers tend to put others on guard. Moreover, listeners often perceive manifest expressions of certainty as connoting inward feelings of inferiority. They see the dogmatic individual as needing to be right, as wanting to win an argument rather than solve a problem, and as seeing their ideas as truths to be defended. This kind of behavior often is associated with acts that others regarded as attempts to exercise control. People who are right seem to have a low tolerance for members who are “wrong”—i.e., who do not agree with the sender.

One reduces the defensiveness of the listener when one communicates that one is willing to experiment with one’s own behavior, attitudes, and ideas. The person who appears to be taking provisional attitudes, to be investigating issues rather than taking sides on them, to be problem-solving rather than doubting, and to be willing to experiment and explore tends to communicate that the listener may have some control over the shared quest or the investigation of the ideas. If a person is genuinely searching for information and data, he or she does not resent help or company along the way.

Table 8.7 Certainty and Provisionalism Examples

Defensive	Supportive
Certainty	**Provisionalism**
It's "my way or the highway," already certain of being right, needs no additional input, one-track mind, lack or regard and respect for others' idea.	Acknowledged others' views, willingness to hear input, open-door policy, no corner on truth, open-mindedness, willing to change stance if reasonable.
Examples of Messages and Behaviors	
"I don't want to hear it. It's NOT going to work"	"I'm not familiar with that idea. Can you tell me more about it?"
Recipient's Potential Perception	
Recipient may feel devalued, defensive, or hostile. May feel unworthy or unaccepted.	Recipient may feel valued, recognized, capable, and worthy.

Source: *"Frameworks for Identifying Types of Climate Messages" in Interpersonal Communication Abridged Textbook by Pamela J. Gerber and Heidi Murphy, CC BY-SA 3.0.*

Neutrality and Empathy

When neutrality in speech appears to the listener to indicate a lack of concern for their welfare, they becomes defensive. Group members usually desire to be perceived as valued persons, as individuals with special worth, and as objects of concern and affection. The clinical, detached, person-is-an-object-study attitude on the part of many psychologist-trainers is resented by group members. Speech with low affect that communicates little warmth or caring is in such contrast with the affect-laden speech in social situations that it sometimes communicates rejection.

Communication that conveys empathy for the feelings and respect for the worth of the listener, however, is particularly supportive and defense reductive. Reassurance results when a message indicates that the speaker identifies themself with the listener's problems, shares their feelings, and accepts their emotional reactions at face value. Abortive efforts to deny the legitimacy of the receiver's emotions by assuring the receiver that she need not feel badly, that she should not feel rejected, or that she is overly anxious, although often intended as support giving, may impress the listener as lack of acceptance. The combination of understanding and empathizing with the other person's emotions with no accompanying effort to change him or her is supportive at a high level. The importance of gestural behavior cues in communicating empathy should be mentioned. Apparently spontaneous facial and bodily evidence of concern is often interpreted as especially valid evidence of deep-level acceptance.

Table 8.8 Neutrality and Empathy Examples

Defensive	Supportive
Neutrality	**Empathy**
Indifference to a person's plight, impersonal response, lack of lack of concern and care, indicating the person or person's issue has little value.	Attempting to put yourself in the other's shoes, see what is seen, feel what is felt, acceptance, support and care of a person, feelings and issues.
Examples of Messages and Behaviors	
"Um. Yeah. It doesn't really matter what the reason is. The policy is the policy. No late papers."	"I'm so sorry for what you are going through. That's a tough situation. Let's talk about specific ways you might be able to keep up."
Recipient's Potential Perception	
Recipient may feel unworthy and inferior, that their needs aren't important, or are being ignored. They may feel a lack of connection and belonging.	Recipient may feel acknowledged, respected, and/or worthy of compassion.

Source: *"Frameworks for Identifying Types of Climate Messages" in Interpersonal Communication Abridged Textbook by Pamela J. Gerber and Heidi Murphy, CC BY-SA 3.0.*

Let's Focus: A Spotlight on Empathy

You may have heard empathy defined as the ability to (metaphorically) "put yourself in someone else's shoes," to feel what another may be feeling. This description is technically accurate on one level, but empathy is actually more complex. Our human capacity for empathy has three levels: cognitive, affective, and compassionate.

The first is cognitive and involves more thinking than feeling. A more appropriate metaphor for this level is "putting on someone else's perception glasses," to attempt to view a situation in the way someone else might view it. It requires thinking about someone else's thinking, considering factors that make up someone's unique perceptual schema, and trying to view a situation through that lens. For example, employees don't always view things the way managers do. A good manager can see through employee glasses and anticipate how workplace actions, decisions, and/or messages may be interpreted.

The second level is affective, or emotional, and involves attempting to feel the emotions of others. The "shoes" metaphor fits best for this level. Attempting to truly feel what other humans feel requires envisioning exactly what they might be going through in their lives. Doing so effectively might even require "taking off your own shoes." For example, to empathize with a complaining customer, we can temporarily put our own needs aside, and really picture what it would feel like to be the customer experiencing the problem situation. Your own need might be to take care of the complaint quickly so you can go to lunch. Yet, if it were you in the problem situation, you would likely want someone to be warm, attentive, and supportive, and take the time needed to solve the problem.

This level of empathy is often confused with **sympathy**, something with which you are probably already very familiar. The two are related but are not the same. Feeling sympathy means feeling bad for or sorry about something another person might be going through, but understanding and feeling it from your own perspective, through your own perception glasses, and in your own shoes. We all recognize that losing a pet is likely to be devastating for someone. We therefore feel sympathy for our friend because their dog died. However, feeling empathy requires making an effort to see the situation through their glasses and shoes. What this means is that we consider how they may see and feel the situation differently from us. For instance, we may have experienced many pet losses and even human losses in your life, so yet another pet loss may not feel that significant to us. But, if this is your friend's first significant loss, they may likely feel more devastation than we would. We can respond more appropriately and with more warmth by letting go of our own perspective and attempting to see and feel the situation as they might. Another way to distinguish between sympathy and empathy is by seeing sympathy as "feeling for..." (as in feeling sorry for or feeling compassion for another person) and empathy as "feeling with..." as in actually feeling the emotions of another person.

The third level of empathy is the compassionate concern for the well-being of our fellow humans (Goleman, 2006). Feeling empathy at this level motivates us to act compassionately in the interest of others. Examples may include dropping off a casserole for a grieving friend, taking some of your coworker's calls when they are especially busy or stressed, or organizing a neighborhood clean-up. With this level of empathy, we sense what people need and feel compelled to help. Most of us are usually able to empathize at this level with people who are important to us.

Strategies for Building Empathy

While empathy comes more naturally for some people than others, it is a skill that can be developed (Goleman, 2006) with a greater awareness of and attention to the perception process. Remember that perception is unique to each person. We all interpret and judge the world through our own set of perception glasses that are framed by factors such as upbringing, family background, ethnicity, age, attitude, knowledge of person and situation, past experiences, amount of exposure to others, social roles, etc.
Below addresses specific ways to build our empathy muscles. The strategies fall into two categories: adding information to the rims of our perception glasses and bringing attention to the perception process itself.

Add More Information to Our Perception Glasses

In order to add more information to our perception glasses, we need to find out what we can about a situation or person with whom we are seeking to understanding and empathize. We can do this by:

- **Taking in information:** When we observe, listen, question, perception check, paraphrase, pay attention to nonverbals and feelings, we take information in rather than putting information out (e.g., listening more and talking less).
- **Broaden or narrow our perspective:** Sometimes we feel stuck, allowing one interaction with one person to become all-consuming. If we remember how big the world is and how many people are

dealing with similar situations right now, we gain perspective that helps us see the situation in a different way. On the other hand, sometimes we generalize too broadly, seeing an entire group of people in one way, or assuming all things are bad at our workplace. Focusing on one person or one situation a time is another way to helpfully shift perspectives.

- **Imagine or seek stories and info (through books, films, articles, technology):** We can learn and imagine what people's lives are really like by reading, watching, or listening to the stories of others.
- **Seek out actual experiences to help us understand what it's like to be in others' shoes:** We can do something experiential like a ride-along with a police officer or spend a day on the streets to really try to feel what it's like to be in a situation in which we are not familiar.

Bring Attention to the Perception Process.

Pull down our own perception glasses and try on a pair of someone else's. Thinking about our thinking is a process called metacognition. By turning our attention toward the way we perceive information and how that perception makes us feel. What factors make up the rims of our glasses and how do these factors shape our perspectives, thoughts, feelings, and actions? Consider what makes another person unique, and what rim factors may influence the person's perspectives and feelings. We should try to see the situation through those glasses, inferring how unique perceptual schemas might shape the others person's emotions and actions too. Remember, though, we can never be certain how or why people do what they do. Only they know for sure. But communication can be more effective if we at least give some type of speculative forethought before we act or react. And when in doubt, we can always ask.

Adapted Works

The section **Principles of Communication Climate** is adapted from:

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The section **Confirming and Disconfirming Messages** is adapted from:

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"Communication Climate" in Introduction to Public Communication (2nd edition) by Indiana State University and is is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

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8.3 Asserting Your Needs

In this section:

- The Passive-Assertive-Aggressive Continuum
- Being Assertive – I Statements
- The Assertion Process
- Framing and Reframing

The Passive-Assertive-Aggressive Continuum

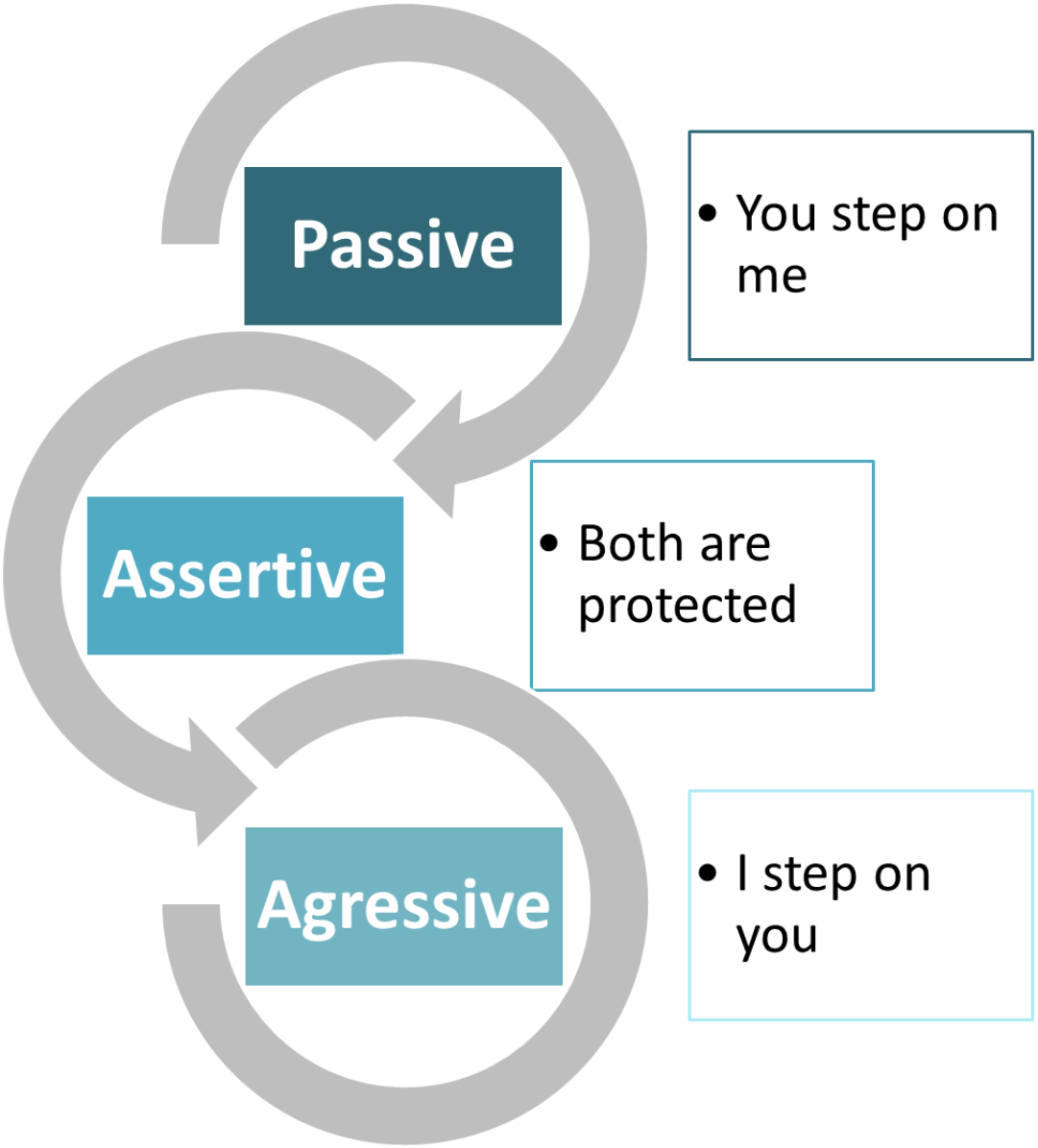

Figure 8.2 Passive-Assertive-Aggressive Continuum. Fanshawe College. Original Image, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. [Click to enlarge].

People tend to relate to communicate their needs using one of three strategies:

- **Passive communicators** tend to put the rights of others before their own. Passive communicators tend to be apologetic or sound tentative when they speak. They do not speak up if they feel like they are being wronged.

- **Assertive communicators** respect their rights and the rights of others when communicating. This person tends to be direct but not insulting or offensive. The assertive communicator stands up for his or her own rights but makes sure the rights of others aren't affected.
- **Aggressive communicators**, on the other hand, will come across as standing up for their rights while possibly violating the rights of others. This person tends to communicate in a way that tells others they don't matter or their feelings don't matter.

Table 8.9 Passive, Assertive, Aggressive Communication Examples.

	Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Definition	Communication style in which you put the rights of others before your own, minimizing your own self-worth	Communication style in which you stand up for your rights while maintaining respect for the rights of others	Communication style in which you stand up for your rights but you violate the rights of others
Implications to others	My feelings are not important	We are both important	Your feelings are not important
	I don't matter	We both matter	You don't matter
	I think I'm inferior	I think we are equal	I think I'm superior
Verbal styles	Apologetic	I statements	You statements
	Overly soft or tentative voice	Firm voice	Loud voice
Nonverbal styles	Looking down or away	Looking direct	Staring, narrow eyes
	Stooped posture, excessive head nodding	Relaxed posture, smooth and relaxed movements	Tense, clenched fists, rigid posture, pointing fingers
Potential consequences	Lowered self-esteem	High self-esteem	Anger from others
	Anger at self	Self-respect	Lowered self-esteem
	False feelings of inferiority	Respect from others	Disrespect from others
	Disrespect from others	Respect of others	Feared by others
	Pitied by others		

Source: *Making Conflict Suck Less: The Basics by Ashley Orme Nichols, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

Most of us tend to have a consistent way we relate to communication, and therefore conflict. The majority of people are either mostly passive (avoidant and accommodating) or mostly aggressive (competitive) with much fewer people regularly being assertive (collaborative). That being said, regardless of where you typically land on the passive – assertive – aggressive continuum, most of us have work to do when it comes to being more assertive in our lives.

Being Assertive – I Statements

One word that is often used for being assertive in our society today is to draw or hold our

“boundaries”. In a physical space, boundaries are easy to identify, such as a fence, stop signs, or a door. Boundaries in our social experiences are not as easy to identify but are just as real and important as physical boundaries. Fences and doors tell us where it is safe to go, and how to behave. The same is true when we are assert our social boundaries, think of them as the invisible fences or doors we draw in our lives. Asserting our social boundaries, tell those around us what is acceptable and what isn’t acceptable in our interaction, they are the guidelines and rules we provide people around us for how we want our relationship with them to look.

I-statements allow you to directly express your thoughts, needs, feelings, and experiences to the people around you. I-statements allow us to take responsibilities for our experiences and places the power of our lives in our hands. I-statements look like this:

- I feel...
- I think...
- I experienced it like this...
- I want...
- I need...

I-statements are contrasted with **You-statements.** Statements that imply the other person is responsible for something. You-statements typically blame on the other person. You statements look like this:

- You made me feel...
- You don’t care about me.
- You never think about how that would impact us.
- You didn’t...

Table 8.10 - I Statements vs You-Statements

I-Statements vs You-Statements	
I felt unappreciated.	You don't care about me.
I need some help.	You are a freeloader and never help.
I felt...	You made me feel....
It makes me sad to be left out.	You never invite me out with your friends.

Source: *Making Conflict Suck Less: The Basics by Ashley Orme Nichols, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

Watch out for those fake I-Statements that so regularly sneak into our conversations. “I feel you...”, “I think you”, “I want you to...” are hidden You-Statements.

Creating an I Statement

Robert Bolton (1979), he gives us a simple but effective template for developing assertive messages to help us draw boundaries:

- When you_____ (a nonjudgmental description of someone's behavior)
- I feel_____ (a specific feeling)
- Because____ (how someone's behavior directly impacts you, how they have crossed a boundary)

Different Ways to Assert Yourself

There are many types of assertions, the template above is just a start. The examples below are hardly exhaustive, it is just to give you a sense of the different ways to be assertive and hold your boundaries. Sometimes even when you assert yourself and hold your boundaries, the people in your life might not respect them. Robert Bolton (1979) shares with us that part of being assertive and holding boundaries might be:

- **Selective Inattention** – ignoring unwanted behavior if it is a one time occurrence
- **Temporary Withdrawal** – taking time away from a relationship that doesn't respect your boundaries
- **Permanent Withdrawal** – ending a relationship because your boundaries aren't respected

Think about this as an order of progression. You assert your boundaries, if they aren't respected you can ignore the other person's behavior and assert yourself again. If this person continues to step on and not respect your boundaries you might need to take some time apart. If that behavior continues, you might need to end that relation. This can happen with friends, partners, co-workers, and even family.

A basic act of being assertive is simply **saying "no"**. Saying no without little white lies or justifying why you are saying no takes some practice. Have you ever been invited out with friends but didn't want to go? Did you make something up? "I'm busy" when really you just don't want to go out. Being assertive in that moment looks like "I really appreciate the offer, and I hope you invite me in the future, but no, I just need some me time".

When Not to Assert

There is a wonderful acronym to remember when you are considering being assertive. **HALT**. Ask yourself, are you?

- **H**ungry?
- **A**ngry?
- **L**onely?
- **T**ired?

If you answer yes to any of those questions, then HALT. Satisfy your needs, whether that is eating a snack, taking a deep breath, connecting with someone, or taking a nap. Then reevaluate your need to assert a boundary. If the need is still there, then proceed with delivering your assertive message.

When asserting a boundary, it is important to carefully choose your channel of communication. This article from Psychology Today talks about Things to not send in a text. Assertive messages are important and often ideally in a synchronous, information rich transaction, ideally a face-to-face conversation.

The Assertion Process

Imagine you know it's time to draw a boundary with someone close to you, you've thought long and hard about what is important to you, you know what you want to say, So what do you do now? Robert Bolton (1979), gives us a process to follow when delivering our assertion:

1. Preparation
2. Delivering the Message
3. Silence
4. Active Listening
5. Recycle steps 2-4 (as necessary)
6. Focus on a Solution

Preparation – In the preparation stage you spend time, before you enter into a conversation with the other person, reflecting on what is important for you to convey, developing your framing (see below) and assertion message, and preparing yourself for this process and active listening.

Deliver the Message – Share your frame and your assertion message

Silence – Allow the other person time to process what you have just said. Sometimes after we assert ourselves, we want to justify ourselves, or jump in when there is silence because it can be awkward and uncomfortable. Take a deep breath while they consider what you have just said, they may have not considered this topic before this very moment.

Active Listening – Once the person responds to your assertion, your job is to reflect back what their response is. This response could be defensive, it could be off track from your original topic, or they could shut down. Actively listening to the other person will likely be the last thing you want to do, so make sure to prepare for this part of the process as much as you can in the preparation step.

Recycle Steps 2-4 (as necessary) – You will likely have to reassert yourself, provide more silence, and

actively listen a few times, before you can move into the next step in the process. This part of the process allow you and the other person to really understand each other and get on the same page.

Focus on A Solution – Often times in conflict we jump to this step *without* taking the time to go through steps 1-5. Only focus on a solution after you have understood the other person, they have understood you, and you are both ready and capable of focusing on a solution.

Let's Focus: Asserting Your Boundaries

While this assertion template seems really simple, it actually can be quite challenging to utilize. Some tips for making sure that you are asserting your boundaries in a productive way.

- Focus on one behavior at a time. *If you have been more passive in your communications you might want to jump into drawing all the boundaries. Pick one to start with and work from there*
- Describe the behavior you chose to focus on in a nonjudgmental way (easier than it sounds) with nonjudgmental language. *Example – "When you don't pick up your crap" vs "When you leave dirty laundry in the bathroom"*
- Pick a very specific feeling (most specifics on this below)
- Watch out for a feeling statement that says "I feel you..." the feeling word should describe your feeling in this situation, not be about the other person *Example- "I feel like you don't care" vs "I feel hurt"*
- When you describe the impact on you, really express how someone's behavior impacts you. *Think back to the types of goals or SCARF model trigger, express what is really going on for you*
- Keep it concise.
- Use this template for positive reinforcement of behavior you want to keep seeing. *When you pick up your dirty clothes, I feel appreciative, because I don't have to take time to pick them up.*

Framing and Reframing

Framing, in communication, is essentially the act of intentionally setting the stage for the conversation you want to have. In framing a conversation you express why you want to engage in this topic, what your intent is, and what you hope the outcome can be for resolving the conflict, as well as the impact/importance of your relationship. When you frame a conversation, you take out the need for the other person to assume what your intentions and motives are or why you are bringing this topic up right now.

There are many ways to frame a conversations, here are a few ideas for how to frame a conversation effectively.

Ask if this is a good time to talk.

> "I have been wanting to connect with you to discuss___. Would now be a good time?" (If the answer is no, take a minute to schedule a good time)

Consider Sharing Your "Why" , Concerns and Intentions

> "This is important to me because....."

> "I'm only bringing this up because I want us and this project to be successful and I'm worried that we are missing something."

> "My intention is...."

> "My intention is to share my thoughts with you, but I don't have any expectations that you do anything with them."

> "I care about our relationships and want to make sure we are addressing challenges as they come up." "I'm not sure how this will go."

> "I'm pretty stressed about this because I'm not sure how this conversation is going to go."

> "I have been thinking about this a lot and figured it was time to ask for help."

Framing a Boundary

Framing sets the stage for the rest of the conversation to unfold. A little bit of framing goes a long way in helping conversations be more productive, and help manage some of the conflict that can happen when people have to make assumptions about "why" and conversation or conflict is happening.

> "I know this is important to you and I'm just too busy to go to that concert right now. "

> "I can see this isn't a good time to talk, so I'd like to set up a time that works better."

> "I'm sorry, I already have too much on my plate."

> "I appreciate you thinking of me for this project. I'm currently working on X, which means unfortunately, I can't do both and have to say no to your request."

For more ideas around framing, The Gottman institute has a really great infographic that shares their version of framing: Harsh Start Ups vs Soft Start Ups.

Reframing

Framing happens at the beginning of a conversation, Reframing happens when things get off track and you need to bring a conversation back on topic. Consider this picture:

Figure 8.3 Reframing. Image: Framing the Ocean, Ashley Orme Nichols , Making Conflict Suck Less: The Basics, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. [Click to enlarge].

In the center of the picture is a frame, that is only covering part of the ocean and cliff. If we expanded that frame to surround the entire picture, that would be reframing. Reframing, in a conversation,

helps us see more of what is going on, helps us focus on the larger picture or our end goals, and helps defuse tense situations. Reframing can be used for many things when managing conflict.

- Defusing inflammatory language
- Recasting negatives into neutral or positive statements
- Refocusing attention
- Acknowledging strong emotions in a productive manner
- Translating communication so that it is more likely to be heard and acknowledged by other parties
- Recontextualizing the dispute, providing a broader perspective

Table 8.11 Reframing Examples

Original Statement	Reframed Statement
"You misinterpret everything."	"We must be misunderstanding each other. Can you help me understand what you meant"
"I am fed up with your negative response to everything that is proposed."	"I agree. Let's focus on finding a solution and move away from negativity."
"Can we just keep talking about this one detail?"	"If you are okay with it, can we make sure we have the big picture figured out before focusing on details? Maybe the details will become more clear then."
"That seems really petty! Can you believe that keeps happening?"	"That sounds irritating. What do you need to move past this moment and look for a solution."

Source: *Making Conflict Suck Less: The Basics by Ashley Orme Nichols, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

Adapted Works

8.4 Understanding Goals in Conflict and The Scarf Model

In this section:

- Understanding Goals in Conflict
- The SCARF Model in Conflict

Understanding Goals in Conflict

Think back to our definition of conflict in Chapter 1 and the importance of "real or perceived incompatible goals." McCorkle and Reese (2009) provide us with a very simple framework for analyzing what is happening with conflict in relation to goal incompatibility and interference. They identify four types of goals: substantive, process, relationship, and face goals. These goals are summarized in the table below.

Table 8.12 Types of Goals

Types	Definition of Goal
Substantive	Ability to secure tangible resources and/or something measurable/visible
Process	Desire to have events and processes unfold in a certain way, these processes include how decision are made and how/when communication happens
Relationship	How we relate to one another, in any relationship setting
Face	Ability to uphold one's self-imagine as it is perceived in a social setting

Source: *Making Conflict Suck Less: The Basics by Ashley Orme Nichols, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

Let's imagine, for example, that I'm a student living with several roommates.

Substantive Goals – our ability to secure tangible resources and/or something measurable and visible that we desire. *Example* – in a living situation with multiple roommates, I could have a substantive goal that our home is clean.

Process Goals – how events or processes unfold, how decisions are made, and how communication takes place. Continuing with the above *example* – in a living situation with multiple roommates, I could have *a substantive goal* that our home is clean, as well as *a process goal* that all the roommates clean up the kitchen as soon as they are done using it (cleaning is an event/process that is taking place).

Relationship Goals – How people relate to one another. Continuing with the above *example* – in a living situation with multiple roommates, I could have *a substantive goal* that our home is clean and a *a process goal* that all the roommates clean up the kitchen as soon as they are done using it., as well as *a relationship goal* that sharing the responsibility of cleaning is what makes a good roommate relationship.

Face Goals – How one's self-image is perceived in a social setting. Continuing with the above e*xample* – in a living situation with multiple roommates, I could have *a substantive goal* that our home is clean. *A process goal* that all the roommates clean up the kitchen as soon as they are done using it. *A relationship goal* that sharing the responsibility of cleaning is what makes a good roommate relationship. And *a face goal* that my house is clean when I invite my friends and family over so they don't think I am a slob.

As you can see in the above example of a living situation with multiple roommates, there could be disagreement or differing views with any one of the goals I listed. Having a clean house isn't important to everyone. Having a set process for how shared kitchen cleaning happens isn't important to everyone. Having a "clean" roommate isn't important to everyone. And caring about what friends and family think about your house isn't important to everyone. These are the points where conflict happens, when we have seemingly incompatible goals OR someone is interfering with one of my goals.

This framework allows us, first, to start understanding ourselves in a conflict situation. Think about a conflict you are currently experiencing. Ask yourself, which type of goals do you have? Which goals do you perceive some type of incompatibility or interference with? If you have more than one goal, which goal is most important? Once you understand what goals you really have in a conflict, you can start addressing the real issue and move towards resolving the conflict you are experiencing.

Once you start thinking about the conflict you have experienced in your lifetime, you will likely notice that you have a pattern in conflict situations. Is there a type of goal interference that leads to most of your conflicts? It is important to note here that substantive goals often times mask other goals when we bring up a conflict with others. It is much easier to talk about "dirty dishes" (something tangible and visible) than it is to admit that you care about what your friends and family think about your home (face goal – self-image in relation to others). One way to recognize this is happening, if someone does what you ask them to *(like clean the dishes) but you still find yourself upset, there is likely something else going on. So when you think about the conflicts that you have experienced in your life, consider if you have masked the "real" conflict with something that is seemingly easier and less vulnerable to talk about.

The SCARF Model in Conflict

The second framework we will examine, The SCARF model, comes from David Rock out the Neuroscience Leadership Institute (2008). The SCARF model provides a framework to understand **the five domains of human social experiences**. David Rock and his team found that there are 5 areas of our brains that light up (via brain scan technology) during our social experiences.

1. **Status** – Sense of respect and importance in relation to others. "I am respected by my family, friends, and colleagues."
2. **Certainty** – Sense of clarity to predict future outcomes. "I am confident I know what is coming next in my life."
3. **Autonomy** – Sense of control over events that impact the future. "I am the master of my own destiny."
4. **Relatedness** – Sense of connection with others in your groups. "I am connected to those around me."
5. **Fairness** – Sense of non-biased and just treatment between people. "I am treated justly."

These five areas can either be interpreted by us as a reward or threat based on the type of social experience we are having. Conflict is, by its very nature, a social experience. When we experience conflict we are experiencing the threat response side of the SCARF model. The different ways our brain interprets social experiences in the SCARF model is summarized in the table below.

Table 8.13 SCARF MODEL – Domains of Human Social Experiences

Term	Definition	Reward Response	Threat Response
S - STATUS	Sense of respect and importance in relation to others.	Recognition for work, Opportunity for input, Reassurance of importance	Embarrassment, Getting unsolicited advice, Public critique
C - CERTAINTY	Sense of clarity to predict future outcomes.	Clear expectations, Specific plans or next steps, Making the implicit explicit	No expectations, Unpredictability, Prospect of change
A - AUTONOMY	Sense of control over events that impact the future.	Giving choice, Offering any flexibility, Options for self-organizing	Loss of choice, No way to make change or impact their situation
R - RELATEDNESS	Sense of connection with others in your groups.	Inclusion, Chance to belong, Taking time to get to know someone	Exclusion, Isolation, Not involving certain people in groups or decisions
F - FAIRNESS	Sense of non-biased and just treatment between people.	Transparency, Creating group or relational norms, Treating people equally and equitably	Unfair processes, Inconsistent application of rules/policy

Source: *Making Conflict Suck Less: The Basics by Ashley Orme Nichols, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

Like with the types of goals framework above, many of us will have one of two areas in this SCARF

model that will be regular conflict triggers for us. For me, they are Autonomy and Certainty. A lot of my conflicts surround these topics. Which of the SCARF domains triggers conflict for you?

Adapted Works

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8.5 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms

Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **Motivation describes a generated drive** that propels people to achieve goals or pursue particular courses of action.
- **Hierarchy-of-needs theory proposes that we're motivated by** five unmet needs— physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization— and must satisfy lower-level needs before we seek to satisfy higher-level needs.
- **Equity theory focuses on our perceptions of how fairly we're treated relative to others.** This theory proposes that employees create rewards ratios that they compare to those of others and will be less motivated when they perceive an imbalance in treatment.
- **Confirming messages include** recognition, acknowledgement and endorsement. They all provide affirmation and help foster a positive communication climate.
- **Disconfirming messages include** impervious messages, interrupting, irrelevant, tangential, impersonal, ambiguous, and incongruous responses. Disconfirming messages provide the relational message that people are not respected or valued and contribute to a negative communication climate.
- **Gibb provides six characteristics** of supportive and defensive communication climates.
- **Empathy is an important ability for** our interpersonal relationships. It has three components: cognitive, affective, and compassionate.
- **Communication styles can be described** on a continuum from passive to assertive to aggressive.
- **Using "I" statements, selective inattention and withdrawal** are all strategies that we can use to assert our boundaries with others.
- **There's six steps in the assertion process.** We should try to assert boundaries when in person (compared to over other channels) and should avoid asserting when we are hungry, angry, alone or tired (HALT).
- **An important part of asserting our needs includes** framing the situation and if needed, refocusing the conversation using reframing.
- **When our substantive, process, relationship or face goals are** threatened or impeded, it can cause conflict.
- **In the SCARF model of conflict,** we can understand conflict in terms of our need for status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness and fairness.

Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/conflictmanagement/?p=155#h5p-10

Key Terms

Key terms from this chapter include:

- **Aggressive communicators**
- **Assertive communicators**
- **Empathy**
- **Employee empowerment**
- **Equity theory**
- **Face Goals**
- **Framing**
- **I statements**
- **Job enlargement**
- **Job enrichment**
- **Motivation**
- **Outcome fairness**
- **Passive communicators**
- **Process Goals**
- **Relationship Goals**
- **Reframing**
- **SCARF model**

- **Substantive Goals**
- **Supportive communication climate**
- **Sympathy**
- **The five domains of human social experiences**
- **You statements**

CHAPTER 9: PERSONALITY AND CONFLICT STYLES

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

- Define personality.
- Identify components of the Big 5 Personality Trait theory.
- Recognize the relationship between personality traits and approaches to conflict.
- Review cognitive and personal-social dimensions that impact our perceptions and relationships.
- Summarize Janie Harden Fritz's types of problematic bosses, coworkers, and subordinates.
- Compare the ABC styles of conflict management.

In this chapter, we will examine personality and the how the stable traits impact our interactions with others. We will focus on the Big 5 trait theory of personality and how our personality traits can foster positive (or negative) interpersonal interactions during conflict. We will also examine cognitive and personal-social dimensions of the self and how these qualities impact our relationships. Using Harden Fritz's typologies, we will examine how deviant workplace behaviours can become stable patterns of interactions. Finally, we will explore an alternate to the Thomas-Kilmann model – the ABC styles of conflict management.

9.1 Personality

In this section:

- Personality
- Big 5 Personality Traits

Personality

Personality encompasses a person's relatively stable feelings, thoughts, and behavioral patterns.

Each of us has a unique personality that differentiates us from other people, and understanding someone's personality gives us clues about how that person is likely to act and feel in a variety of situations. To manage conflict effectively, it is helpful to understand the personalities of different employees. Having this knowledge is also useful for placing people into jobs and organizations.

If personality is stable, does this mean that it does not change? You probably remember how you have changed and evolved as a result of your own life experiences, parenting style and attention you have received in early childhood, successes and failures you experienced over the course of your life, and other life events. In fact, personality does change over long periods of time. For example, we tend to become more socially dominant, more conscientious (organized and dependable), and more emotionally stable between the ages of 20 and 40, whereas openness to new experiences tends to decline as we age (Roberts, 2006). In other words, even though we treat personality as relatively stable, change occurs. Moreover, even in childhood, our personality matters, and it has lasting consequences for us. For example, studies show that part of our career success and job satisfaction later in life can be explained by our childhood personality (Judge & Higgins, 1999; Staw et al., 1986).

Is our behavior in organizations dependent on our personality? To some extent, yes, and to some extent, no. While we will discuss the effects of personality for employee behavior, you must remember that the relationships we describe are modest correlations. For example, having a sociable and outgoing personality may encourage people to seek friends and prefer social situations. This does not mean that their personality will immediately affect their work behavior. At work, we

have a job to do and a role to perform. Therefore, our behavior may be more strongly affected by what is expected of us, as opposed to how we want to behave. Especially in jobs that involve a lot of autonomy, or freedom, personality tends to exert a strong influence on work behavior (Barrick & Mount, 1993). Knowing about your own personality and the personality of the people you work with can also be an asset in conflict management.

Big Five Personality Traits

How many personality traits are there? How do we even know? In every language, there are many words describing a person's personality. In fact, in the English language, more than 15,000 words describing personality have been identified. When researchers analyzed the traits describing personality characteristics, they realized that many different words were actually pointing to a single dimension of personality. When these words were grouped, five dimensions seemed to emerge, and these explain much of the variation in our personalities (Goldberg, 1990). The Big Five dimensions are openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism—if you put the initials together, you get the acronym OCEAN. Everyone has some degree of each of these traits; it is the unique configuration of how high a person rates on some traits and how low on others that produces the individual quality we call personality. Let's talk about each of these traits in more detail.

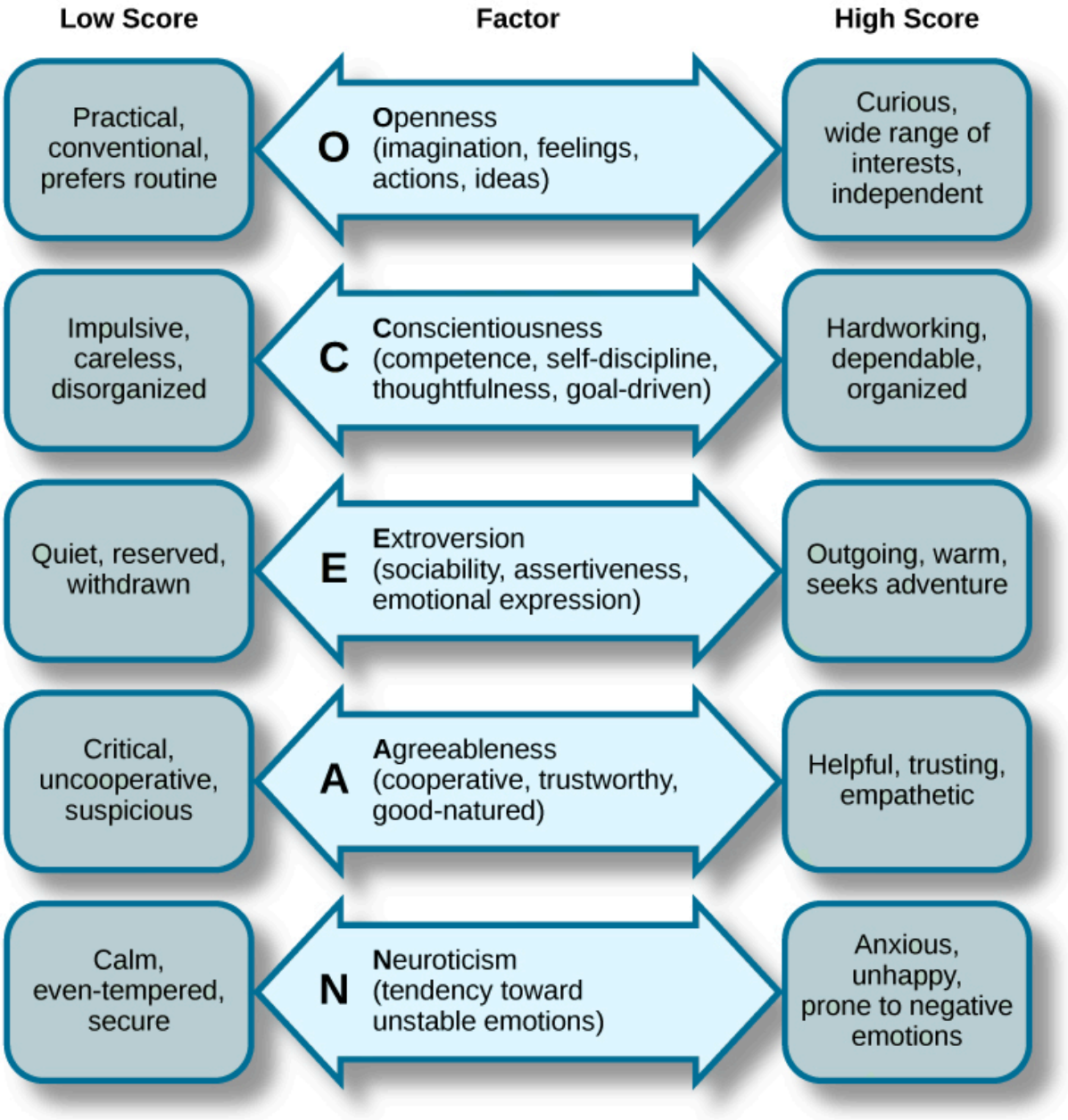

Figure 9.1 In the Five Factor Model, each person has five factors, each scored on a continuum from high to low. In the center column, notice that the first letter of each factor spells the mnemonic OCEAN. In Psychology, 2nd edition by Rice University, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. {click to enlarge].

Openness

Openness is the degree to which a person is curious, original, intellectual, creative, and open to new ideas. People high in openness seem to thrive in situations that require flexibility and learning new things. They are highly motivated to learn new skills, and they do well in training settings (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Lievens, et al., 2003). They also have an advantage when they enter into a new organization. Their open-mindedness leads them to seek a lot of information and feedback

about how they are doing and to build relationships, which leads to quicker adjustment to the new job (Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). When given support, they tend to be creative (Baer & Oldham, 2006). Open people are highly adaptable to change, and teams that experience unforeseen changes in their tasks do well if they are populated with people high in openness (LePine, 2003). Compared with people low in openness, they are also more likely to start their own business (Zhao & Seibert, 2006). The potential downside is that they may also be prone to becoming more easily bored or impatient with routine.

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness refers to the degree to which a person is organized, systematic, punctual, achievement-oriented, and dependable. Conscientiousness is the one personality trait that uniformly predicts how high a person's performance will be across a variety of occupations and jobs (Barrick & Mount, 1991). In fact, conscientiousness is the trait most desired by recruiters, and highly conscientious applicants tend to succeed in interviews (Dunn et al., 1995; Tay et al., 2006). Once they are hired, conscientious people not only tend to perform well, but they also have higher levels of motivation to perform, lower levels of turnover, lower levels of absenteeism, and higher levels of safety performance at work (Judge & Ilies, 2002; Judge et al., 1997; Wallace & Chen 2006; Zimmerman, 2008). One's conscientiousness is related to career success and career satisfaction over time (Judge & Higgins, 1999). Finally, it seems that conscientiousness is a valuable trait for entrepreneurs. Highly conscientious people are more likely to start their own business compared with those who are not conscientious, and their firms have longer survival rates (Certo & Certo, 2005; Zhao & Seibert, 2006). A potential downside is that highly conscientious individuals can be detail-oriented rather than seeing the big picture.

Extraversion

Extraversion is the degree to which a person is outgoing, talkative, sociable, and enjoys socializing. One of the established findings is that they tend to be effective in jobs involving sales (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Vinchur, et al., 1998). Moreover, they tend to be effective as managers and they demonstrate inspirational leadership behaviors (Bauer, et al., 2006; Bono & Judge, 2004). extraverts do well in social situations, and, as a result, they tend to be effective in job interviews. Part of this success comes from preparation, as they are likely to use their social network to prepare for the interview (Caldwell & Burger, 1998; Tay & Van Dyne, 2006). Extraverts have an easier time than introverts do when adjusting to a new job. They actively seek information and feedback and build effective relationships, which helps them adjust (Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). Interestingly, extraverts are also found to be happier at work, which may be because of the relationships they build with the people around them and their easier adjustment to a new job (Judge & Mount, 2002). However, they do not necessarily perform well in all jobs; jobs depriving them of social interaction may be a poor fit. Moreover, they are not necessarily model employees. For example, they tend to

have higher levels of absenteeism at work, potentially because they may miss work to hang out with or attend to the needs of their friends (Judge et al., 1997).

Kristas' Book Club: Quiet

In her book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*, Susan Cain reviews the introversion-extroversion continuum. This book provides information about the differences between introverts and extroverts when it comes to group interactions, working styles, patterns of thinking, and differences in the body's central nervous system. Cain challenges the notion that folks need to be extroverted to be successful leaders. Cain says, "If there is only one insight you take away from this book... I hope it's a newfound sense of entitlement to be yourself" (p. 27).

Students may also be interested in her TED Talk on the same topic: The Power of Introverts – Susan Cain.

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Agreeableness

Agreeableness is the degree to which a person is affable, tolerant, sensitive, trusting, kind, and warm. In other words, people who are high in agreeableness are likeable people who get along with others. Not surprisingly, agreeable people help others at work consistently; this helping behavior does not depend on their good mood (Ilies et al., 2006). They are also less likely to retaliate when other people treat them unfairly (Skarlicki et al., 1999). This may reflect their ability to show empathy and to give people the benefit of the doubt. Agreeable people may be a valuable addition to their teams and may be effective leaders because they create a fair environment when they are in leadership positions (Mayer et al., 2007). At the other end of the spectrum, people low in agreeableness are less likely to show these positive behaviors. Moreover, people who are disagreeable are shown to quit their jobs unexpectedly, perhaps in response to a conflict with a boss or a peer (Zimmerman, 2008). If agreeable people are so nice, does this mean that we should only look for agreeable people when hiring? You might expect some jobs to require a low level of agreeableness. Think about it: When hiring a lawyer, would you prefer a kind and gentle person or someone who can stand up to an opponent? People high in agreeableness are also less likely to engage in constructive and change-oriented communication (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001). Disagreeing with the status quo may create conflict, and agreeable people may avoid creating such conflict, missing an opportunity for constructive change.

Neuroticism

Neuroticism refers to the degree to which a person is anxious, irritable, temperamental, and moody. It is perhaps the only Big Five dimension where scoring high is undesirable. Neurotic people have a tendency to have emotional adjustment problems and habitually experience stress and depression. People very high in neuroticism experience a number of problems at work. For example, they have trouble forming and maintaining relationships and are less likely to be someone people go to for advice and friendship (Klein et al., 2004). They tend to be habitually unhappy in their jobs and report high intentions to leave, but they do not necessarily actually leave their jobs (Judge et al., 2002; Zimmerman, 2008) Being high in neuroticism seems to be harmful to one's career, as these employees have lower levels of career success (measured with income and occupational status achieved in one's career). Finally, if they achieve managerial jobs, they tend to create an unfair climate at work (Mayer et al., 2007).

In contrast, people who are low on neuroticism—those who have a positive affective disposition—tend to experience positive moods more often than negative moods. They tend to be more satisfied with their jobs and more committed to their companies (Connolly & Viswesvaran, 2000; Thoresen et al., 2003). This is not surprising, as people who habitually see the glass as half full will notice the good things in their work environment while those with the opposite character will find more things to complain about. Whether these people are more successful in finding jobs and companies that will make them happy, build better relationships at work that increase their satisfaction and commitment, or simply see their environment as more positive, it seems that low neuroticism is a strong advantage in the workplace.

Consider This: Help! I Work With a Negative Person!

Employees who have high levels of neuroticism or high levels of negative affectivity may act overly negative at work, criticize others, complain about trivial things, or create an overall negative work environment. Here are some tips for how to work with them effectively.

- ***Understand that you are unlikely to change someone else's personality***. Personality is relatively stable and criticizing someone's personality will not bring about change. If the behavior is truly disruptive, focus on behavior, not personality.
- ***Keep an open mind.*** Just because a person is constantly negative does not mean that they are not sometimes right. Listen to the feedback they are giving you.
- ***Set a time limit.*** If you are dealing with someone who constantly complains about things, you may want to limit these conversations to prevent them from consuming your time at work.
- ***You may also empower them to act on the negatives they mention.*** The next time an overly

negative individual complains about something, ask that person to think of ways to change the situation and get back to you.

- ***Ask for specifics.*** If someone has a negative tone in general, you may want to ask for specific examples for what the problem is.

Sources: Adapted from ideas in Ferguson, J. (2006, October 31). Expert's view...on managing office moaners. Personnel Today, 29; Karcher, C. (2003, September), Working with difficult people. National Public Accountant, 39–40; Mudore, C. F. (2001, February/March). Working with difficult people. Career World, 29(5), 16–18; How to manage difficult people. (2000, May). Leadership for the Front Lines, 3–4.

Personality and Conflict

Studying personality gives us the chance to understand ourselves and others needs and preferences, which may be very different from one another. In previous chapters, we talked about Type A personality and conflict. We can also think about the Big 5 personality traits and conflict. For example, introverts gain and gather energy through alone time. At work, they may prefer to work alone and need some time to themselves after team activities. Extroverts on the other hand gain and gather energy through interactions with other people and might prefer group work and an open office floor plan (Cain, 2012). These difference in how we gain and gather energy could very well be the cause of the above conflict. Instead of taking each other behaviors, one wanting some alone time and one wanting to talk, personally (being hurt or annoyed with each other), we can use this understand to set up clear expectations and personal boundaries with others.

Furthermore, research by Antonioni (1999) found that Big 5 traits were related to an individual's conflict style. Individuals who were agreeable and neurotic were more likely to avoid conflict. On the other hand, individuals who scored high in contentiousness, agreeableness, and openness were more likely to engage in collaboration to find a win-win solution during conflict.

While we will discuss the effects of personality on conflict, please remember that this information gives us clues into what might be important to someone, it does not give us a magic formula to fully understand another person. Personality is just one piece of a 1,000 piece puzzle that makes someone who they are. Said another way, don't use someones personality type to stereotype them.

Adapted Works

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9.2 Cognitive and Personal-Social Dispositions

In this section:

- Cognitive Dispositions
  - Locus of Control
  - Cognitive Complexity
  - Authoritarianism/Dogmatism
  - Emotional Intelligence
- Personal-Social Dispositions
  - Self-Esteem
  - Narcissism
  - Machiavellianism
  - Empathy
  - Self-Monitoring

Cognitive Dispositions

Cognitive dispositions refer to general patterns of mental processes that impact how people respond and react to the world around them. These dispositions (or one's natural mental or emotional outlook) take on several different forms. For our purposes, we'll briefly examine the four identified by John Daly (2011): locus of control, cognitive complexity, authoritarianism/dogmatism, and emotional intelligence.

Locus of Control

As we have previous learned, individuals differ with respect to how much control they perceive they have over their behaviour and life circumstances. People with an internal locus of control believe that they can control their behavior and life circumstances. For example, people with an internal locus of control would believe that their careers and choice of job are ultimately a product of their behaviors

and decisions.The opposite is an external locus of control, or the belief that an individual's behavior and circumstances exist because of forces outside the individual's control. An individual with an external locus of control might believe that their career is a matter of luck or divine intervention. This individual would also be more likely to blame outside forces if their work life isn't going as desired. Our locus of control can also impact how much control we perceive we have in conflict and our belief that we can be part of the solution. For example, Dijkstra et al. (2011) found that individuals with an internal locus of control were more likely to engage in active problem-solving when they encountered conflict in the workplace.

Cognitive Complexity

According to John Daly (2002), "**cognitive complexity** has been defined in terms of the number of different constructs an individual has to describe others (differentiation), the degree to which those constructs cohere (integration), and the level of abstraction of the constructs (abstractiveness)" (p. 144). By differentiation, we are talking about the number of distinctions or separate elements an individual can utilize to recognize and interpret an event. For example, in the world of communication, someone who can attend to another individual's body language to a great degree can differentiate large amounts of nonverbal data in a way to understand how another person is thinking or feeling. Someone low in differentiation may only be able to understand a small number of pronounced nonverbal behaviors.

Integration, on the other hand, refers to an individual's ability to see connections or relationships among the various elements they has differentiated. It's one thing to recognize several unique nonverbal behaviors, but it's the ability to interpret nonverbal behaviors that enables someone to be genuinely aware of someone else's body language. It would be one thing if I could recognize that someone is smiling, an eyebrow is going up, the head is tilted, and someone's arms are crossed in front. Still, if I cannot see all of these unique behaviors as a total package, then I'm not going to be able to interpret this person's actual nonverbal behavior.

The last part of Daly's definition involves the ability to see levels of abstraction. Abstraction refers to something which exists apart from concrete realities, specific objects, or actual instances. For example, if someone to come right out and verbally tell you that they disagrees with something you said, then this person is concretely communicating disagreement, so as the receiver of the disagreement, it should be pretty easy to interpret the disagreement. On the other hand, if someone doesn't tell you they disagrees with what you've said but instead provides only small nonverbal cues of disagreement, being able to interpret those theoretical cues is attending to communicative behavior that is considerably more abstract.

Overall, cognitive complexity is a critical cognitive disposition because it directly impacts interpersonal relationships. According to Brant Burleson and Scott Caplan (1998, p. 239) cognitive complexity impacts several interpersonal constructs:

1. Form more detailed and organized impressions of others;

2. Better able to remember impressions of others;
3. Better able to resolve inconsistencies in information about others;
4. Learn complex social information quickly; and
5. Use multiple dimensions of judgment in making social evaluations.

In essence, these findings clearly illustrate that cognitive complexity is essential when determining the extent to which an individual can understand and make judgments about others in interpersonal interactions.

Authoritarianism/Dogmatism

According to Jason Wrench, James C. McCroskey, and Virginia Richmond (2008), two personality characteristics that commonly impact interpersonal communication are authoritarianism and dogmatism. **Authoritarianism** is a form of social organization where individuals favor absolute obedience to authority (or authorities) as opposed to individual freedom. The highly authoritarian individual believes that individuals should just knowingly submit to their power. Individuals who believe in authoritarianism but are not in power believe that others should submit themselves to those who have power.

Dogmatism, although closely related, is not the same thing as authoritarianism. Dogmatism is defined as the inclination to believe one's point-of-view as undeniably true based on faulty premises and without consideration of evidence and the opinions of others. Individuals who are highly dogmatic believe there is generally only one point-of-view on a specific topic, and it's their point-of-view. Highly dogmatic individuals typically view the world in terms of "black and white" while missing most of the shades of grey that exist between. Dogmatic people tend to force their beliefs on others and refuse to accept any variation or debate about these beliefs, which can lead to strained interpersonal interactions. Both authoritarianism and dogmatism "tap into the same broad idea: Some people are more rigid than others, and this rigidity affects both how they communicate and how they respond to communication" (Daly, 2002, p. 144).

Right-Wing Authoritarianism

One closely related term that has received some minor exploration in interpersonal communication is right-wing authoritarianism. According to Bob Altemeyer (2006) in his book *The Authoritarians,* **right-wing authoritarians (RWAs)** tend to have three specific characteristics:

1. RWAs believe in submitting themselves to individuals they perceive as established and legitimate authorities.
2. RWAs believe in strict adherence to social and cultural norms.
3. RWAs tend to become aggressive towards those who do not submit to established, legitimate authorities and those who violate social and cultural norms.

Please understand that Altemeyer's use of the term "right-wing" does not imply the same political connotation that is often associated with it in the North America. As Altemeyer explains, "Because the submission occurs to traditional authority, I call these followers *right-wing* authoritarians. I'm using the word "right" in one of its earliest meanings, for in Old English 'right'(pronounced 'writ') as an adjective meant lawful, proper, correct, doing what the authorities said of others" (Altemeyer, 2006, p. 9). Under this definition, right-wing authoritarianism is the perfect combination of both dogmatism and authoritarianism.

Right-wing authoritarianism has been linked to several interpersonal variables. For example, parents/guardians who are RWAs are more likely to believe in a highly dogmatic approach to parenting. In contrast, those who are not RWAs tend to be more permissive in their approaches to parenting (Manuel, 2006). Another study found that men with high levels of RWA were more likely to have been sexually aggressive in the past and were more likely to report sexually aggressive intentions for the future (Walker et al., 1993) Men with high RWA scores tend to be considerably more sexist and believe in highly traditional sex roles, which impacts how they communicate and interact with women (Altemeyer, 2006). Overall, RWA tends to negatively impact interpersonal interactions with anyone who does not see an individual's specific world view and does not come from their cultural background.

Emotional Intelligence

As discussed in Chapter 7, emotional intelligence is essential for successful relationships and conflict management (Goleman, 1995). Emotional intelligence (EQ) is important for interpersonal communication because individuals who are higher in EQ tend to be more sociable and less socially anxious. As a result of both sociability and lowered anxiety, high EQ individuals tend to be more socially skilled and have higher quality interpersonal relationships.

Affective Orientation

A closely related communication construct originally coined by Melanie and Steven Booth-Butterfield is affective orientation(Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1994) As it is conceptualized by the Booth-Butterfields, **affective orientation (AO)** is "the degree to which people are aware of their emotions, perceive them as important, and actively consider their affective responses in making judgments and interacting with others" (Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1994, p. 332). Under the auspices of AO, the general assumption is that highly affective-oriented people are (1) cognitively aware of their own and others' emotions, and (2) can implement emotional information in communication with others. Not surprisingly, the Booth-Butterfields found that highly affective-oriented individuals also reported greater affect intensity in their relationships.

Melanie and Steven Booth-Butterfield (1996) later furthered their understanding of AO by examining it in terms of how an individual's emotions drive their decisions in life. As the Booth-Butterfields

explain, in their further conceptualization of AO, they "are primarily interested in those individuals who not only sense and value their emotions but scrutinize and give them weight to direct behavior" (p. 159). In this sense, the Booth-Butterfields are expanding our notion of AO by explaining that some individuals use their emotions as a guiding force for their behaviors and their lives. On the other end of the spectrum, you have individuals who use no emotional information in how they behave and guide their lives. Although relatively little research has examined AO, the conducted research indicates its importance in interpersonal relationships. For example, in one study, individuals who viewed their parents/guardians as having high AO levels reported more open communication with those parents/guardians (Booth-Butterfield & Sidelinger, 1997).

Personal-Social Dispositions

Social-personal dispositions refer to general patterns of mental processes that impact how people socially relate to others or view themselves. All of the following dispositions impact how people interact with others, but they do so from very different places. Without going into too much detail, we are going to examine the seven personal-social dispositions identified by John Daly (2011).

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem consists of your sense of self-worth and the level of satisfaction you have with yourself; it is how you feel about yourself. A good self-image raises your self-esteem; a poor self-image often results in poor self-esteem, lack of confidence, and insecurity. Not surprisingly, individuals with low self-esteem tend to have more problematic interpersonal relationships and may have difficulty asserting their needs and boundaries.

Our self-esteem is determined by many factors, including how well we view our own performance and appearance, and how satisfied we are with our relationships with other people (Tafarodi & Swann, 1995). Self-esteem is in part a trait that is stable over time, with some people having relatively high self-esteem and others having lower self-esteem. But self-esteem is also a state that varies day to day and even hour to hour. When we have succeeded at an important task, when we have done something that we think is useful or important, or when we feel that we are accepted and valued by others, our self-concept will contain many positive thoughts and we will therefore have high self-esteem. When we have failed, done something harmful, or feel that we have been ignored or criticized, the negative aspects of the self-concept are more accessible and we experience low self-esteem.

Baumeister and colleagues (2003) conducted an extensive review of the research literature to determine whether having high self-esteem was as helpful as many people seem to think it is. They began by assessing which variables were correlated with high self-esteem and then considered the extent to which high self-esteem caused these outcomes. They found that high self-esteem does correlate with many positive outcomes. People with high self-esteem get better grades, are

less depressed, feel less stress, and may even live longer than those who view themselves more negatively. The researchers also found that high self-esteem is correlated with greater initiative and activity; people with high self-esteem just do more things. They are also more more likely to defend victims against bullies compared with people with low self-esteem, and they are more likely to initiate relationships and to speak up in groups. High self-esteem people also work harder in response to initial failure and are more willing to switch to a new line of endeavor if the present one seems unpromising. Thus, having high self-esteem seems to be a valuable resource—people with high self-esteem are happier, more active, and in many ways better able to deal with their environment.

While a high self-esteem is generally healthy, Jennifer Crocker and Lora Park (2004) have identified a potential cost of our attempts to inflate our self-esteem: we may spend so much time trying to enhance our self-esteem in the eyes of others—by focusing on the clothes we are wearing, impressing others, and so forth—that we have little time left to really improve ourselves in more meaningful ways. In some extreme cases, people experience such strong needs to improve their self-esteem and social status that they act in assertive or dominant ways in order to gain it. As in many other domains, then, having positive self-esteem is a good thing, but we must be careful to temper it with a healthy realism and a concern for others. The real irony here is that those people who do show more other- than self-concern, those who engage in more prosocial behavior at personal costs to themselves, for example, often tend to have higher self-esteem anyway (Leak & Leak, 2003).

Narcissism

Ovid's story of Narcissus and Echo has been passed down through the ages. The story starts with a Mountain Nymph named Echo who falls in love with a human named Narcissus. When Echo reveals herself to Narcissus, he rejects her. In true Roman fashion, this slight could not be left unpunished. Echo eventually leads Narcissus to a pool of water where he quickly falls in love with his reflection. He ultimately dies, staring at himself, because he realizes that his love will never be met.

In modern times, **narcissism** is defined a personality trait characterized by overly high self-esteem, self-admiration, and self-centeredness. Highly narcissistic individuals are completely self-focused and tend to ignore the communicative needs and emotions of others. In social situations, highly narcissistic individuals strive to be the center of attention. Narcissists tend to agree with statements such as the following:

> "I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so."
> "I can usually talk my way out of anything."
> "I like to be the center of attention."
> "I have a natural talent for influencing people."

Anita Vangelisti, Mark Knapp, and John Daly (1990) examined a purely communicative form of narcissism they deemed conversational narcissism. Conversational narcissism is an extreme focusing of one's interests and desires during an interpersonal interaction while completely ignoring

the interests and desires of another person. Vangelisti et al. found four general categories of conversationally narcissistic behavior. First, conversational narcissists inflate their self-importance while displaying an inflated self-image. Some behaviors include bragging, refusing to listen to criticism, praising one's self, etc. Second, conversational narcissists exploit a conversation by attempting to focus the direction of the conversation on topics of interest to them. Some behaviors include talking so fast others cannot interject, shifting the topic to one's self, interrupting others, etc. Third, conversational narcissists are exhibitionists, or they attempt to show-off or entertain others to turn the focus on themselves. Some behaviors include primping or preening, dressing to attract attention, being or laughing louder than others, positioning oneself in the center, etc. Lastly, conversational narcissists tend to have impersonal relationships. During their interactions with others, conversational narcissists show a lack of caring about another person and a lack of interest in another person. Some common behaviors include "glazing over" while someone else is speaking, looking impatient while someone is speaking, looking around the room while someone is speaking, etc. As you can imagine, people engaged in interpersonal encounters with conversational narcissists are generally highly unsatisfied with those interactions.

Narcissists can be perceived as charming at first, but often alienate others in the long run (Baumeister et al., 2003). They can also make bad romantic partners as they often behave selfishly and are always ready to look for someone else who they think will be a better mate, and they are more likely to be unfaithful than non-narcissists (Campbell & Foster, 2002; Campbell et al., 2002). Narcissists are also more likely to bully others, and they may respond very negatively to criticism (Baumeister et al., 2003). People who have narcissistic tendencies more often pursue self-serving behaviors, to the detriment of the people and communities surrounding them (Campbell et al., 2005). Perhaps surprisingly, narcissists seem to understand these things about themselves, although they engage in the behaviors anyway (Carlson et al., 2011).

Interestingly, scores on measures of narcissistic personality traits have been creeping steadily upward in recent decades in some cultures (Twenge et al., 2008). Given the social costs of these traits, this is troubling news. What reasons might there be for these trends? Twenge and Campbell (2009) argue that several interlocking factors are at work here, namely increasingly child-centered parenting styles, the cult of celebrity, the role of social media in promoting self-enhancement, and the wider availability of easy credit, which, they argue, has lead to more people being able to acquire status-related goods, in turn further fueling a sense of entitlement. As narcissism is partly about having an excess of self-esteem, it should by now come as no surprise that narcissistic traits are higher, on average, in people from individualistic versus collectivistic cultures (Twenge et al., 2008).

Machiavellianism

In 1513, Nicolo Machiavelli wrote a text called The Prince. Although Machiavelli dedicated the book to Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici, who was a member of the ruling Florentine Medici family, the book was originally scribed for Lorenzo's uncle. In The Prince, Nicolo Machiavelli unabashedly describes how he believes leaders should keep power. First, he notes that traditional leadership virtues like

decency, honor, and trust should be discarded for a more calculating approach to leadership. Most specifically, Machiavelli believed that humans were easily manipulated, so ultimately, leaders can either be the ones influencing their followers or wait for someone else to wield that influence in a different direction.

In 1970, two social psychologists named Richard Christie and Florence Geis decided to see if Machiavelli's ideas were still in practice in the 20th Century. The basic model that Christie and Geis proposed consisted of four basic **Machiavellian** characteristics:

1. **Lack of affect** in interpersonal relationships (relationships are a means to an end);
2. **Lack of concern** with conventional morality (people are tools to be used in the best way possible);
3. **Rational view of others not based on psychopathology** (people who actively manipulate others must be logical and rational); and
4. **Focused on short-term tasks rather than long-range ramifications of behavior** (these individuals have little ideological/organizational commitment).

Interpersonally, highly Machiavellian people tend to see people as stepping stones to get what they want. If talking to someone in a particular manner makes that other people feel good about themself, the Machiavellian has no problem doing this if it helps the Machiavellian get what they wants. Ultimately, Machiavellian behavior is very problematic. In interpersonal interactions where the receiver of a Machiavellian's attempt of manipulation is aware of the manipulation, the receiver tends to be highly unsatisfied with these communicative interactions. However, someone who is truly adept at the art of manipulation may be harder to recognize than most people realize.

Empathy

As we have previously learned, empathy is the ability to recognize and mutually experience another person's attitudes, emotions, experiences, and thoughts. Highly empathic individuals have the unique ability to connect with others interpersonally, because they can truly see how the other person is viewing life. Individuals who are unempathetic generally have a hard time taking or seeing another person's perspective, so their interpersonal interactions tend to be more rigid and less emotionally driven. Generally speaking, people who have high levels of empathy tend to have more successful and rewarding interactions with others when compared to unempathetic individuals. Furthermore, people who are interacting with a highly empathetic person tend to find those interactions more satisfying than when interacting with someone who is unempathetic. The ability to take perspective and show genuine concern and connection to others is a highly valuable skill in interpersonal interactions, especially during the conflict process.

Individuals with low levels of empathy may exhibit patterns of psychopathy. Together psychopathy, Machiavellianism and narcissism comprise what social psychologists call the Dark Triad.

Figure 9.2. The Dark Triad. Social psychologists classify a collection of three personality traits as the "dark triad": Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism. Image: Chris Patrick, Psychopathy, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge].

Consider This: Dealing with Someone with Narcissistic Tendencies

The Grey Rocking Technique

When a coworker is exhibiting signs of narcissism (e.g., creating unnecessary drama, demanding to be the center of attention, or constantly seeking approval), it can be exhausting to deal with daily. This individual may not have the capacity or the motivation to deal with conflict in a respectful manner. In some situations, reporting inappropriate behaviour to relevant managers or organizational structures may be necessary. Later in the book, we will talk about bullying and harassment. If the behaviour is more of an annoyance, Sword and Zimbardo (2022) suggest a strategy called "grey rocking".

This technique encourages you to think about your own behaviour and to model the grey rock pictured above. It's unmoving and dull. In much the same way, grey rocking in communication involves becoming uninteresting. Sword and Zimbardo suggest keeping conversations brief, not providing lot of elaboration when questions are asked, and using non-verbal behaviours (e.g., lack of eye contact) to show your disinterest or disengagement.

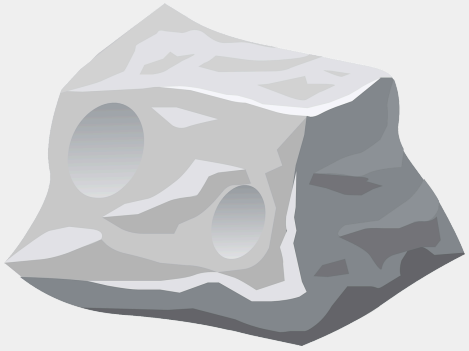

Image: Rock Grey Square, OpenClipart-Vectors, Pixabay License.

The individual will learn that their need for attention won't be met by you and change unwanted behaviours or, at the very least, that you will feel less emotionally depleted by encounters with this person.

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Self-Monitoring

The last of the personal-social dispositions is referred to as self-monitoring. In 1974 Mark Snyder developed his basic theory of **self-monitoring**, which proposes that individuals differ in the degree to which they can control their behaviors following the appropriate social rules and norms involved in interpersonal interaction. In this theory, Snyder proposes that there are some individuals adept at selecting appropriate behavior in light of the context of a situation, which he deems high self-monitors. High self-monitors want others to view them in a precise manner (impression

management), so they enact communicative behaviors that ensure suitable or favorable public appearances. On the other hand, some people are merely unconcerned with how others view them and will act consistently across differing communicative contexts despite the changes in cultural rules and norms. Snyder called these people low self-monitors.

Interpersonally, high self-monitors tend to have more meaningful and satisfying interpersonal interactions with others. Conversely, individuals who are low self-monitors tend to have more problematic and less satisfying interpersonal relationships with others. In romantic relationships, high self-monitors tend to develop relational intimacy much faster than individuals who are low self-monitors. Furthermore, high self-monitors tend to build lots of interpersonal friendships with a broad range of people. Low-self-monitors may only have a small handful of friends, but these friendships tend to have more depth. Furthermore, high self-monitors are also more likely to take on leadership positions and get promoted in an organization when compared to their low self-monitoring counterparts. Overall, self-monitoring is an important dispositional characteristic that impacts interpersonal relationships.

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9.3 Types of Deviant Workplace Behaviour

In this section:

- Types of Deviant Workplace Behaviour
  - Problem Bosses
  - Problem Coworkers
  - Problem Subordinates
- Dealing with Deviant Behaviour in the Workplace

Types of Deviant Workplace Behaviour

Eventually, everyone is going to run into someone within the workplace that is going to annoy them. There are many out there designed to help you deal with difficult people, toxic people, workplace vampires, energy drainers, etc.... Some of these people are just irritants while other problem people can be more egregious (e.g., aggressive, bullying, deviating from work norms, overly cynical about everything, etc.). We view these people as problem people because they ultimately take more of our resources to deal with them. There's a reason some writers refer to problem people as emotional vampires because we have to use more of our emotional resources to deal with these people, and they increase our levels of stress along the way (Harden Fritz & Omdahl, 2009). In this section, we are going to explore the different types of "problem people" we come in contact within the workplace and how we can strive towards workplace civility. In the organizational literature, we often refer to these people as engaging deviant workplace behaviour.

Deviant workplace behaviour is defined as voluntary behavior of organizational members that violates significant organizational norms and practices or threatens the wellbeing of the organization and its members.

Research on problem people in the workplace tends to demonstrate that we have problem people at all levels of the organization. We have problematic bosses, peers, and subordinates. In an attempt

to understand the types of problem people individuals face in the workplace, in 2002 Janie Harden Fritz created a typology of the different types of problem people we encounter in the workplace, which was later updated in 2009 (Harden Fritz, 2009). Figure 9.3 shows the typology. In this typology, Harden Fritz discusses how different positions in the workplace can lead to varying types of problem people. Let's examine each of these types.

Figure 9.3 Problematic People in the Workplace. Image: Jason S. Wrench, Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter, and Katherine S. Thweatt, Interpersonal Communication, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from the original. [Click to enlarge].

Problem Bosses

Through Harden Fritz's research into bosses, she found that there are six common types of

problematic bosses: different, okay good old boy/girl, toxic, self-centered taskmaster, and intrusive harasser.

The Different Boss

First, **The Different Boss** is someone a subordinate sees as distractingly different from them as a person. Different subordinates are going to view what is "distractingly different" in a wide range of different ways. Some people who view their bosses as "distractingly different" may also be succumbing to their prejudices about people from various social groups.

Good Old Boy or Good Old Girl Boss

Second, is **the Good Old Boy or Good Old Girl Boss**. This type of boss is someone who probably hasn't progressed along with the modern world of corporate thinking. This person may be gregarious and outgoing, but this person tends to see the "old ways of doing things" as best – even when they're problematic. These individuals tend to see sexual harassment as something that isn't a big deal in the workplace. Their subordinates are also more likely to view some of their behaviors as unethical.

Okay Boss

The third type of boss is the **Okay Boss**. This person is exactly like the name says, okay and average in just about every way possible. These individuals are, in many ways, coasting towards retirement. They try not to rock the boat within the organization, so they will never stand up to their bosses, nor will they advocate for their subordinates. For someone who likes work and wants to succeed in life, working for one of these people can be very frustrating because they like the average and can create an environment where the average is the norm, and people who exceed the average are the outcasts.

The Toxic Boss

Fourth, we have the **Toxic Boss**. These bosses are just all-around problematic in the workplace. These people are often seen as unethical, obnoxious, and unprofessional by their subordinates. These are the types of bosses that can create reasonably hostile work environments and pit employees against each other for their amusement. However, when it comes to harassing behavior, they are less likely to engage in harassment directly. Still, they can often create environments where both sexual harassment and bullying become the norm.

Self-Centered Taskmaster

The fifth type of problematic boss is the **Self-Centered Taskmaster**. The self-centered taskmaster is ultimately "focused on getting the job done to advance his/her own goals, without concern for others" (Harden Fritz, 2009, p. 31). This type of boss is purely focused on getting work done. This individual may be excessive in the amount of work they give subordinates. Ultimately, this individual wants to show their superiors how good of a boss they are to move up the organizational hierarchy. On the flip side, these people are highly competent, but their tendency to lord power over others in an obnoxious way makes working for this type of boss very stressful.

The Intrusive Harasser Boss

Sixth, we have the **Intrusive Harasser Boss**. This individual tends to be highly interfering and often wants to get caught up in their subordinates' personal and professional lives. They are likely to be overly attentive in the workplace, which can interfere with an individual's ability to complete their task assignments. Furthermore, this boss is likely to be one who engages in activities like sexual harassment, backstabbing, and busybody behavior.

Problem Coworkers

Through Harden Fritz's research into coworkers, she found that there are eight common types of problematic coworkers: adolescent, bully, mild annoyance, independent self-promoter, pushy playboy/playgirl, independent other, soap opera star, and the abrasive, incompetent harasser.

Adolescent

The first common problematic coworker you can have is the **Adolescent**. The adolescent is the Peter Pan of the business world, they don't want to grow up. These people tend to want to be the center of attention and will be the first to let everyone know when they've accomplished something. You almost feel like you need to give them a reward just for doing their job. However, if someone dares to question them, they tend to become very defensive, probably because they don't want others to know how insecure they feel.

Bully

Second, we have the **Bully**. As we have previously discussed, bully is still common in many Canadian workplaces. This individual has a knack of being overly demanding on their peers, but then dares to take credit for their peers' work when the time comes. This is your prototypical schoolyard bully all

grown up and in an office job. In 2005, Charlotte Rayner and Loraleigh Keashly (2005) examined the available definitions for "workplace bullying" and derived at five specific characteristics:

1. the experience of negative behavior;
2. behaviors experienced persistently;
3. targets experiencing damage;
4. targets labeling themselves as bullied; and
5. targets with less power and difficulty defending themselves.

You'll notice from this list that being a bully isn't a one-off behavior for these coworkers. This behavior targets individuals in a highly negative manner, happens over a long period, and can have long-term psychological and physiological ramifications for individuals who are targeted. We should note that more often than not, bullies do not happen in isolation, but more often than not run in packs. For this reason, a lot of European research on this subject has been called mobbing instead of bullying. Sadly, this is an all-too-often occurrence in the modern work world. In a large study examining 148 international corporations through both qualitative and quantitative methods, Randy Hodson et al. (2006) reported that 49 percent of the organizations they investigated had routine patterns of workplace bullying.

Mild Annoyance

The third type of problematic coworker is the **Mild Annoyance**. When it comes down to it, this person isn't going to ruin your day, but they are mildly annoying and tend to be so on a routine basis. Maybe it's a coworker who wants to come in every morning and talk to you about what they watched on television the night before while you're trying to catch up on email. Or maybe it's the coworker who plays music a little too loudly in the workplace. There are all kinds of things that can annoy us as human beings, so the mildly annoying coworker is one that generally is tolerated.

Independent Self-Promoter

Fourth, we have the **Independent Self-Promoter**. The independent self-promoter is someone who likes to toot their own horn at work. This individual tends to be slight to extremely narcissistic and thinks the world revolves around them. These individuals are not the type to take credit for other people's work, but they also aren't the type to do work that needs to be done unless they see its utility in making them look good.

Pushy Playboy/Playgirl

The fifth problematic coworker is t**he Pushy Playboy/Playgirl**. The pushy playboy/playgirl is an individual marked by their tendency to push other coworkers into doing things for them. Often

these tasks have nothing to do with work at all. For example, the pushy playboy/playgirl would be the type of person to demand that a younger or more submissive coworker run down the street for a Starbucks run. Furthermore, these are the types of people who tend to be overly demanding of coworkers and then misrepresent their performance to those higher up in the corporate hierarchy.

Independent Other

The sixth common problematic coworker is the **Independent Other**. In many ways, the independent other is similar to the different bosses discussed earlier. These people tend to be perceived as uniquely different from their coworkers. There are a lot of characteristics that can make someone viewed as uniquely other. Any specific demographic that goes against the workplace norm could be cause for perceiving someone as different: age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, race, etc.... Some people may view them as having a low work ethic, but this perception may stem out of that perceived "otherness."

Soap Opera Star

The seventh common problematic coworker identified by Harden Fritz (2009) is the **Soap Opera Star**. The soap opera star lives for drama in the workplace. New rumors of office romances? This person tends to be a busybody and will be all up in everyone's business both at work and in their personal lives. Because of their tendency towards drama (both finding it and often creating it), they are generally seen as highly distracting by their peers. At the same time, they tend to spend so much time digging for office gossip that they are typically perceived as having a poor work ethic by others.

Abrasive, Incompetent Harasser

The final type of problematic coworker is the **Abrasive, Incompetent Harasser**, which is an individual who tends to be highly uncivil in the workplace with a particular emphasis on sexually harassing behavior. This coworker is very similar to the intrusive harasser boss discussed earlier. This individual is generally viewed as incompetent and unprofessional in the workplace. This person tends to score high on all of the problematic work behaviors commonly seen by coworkers.

Problem Subordinates

In the two previous sections, we've looked at problematic bosses and coworkers, but subordinates can also be a bit of a problem in the workplace. For this reason, Harden Fritz (2009) identified five clear troublesome subordinates: the okay subordinate, the abrasive harasser, the bully, the different other, and the incompetent renegade.

Okay Subordinate

First, we have the **Okay Subordinate**. Just like the name sounds, this person is not stellar, nor is this person awful; this person is just OK. This person does tend towards being a mildly annoying busybody at work. Still, none of their behavior rises to the status where a supervisor would need to step in and counsel the employee's behavior formally.

Abrasive Harasser

Second, we have the **Abrasive Harasser**. The abrasive harasser is an individual who tends to be someone who needs counseling regularly about what constitutes sexual harassment. They may not even always realize what types of behavior are appropriate in the workplace. For example, this subordinate could forward their supervisor a sexual joke via email without thinking others could perceive the joke as inappropriate in the workplace. On the more advanced end, you have people who are perpetual sexual harassers who need to be severely counseled to protect the organization and start the process of firing the person for harassing behavior.

The Bully

The next common problem subordinate is the **Bully**. According to Harden Fritz, this subordinate is one "who bosses others, usurps authority, is competitive and is at the same time insecure" (Harden Fritz, 2009, p. 40). If this person's behavior is not curtailed by their supervisor, this type of behavior can quickly become infectious and end up hurting cohesion throughout the entire office. Furthermore, supervisors need to recognize this behavior and ensure that the targets of the bully have a safe and secure place to work. Don't be surprised if this person decides to bully upward, or attempt to bully their supervisor because it can happen.

The Different Other

The fourth common problem subordinate is the **Different Other**. Just like the two previous versions of "difference" discussed for bosses and coworkers, the different other is a subordinate who is perceived as distinctly different from their supervisor. One thing we know from years of management research is that people who are perceived as different from their supervisors are less likely to enjoy protective and mentoring relationships with their supervisors. As such, when a supervisor views someone as a "different other," they may engage in subconscious discriminatory behavior towards their subordinate.

Incompetent Renegade

Finally, we have the **Incompetent Renegade**. This individual tends to be ethically incompetent and views themself as above the law within the organization. This individual may view themself as better than the organization to begin with, which causes a lot of problems around the office. However, instead of accomplishing their work, this person is more likely to take credit for others' work. If this subordinate is allowed to keep behaving in this manner, they will be viewed by others as running the place. For this reason, subordinates need to stop this behavior when they see it occurring and immediately initiate counseling to stop the behavior and build a case for termination if the behavior does not cease.

Dealing with Deviant Behaviour in the Workplace

Have you ever encountered any of these deviant behaviours in your workplace? Can you recognize any times that you have engaged in these behaviours yourself?

While we can't control other people and what they do and say, we can control our own perspectives and actions. We can also be aware of our own triggers and why another person poses a challenge to us. Sometimes it has nothing to do with them at all! When we encounter deviant behaviour, we can also assert and reinforce our boundaries using assertive language (discussed in Chapter 8).

Consider This: Research on Dealing with Bullies at Work

We have already discussed some strategies for addressing bullying or harassing behaviour in the workplace.

In 2017, Stacy Tye-Williams and Kathleen J. Krone wanted to examine the advice given to victims of workplace bullying. Going into this study, the researchers realized that a lot of the advice given to victims makes it their personal responsibility to end the bullying, "You should just stand up to the bully" or "You're being too emotional this." In their study, the researchers interviewed 48 people who had been the victims of workplace bullying (the average age was 28). The participants had worked on average for 5 ½ years in the organization where they were bullied. Here are the top ten most common pieces of advice victims received:

- Quit/get out
- Ignore it/blow it off/do not let it affect you
- Fight/stand up

- Stay calm
- Report the bullying
- Be quiet/keep mouth shut
- Be rational
- Journal
- Avoid the bully
- Toughen up

The researchers discovered three underlying themes of advice. First, participants reported that they felt they were being told to downplay their emotional experiences as victims. Second, was what the researchers called the "dilemma of advice," or the tendency to believe that the advice given wasn't realistic and wouldn't change anything. Furthermore, many who followed the advice reported that it made things worse, not better. Lastly, the researchers noted the "paradox of advice." Some participants wouldn't offer advice because bullying is contextual and needs a more contextually-based approach. Yet others admitted that they offered the same advice to others that they'd been offered, even when they knew the advice didn't help them at all.

The researches ultimately concluded, "The results of this study point to a paradoxical relationship between advice and its usefulness. Targets felt that all types of advice are potentially useful. However, the advice either would not have worked in their case or could possibly be detrimental if put into practice." Ultimately, the researchers argue that responding to bullying must first take into account the emotions the victim is receiving, and that responses to bullying should be a group and not a single individual's efforts.

Source: Tye-Williams, S., & Krone, K. J. (2017). Identifying and re-imagining the paradox of workplace bullying advice. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 45(2), 218–235. https://doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2017.1288291

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9.4 ABCs of Conflict

ABCs of Conflict

Many researchers have attempted to understand how humans handle conflict with one another. In Chapter 2, we learned about the Thomas-Kilmann model. The first researchers to create a taxonomy for understanding conflict management strategies were Richard E. Walton and Robert B. McKersie (1965). Walton and McKersie were primarily interested in how individuals handle conflict during labor negotiations. The Walton and McKersie model consisted of only two methods for managing conflict: integrative and distributive. Recall, integrative conflict is a win-win approach to conflict; whereby, both parties attempt to come to a settled agreement that is mutually beneficial. Distributive conflict is a win-lose approach; whereby, conflicting parties see their job as to win and make sure the other person or group loses. Over the years, a number of different patterns for handling conflict have arisen in the literature, but most of them agree with the first two proposed by Walton and McKersie, but they generally add a third dimension of conflict: avoidance. In this framework, there are three conflict management styles that form the acronym ABC. They are:

- **A**voiders,
- **B**attlers, and
- **C**ollaborators.

Avoiders

Alan Sillars, Stephen, Coletti, Doug Parry, and Mark Rogers (1982) created a taxonomy of different types of strategies that people can use when avoiding conflict. Table 9.1 provides a list of these common tactics.

Table 9.1 Common Strategies

Conflict Management Tactic	Definition	Example
Simple Denial	Statements that deny the conflict.	“No, I'm perfectly fine.“
Extended Denial	Statements that deny conflict with a short justification.	“No, I'm perfectly fine. I just had a long night.“
Under Responsiveness	Statements that deny the conflict and then pose a question to the conflict partner.	“I don't know why you are upset, did you wake up on the wrong side of the bed this morning?“
Topic Shifting	Statements that shift the interaction away from the conflict.	“Sorry to hear that. Did you hear about the mall opening?“
Topic Avoidance	Statements designed to clearly stop the conflict.	“I don't want to deal with this right now.“
Abstractness	Statements designed to shift a conflict from concrete factors to more abstract ones.	“Yes, I know I'm late. But what is time really except a construction of humans to force conformity.“
Semantic Focus	Statements focused on the denotative and connotative definitions of words.	“So, what do you mean by the word 'report'?“
Process Focus	Statements focused on the “appropriate“ procedures for handling conflict.	“I refuse to talk to you when you are angry.“
Joking	Humorous statements designed to derail conflict.	“That's about as useless as a football bat.“
Ambivalence	Statements designed to indicate a lack of caring.	“Whatever!" "Just do what you want.“
Pessimism	Statements that devalue the purpose of conflict.	“What's the point of fighting over this? Neither of us are changing our minds.“
Evasion	Statements designed to shift the focus of the conflict.	“I hear the accounting department has that problem, not us.“
Stalling	Statements designed to shift the conflict to another time.	“I don't have time to talk about this right now.“
Irrelevant Remark	Statements that have nothing to do with the conflict.	“Did they repaint this meeting room? The walls look different.“

Source: *Interpersonal Communication by Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

Battlers

For our purposes, we have opted to describe those who engage in distributive conflict as battlers because they often see going into a conflict as heading off to war, which is most appropriately aligned with the distributive conflict management strategies. Battlers believe that conflict should take on an approach where the battler must win the conflict at all costs without regard to the damage they might cause along the way. Furthermore, battlers tend to be very personalistic in their goals and are often highly antagonistic towards those individuals with whom they are engaging in

conflict (Sillars et al., 1982). Sillars et al. created a taxonomy of different types of strategies that people can use when using distributive conflict management strategies. Table 9.2 provides a list of these common tactics.

Table 9.2 Distributive Conflict Management Strategies

Conflict Management Tactic	Definition	Example
Faulting	Statements that verbally criticize a conflict partner.	"Wow, I can't believe you are so dense at times."
Rejection	Statements that express antagonistic disagreement.	"That is such a dumb idea."
Hostile Questioning	Questions designed to fault a conflict partner.	"Who made you the boss?"
Hostile Joking	Humorous statements designed to attack a partner.	"I do believe a village has lost its idiot."
Presumptive Attribution	Statements designed to point the meaning or origin of the conflict to another source.	"You just think that because your manager keeps telling you that."
Avoiding Responsibility	Statements that deny fault.	"Not my fault, not my problem."
Prescription	Statements that describe a specific change to another's behavior.	"You know, if you'd just stop yelling, maybe people would take you seriously."
Threat	Statements designed to inform a conflict partner of a future punishment.	"You either complete this part of the project by Friday or you'll have to come in and work all weekend"
Blame	Statements that lay culpability for a problem on a partner.	"It's your fault we got ourselves in this mess in the first place."
Shouting	Statements delivered in a manner with an increased volume.	"GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER!"
Sarcasm	Statements involving the use of irony to convey contempt, mock, insult, or wound another person.	"The trouble with you is that you lack the power of conversation but not the power of speech."

Source: *Interpersonal Communication by Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

Collaborators

The last type of conflicting partners are collaborators. There are a range of collaborating choices, from being completely collaborative in an attempt to find a mutually agreed upon solution, to being compromising when you realize that both sides will need to win and lose a little to come to a satisfactory solution. In both cases, the goal is to use prosocial communicative behaviors in an attempt to reach a solution everyone is happy with. Admittedly, this is often easier said than done. Furthermore, it’s entirely possible that one side says they want to collaborate, and the other side

refuses to collaborate at all. When this happens, collaborative conflict management strategies may not be as effective, because it's hard to collaborate with someone who truly believes you need to lose the conflict.

Alan Sillars, Stephen, Coletti, Doug Parry, and Mark Rogers created a taxonomy of different types of strategies that people can use when collaborating during a conflict. Table 9.3 provides a list of these common tactics.

Table 9.3 Integrative Conflict Management Strategies

Conflict Management Tactic	Definition	Example
Descriptive Acts	Statements that describe obvious events or factors.	"Last time your manager worked at our branch, she yelled babysat our kids, she yelled at them."
Qualification	Statements that explicitly explain the conflict.	"I am upset because you didn't show up for the meeting this morning. "
Disclosure	Statements that disclose one's thoughts and feelings in a non-judgmental way.	"I get really anxious when you don't return my phone calls."
Soliciting Disclosure	Questions that ask another person to disclose their thoughts and feelings.	"How do you feel about what I just said?"
Negative Inquiry	Statements allowing for the other person to identify your negative behaviors.	"What is it that I do that makes you yell at me?"
Empathy	Statements that indicate you understand and relate to the other person's emotions and experiences.	"I know this isn't easy for you."
Emphasize Commonalities	Statements that highlight shared goals, aims, and values.	"We both want what's best for this company."
Accepting Responsibility	Statements acknowledging the part you play within a conflict.	"You're right. I sometimes let my anger get the best of me."
Initiating Problem-Solving	Statements designed to help the conflict come to a mutually agreed upon solution.	"So let's brainstorm some ways that will help us solve this."
Concession	Statements designed to give in or yield to a partner's goals, aims, or values.	"I promise, I will make sure my part of the report is complete before I leave for the night."

Source: *Interpersonal Communication by Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

Before we conclude this section, it is important to point out that conflict management strategies are often reciprocated by others. If you start a conflict in a highly competitive way, do not be surprised when your conflicting partner mirrors you and starts using distributive conflict management strategies in return. The same is also true for integrative conflict management strategies. When you start using integrative conflict management strategies, you can often deescalate a problematic conflict by using integrative conflict management strategies (Wrench & McGee, 2000).

Self-assessment

See Appendix B: Self-Assessments

Want to learn your own ABC conflict style? Take the Self-Assessment to find out.

- The ABCs of Conflict

Adapted Works

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9.5 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms

Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **Personality encompasses a person's** relatively stable feelings, thoughts, and behavioral patterns.
- **The Big 5 personality traits are** summarized by the acronym OCEAN. They are Openness, Contentiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Neuroticism is associated with poor emotion regulation while individuals who score high in contentiousness, openness and agreeableness may be more likely to engage in positive conflict.
- **Cognitive dispositions** (general patterns of mental processes that impact how people respond and react to the world around them) discussed in this chapter were locus of control, cognitive complexity, authoritarianism, dogmatism, emotional intelligence, and AO. Social-personal dispositions (general patterns of mental processes that impact how people socially relate to others or view themselves) discussed in this chapter were loneliness, depression, self-esteem, narcissism, Machiavellianism, empathy, and self-monitoring. These ways of being impact our relationships and ability to engage in conflict management.
- **Workplace deviance involves** the voluntary behavior of organizational members that violates significant organizational norms and practices or threatens the wellbeing of the organization and its members.
- **Harden Fritz categorized six types of problematic bosses**: different, okay good old boy/girl, toxic, self-centered taskmaster, and intrusive harasser.
    - First, the different boss is someone a subordinate sees as distractingly different from them as a person.
    - Second, the good old boy/girl boss considers the "old ways of doing things" as best – even when they're problematic.
    - Third, the OK boss kay and average in just about every way possible coasting towards retirement.
    - Fourth, the toxic boss is seen as unethical, obnoxious, and unprofessional by their subordinates.
    - Fifth, the self-centered taskmaster is entirely concerned with completing tasks with no concern for developing relationships with their followers.

    - Lastly, the intrusive harasser boss tends to be highly interfering and often wants to get caught up in their subordinates' personal and professional lives.

- **Harden Fritz categorized eight types of problematic coworkers**:
    - adolescent (wants to be the center of attention and get nothing done),
    - bully (is overly demanding of their peers and takes credit for their work),
    - mild annoyance (they engage in disruptive behaviors regularly but not to a drastic degree),
    - independent self-promoter (likes to toot their own horn),
    - pushy playboy/playgirl (pushes people into doing things for them),
    - independent other (perceived as distinctly different from their coworkers),
    - soap opera star (loves to gossip and be in the middle of all of the workplace drama), and
    - the abrasive, incompetent harasser (is highly uncivil in the workplace with a special emphasis in sexually harassing behavior).
- **Harden Fritz categorized five types of problematic subordinates**: the okay subordinate, the abrasive harasser, the bully, the different other, and the incompetent renegade.
    - First, the okay substitute is a follower who is not stellar or awful, just very much middle of the road.
    - Second, the abrasive harasser is an individual who tends to be someone who needs counseling regularly about what constitutes sexual harassment.
    - Third, the bully is someone who bosses their peers around, usurps authority, and engages in hypercompetitive behavior when competition is not necessary (all signs of someone who is deeply insecure).
    - Fourth, the different other is a follower who is perceived as distinctly different from their supervisor.
    - Finally, the incompetent renegade is ethically incompetent and views themselves as above the law within the organization.
- **Using the ABC model, we discussed three basic forms of conflict management**: Avoider attempt to avoid a conflict altogether or leave the conflict field. Battlers have a distributive conflict style and desire a win-lose orientation. Collaborators engage in integrative conflict and attempt to find a mutually beneficial solution to a problem.

Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/conflictmanagement/?p=169#h5p-12

Key Terms

Key terms from this chapter include:

- **Affective orientation**
- **Avoiders**
- **Authoritarianism**
- **Battlers**
- **Big 5 personality traits**
- **Cognitive complexity**
- **Cognitive dispositions**
- **Collaborators**
- **Depression**
- **Deviant workplace behaviour**
- **Dogmatism**
- **Emotional loneliness**
- **Machiavellianism**
- **Narcissism**
- **Personality**
- **Right-wing authoritarians (RWAs)**
- **Self-esteem**

- **Self-monitoring**
- **Social loneliness**
- **Social-personal dispositions**

CHAPTER 10: COMMUNICATION IN CONFLICT

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

- Define communication.
- Explain the process of communication using the transactional model.
- Identify possible directions of communication within organizations.
- List the characteristics of written, oral and verbal communication.
- Recognize barriers to effective communication.
- Appreciate the relationship between communication and self-esteem.
- Explore how self-esteem, communication dispositions and relational dispositions impact how we see and interact with others.
- Contrast hearing and listening.
- Describe steps in the listening process.
- Summarize four different listening styles.
- Explain barriers to effective listening.
- Review bad listening practices and strategies for engaging in active listening.
- Describe guidelines for giving and receiving constructive feedback.
- Compare common communication behaviours during conflict.
- Explain conflict management strategies.
- Recognize the four steps in the STLC conflict model.

In this chapter, we will explore the process of communication (written, verbal, and nonverbal) within organizations. We will unpack various barriers to effective communication and how our self-esteem, communication dispositions and relational dispositions impact how we communicate with others. We will differentiate between hearing and listening and the steps involved in the listening process. We will summarize four different listening styles and explore factors that make listening a challenge. In addition, we will identify guidelines for giving and receiving feedback. Finally, we will examine communication behaviours during conflict and strategies for communicating effectively during conflict.

10.1 Communication

In this section:

- The Communication Process
- Direction of Communication Within Organizations
- Types of Communication
- Barriers to Effective Communication

Communication

Before we explore different forms of communication, it is important that we have a shared understanding of what we mean by the word *communication*.

For our purposes in this book, we will define **communication** as the process of generating meaning by sending and receiving verbal and nonverbal symbols and signs that are influenced by multiple contexts.

The Communication Process

Interpersonal communication is an important part of being effective in the workplace. It helps us to:

- influence the opinions, attitudes, motivations, and behaviors of others;
- express our feelings, emotions, and intentions to others;
- exchange information regarding events or issues; and
- reinforce the formal structure of the organization by such means as making use of formal channels of communication.

Interpersonal communication allows employees at all levels of an organization to interact with others, to secure desired results, to request or extend assistance, and to make use of and reinforce

the formal design of the organization. These purposes serve not only the individuals involved, but the larger goal of improving the quality of organizational effectiveness.

The transactional model that we present here is an oversimplification of what really happens in communication, but this model will be useful in creating a diagram to be used to discuss the topic. Figure 10.1 illustrates a simple communication episode where a communicator encodes a message and a receiver decodes the message (Shannon & Weaver, 1948).

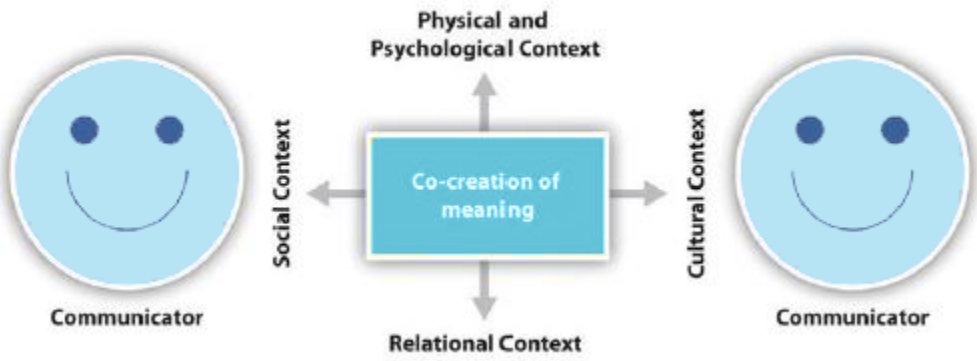

Figure 10.1 The Transaction Model of Communication. Image by Andy Schmitz, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

The **transactional model** of communication describes communication as a process in which communicators generate social realities within social, relational, and cultural contexts. In this model, you don't just communicate to exchange messages; you communicate to create relationships, form intercultural alliances, shape your self-concepts, and engage with others in dialogue to create communities. In short, you don't communicate about your realities; communication helps to construct your realities (and the realities of others).

The roles of sender (source) and receiver in the transaction model of communication differ significantly from the other models. Instead of labeling participants as senders and receivers, the people in a communication encounter are referred to as communicators. Unlike the interaction model, which suggests that participants alternate positions as sender and receiver, the transaction model suggests that you are simultaneously a sender and a receiver. For example, when meeting a new friend, you send verbal messages about your interests and background, your companion reacts nonverbally. You don't wait until you are done sending your verbal message to start receiving and decoding the nonverbal messages of your new friend. Instead, you are simultaneously sending your verbal message and receiving your friend's nonverbal messages. This is an important addition to the model because it allows you to understand how you are able to adapt your communication—for example, adapting a verbal message—in the middle of sending it based on the communication you are simultaneously receiving from your communication partner.

Direction of Communication Within Organizations

Information can move between communicators in a variety of directions throughout an organization's hierarchy. It can move laterally through sharing of information between coworkers, diagonally when information is shared between different branches or areas within an organization. Information can also flow upwards or downwards to supervisors and subordinates. Another powerful means of information dissemination in organizations that is not depicted in the image below is an informal network of gossip that travels through an organization often referred to as the grapevine.

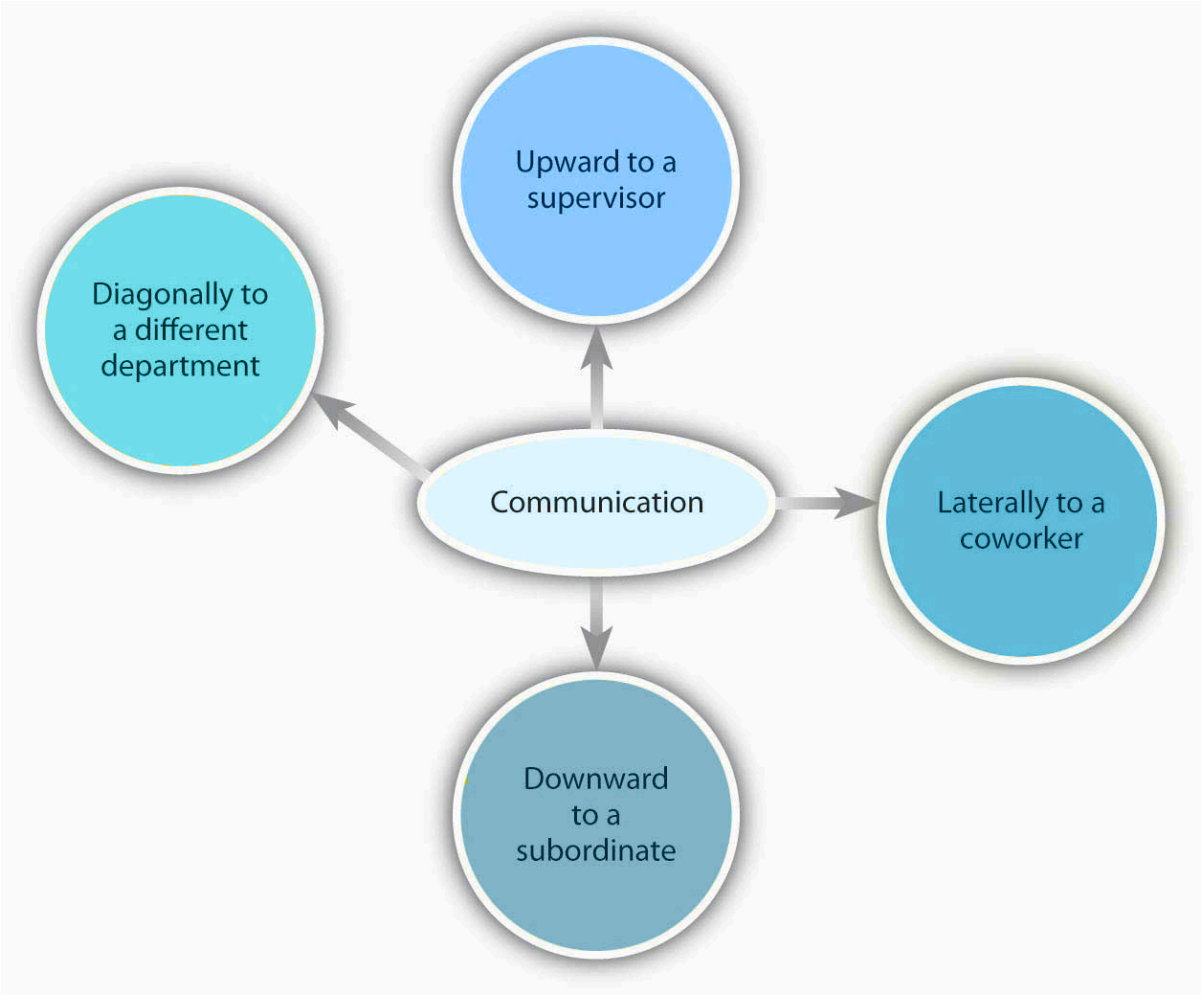

Figure 10.2 Communication flows in many different directions within an organization. Adapted from Principles of Management for Leadership Communication by University of Minnesota information, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original.[Click to enlarge]

Types of Communication

Written Communication

Written communications include e-mail, texts, letters, reports, manuals, and annotations on sticky notes. Written communications may be printed on paper or appear on the screen. Written communication is often asynchronous. That is, the sender can write a message that the receiver can read at any time, unlike a conversation that is carried on in real time. A written communication can also be read by many people (such as all employees in a department or all customers). It's a "one-to-many" communication, as opposed to a one-to-one conversation. The modern workplace relies increasingly on electronic communications like email. Written communication can serve a good medium for messages, such as a change in a company policy, where precision of language and documentation of the message are important. Written communications is a good medium for conveying facts.

Oral Communication

This consists of all messages or exchanges of information that are spoken, and it's the most prevalent type of communication. Compared to written communication, oral communication is synchronous and has greater channel richness due to the availability of nonverbal cues in addition to the content of the message. Oral communication is preferable for conveying emotions and is often more appropriate for handling sensitive topics that may occur during conflict. In the next section, we will discuss some common patterns of communication behaviours during conflict.

Nonverbal Communication

It's not just what we say to others, but also how we say it. Research also shows that 55% of in-person communication comes from nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, body stance, and tone of voice. According to one study, only 7% of a receiver's comprehension of a message is based on the sender's actual words, 38% is based on paralanguage (the tone, pace, and volume of speech), and 55% is based on *nonverbal cues* (body language) (Mehrabian, 1981). To be effective communicators, our body language, appearance, and tone must align with the words we're trying to convey. Changing the tone of voice in a conversation can incite or diffuse a misunderstanding. Thus, it is important to be aware of our nonverbal messages always, but especially during conflict.

Barriers to Effective Communication

Communicating can be more of a challenge than you think, when you realize the many things that can stand in the way of effective communication. These include filtering, selective perception, information overload, emotional disconnects, lack of source familiarity or credibility, workplace gossip, lies, bribery and coercion, semantics, gender differences, differences in meaning between communicators, biased language, and ineffective listening. It is important to be aware of these barriers and how they might create or escalate a conflict situation.. Let's examine each of these barriers.

Filtering

Filtering is the distortion or withholding of information to manage a person's reactions. Some examples of filtering include a manager who keeps her division's poor sales figures from her boss, the vice president, fearing that the bad news will make them angry. A gatekeeper (the vice president's assistant, perhaps) who doesn't pass along a complete message is also filtering. The vice president may delete the e-mail announcing the quarter's sales figures before reading it, blocking the message before it arrives.

As you can see, filtering prevents members of an organization from getting a complete picture of the way things are. To maximize your chances of sending and receiving effective communications, it's helpful to deliver a Message in multiple ways and to seek information from multiple sources. In this way, the effect of any one person's filtering the message will be diminished.

Since people tend to filter bad news more during upward communication, it is also helpful to remember that those below you in an organization may be wary of sharing bad news. One way to defuse the tendency to filter is to reward employees who clearly convey information upward, regardless of whether the news is good and bad. Here are some of the criteria that individuals may use when deciding whether to filter a message or pass it on:

- Past experience: Was the communicator rewarded for passing along news of this kind in the past, or were they criticized?
- Knowledge, perception of the speaker: Has the direct superior made it clear that "no news is good news?"
- Emotional state, involvement with the topic, level of attention: Does the communicator's fear of failure or criticism prevent them from conveying the message? Is the topic within their realm of expertise, increasing their confidence in their ability to decode it, or is this person out of their comfort zone when it comes to evaluating the message's significance? Are personal concerns impacting their ability to judge the message's value?

Once again, filtering can lead to miscommunications in the workplace. Each listener translates the message, creating their own version of what was said (Alessandra, 1993).

Selective Perception

Recall, **selective perception** refers to filtering what we see and hear to suit our own needs. This process is often unconscious. Small things can command our attention when we're visiting a new place—a new city or a new company. Over time, however, we begin to make assumptions about the way things are on the basis of our past experience. Often, much of this process is unconscious. "We simply are bombarded with too much stimuli every day to pay equal attention to everything so we pick and choose according to our own needs" (Pope, 2008). Selective perception is a time-saver, a necessary tool in a complex culture. But it can also lead to mistakes. When two selective perceptions collide, a misunderstanding often occurs.

Information Overload

Information overload can be defined as "occurring when the information processing demands on an individual's time to perform interactions and internal calculations exceed the supply or capacity of time available for such processing (Schick, et. al., 1990)." Messages reach us in countless ways every day. Some are societal—advertisements that we may hear or see in the course of our day. Others are professional—e-mails, and memos, voice mails, and conversations from our colleagues. Others are personal—messages and conversations from our loved ones and friends.

Add these together and it's easy to see how we may be receiving more information than we can take in. This state of imbalance is known as information overload. Experts note that information overload is "A symptom of the high-tech age, which is too much information for one human being to absorb in an expanding world of people and technology. It comes from all sources including TV, newspapers, and magazines as well as wanted and unwanted regular mail, e-mail and faxes. It has been exacerbated enormously because of the formidable number of results obtained from Web search engines (PC Magazine, 2008; Dawley & Anthony, 2003)." Other research shows that working in such fragmented fashion has a significant negative effect on efficiency, creativity, and mental acuity (Overholt, 2001).

Let's Focus: Dealing with Information Overload

One of the challenges in many organizations is dealing with a deluge of emails, texts, voicemails, and other communication. Organizations have become flatter, outsourced many functions, and layered technology to speed communication with an integrated communication programs such as Slack, which allows users to manage all their communication and access shared resources in one place. This can lead to information overload, and crucial messages may be drowned out by the volume in your inbox.

Add the practice of "reply to all," which can add to the volume of communication, that many coworkers use, and that means that you may get five or six versions of an initial e-mail and need to understand all of the responses as well as the initial communication before responding or deciding that the issue is resolved and no response is needed. Here are suggestions to dealing with e-mail overload upward, horizontally, and downward within your organization and externally to stakeholders and customers.

One way to reduce the volume and the time you spend on e-mail is to turn off the spigot of incoming messages. There are obvious practices that help, such as unsubscribing to e-newsletters or turning off notifications from social media accounts. Also consider whether your colleagues or direct reports are copying you on too many emails as an FYI. If yes, explain that you only need to be updated at certain times or when a final decision is made.

You will also want to set up a system that will organize your inbox into "folders" that will allow you to manage the flow of messages into groups that will allow you to address them appropriately. Your system might look something like this:

Inbox: Treat this as a holding pen. E-mails shouldn't stay here any longer than it takes for you to file them into another folder. The exception is when you respond immediately and are waiting for an immediate response.
Today: This is for items that need a response today.
This week: This is for messages that require a response before the end of the week.
This month/quarter: This is for everything that needs a longer-term response. Depending on your role, you may need a monthly or quarterly folder.
FYI: This is for any items that are for information only and that you may want to refer back to in the future.

This system prioritizes e-mails based on timescales rather than the e-mails' senders, enabling you to better schedule work and set deadlines. Another thing to consider is your outgoing e-mail. If your outgoing messages are not specific, too long, unclear, or are copied too widely, your colleagues are likely to follow the same practice when communicating with you. Keep your communication clear and to the point, and managing your outbox will help make your inbound e-mails manageable.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How are you managing your e-mails now? Are you mixing personal and school and work-related e-mails in the same account?
2. How would you communicate to a colleague that is sending too many FYI e-mails, sending too may unclear e-mails, or copying too many people on their messages?

Sources: Gallo, A. (2012, February 12). Stop email overload. Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2012/02/stop-email-overload-1; Chingel, B. (2018, January 16). How to beat email overload in 2018. CIPHER. https://www.ciphr.com/advice/email-overload/; Seely, M. (2017, November 6). At the mercy of your inbox? How to cope with email overload. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/small-business-network/2017/nov/06/at-the-mercy-of-your-inbox-how-to-cope-with-email-overload.

Emotional Disconnects

Emotional disconnects happen when the communicators are upset, whether about the subject at hand or about some unrelated incident that may have happened earlier. An effective communication requires communicators who are open to speaking and listening to one another, despite possible differences in opinion or personality. One or both parties may have to put their emotions aside to achieve the goal of communicating clearly. A communicator who is emotionally upset tends to ignore or distort what the other person is saying. A communicator who is emotionally upset may be unable to present ideas or feelings effectively.

Lack of Source Credibility

Lack of source familiarity or credibility can derail communications, especially when humor is involved. Have you ever told a joke that fell flat? You and the other communicator may lacked the common context that could have made it funny. (Or yes, it could have just been a lousy joke.) Sarcasm and irony are subtle, and potentially hurtful. It's best to keep these types of communications out of the workplace as their benefits are limited, and their potential dangers are great. Lack of familiarity can lead to misinterpreting humor, especially in less-rich information channels like e-mail.

Similarly, if the communicator lacks credibility or is untrustworthy, the message will not get through. It may create suspicion about the other party's motivations ("Why am I being told this?"). Likewise, if the communicator has shared erroneous information in the past, or has created false emergencies, the current message may be filtered.

Workplace Gossip

Workplace gossip, also known as the **grapevine,** is a lifeline for many employees seeking information about their company (Kurland & Pelled, 2000). Researchers agree that the grapevine is an inevitable part of organizational life. Research finds that 70% of all organizational communication occurs at the grapevine level (Crampton, 1998).

Employees trust their peers as a source of messages, but the grapevine's informal structure can be a barrier to effective communication from the managerial point of view. Its grassroots structure gives it greater credibility in the minds of employees than information delivered through official channels, even when that information is false.

Some downsides of the office grapevine are that gossip offers politically minded insiders a powerful tool for disseminating communication (and self-promoting miscommunications) within an organization. In addition, the grapevine lacks a specific sender, which can create a sense of distrust among employees—who is at the root of the gossip network? When the news is volatile, suspicions may arise as to the person or persons behind the message. Managers who understand the grapevine's power can use it to send and receive messages of their own. They also decrease the grapevine's power by sending official messages quickly and accurately, should big news arise.

Lies

In the context of communication, manipulation is the management of facts, ideas or points of view to play upon people's insecurities or to use emotional appeals to one's own advantage. Deception is unethical because it uses lies, partial truths, or the omission of relevant information to deceive. No one likes to be lied to or led to believe something that isn't true. Deception can involve intentional bias or the selection of information to support your position while negatively framing any information that might challenge your audience's belief.

Deception

We are all familiar with the concept of lying and deception. We are taught from a young age that we should not lie, but we often witness the very people instructing us not to lie engaging in "little white lies" or socially acceptable lies. As communication scholars, we must distinguish between a lie that is told for the benefit of the receiver and a lie that is told with more malicious intent Judee Burgoon and David Buller (1994) define deception as, ''a deliberate act perpetuated by a sender to engender in a receiver beliefs contrary to what the sender believes is true to put the receiver at a disadvantage" (p. 155-156). Deceptive communication can exist in any type of relationship and in any context. H. Dan O'Hair and Michael Cody (1994) discuss deception as a common message strategy that is used in a manner similar to other forms of communication. They state that deception

is often purposeful, goal-directed, and can be used as a relational control device. We will begin our discussion of deception by exploring three types of deception. Three types of deception are discussed in the field of communication: falsification, concealment, and equivocation (Burgoon et al., 1996). **Falsification** is when a source deliberately presents information that is false or fraudulent. Researchers have found that falsification is the most common form of deception. **Concealment** is another form of deception in which the source deliberately withholds information. The third form of deception is referred to as **equivocation**. This form of deception represents a moral grey area for some because some see equivocation as a clear lie. Equivocation is a statement that could be interpreted as having more than one meaning.

Coercion and Bribery

Other unethical behaviours include coercion and bribery. **Coercion** is the use of power to make someone do something they would not choose to do freely. It usually involves threats of punishment. In the short term, coercion can create compliance. However, it can result in dislike and disrespect of the coercing person or group and a toxic work environment that is ruled by fear and other negative emotions. **Bribery**, which is offering something in return for an expected favour, is similarly unethical because it sidesteps normal, fair protocol for personal gain at the audience's expense. When the rest of the team finds out that they lost out on opportunities because someone received favours for favours, an atmosphere of mistrust and animosity—hallmarks of a toxic work environment—hangs over the workplace.

Semantics

Semantics is the study of meaning in communication. Words can mean different things to different people, or they might not mean anything to another person. For example, companies often have their own acronyms and buzzwords that are clear to them but impenetrable to outsiders. Given the amount of messages we send and receive every day, it makes sense that humans try to find shortcuts—a way to communicate things in code. In business, this code is known as jargon. **Jargon** is the language of specialized terms used by a group or profession. It is common shorthand among experts and if used sensibly can be a quick and efficient way of communicating. Most jargon consists of unfamiliar terms, abstract words, nonexistent words, acronyms, and abbreviations, with an occasional euphemism thrown in for good measure. Every profession, trade, and organization has its own specialized terms (Wright, 2008). At first glance, jargon seems like a good thing—a quicker way to send an effective communication, the way text message abbreviations can send common messages in a shorter, yet understandable way. But that's not always how things happen. Jargon can be an obstacle to effective communication, causing listeners to tune out or fostering ill-feeling between partners in a conversation. When jargon rules the day, the message can get obscured.

A key question to ask before using jargon is, "Who is the my intended audience?" If you are a specialist speaking to another specialist in your area, jargon may be the best way to send a message

while forging a professional bond—similar to the way best friends can communicate in code. For example, an information technology (IT) systems analyst communicating with another IT employee may use jargon as a way of sharing information in a way that reinforces the pair's shared knowledge. But that same conversation should be held in standard English, free of jargon, when communicating with staff members outside the IT group.

Differences in meaning often exist between communicators. "Mean what you say, and say what you mean." It's an easy thing to say. Age, education, and cultural background are all factors that influence how a person interprets words. The less we consider our audience, the greater our chances of miscommunication will be. When communication occurs in the cross-cultural context, extra caution is needed given that different words will be interpreted differently across cultures and different cultures have different norms regarding nonverbal communication. Eliminating jargon is one way of ensuring that our words will convey real-world concepts to others. Speaking to our audience, as opposed to about ourselves, is another.

Cultural Differences

Social norms are culturally relative. The words used in politeness rituals in one culture can mean something completely different in another. For example, *thank you* in American English acknowledges receiving something (a gift, a favor, a compliment), in British English it can mean "yes" similar to American English's *yes, please*, and in French *merci* can mean "no" as in "no, thank you" (Crystal, 2005).

One of the earliest researchers in the area of cultural differences and their importance to communication was a researcher by the name of Edward T. Hall (Hall, 1977). His book *Beyond Culture* is still considered one of the most influential books for the field of intercultural communication (Rogers et al., 2002). According to Hall, all cultures incorporate both verbal and nonverbal elements into communication. In his 1959 book, *The Silent Language*, Hall (1981) states, "culture is communication and communication is culture" (p. 186).

One of Hall's most essential contributions to the field of intercultural communication is the idea of low-context and high-context cultures. The terms "low-context culture" (LCC) and "high-context culture" (HCC) were created by Hall to describe how communication styles differ across cultures. In essence, "in LCC, meaning is expressed through explicit verbal messages, both written and oral. In HCC, on the other hand, intention or meaning can best be conveyed through implicit contexts, including gestures, social customs, silence, nuance, or tone of voice" (Nam, 2015, p. 378). Table 10.1 further explores the differences between low-context and high-context cultures in three general categories: communication, cultural orientation, and business.

Table 10.1 Low-Context vs. High-Context Cultures

		Low-Context	High-Context
Communication	Type of Communication	Explicit Communication	Implicit Communication
	Communication Focus	Focus on Verbal Communication	Focus on Nonverbal Communication
	Context of Message	Less Meaningful	Very Meaningful
	Politeness	Not Important	Very Important
	Approach to People	Direct and Confrontational	Indirect and Polite
	Emotions	No Room for Emotions	Emotions Have Importance
Cultural Orientation	Approach to Time	Monochromatic	Polychromatic
	Time Orientation	Present-Future	Past
	In/Out-Groups	Flexible and Transient Grouping Patterns	Strong Distinctions Between In and Out-Groups
	Identity	Based on Individual	Based on Social System
	Values	Independence and Freedom	Tradition and Social Rules/Norms
Business	Work Style	Individualistic	Team-Oriented
	Work Approach	Task-Oriented	Relationship-Oriented
	Business Approach	Competitive	Cooperative
	Learning	Knowledge is Transferable	Knowledge is Situational
	Sales Orientation	Hard Sell	Soft Sell
	View of Change	Change over Tradition	Tradition over Change

Source: *Interpersonal Communication by Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

Biased Language

Biased language can offend, alienate or stereotype others on the basis of their personal or group affiliation. Effective communication is clear, factual, and goal-oriented. It is also respectful. Language that insults an individual or group based on age, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, or political beliefs violates public and private standards of decency, ranging from civil rights to corporate regulations. Many companies offer new employees written guides on standards of speech and conduct. These guides, augmented by common sense and courtesy, are solid starting points for effective, respectful workplace communication. Let's talk in more detail about some types of biased language including polarizing language, gendered language, disrespectful language, and language that contains microaggressions.

Polarizing Language

Philosophers of language have long noted our tendency to verbally represent the world in very narrow ways when we feel threatened (Hayakawa & Hayakawa, 1990). This misrepresents reality and closes off dialogue. Although in our everyday talk we describe things in nuanced and measured ways, quarrels and controversies often narrow our vision, which is reflected in our vocabulary. In order to maintain a civil discourse in which people interact ethically and competently, it has been suggested that we keep an open mind and an open vocabulary.

One feature of communicative incivility is **polarizing language**, which refers to language that presents people, ideas, or situations as polar opposites. Such language exaggerates differences and overgeneralizes. Things aren't simply black or white, right or wrong, or good or bad. Being able to only see two values and clearly accepting one and rejecting another doesn't indicate sophisticated or critical thinking. We don't have to accept every viewpoint as right and valid, and we can still hold strongly to our own beliefs and defend them without ignoring other possibilities or rejecting or alienating others. In avoiding polarizing language, we keep a more open mind, which may lead us to learn something new. Avoiding polarizing language can help us avoid polarized thinking, and the new information we learn may allow us to better understand and advocate for our position. Avoiding sweeping generalizations allows us to speak more clearly and hopefully avoid defensive reactions from others that result from such blanket statements.

Gender Neutral

Gender-neutral language use is important in a diverse workplace, assumptions should never be made as to what a person's preferred pronouns or name are. The simplest way to avoid making a mistake when referring to someone else is to use the name they have introduced themselves to you with to refer to them. This avoids the use of pronouns that they do not identify with. Some examples of gender-neutral pronouns that you can use when referring to others are, they, them, and their. These pronouns do not make assumptions about the gender identity. Another way that gender neutral language can be incorporated into our day-to-day communication is by reframing terms that were previously gendered, such as foreman or journeyman. By using the neutral terms foreperson or journeyperson we do not exclude anyone from these titles.

Respectful

Respectful communication is communication that focuses on topics that are appropriate for your audiences, using manners, allowing others the space to speak, and avoiding topics that are inflammatory, insulting or prejudicial. As individuals, we each have our own unique sets of beliefs, opinions and values, however it is not our place to bestow those upon others without their consent, nor to judge others for theirs. When engaging in respectful verbal communication, particularly with those you do not know well, focus on the subject at hand, common interests, and neutral topics. Use manners, say please and thank you when appropriate, be genuine and apologize for

miscommunications. Allow the person you are communicating with space to speak, do not interrupt or take over the conversation, wait your turn.

Microaggressions

When engaging in verbal communication you should also be aware of microaggressions, their impact and what can be done to avoid conflict that stems from them. **Microaggressions** are subtle slights, remarks and actions that occur both consciously and unconsciously and are often linked to our unconscious bias and stereotypes. These remarks are often made based on assumptions and can perpetuate stereotypes of people of other cultures, races, gender identities and sexualities. Sometimes these comments are made in such a way that the person who has made them does not realize they have insulted the other person. These small and seemingly harmless comments and actions are psychologically harmful and have an impact on the overall ability of a work environment to feel inclusive and respectful. It is important to acknowledge our own personal biases and to not allow them to guide our communication with others based on assumptions. Expanding your circles to include a diverse make up of people with whom you interact, being an ally against discrimination and carefully considering your actions and words when interacting with others are keys to avoiding the harm that is created by microaggressions. If you do unknowingly use microaggressions and this is pointed out to you, take the time to listen and acknowledge why this may have been harmful to the other person, do not get defensive about it, and apologize for the comment.

Ineffective Listening

Our final barrier is ineffective listening. A communicator may strive to deliver a message clearly, but the ability to listen effectively is equally vital to effective communication. The average worker spends 55% of their workdays listening. Managers listen up to 70% each day. But listening doesn't lead to understanding in every case. Listening takes practice, skill, and concentration.

According to University of San Diego professor Phillip Hunsaker, "The consequences of poor listening are lower employee productivity, missed sales, unhappy customers, and billions of dollars of increased cost and lost profits. Poor listening is a factor in low employee morale and increased turnover because employees do not feel their managers listen to their needs, suggestions, or complaints (Alessandra, et. al., 1993)." We will talk more about how to engage in effective listening later in this chapter.

Adapted Works

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10.2 Self-Esteem, Communication and Relationship Dispositions

In this section:

- Self-Esteem
- Communication Dispositions
  - Introversion/Extraversion
  - Approach and Avoidance Traits
  - Argumentativeness and Verbal Aggressiveness
  - Sociocommunicative Orientation
- Relationship Dispositions
  - Attachment
  - Rejection Sensitivity

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is an individual's subjective evaluation of their abilities and limitations. You may be wondering the importance of self-esteem in interpersonal communication. Self-esteem and communication have a reciprocal relationship (as depicted in Figure 10.3). Our communication with others impacts our self-esteem, and our self-esteem impacts our communication with others. As such, our self-esteem and communication are constantly being transformed by each other.

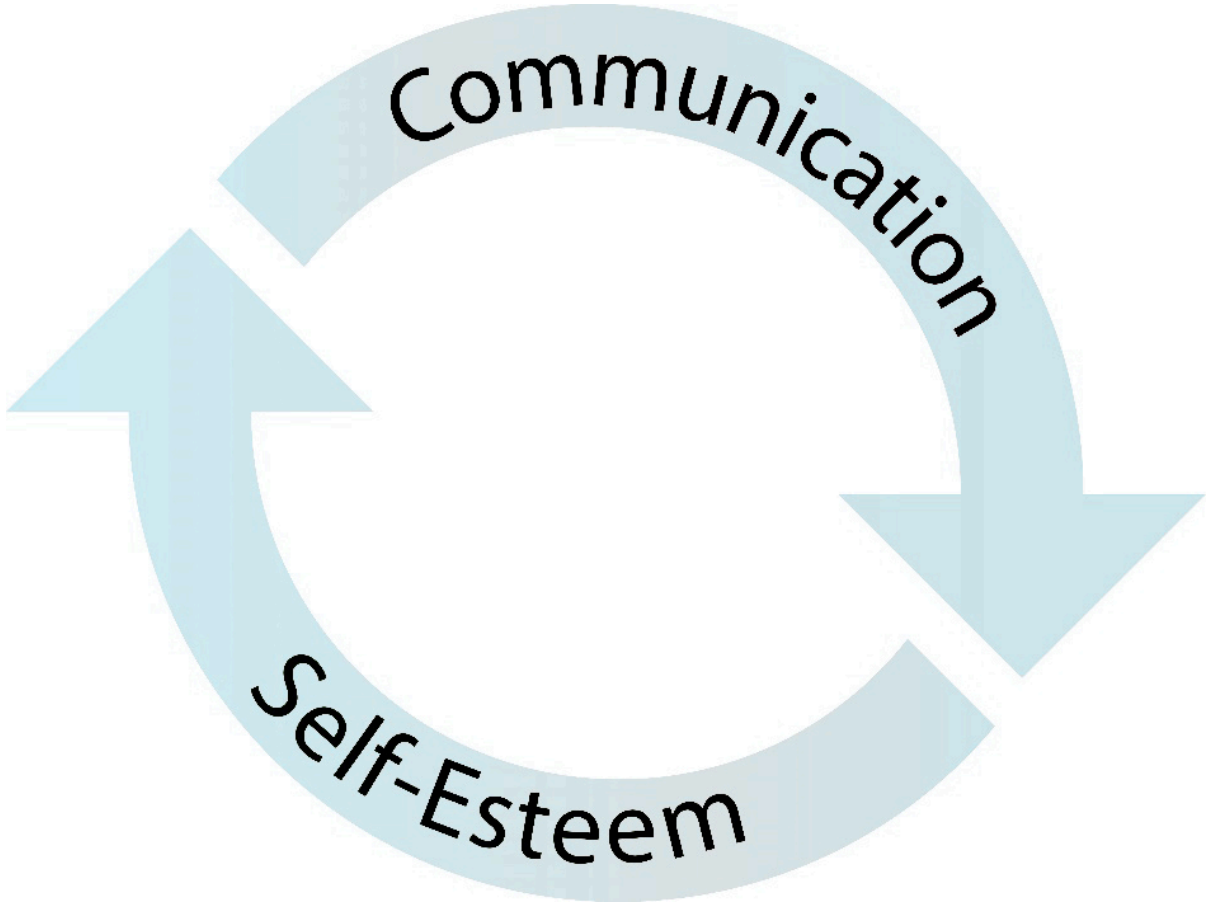

Figure 10.3 Self-Esteem and Communication. Image: Interpersonal Communication by Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original.[Click to enlarge]

Interpersonal communication and self-esteem cannot be separated. Now, our interpersonal communication is not the only factor that impacts self-esteem, but interpersonal interactions are one of the most important tools we have in developing our selves.

Self-Compassion

Some researchers have argued that self–esteem as the primary measure of someone's psychological health may not be wise because it stems from comparisons with others and judgments. As such, Kristy Neff (2003) has argued for the use of the term self-compassion.

Self-Compassion stems out of the larger discussion of compassion. Compassion then is about the sympathetic consciousness for someone who is suffering or unfortunate. Self-compassion "involves being touched by and open to one's own suffering, not avoiding or disconnecting from it, generating the desire to alleviate one's suffering and to heal oneself with kindness. **Self-compassion** also involves offering nonjudgmental understanding to one's pain, inadequacies and failures, so that

one's experience is seen as part of the larger human experience" (Neff, 2003, p. 86-87). Neff argues that self-compassion can be broken down into three distinct categories: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness (see Figure 10.4)

Figure 10.4 Three Factors of Self-Compassion. Image: Interpersonal Communication by Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original.[Click to enlarge]

Self-Kindness

Humans have a really bad habit of beating ourselves up. As the saying goes, we are often our own worst enemies. **Self-kindness** is simply extending the same level of care and understanding to ourselves as we would to others. Instead of being harsh and judgmental, we are encouraging and supportive. Instead of being critical, we are empathic towards ourselves. Now, this doesn't mean

that we just ignore our faults and become narcissistic (excessive interest in oneself), but rather we realistically evaluate ourselves.

Common Humanity

The second factor of self-compassion is common humanity, or "seeing one's experiences as part of the larger human experience rather than seeing them as separating and isolating" (Neff, 2003, p. 89). As Kristen Neff and Christopher Germer (2018) realize, we're all flawed works in progress. No one is perfect. No one is ever going to be perfect. We all make mistakes (some big, some small). We're also all going to experience pain and suffering in our lives. Being self-compassionate is approaching this pain and suffering and seeing it for what it is, a natural part of being human. "The pain I feel in difficult times is the same pain you feel in difficult times. The circumstances are different, the degree of pain is different, but the basic experience of human suffering is the same" (Neff & Germer, 2018, p. 11).

Mindfulness

The final factor of self-compassion is mindfulness. Although Neff (2003) defines mindfulness in the same terms we've been discussing in this text, she specifically addresses mindfulness as a factor of pain, so she defines mindfulness, with regards to self-compassion, as "holding one's painful thoughts and feelings in balanced awareness rather than over-identifying with them" (p. 89). Essentially, Neff argues that mindfulness is an essential part of self-compassion, because we need to be able to recognize and acknowledge when we're suffering so we can respond with compassion to ourselves.

Let's Practice: Mindfulness Activity

One of the beautiful things about mindfulness is that it positively impacts someone's self-esteem (Pepping et al., 2013). It's possible that people who are higher in mindfulness report higher self-esteem because of the central tenant of non-judgment. People with lower self-esteems often report highly negative views of themselves and their past experiences in life. These negative judgments can start to wear someone down.

Christopher Pepping, Analise O'Donovan, and Penelope J. Davis (2013) believe that mindfulness practice can help improve one's self-esteem for four reasons:

- Labeling internal experiences with words, which might prevent people from getting consumed

by self-critical thoughts and emotions;
- Bringing a non-judgmental attitude toward thoughts and emotions, which could help individuals have a neutral, accepting attitude toward the self;
- Sustaining attention on the present moment, which could help people avoid becoming caught up in self-critical thoughts that relate to events from the past or future;\
- Letting thoughts and emotions enter and leave awareness without reacting to them (Nauman, 2014).

For this exercise, think about a recent situation where you engaged in self-critical thoughts.

1. What types of phrases ran through your head? Would you have said these to a friend? If not, why do you say them to yourself?
2. What does the negative voice in your head sound like? Is this voice someone you want to listen to? Why?
3. Did you try temporarily distracting yourself to see if the critical thoughts would go away (e.g., mindfulness meditation, coloring, exercise, etc.)? If yes, how did that help? If not, why?
4. Did you examine the evidence? What proof did you have that the self-critical thought was true?
5. Was this a case of a desire to improve yourself or a case of non-compassion towards yourself?

Sources: *Nauman, E. (2014, March 10). Feeling self-critical? Try mindfulness. Greater Good Magazine. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/feeling_self_critical_try_mindfulness; Pepping, C. A.,* O'Donovan, *A., & Davis, P. J. (2013). The positive effects of mindfulness on self-esteem. The Journal of Positive Psychology, 8(5), 376-386. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2013.807353*

Communication Dispositions

In our chapter on personality, we examined cognitive and personal-social dispositions. In addition, there are several intrapersonal dispositions studied specifically by communication scholars. **Communication dispositions** are general patterns of communicative behavior. In this section, we will explore the nature of introversion/extraversion, approach and avoidance traits, argumentativeness /verbal aggressiveness, and lastly, sociocommunicative orientation (Daly, 2011).

Introversion/Extraversion

The concept of introversion/extraversion is one that has been widely studied by both psychologists and communication researchers. The idea is that people exist on a continuum that exists from highly extraverted (an individual's likelihood to be talkative, dynamic, and outgoing) to highly introverted (an individual's likelihood to be quiet, shy, and more reserved).There is a considerable amount of research that has found an individual's tendency toward extraversion or introversion is biologically based (Beatty et al., 2001). As such, where you score on the Introversion Scale may largely be a factor of your genetic makeup and not something you can alter greatly. When it comes to

interpersonal relationships, individuals who score highly on extraversion tended to be perceived by others as intelligent, friendly, and attractive. As such, extraverts tend to have more opportunities for interpersonal communication; it's not surprising that they tend to have better communicative skills when compared to their more introverted counterparts.

Let's Practice

Want to know how you score on the introversion/extroversion continuum Consider completing the Introversion Scale created by James C. McCroskey. It's available on his website:

- http://www.jamescmccroskey.com/measures/introversion.htm).

Approach and Avoidance Traits

The second set of communication dispositions are categorized as approach and avoidance traits. According to Virginia Richmond, Jason Wrench, and James McCroskey (2018), approach and avoidance traits depict the tendency an individual has to either willingly approach or avoid situations where they will have to communicate with others. To help us understand the approach and avoidance traits, we'll examine three specific traits commonly discussed by communication scholars: shyness, communication apprehension, and willingness to communicate.

Shyness

In a classic study conducted by Philip Zimbardo (1977), he asked two questions to over 5,000 participants: Do you presently consider yourself to be a shy person? If "No," was there ever a period in your life during which you considered yourself to be a shy person? The results of these two questions were quite surprising. Over 40% said that they considered themselves to be currently shy. Over 80% said that they had been shy at one point in their lifetimes. Another, more revealing measure of shyness, was created by James C. McCroskey and Virginia Richmond (1982).

According to Arnold Buss (2009), shyness involves discomfort when an individual is interacting with another person(s) in a social situation. Buss further clarifies the concept by differentiating between anxious shyness and self-conscious shyness. **Anxious shyness** involves the fear associated with dealing with others face-to-face. Anxious shyness is initially caused by a combination of strangers, novel settings, novel social roles, fear of evaluation, or fear of self-presentation. However,

long-term anxious shyness is generally caused by chronic fear, low sociability, low self-esteem, loneliness, and avoidance conditioning. **Self-conscious shyness**, on the other hand, involves feeling conspicuous or socially exposed when dealing with others face-to-face. Self-conscious shyness is generally initially caused by feelings of conspicuousness, breaches of one's privacy, teasing/ridicule/bullying, overpraise, or one's foolish actions. However, long-term self-conscious shyness can be a result of socialization, public self-consciousness, history of teasing/ridicule/bullying, low self-esteem, negative appearance, and poor social skills.

Whether one suffers from anxious or self-conscious shyness, the general outcome is a detriment to an individual's interpersonal interactions with others. Generally speaking, shy individuals have few opportunities to engage in interpersonal interactions with others, so their communicative skills are not as developed as their less-shy counterparts. This lack of skill practice tends to place a shy individual in a never-ending spiral where they always feels just outside the crowd.

Let's Practice

Learn about your own level of shyness by completing the Shyness Scale.

- It's available at http://www.jamescmccroskey.com/measures/shyness.htm

Communication Apprehension

James C. McCroskey started examining the notion of anxiety in communicative situations during the late 1960s. Since that time, research on communication apprehension has been one of the most commonly studied variables in the field. McCroskey (1977) defined **communication apprehension** as the fear or anxiety "associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (p. 28). Although many different measures have been created over the years examining communication apprehension, the most prominent one has been James C. McCroskey's (1982) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24 (PRCA-24).

The PRCA-24 evaluates four distinct types of communication apprehension (CA): interpersonal CA, group CA, meeting CA, and public CA. **Interpersonal CA** examines the extent to which individuals experience fear or anxiety when thinking about or actually interacting with another person (For more on the topic of CA as a general area of study, read Richmond, Wrench, and McCroskey's (2018) book, Communication Apprehension, Avoidance, and Effectiveness). **Interpersonal CA** impacts people's relationship development almost immediately. In one experimental study by Colby et al. (1993), researchers paired people and had them converse for 15 minutes. At the end of the 15-minute

conversation, the researchers had both parties rate the other individual. The results indicated that high-CAs (highly communicative apprehensive people) were perceived as less attractive, less trustworthy, and less satisfied than low-CAs (people with low levels of communication apprehension). Generally speaking, high-CAs don't tend to fare well in most of the research in interpersonal communication.

Let's Practice

You can complete James C. McCroskey's *Personal Report of Communication Apprehension* to learn about your own profile of communication apprehension.

- http://www.jamescmccroskey.com/measures/prca24.htm

Willingness to Communicate

The final of our approach and avoidance traits is the willingness to communicate (WTC). James McCroskey and Virginia Richmond (1987)originally coined the WTC concept as an individual's predisposition to initiate communication with others. Willingness to communicate examines an individual's tendency to initiate communicative interactions with other people.

People who have high WTC levels are going to be more likely to initiate interpersonal interactions than those with low WTC levels. However, just because someone is not likely to initiate conversations doesn't mean that he or she is unable to actively and successfully engage in interpersonal interactions. For this reason, we refer to WTC as an approach trait because it describes an individual's likelihood of approaching interactions with other people. As noted by Richmond et al. (2013), "People with a high WTC attempt to communicate more often and work harder to make that communication effective than people with a low WTC, who make far fewer attempts and often aren't as effective at communicating" (p. 18).

Let's Practice

You can take the Willingness To Communicate (WTC) scale at James C. McCroskey's website

- http://www.jamescmccroskey.com/measures/WTC.htm

Argumentativeness and Verbal Aggressiveness

Starting in the mid-1980s, Dominic Infante and Charles Wigley (1986) defined **verbal aggression** as "the tendency to attack the self-concept of individuals instead of, or in addition to, their positions on topics of communication" (p. 61). Notice that this definition specifically is focused on the attacking of someone's self-concept or an individual's attitudes, opinions, and cognitions about one's competence, character, strengths, and weaknesses. For example, if someone perceives themselves as a good worker, then a verbally aggressive attack would demean that person's quality of work or their ability to do future quality work. In a study conducted by Terry Kinney (1994), he found that self-concept attacks happen on three basic fronts: group membership (e.g., "Your whole division is a bunch of idiots!"), personal failings (e.g., "No wonder you keep getting passed up for a promotion!"), and relational failings (e.g., "No wonder your spouse left you!").

Now that we've discussed what verbal aggression is, we should delineate verbal aggression from another closely related term, argumentativeness. According to Dominic Infante and Andrew Rancer (1982), **argumentativeness** is a communication trait that "predisposes the individual in communication situations to advocate positions on controversial issues, and to attacking verbally the positions which other people take on these issues" (p. 72). You'll notice that argumentativeness occurs when an individual attacks another's positions on various issues; whereas, verbal aggression occurs when an individual attacks someone's self-concept instead of attack another's positions. Argumentativeness is seen as a constructive communication trait, while verbal aggression is a destructive communication trait.

Individuals who are highly verbally aggressive are not liked by those around them (Myers & Johnson, 2003). Researchers have seen this pattern of results across different relationship types. Highly verbally aggressive individuals tend to justify their verbal aggression in interpersonal relationships regardless of the relational stage (new vs. long-term relationship) (Martin et al., 1996). In an interesting study conducted by Beth Semic and Daniel Canary (1996), the two set out to watch interpersonal interactions and the types of arguments formed during those interactions based on individuals' verbal aggressiveness and argumentativeness. The researchers had friendship-dyads

come into the lab and were asked to talk about two different topics. The researchers found that highly argumentative individuals did not differ in the number of arguments they made when compared to their low argumentative counterparts. However, highly verbally aggressive individuals provided far fewer arguments when compared to their less verbally aggressive counterparts. Although this study did not find that highly argumentative people provided more (or better) arguments, highly verbally aggressive people provided fewer actual arguments when they disagreed with another person. Overall, verbal aggression and argumentativeness have been shown to impact several different interpersonal relationships.

Sociocommunicative Orientation

In the mid to late 1970s, Sandra Bem began examining psychological gender orientation. In her theorizing of psychological gender, Bem (1974) measured two constructs, masculinity and femininity, using a scale she created called the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI). Her measure was designed to evaluate an individual's femininity or masculinity. Bem defined masculinity as individuals exhibiting perceptions and traits typically associated with males, and femininity as individuals exhibiting perceptions and traits usually associated with females. Individuals who adhered to both their biological sex and their corresponding psychological gender (masculine males, feminine females) were considered sex-typed. Individuals who differed between their biological sex and their corresponding psychological gender (feminine males, masculine females) were labeled cross-sex typed. Lastly, some individuals exhibited both feminine and masculine traits, and these individuals were called androgynous.

Virginia Richmond and James McCroskey (1985) opted to discard the biological sex-biased language of "masculine" and "feminine" for the more neutral language of "assertiveness" and "responsiveness." The combination of assertiveness and responsiveness was called someone's **sociocommunicative orientation**, which emphasizes that Bem's notions of gender are truly representative of communicator traits and not one's biological sex (Richmond & McCroskey, 1990).

Responsiveness

Responsiveness refers to an individual who "considers other's feelings, listens to what others have to say, and recognizes the needs of others" (Richmond & McCroskey, 1990, p. 449-450). If you filled out the Sociocommunicative Orientation Scale, you would find that the words associated with responsiveness include the following: helpful, responsive to others, sympathetic, compassionate, sensitive to the needs of others, sincere, gentle, warm, tender, and friendly.

Assertiveness

Assertiveness refers to individuals who "can initiate, maintain, and terminate conversations,

according to their interpersonal goals" (Richmond & Martin, 1998, p. 136). If you filled out the Sociocommunicative Orientation Scale, you would find that the words associated with assertiveness include the following: defends own beliefs, independent, forceful, has a strong personality, assertive, dominant, willing to take a stand, acts as a leader, aggressive, and competitive.

Versatility

Communication always exists within specific contexts, so picking a single best style to communicate in every context simply can't be done because not all patterns of communication are appropriate or effective in all situations. As such, McCroskey and Richmond added a third dimension to the mix that they called versatility(McCroskey&Richmond,1996).In essence, individuals who are competent communicators know when it is both appropriate and effective to use both responsiveness and assertiveness. The notion of pairing the two terms against each other did not make sense to McCroskey and Richmond because both were so important. Other terms scholars have associated with **versatility** include "adaptability, flexibility, rhetorical sensitivity, and style flexing" (Richomond & Martin, 1998, p. 138). The opposite of versatility was also noted by McCroskey and Richmond, who saw such terms as dogmatic, rigid, uncompromising, and unyielding as demonstrating the lack of versatility.

Let's Practice: Sociocommunicative Orientation and Interpersonal Communication

orientation has been examined in several studies that relate to interpersonal communication. In a study conducted by Brian Patterson and Shawn Beckett (1995), the researchers sought to see the importance of sociocommunicative orientation and how people repair relationships. Highly assertive individuals were found to take control of repair situations. Highly responsive individuals, on the other hand, tended to differ in their approaches to relational repair, depending on whether the target was perceived as assertive or responsive.

When a target was perceived as highly assertive, the responsive individual tended to let the assertive person take control of the relational repair process. When a target was perceived as highly responsive, the responsive individual was more likely to encourage the other person to self-disclose and took on the role of the listener.

As a whole, highly assertive individuals were more likely to stress the optimism of the relationship, while highly responsive individuals were more likely to take on the role of a listener during the relational repair.

- You can take the Bem Sex-Role Inventory at http://garote.bdmonkeys.net/bsri.htmland
- You can take the Sociocommunicative Orientation Scale at http://www.jamescmccroskey.com/measures/sco.htm

Relational Dispositions

The final three dimensions proposed by John Daly (2011) were relational dispositions. **Relational dispositions** are general patterns of mental processes that impact how people view and organize themselves in relationships. For our purposes, we'll examine two unique relational dispositions: attachment and rejection sensitivity.

Attachment

In a set of three different volumes, John Bowlby (1969, 1983, 1980) theorized that humans were born with a set of inherent behaviors designed to allow proximity with supportive others. These behaviors were called **attachment behaviors**, and the supportive others were called **attachment figures**. Inherent in Bowlby's model of attachment is that humans have a biological drive to attach themselves with others. For example, a baby's crying and searching help the baby find their attachment figure (typically a parent/guardian) who can provide care, protection, and support. Infants (and adults) view attachment as an issue of whether an attachment figure is nearby, accessible, and attentive? Bowlby believed that these interpersonal models, which were developed in infancy through thousands of interactions with an attachment figure, would influence an individual's interpersonal relationships across their entire life span. According to Bowlby, the basic internal working model of affection consists of three components. Infants who bond with their attachment figure during the first two years develop a model that people are trustworthy, develop a model that informs the infant thatthey are valuable, and develop a model that informs the infant that they are effective during interpersonal interactions. As you can easily see, not developing this model during infancy leads to several problems.

If there is a breakdown in an individual's relationship with their attachment figure (primarily one's mother), then the infant would suffer long-term negative consequences. Bowlby called his ideas on the importance of mother-child attachment and the lack thereof as the Maternal Deprivation Hypothesis. Bowlby hypothesized that maternal deprivation occurred as a result of separation from or loss of one's mother or a mother's inability to develop an attachment with her infant. This attachment is crucial during the first two years of a child's life. Bowlby predicted that children who were deprived of attachment (or had a sporadic attachment) would later exhibit delinquency, reduced intelligence, increased aggression, depression, and affectionless psychopathy – the inability to show affection or care about others.

In 1991, Kim Bartholomew and Leonard Horowitz (1991) expanded on Bowlby's work developing a scheme for understanding adult attachment. In this study, Bartholomew and Horowitz proposed a model for understanding adult attachment. On one end of the spectrum, you have an individual's abstract image of themself as being either worthy of love and support or not. On the other end of the spectrum, you have an individual's perception of whether or not another person will be trustworthy/available or another person is unreliable and rejecting. When you combine these dichotomies, you end up with four distinct attachment styles (as seen in Figure 10.5).

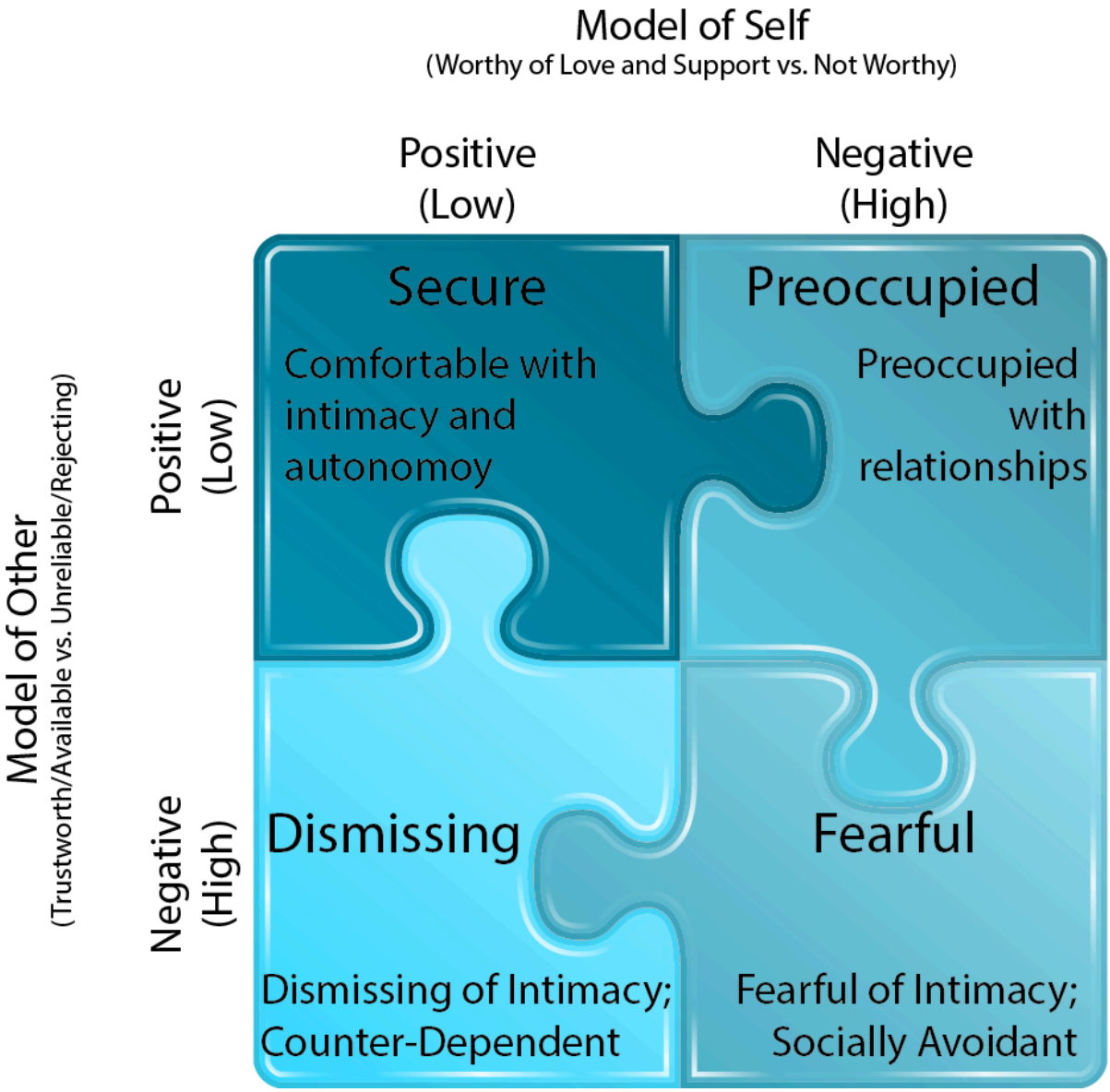

Figure 10.5 Attachment Styles. Image: Interpersonal Communication by Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original.[Click to enlarge]

The first attachment style is labeled "secure," because these individuals believe that they are loveable and expect that others will generally behave in accepting and responsive ways within interpersonal

interactions. Not surprisingly, secure individuals tend to show the most satisfaction, commitment, and trust in their relationships.

The second attachment style, preoccupied, occurs when someone does not perceive themself as worthy of love but does generally see people as trustworthy and available for interpersonal relationships. These individuals would attempt to get others to accept them.

The third attachment style, fearful (sometimes referred to as fearful avoidants), represents individuals who see themselves as unworthy of love and generally believe that others will react negatively through either deception or rejection (Guerro & Brugoon, 1996). These individuals simply avoid interpersonal relationships to avoid being rejected by others. Even in communication, fearful people may avoid communication because they simply believe that others will not provide helpful information or others will simply reject their communicative attempts.

The final attachment style, dismissing, reflects those individuals who see themselves as worthy of love, but generally believes that others will be deceptive and reject them in interpersonal relationships. These people tend to avoid interpersonal relationships to protect themselves against disappointment that occurs from placing too much trust in another person or making one's self vulnerable to rejection.

Rejection Sensitivity

Although no one likes to be rejected by other people in interpersonal interactions, most of us do differ from one another in how this rejection affects us as humans. We've all had our relational approaches (either by potential friends or dating partners) rejected at some point and know that it kind of sucks to be rejected. The idea that people differ in terms of degree in how sensitive they are to rejection was first discussed in the 1930s by a German psychoanalyst named Karen Horney (1937). **Rejection sensitivity** can be defined as the degree to which an individual expects to be rejected, readily perceives rejection when occurring, and experiences an intensely adverse reaction to that rejection.

First, people that are highly sensitive to rejection expect that others will reject them. This expectation of rejection is generally based on a multitude of previous experiences where the individual has faced real rejection. Hence, they just assume that others will reject them.

Second, people highly sensitive to rejection are more adept at noting when they are being rejected; however, it's not uncommon for these individuals to see rejection when it does not exist. Horney explains perceptions of rejection in this fashion:

> It is difficult to describe the degree of their sensitivity to rejection. Change in an appointment, having to wait, failure to receive an immediate response, disagreement with their opinions, any noncompliance with their wishes, in short, any failure to fulfill their demands on their terms, is felt as a rebuff. And a rebuff not only throws them back on their basic anxiety, but it is also considered equivalent to humiliation (Horney, 1937, p. 135).

As we can see from this short description from Horney, rejection sensitivity can occur from even the slightest perceptions of being rejected.

Lastly, individuals who are highly sensitive to rejection tend to react negatively when they feel they are being rejected. This negative reaction can be as simple as just not bothering to engage in future interactions or even physical or verbal aggression. The link between the rejection and the negative reaction may not even be completely understandable to the individual. Horney (1937) explains, "More often the connection between feeling rebuffed and feeling irritated remains unconscious. This happens all the more easily since the rebuff may have been so slight as to escape conscious awareness. Then a person will feel irritable, or become spiteful and vindictive or feel fatigued or depressed or have a headache, without the remotest suspicion why" (p. 136). Ultimately, individuals with high sensitivity to rejection can develop a "why bother" approach to initiating new relationships with others. This fear of rejection eventually becomes a self-induced handicap that prevents these individuals from receiving the affection they desire.

As with most psychological phenomena, this process tends to proceed through a series of stages. Horney explains that individuals suffering from rejection sensitivity tend to undergo an eight-step cycle:

1. Fear of being rejected.
2. Excessive need for affection (e.g., demands for exclusive and unconditional love).
3. When the need is not met, they feel rejected.
4. The individual reacts negatively (e.g., with hostility) to the rejection.
5. Repressed hostility for fear of losing the affection.
6. Unexpressed rage builds up inside.
7. Increased fear of rejection.
8. Increased need for relational reassurance from a partner.

Of course, as an individual's need for relational reassurance increases, so does their fear of being rejected, and the perceptions of rejection spiral out of control. Research by Towler and Stuhamker (2012) suggests that attachment styles can also impact the quality of relationships between individuals in the workplace.

As you may have guessed, there is a strong connection between John Bowlby's (1969, 1973, 1980) attachment theory and Karen Horney's (1937) theory of rejection sensitivity. As you can imagine, rejection sensitivity has several implications for interpersonal communication. In a study conducted by Downey et al. (1998), the researchers wanted to track high versus low rejection sensitive individuals in relationships and how long those relationships lasted. The researchers also had the participants complete the Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire created by Geraldine Downey and Scott Feldman (1996). The study started by having couples keep diaries for four weeks, which helped the researchers develop a baseline perception of an individual's sensitivity to rejection during the conflict. After the initial four-week period, the researchers revisited the participants one year later to see what had happened. Not surprisingly, high rejection sensitive individuals were more likely to

break up during the study than their low rejection sensitivity counterparts. More recently Dorfman et al. (2020) found that high rejection sensitivity impacted reasoning ability during conflict at work.

Adapted Works

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10.3 Listening

In this section:

- Listening
- The Listening Process
- Listening Styles
- Barriers to Effective Listening
- Bad Listening Pratices
- Improving Listening

Listening

When it comes to daily communication, we spend about 45% of our listening, 30% speaking, 16% reading, and 9% writing (Hayes, 1991). However, most people are not entirely sure what the word "listening" is or how to do it effectively.

Hearing Is Not Listening

Hearing refers to a passive activity where an individual perceives sound by detecting vibrations through an ear. Hearing is a physiological process that is continuously happening. We are bombarded by sounds all the time. Unless you are in a sound-proof room or are 100% deaf, we are constantly hearing sounds. Even in a sound-proof room, other sounds that are normally not heard like a beating heart or breathing will become more apparent as a result of the blocked background noise.

Listening, on the other hand, is generally seen as an active process. Listening is "focused, concentrated attention for the purpose of understanding the meanings expressed by a [source]" (Wrench et al., 2017, p. 50). From this perspective, hearing is more of an automatic response when your ear perceives information; whereas, listening is what happens when we purposefully attend to different messages.

We can even take this a step further and differentiate normal listening from critical listening. **Critical listening** is the "careful, systematic thinking and reasoning to see whether a message makes sense

in light of factual evidence" (Wrench et al., 2017, p. 61). From this perspective, it's one thing to attend to someone's message, but something very different to analyze what the person is saying based on known facts and evidence.

Let's apply these ideas to a typical interpersonal situation. Let's say that you and your best friend are having dinner at a crowded restaurant. Your ear is going to be attending to a lot of different messages all the time in that environment, but most of those messages get filtered out as "background noise," or information we don't listen to at all. Maybe then your favorite song comes on the speaker system the restaurant is playing, and you and your best friend both attend to the song because you both like it. A minute earlier, another song could have been playing, but you tuned it out (hearing) instead of taking a moment to enjoy and attend to the song itself (listen). Next, let's say you and your friend get into a discussion about the issues of campus parking. Your friend states, "There's never any parking on campus. What gives?" Now, if you're critically listening to what your friend says, you'll question the basis of this argument. For example, the word "never" in this statement is problematic because it would mean that the campus has zero available parking, which is probably not the case. Now, it may be difficult for your friend to find a parking spot on campus, but that doesn't mean that there's "never any parking." In this case, you've gone from just listening to critically evaluating the argument your friend is making.

The Listening Process

Judi Brownell (1985) created one of the most commonly used models for listening – the HURIER model. Although not the only model of listening that exists, we like this model because it breaks the process of hearing down into clearly differentiated stages: hearing, understanding, remembering, interpreting, evaluating, and responding (Figure 10.6)

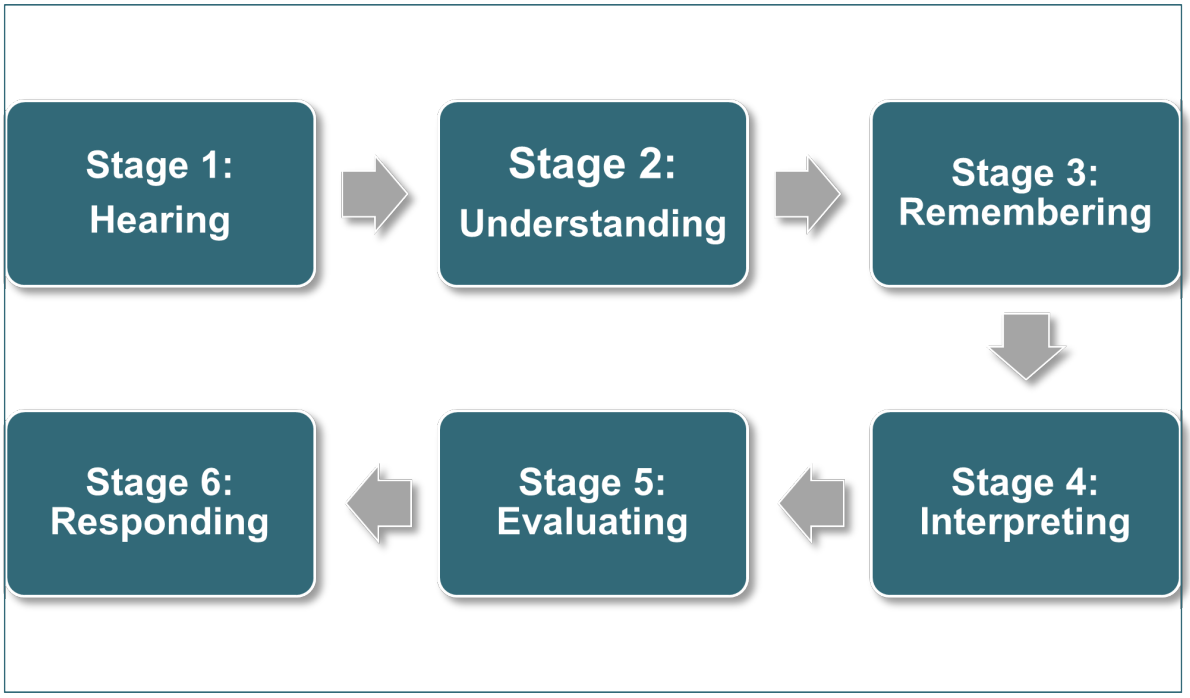

Figure 10.6 Stages in the Listening Process. Image: Original Image, Fanshawe College, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.[Click to enlarge]

Hearing

From a fundamental perspective, for listening to occur, an individual must attend to some kind of communicated message. Now, one can argue that hearing should not be equated with listening (as we did above), but it is the first step in the model of listening. Simply, if we don't attend to the message at all, then communication never occurred from the receiver's perspective. Now, to engage in mindful listening, it's important to take hearing seriously because of the issue of intention. If we go into an interaction with another person without really intending to listening to what they have to say, we may end up being a passive listener who does nothing more than hear and nod our heads. Remember, mindful communication starts with the premise that we must think about our intentions and be aware of them.

Understanding

The second stage of the listening model is understanding, or the ability to comprehend or decode the source's message. When we discussed the basic models of human communication, we discussed the idea of decoding a message. Decoding is when we attempt to break down the message we've heard into comprehensible meanings.

Remembering

Once we've decoded a message, we have to actually remember the message itself, or the ability to recall a message that was sent. We are bombarded by messages throughout our day, so it's completely possible to attend to a message and decode it and then forget it minutes later.

Interpreting

The next stage in the HURIER model of listening is interpreting. According to Brownell (1985), "interpreting messages involves attention to all of the various speaker and contextual variables that provide a background for accurately perceived messages" (p. 43). So, what do we mean by contextual variables? A lot of the interpreting process is being aware of the nonverbal cues (both oral and physical) that accompany a message to accurately assign meaning to the message.

Imagine you're having a conversation with one of your peers, and he says, "I love math." Well, the text itself is demonstrating an overwhelming joy and calculating mathematical problems. However, if the message is accompanied by an eye roll or is said in a manner that makes it sound sarcastic, then the meaning of the oral phrase changes. Part of interpreting a message then is being sensitive to nonverbal cues.

Evaluating

The next stage is the evaluating stage, or judging the message itself. One of the biggest hurdles many people have with listening is the evaluative stage. Our personal biases, values, and beliefs can prevent us from effectively listening to someone else's message.

Let's imagine that you despise a specific politician. It's gotten to the point where if you hear this politician's voice, you immediately change the television channel. Even hearing other people talk about this politician causes you to tune out completely. In this case, your own bias against this politician prevents you from effectively listening to their message or even others' messages involving this politician. Overcoming our own biases against the source of a message or the content of a message in an effort to truly listen to a message is not easy. One of the reasons listening is a difficult process is because of our inherent desire to evaluate people and ideas. When it comes to evaluating another person's message during conflict, it's important to remember to be mindful of our own potential biases.

Responding

It's important to realize that effective listening starts with the ear and centers in the brain, and only then should someone provide feedback to the message itself. Often, people jump from hearing and

understanding to responding, which can cause problems as they jump to conclusions that have arisen by truncated interpretation and evaluation.

Ultimately, how we respond to a source's message will dictate how the rest of that interaction will progress. If we outright dismiss what someone is saying, we put up a roadblock that says, "I don't want to hear anything else." On the other hand, if we nod our heads and say, "tell me more," then we are encouraging the speaker to continue the interaction. For effective communication to occur, it's essential to consider how our responses will impact the other person and our relationship with that other person.

Overall, when it comes to being a mindful listener, it's vital to remember COAL: curiosity, openness, acceptance, and love (Siegal, 2007). We need to go into our interactions with others and try to see things from their points of view. When we engage in COAL, we can listen mindfully and be in the moment.

Listening Styles

Now that we have a better understanding of how listening works, let's talk about four different styles of listening researchers have identified. Kittie Watson, Larry Barker, and James Weaver (1995) defined listening styles as "attitudes, beliefs, and predispositions about the how, where, when, who, and what of the information reception and encoding process" (p. 2). Watson et al. (1992) identified four distinct listening styles: people, content, action, and time.

Self-assessment

See Appendix B: Self-Assessments

- Take the Listening Style Questionnaire.

The Four Listening Styles

People

The first listening style is the **people-oriented listening style**. People-oriented listeners tend to be more focused on the person sending the message than the content of the message. As such, people-oriented listeners focus on the emotional states of senders of information. One way to think

about people-oriented listeners is to see them as highly compassionate, empathic, and sensitive, which allows them to put themselves in the shoes of the person sending the message.

People-oriented listeners often work well in helping professions where listening to the person and understanding their feelings is very important (e.g., therapist, counselor, social worker, etc.). People-oriented listeners are also very focused on maintaining relationships, so they are good at casual conservation where they can focus on the person.\

Action

The second listening style is the action-oriented listener. **Action-oriented listeners** are focused on what the source wants. The action-oriented listener wants a source to get to the point quickly. Instead of long, drawn-out lectures, the action-oriented speaker would prefer quick bullet points that get to what the source desires. Action-oriented listeners "tend to preference speakers that construct organized, direct, and logical presentations" (Bodie & Worthington, 2010, p. 71). When dealing with an action-oriented listener, it's important to realize that they want you to be logical and get to the point. One of the things action-oriented listeners commonly do is search for errors and inconsistencies in someone's message, so it's important to be organized and have your facts straight.

Content

The third type of listener is the **content-oriented listener**, or a listener who focuses on the content of the message and process that message in a systematic way. Of the four different listening styles, content-oriented listeners are more adept at listening to complex information. Content-oriented listeners "believe it is important to listen fully to a speaker's message prior to forming an opinion about it (while action listeners tend to become frustrated if the speaker is 'wasting time')" (Bodie & Worthington, 2010, p. 71). When it comes to analyzing messages, content-oriented listeners really want to dig into the message itself. They want as much information as possible in order to make the best evaluation of the message. As such, "they want to look at the time, the place, the people, the who, the what, the where, the when, the how … all of that. They don't want to leave anything out" (Grant, n.d.)

Time

The final listening style is the **time-oriented listening style**. Time-oriented listeners are sometimes referred to as "clock watchers" because they're always in a hurry and want a source of a message to speed things up a bit. Time-oriented listeners "tend to verbalize the limited amount of time they are willing or able to devote to listening and are likely to interrupt others and openly signal disinterest" (Bodie et al., 2013, p. 73). They often feel that they are overwhelmed by so many different tasks that need to be completed (whether real or not), so they usually try to accomplish multiple tasks while they are listening to a source. Of course, multitasking often leads to someone's attention being divided, and information being missed.

Thinking About the Four Listening Types

Kina Mallard (1999) broke down the four listening styles and examined some of the common positive characteristics, negative characteristics, and strategies for communicating with the different listening styles. These ideas are summarized in the tables below.

Table 10.2 People-Oriented Listeners.

Positive Characteristics	Negative Characteristics	Strategies for Communicating with People-Oriented Listeners
Show care and concern for others	Over involved in feelings of others	Use stories and illustrations to make points
Are nonjudgmental	Avoid seeing faults in others	Use "we" rather than "I" in conversations
Provide clear verbal and nonverbal feedback signals	Internalize/adopt emotional states of others	Use emotional examples and appeals
Are interested in building relationships	Are overly expressive when giving feedback	Show some vulnerability when possible
Notice others' moods quickly	Are nondiscriminating in building relationships	Use self-effacing humor or illustrations

Source: *Interpersonal Communication by Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

Table 10.3 Action-Oriented Listeners

Positive Characteristics	Negative Characteristics	Strategies for Communicating with Action-Oriented Listeners
Get to the point quickly	Tend to be impatient with rambling speakers	Keep main points to three or fewer
Give clear feedback concerning expectations	Jump ahead and reach conclusions quickly	Keep presentations short and concise
Concentrate on understanding task	Jump ahead or finishes thoughts of speakers	Have a step-by-step plan and label each step
Help others focus on what's important	Minimize relationship issues and concerns	Watch for cues of disinterest and pick up vocal pace at those points or change subjects
Encourage others to be organized and concise	Ask blunt questions and appear overly critical	Speak at a rapid but controlled rate

Source: *Interpersonal Communication by Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

Table 10.4 Content-Oriented Listeners

Positive Characteristics	Negative Characteristics	Strategies for Communicating with Content-Oriented Listeners
Value technical information	Are overly detail oriented	Use two-side arguments when possible
Test for clarity and understanding	May intimidate others by asking pointed questions	Provide hard data when available
Encourage others to provide support for their ideas	Minimize the value of nontechnical information	Quote credible experts
Welcome complex and challenging information	Discount information from nonexperts	Suggest logical sequences and plan
Look at all sides of an issue	Take a long time to make decisions	Use charts and graphs

Source: *Interpersonal Communication by Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

Table 10.5 Time-Oriented Listeners

Positive Characteristics	Negative Characteristics	Strategies for Communicating with Content-Oriented Listeners
Value technical information	Are overly detail oriented	Use two-side arguments when possible
Test for clarity and understanding	May intimidate others by asking pointed questions	Provide hard data when available
Encourage others to provide support for their ideas	Minimize the value of nontechnical information	Quote credible experts
Welcome complex and challenging information	Discount information from nonexperts	Suggest logical sequences and plan
Look at all sides of an issue	Take a long time to make decisions	Use charts and graphs

Source: *Interpersonal Communication by Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

We should mention that many people are not just one listening style or another. It's possible to be a combination of different listening styles. However, some of the listening style combinations are more common. For example, someone who is action-oriented and time-oriented will want the bare-bones information so they can make a decision. On the other hand, it's hard to be a people-oriented listener and time-oriented listener because being empathic and attending to someone's feelings takes time and effort.

Types of Listening Responses

Who do you think is a great listener? Why did you name that particular person? How can you tell

that person is a good listener? You probably recognize a good listener based on the nonverbal and verbal cues that they display. In this section, we will discuss different types of listening responses. We all don't listen in the same way. Also, each situation is different and requires a distinct style that is appropriate for that situation.

Ronald Adler, Lawrence Rosenfeld, and Russell Proctor (2013) are three interpersonal scholars who have done quite a bit with listening. Based on their research, they have found different types of listening responses: silent listening, questioning, paraphrasing, empathizing, supporting, analyzing, evaluating, and advising (Adler et al., 2013).

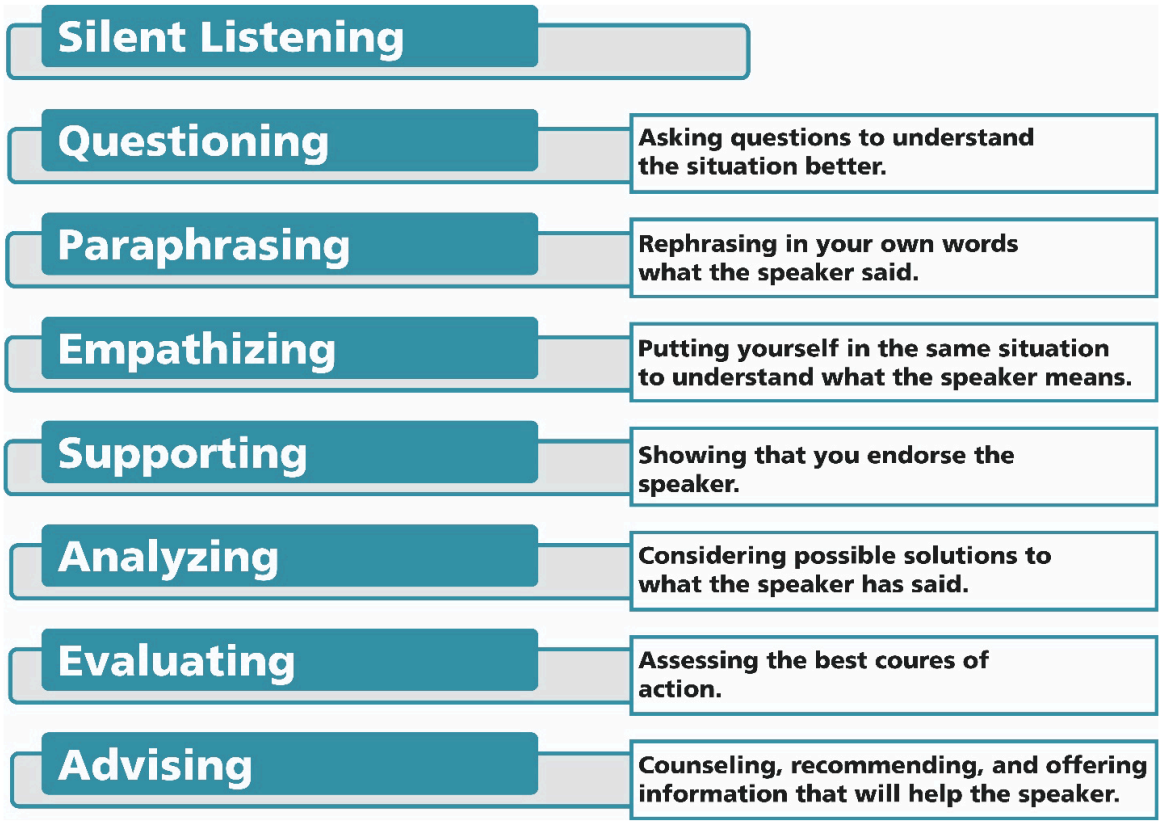

Figure 10.7 Types of Listening Responses. Image: Interpersonal Communication by Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from the original. [Click to enlarge].

Silent Listening

Silent listening occurs when you say nothing. It is ideal in certain situations and awful in other situations. However, when used correctly, it can be very powerful. If misused, you could give the wrong impression to someone. It is appropriate to use when you don't want to encourage more talking. It also shows that you are open to the speaker's ideas. Sometimes people get angry when someone doesn't respond. They might think that this person is not listening or trying to avoid the situation. But it might be due to the fact that the person is just trying to gather their thoughts, or

perhaps it would be inappropriate to respond. There are certain situations such as in counseling, where silent listening can be beneficial because it can help that person figure out their feelings and emotions.

Questioning

In situations where you want to get answers, it might be beneficial to use **questioning**. You can do this in a variety of ways. There are several ways to question in a sincere, nondirective way including to clarify meaning; to learn about others' thoughts, feelings and wants; to encourage elaboration; to encourage discovery; and to gather more facts and details.

Sincere questions are ones that are created to find a genuine answer. **Counterfeit questions** are disguised attempts to send a message, not to receive one. Sometimes, counterfeit questions can cause the listener to be defensive. For instance, if someone asks you, "Tell me how many times this week you arrived late to work?" The speaker implies that you were late several times, even though that has not been established. A speaker can use questions that make statements by emphasizing specific words or phrases, stating an opinion or feeling on the subject. They can ask questions that carry hidden agendas, like "Do you have $5?" because the person would like to borrow that money. Some questions seek "correct" answers. For instance, when a friend says, "Do you like my new glasses?" You probably have a correct or ideal answer. There are questions that are based on unchecked assumptions. An example would be, "Why aren't you listening?" This example implies that the person wasn't listening, when in fact they are listening.

Consider this: Open and Close Ended Questions

There is a general distinction made between **Open Ended Question**, questions that likely require some thought and/or more than a yes/no answer, and **Close Ended Questions**, questions that only require a specific answer and/or a yes/no answer. This is an important distinction to understand and remember. In the context of managing conflict open ended questions are utilized for Information Gathering and close ended questions are used for clarifying concepts or ideas you have heard. Here are examples of these types of questions.

Close Ended Questions

- Is this what you said...?
- Did I hear you say...?

- Did I understand you when you said...?
- Did I hear you correctly when you said...?
- Did I paraphrase what you said correctly?
- So this took place on....?
- So you would like to see...?

Open Ended Questions

- If there was one small way that things could be better starting today, what would that be?
- How did you feel when...?
- How could you have handled it differently?
- When did it began?
- When did you first notice...?
- When did that happen?
- Where did it happen?
- What was that all about?
- What happened then?
- What would you like to do about it?
- I want to understand from your perspective, would you please tell me again?
- What do you think would make this better going forward?
- What criteria did you use to...?
- What's another way you might...?
- What resources were used for the project?
- Tell me more about... (not a question, but an open ended prompt)

A type of question to watch out for is **Leading Questions**, which provides a direction or answer for someone to agree or disagree with. An example would be, "So you are going to vote for____ for prime minister, aren't you?" or "What they did is unbelievably, don't you agree?" These questions can easily be turned into information gathering questions, "Who are you going to vote for this year?" or "What do you this about their behavior?"

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is defined as restating in your own words, the message you think the speaker just sent. There are three types of paraphrasing. First, you can change the speaker's wording to indicate what you think they meant. Second, you can offer an example of what you think the speaker is talking about. Third, you can reflect on the underlying theme of a speaker's remarks. Paraphrasing represents mindful listening in the way that you are trying to analyze and understand the speaker's information. Paraphrasing can be used to summarize facts and to gain consensus in essential discussions. This could be used in a business meeting to make sure that all details were discussed and agreed upon. Paraphrasing can also be used to understand personal information more

accurately. Think about being in a counselor's office. Counselors often paraphrase information to understand better exactly how you are feeling and to be able to analyze the information better.

Empathizing

Empathizing is used to show that you identify with a speaker's information. You are not empathizing when you deny others the rights to their feelings. Examples of this are statements such as, "It's really not a big deal" or "Who cares?" This indicates that the listener is trying to make the speaker feel a different way. In minimizing the significance of the situation, you are interpreting the situation in your perspective and passing judgment.

Supporting

Sometimes, in a discussion, people want to know how you feel about them instead of a reflection on the content. Several types of **supportive responses** are: agreement, offers to help, praise, reassurance, and diversion. The value of receiving support when faced with personal problems is very important. This has been shown to enhance psychological, physical, and relational health. To effectively support others, you must meet certain criteria. You have to make sure that your expression of support is sincere, be sure that other person can accept your support, and focus on "here and now" rather than "then and there."

Analyzing

Analyzing is helpful in gaining different alternatives and perspectives by offering an interpretation of the speaker's message. However, this can be problematic at times. Sometimes the speaker might not be able to understand your perspective or may become more confused by accepting it. To avoid this, steps must be taken in advance. These include tentatively offering your interpretation instead of as an absolute fact. By being more sensitive about it, it might be more comfortable for the speaker to accept. You can also make sure that your analysis has a reasonable chance of being correct. If it were inaccurate, it would leave the person more confused than before. Also, you must make sure the person will be receptive to your analysis and that your motive for offering is to truly help the other person. An analysis offered under any other circumstances is useless.

Evaluating

Evaluating appraises the speaker's thoughts or behaviors. The evaluation can be favorable ("that makes sense") or negative (passing judgment). Negative evaluations can be critical or non-critical (constructive criticism). Two conditions offer the best chance for evaluations to be received: if the

person with the problem requested an evaluation, and if it is genuinely constructive and not designed as a putdown.

Advising

Advising differs from evaluations. It is not always the best solution and can sometimes be harmful. In order to avoid this, you must make sure four conditions are present: be sure the person is receptive to your suggestions, make sure they are truly ready to accept it, be confident in the correctness of your advice, and be sure the receiver won't blame you if it doesn't work out.

Barriers to Effective Listening

Barriers to effective listening are present at every stage of the listening process (Hargie, 2011). At the receiving stage, noise can block or distort incoming stimuli. At the interpreting stage, complex or abstract information may be difficult to relate to previous experiences, making it difficult to reach understanding. At the recalling stage, natural limits to our memory and challenges to concentration can interfere with remembering. At the evaluating stage, personal biases and prejudices can lead us to block people out or assume we know what they are going to say. At the responding stage, a lack of paraphrasing and questioning skills can lead to misunderstanding. In the following section, we will explore how environmental and physical factors, cognitive and personal factors, and bad listening practices present barriers to effective listening.

Environmental, Physical, and Psychological Barriers

Environmental noise, such as lighting, temperature, and furniture affect our ability to listen. A room that is too dark can make us sleepy, just as a room that is too warm or cool can raise awareness of our physical discomfort to a point that it is distracting. Some seating arrangements facilitate listening, while others separate people. In general, listening is easier when listeners can make direct eye contact with and are in close physical proximity to a speaker. The ability to effectively see and hear a person increases people's confidence in their abilities to receive and process information. Eye contact and physical proximity can still be affected by noise. Environmental noises such as a whirring air conditioner, barking dogs, or a ringing fire alarm can obviously interfere with listening despite direct lines of sight and well-placed furniture.

Physiological noise, like environmental noise, can interfere with our ability to process incoming information. This is considered a physical barrier to effective listening because it emanates from our physical body. Physiological noise is noise stemming from a physical illness, injury, or bodily stress. Ailments such as a cold, a broken leg, a headache, or a poison ivy outbreak can range from annoying to unbearably painful and impact our listening relative to their intensity. Another type of noise, psychological noise, bridges physical and cognitive barriers to effective listening. **Psychological**

noise, or noise stemming from our psychological states including moods and level of arousal, can facilitate or impede listening. Any mood or state of arousal, positive or negative, that is too far above or below our regular baseline creates a barrier to message reception and processing. The generally positive emotional state of being in love can be just as much of a barrier as feeling hatred. Excited arousal can also distract as much as anxious arousal. Stress about an upcoming events ranging from losing a job, to having surgery, to wondering about what to eat for lunch can overshadow incoming messages. Cognitive limits, a lack of listening preparation, difficult or disorganized messages, and prejudices can also interfere with listening. Whether you call it multitasking, daydreaming, glazing over, or drifting off, we all cognitively process other things while receiving messages.

Difference Between Speech and Thought Rate

Our ability to process more information than what comes from one speaker or source creates a barrier to effective listening. While people speak at a rate of 125 to 175 words per minute, we can process between 400 and 800 words per minute (Hargie, 2011). This gap between speech rate and thought rate gives us an opportunity to side-process any number of thoughts that can be distracting from a more important message. Because of this gap, it is impossible to give one message our "undivided attention," but we can occupy other channels in our minds with thoughts related to the central message. For example, using some of your extra cognitive processing abilities to repeat, rephrase, or reorganize messages coming from one source allows you to use that extra capacity in a way that reinforces the primary message.

The difference between speech and thought rate connects to personal barriers to listening, as personal concerns are often the focus of competing thoughts that can take us away from listening and challenge our ability to concentrate on others' messages. Two common barriers to concentration are self-centeredness and lack of motivation (Brownell, 1993). For example, when our self-consciousness is raised, we may be too busy thinking about how we look, how we're sitting, or what others think of us to be attentive to an incoming message. Additionally, we are often challenged when presented with messages that we do not find personally relevant. In general, we employ selective attention, which refers to our tendency to pay attention to the messages that benefit us in some way and filter others out.

Another common barrier to effective listening that stems from the speech and thought rate divide is response preparation. **Response preparation** refers to our tendency to rehearse what we are going to say next while a speaker is still talking. Rehearsal of what we will say once a speaker's turn is over is an important part of the listening process that takes place between the recalling and evaluation and/or the evaluation and responding stage. Rehearsal becomes problematic when response preparation begins as someone is receiving a message and hasn't had time to engage in interpretation or recall. In this sense, we are listening with the goal of responding instead of with the goal of understanding, which can lead us to miss important information that could influence our response.

Lack of Skill

Another barrier to effective listening is a general lack of listening preparation. Unfortunately, most people have never received any formal training or instruction related to listening. Although some people think listening skills just develop over time, competent listening is difficult, and enhancing listening skills takes concerted effort. Even when listening education is available, people do not embrace it as readily as they do opportunities to enhance their speaking skills. Listening is often viewed as an annoyance or a chore, or just ignored or minimized as part of the communication process. In addition, our individualistic society values speaking more than listening, as it's the speakers who are sometimes literally in the spotlight. Although listening competence is a crucial part of social interaction and many of us value others we perceive to be "good listeners," listening just doesn't get the same kind of praise, attention, instruction, or credibility as speaking. Teachers, parents, and relational partners explicitly convey the importance of listening through statements like "You better listen to me," "Listen closely," and "Listen up," but these demands are rarely paired with concrete instruction.

Bad messages and/or lack of communication skill on the part of the speaker also presents a barrier to effective listening. Sometimes our trouble listening originates in the sender. In terms of message construction, poorly structured messages or messages that are too vague, too jargon filled, or too simple can present listening difficulties. In terms of speakers' delivery, verbal fillers, monotone voices, distracting movements, or a disheveled appearance can inhibit our ability to cognitively process a message (Hargie, 2011). Listening also becomes difficult when a speaker tries to present too much information. Information overload is a common barrier to effective listening that good speakers can help mitigate by building redundancy into their speeches and providing concrete examples of new information to help audience members interpret and understand the key ideas.

Prejudice

Oscar Wilde said, "Listening is a very dangerous thing. If one listens one may be convinced." Unfortunately, some of our default ways of processing information and perceiving others lead us to rigid ways of thinking. When we engage in prejudiced listening, we are usually trying to preserve our ways of thinking and avoid being convinced of something different. This type of prejudice is a barrier to effective listening, because when we prejudge a person based on his or her identity or ideas, we usually stop listening in an active and/or ethical way.

We exhibit prejudice in our listening in several ways, some of which are more obvious than others. For example, we may claim to be in a hurry and only selectively address the parts of a message that we agree with or that aren't controversial. We can also operate from a state of denial where we avoid a subject or person altogether so that our views are not challenged. Prejudices that are based on a person's identity, such as race, age, occupation, or appearance, may lead us to assume that we know what they will say, essentially closing down the listening process. Keeping an open mind and engaging in perception checking can help us identify prejudiced listening and hopefully shift into more competent listening practices.

Inattentional Blindness

Do you regularly spot editing errors in movies? Can you multitask effectively, texting while talking with your friends or watching television? Are you fully aware of your surroundings? If you answered yes to any of those questions, you're not alone. And, you're most likely wrong.

More than 50 years ago, experimental psychologists began documenting the many ways that our perception of the world is limited, not by our eyes and ears, but by our minds. We appear able to process only one stream of information at a time, effectively filtering other information from awareness. To a large extent, we perceive only that which receives the focus of our cognitive efforts: our attention.

Imagine the following task, known as dichotic listening (e.g., Cherry, 1953; Moray, 1959; Treisman, 1960): You put on a set of headphones that play two completely different speech streams, one to your left ear and one to your right ear. Your task is to repeat each syllable spoken into your left ear as quickly and accurately as possible, mimicking each sound as you hear it. When performing this attention-demanding task, you won't notice if the speaker in your right ear switches to a different language or is replaced by a different speaker with a similar voice. You won't notice if the content of their speech becomes nonsensical. In effect, you are deaf to the substance of the ignored speech. But, that is not because of the limits of your auditory senses. It is a form of cognitive deafness, due to the nature of focused, selective attention. Even if the speaker on your right headphone says your name, you will notice it only about one-third of the time (Conway et al., 2001). And, at least by some accounts, you only notice it that often because you still devote some of your limited attention to the ignored speech stream (Cherry, 1953). In this task, you will tend to notice only large physical changes (e.g., a switch from a male to a female speaker), but not substantive ones, except in rare cases.

This selective listing task highlights the power of attention to filter extraneous information from awareness while letting in only those elements of our world that we want to hear. Focused attention is crucial to our powers of observation, making it possible for us to zero in on what we want to see or hear while filtering out irrelevant distractions. But, it has consequences as well: We can miss what would otherwise be obvious and important signals.

Bad Listening Practices

The previously discussed barriers to effective listening may be difficult to overcome because they are at least partially beyond our control. Physical barriers, cognitive limitations, and perceptual biases exist within all of us, and it is more realistic to believe that we can become more conscious of and lessen them than it is to believe that we can eliminate them altogether. Other "bad listening" practices may be habitual, but they are easier to address with some concerted effort. These bad listening practices include interrupting, distorted listening, eavesdropping, aggressive listening, narcissistic listening, and pseudo-listening.

Interrupting

Conversations unfold as a series of turns, and turn taking is negotiated through a complex set of verbal and nonverbal signals that are consciously and subconsciously received. In this sense, conversational turn taking has been likened to a dance where communicators try to avoid stepping on each other's toes. One of the most frequent glitches in the turn-taking process is **interruption**, but not all interruptions are considered "bad listening." An interruption could be unintentional if we misread cues and think a person is done speaking only to have they start up again at the same time we do. Sometimes interruptions are more like overlapping statements that show support (e.g., "I think so too.") or excitement about the conversation (e.g., "That's so cool!"). Back-channel cues like "uh-huh," as we learned earlier, also overlap with a speaker's message. We may also interrupt out of necessity if we're engaged in a task with the other person and need to offer directions (e.g., "Turn left here."), instructions (e.g., "Will you stir the sauce?"), or warnings (e.g., "Look out behind you!"). All these interruptions are not typically thought of as evidence of bad listening unless they become distracting for the speaker or are unnecessary.

Unintentional interruptions can still be considered bad listening if they result from mindless communication. As we've already learned, intended meaning is not as important as the meaning that is generated in the interaction itself. So if you interrupt unintentionally, but because you were only half-listening, then the interruption is still evidence of bad listening. The speaker may form a negative impression of you that can't just be erased by you noting that you didn't "mean to interrupt." Interruptions can also be used as an attempt to dominate a conversation. A person engaging in this type of interruption may lead the other communicator to try to assert dominance, too, resulting in a competition to see who can hold the floor the longest or the most often. More than likely, though, the speaker will form a negative impression of the interrupter and may withdraw from the conversation.

Distorted Listening

Distorted listening occurs in many ways. Sometimes we just get the order of information wrong, which can have relatively little negative effects if we are casually recounting a story, annoying effects if we forget the order of turns (left, right, left or right, left, right?) in our driving directions, or very negative effects if we recount the events of a crime out of order, which leads to faulty testimony at a criminal trial. Rationalization is another form of distorted listening through which we adapt, edit, or skew incoming information to fit our existing schemata. We may, for example, reattribute the cause of something to better suit our own beliefs. Sometimes we actually change the words we hear to make them better fit what we are thinking. This can easily happen if we join a conversation late, overhear part of a conversation, or are being a lazy listener and miss important setup and context. Passing along distorted information can lead to negative consequences ranging from starting a false rumor about someone to passing along incorrect medical instructions from one health-care provider to the next (Hargie, 2011). Last, the addition of material to a message is a type of distorted listening that actually goes against our normal pattern of listening, which involves reducing the

amount of information and losing some meaning as we take it in. The metaphor of "weaving a tall tale" is related to the practice of distorting through addition, as inaccurate or fabricated information is added to what was actually heard. Addition of material is also a common feature of gossip.

Eavesdropping

Eavesdropping is a bad listening practice that involves a calculated and planned attempt to secretly listen to a conversation. There is a difference between eavesdropping on and overhearing a conversation. Many if not most of the interactions we have throughout the day occur in the presence of other people. However, given that our perceptual fields are usually focused on the interaction, we are often unaware of the other people around us or don't think about the fact that they could be listening in on our conversation. We usually only become aware of the fact that other people could be listening in when we're discussing something private.

People eavesdrop for a variety of reasons. People might think another person is talking about them behind their back or that someone is engaged in illegal or unethical behavior. Sometimes people eavesdrop to feed the gossip mill or out of curiosity (McCornack, 2007). In any case, this type of listening is considered bad because it is a violation of people's privacy. Consequences for eavesdropping may include an angry reaction if caught, damage to interpersonal relationships, or being perceived as dishonest and sneaky. Additionally, eavesdropping may lead people to find out information that is personally upsetting or hurtful, especially if the point of the eavesdropping is to find out what people are saying behind their back.

Aggressive Listening

Aggressive listening is a bad listening practice in which people pay attention in order to attack something that a speaker says (McCornack, 2007). Aggressive listeners like to ambush speakers in order to critique their ideas, personality, or other characteristics. Such behavior often results from built-up frustration within an interpersonal relationship. Unfortunately, the more two people know each other, the better they will be at aggressive listening. Take the following exchange between long-term partners:

> **Deb:** I've been thinking about making a salsa garden next to the side porch. I think it would be really good to be able to go pick our own tomatoes and peppers and cilantro to make homemade salsa.
>
> **Summer:** Really? When are you thinking about doing it?
>
> **Deb:** Next weekend. Would you like to help?
>
> **Summer:** I won't hold my breath. Every time you come up with some "idea of the week" you

> get so excited about it. But do you ever follow through with it? No. We'll be eating salsa from the store next year, just like we are now.

Although Summer's initial response to Deb's idea is seemingly appropriate and positive, she asks the question because she has already planned her upcoming aggressive response. Summer's aggression toward Deb isn't about a salsa garden; it's about a building frustration with what Summer perceives as Deb's lack of follow-through on her ideas. Aside from engaging in aggressive listening because of built-up frustration, such listeners may also attack others' ideas or mock their feelings because of their own low self-esteem and insecurities.

Narcissistic Listening

Narcissistic listening is a form of self-centered and self-absorbed listening in which listeners try to make the interaction about them (McCornack, 2007). Narcissistic listeners redirect the focus of the conversation to them by interrupting or changing the topic. When the focus is taken off them, narcissistic listeners may give negative feedback by pouting, providing negative criticism of the speaker or topic, or ignoring the speaker. A common sign of narcissistic listening is the combination of a "pivot," when listeners shift the focus of attention back to them, and "one-upping," when listeners try to top what previous speakers have said during the interaction. You can see this narcissistic combination in the following interaction:

> **Bryce:** My boss has been really unfair to me lately and hasn't been letting me work around my class schedule. I think I may have to quit, but I don't know where I'll find another job.
>
> **Toby:** Why are you complaining? I've been working with the same stupid boss for two years. He doesn't even care that I'm trying to get my degree and work at the same time. And you should hear the way he talks to me in front of the other employees.

Narcissistic listeners, given their self-centeredness, may actually fool themselves into thinking that they are listening and actively contributing to a conversation. We all have the urge to share our own stories during interactions, because other people's communication triggers our own memories about related experiences. It is generally more competent to withhold sharing our stories until the other person has been able to speak and we have given the appropriate support and response. But we all shift the focus of a conversation back to us occasionally, either because we don't know another way to respond or because we are making an attempt at empathy. Narcissistic listeners consistently interrupt or follow another speaker with statements like "That reminds me of the time...," "Well, if I were you...," and "That's nothing..." (Nichols, 1995). As we'll learn later, matching stories isn't considered empathetic listening, but occasionally doing it doesn't make you a narcissistic listener.

Pseudo-listening

Do you have a friend or family member who repeats stories? If so, then you've probably engaged in pseudo-listening as a politeness strategy. Pseudo-listening is behaving as if you're paying attention to a speaker when you're actually not (McCornack, 2007). Outwardly visible signals of attentiveness are an important part of the listening process, but when they are just an "act," the pseudo-listener is engaging in bad listening behaviors. The listener is not actually going through the stages of the listening process and will likely not be able to recall the speaker's message or offer a competent and relevant response. Although it is a bad listening practice, we all understandably engage in pseudo-listening from time to time. If a friend needs someone to talk but you're really tired or experiencing some other barrier to effective listening, it may be worth engaging in pseudo-listening as a relational maintenance strategy, especially if the friend just needs a sounding board and isn't expecting advice or guidance. We may also pseudo-listen to a romantic partner or grandfather's story for the fifteenth time to prevent hurting their feelings. We should avoid pseudo-listening when possible and should definitely avoid making it a listening habit. Although we may get away with it in some situations, each time we risk being "found out," which could have negative relational consequences.

Active Listening

Active listening refers to the process of pairing outwardly visible positive listening behaviors with positive cognitive listening practices. Active listening can help address many of the environmental, physical, cognitive, and personal barriers to effective listening that we discussed earlier. The behaviors associated with active listening can also enhance informational, critical, and empathetic listening.

Being an active listener starts before you actually start receiving a message. Active listeners make strategic choices and take action in order to set up ideal listening conditions. Physical and environmental noises can often be managed by moving locations or by manipulating the lighting, temperature, or furniture. When possible, avoid important listening activities during times of distracting psychological or physiological noise. For example, we often know when we're going to be hungry, full, more awake, less awake, more anxious, or less anxious, and advance planning can alleviate the presence of these barriers. Of course, we don't always have control over our schedule, in which case we will need to utilize other effective listening strategies that we will learn more about later in this chapter.

In terms of cognitive barriers to effective listening, we can prime ourselves to listen by analyzing a listening situation before it begins. For example, you could ask yourself the following questions:

1. "What are my goals for listening to this message?"
2. "How does this message relate to me / affect my life?"
3. "What listening type and style are most appropriate for this message?"

As we learned earlier, the difference between speech and thought processing rate means listeners' level of attention varies while receiving a message. Effective listeners must work to maintain focus as much as possible and refocus when attention shifts or fades (Wolvin & Coakley, 1993). One way to do this is to find the motivation to listen. If you can identify intrinsic and or extrinsic motivations for listening to a particular message, then you will be more likely to remember the information presented. Ask yourself how a message could impact your life, your career, your intellect, or your relationships. This can help overcome our tendency toward selective attention. As senders of messages, we can help listeners by making the relevance of what we're saying clear and offering well-organized messages that are tailored for our listeners.

Improving Listening

Many people admit that they could stand to improve their listening skills. This section will help us do that. In this section, we will learn strategies for developing and improving competence at each stage of the listening process. We will also define active listening and the behaviors that go along with it.

We can develop competence within each stage of the listening process (Ridge, 1993)

To improve listening at the hearing and understanding stages:

- prepare yourself to listen,
- discern between intentional messages and noise,
- concentrate on stimuli most relevant to your listening purpose(s) or goal(s),
- be mindful of the selection and attention process as much as possible,
- avoid interrupting someone while they are speaking in order to maintain your ability
- to receive stimuli and listen, and,
- pay attention so you can follow the conversational flow.

To improve listening at the remembering stage:

- use multiple sensory channels to decode messages and make more complete memories;
- repeat, rephrase, and reorganize information to fit your cognitive preferences; and
- use mnemonic devices as a gimmick to help with recall.

To improve listening at the interpreting stage,

- identify main points and supporting points;
- use contextual clues from the person or environment to discern additional meaning;
- be aware of how a relational, cultural, or situational context can influence meaning;
- be aware of the different meanings of silence; and
- note differences in tone of voice and other paralinguistic cues that influence meaning.

To improve listening at the evaluating stage,

- separate facts, inferences, and judgments;
- be familiar with and able to identify persuasive strategies and fallacies of reasoning;
- assess the credibility of the speaker and the message; and
- be aware of your own biases and how your perceptual filters can create barriers to effective listening.

To improve listening at the responding stage,

- reflect information to check understanding,
- ask appropriate clarifying and follow-up questions,
- give feedback that is relevant to the speaker's purpose/motivation for speaking,
- adapt your response to the speaker and the context, and
- do not let the preparation and rehearsal of your response diminish earlier stages of listening.

Active Listening and Conflict

Active listening is challenging in calm everyday setting and it's often even harder in times of conflict. When your brain is under the stress of conflict, it is extremely challenging to actively listen to what someone else is saying, because in a conflict situation you likely disagree with everything that is coming out of their mouth. In conflict is where the barriers to listening happen the most.

Think back to the idea of inattentional blindness. How do you think that impacts you in a conflict? Have you ever thought back to a high conflict situation and realized that you missed a key piece of information that was shared? Likely because in the heat of the moment you were too focused on either getting your point across, making your case, or figuring out how to make this conflict end. Inattentional blindness in conflict means that we are likely to miss key pieces of information, verbal or nonverbal. The more effort a cognitive task requires the more likely it becomes that you'll miss noticing something significant. This in and of itself can lead to more conflict.

Or what about the difference between the speech and thought rate? You can process information at significantly higher rate than someone can share with you. In a conflict situation, you can process every previous conversation or conflict you have had with this person and still "hear" what they said. But you aren't really listening when that is happening.

So what can you do about these challenges in a conflict situation? First, recognize that we are all wired to be distracted AND that you will likely miss something. Second, maximize the attention you do have available by avoiding distractions. The ring of a new call or the ding of a new text are hard to resist, so make it impossible to succumb to the temptation by turning your phone off or putting it somewhere out of reach. Third, don't be afraid to slow down and pause a conversation because you were actively listening to someone. You build stronger relationships by showing people that you are truly listening to them and will give the hard conversations they time they deserve.

Adapted Works

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10.4 Giving and Receiving Feedback

Feedback

Performing work of a high quality is vital not only to your success in any profession but to the success of your team and company. How do you know if the quality of your work is meeting client, manager, co-worker, and other stakeholder expectations? **Feedback**. Whether this comes as a formal evaluation or informal comments, they'll tell you whether you're doing a great job, merely a good one, satisfactory, or a poor one that needs improving because their success depends on the quality of work you do. Poor leadership will merely point out what you're doing wrong, which is **negative feedback** or mere criticism, and tell you to fix it without being much help. Good leadership may start with negative feedback and then tell you what you must do to improve. Inspiring leadership skips the negative criticism altogether and surrounds the constructive criticism with praise to effectively boost morale and motivate the worker to seek more praise. This is leading by carrot rather than stick.

Constructive criticism differs from mere negative criticism in that it is focused on improvement with clear, specific instructions for what exactly the receiver must do to meet expectations. If you merely wanted to criticize a report, for instance, you could say it's terribly written and demand that it be fixed, leaving the writer to figure it out. Of course, if they don't know what the expectations are, attempts at fixing it may result in yet more disappointment.

If you were offering constructive criticism, however, you would give the writer specific direction on how to improve. You might encourage them to revise and proofread it, perhaps taking advantage of MS Word's spell checker and grammar checker, as well as perhaps some specific writing-guide review for recurring errors and the help of a second pair of eyes. You may even offer to help yourself by going through a part of the report, pointing out how to fix certain errors, and thus guiding the writer to correct similar errors throughout. Of course, you can lead a horse to water but you can't make them drink; if all of these efforts fail to motivate the employee to do better, switching to a more strict, threat-based style of leadership may get the necessary results. Most people don't like being criticized, and yet sometimes negative feedback is necessary if being too nice doesn't work. For best results at the outset, however, always start with well-organized constructive criticism.

Giving Constructive Criticism: The Sandwich Method

As miscommunication, vague and misleading instruction will lead to little-to-no improvement or even more damage from people acting on misunderstandings caused by poor direction. Not only must the content of constructive criticism be of a high quality itself, but its packaging must be such that it properly motivates the receiver. An effective way of delivering constructive criticism is called using the sandwich method. Like sugar-coating bitter medicine, the idea here is to make

the receiver feel good about themselves so that they're in a receptive frame of mind for hearing, processing, and remembering the constructive criticism. If the constructive criticism is focused on improvement and the receiver associates it with the praise that comes before and after (the slices of bread), the purely positive phrasing motivates them to actually improve. The three parts of this feedback are shown in Table 10.36

Table 10.6 Three Parts of Feedback

Feedback	Example
1. Sincere, specific praise	Your report really impressed me with its organization and visually appealing presentation of your findings. It's almost perfect.
2. Constructive criticism	If there's anything that you can improve before you send it on to the head office, it's the writing. Use MS Word's spellchecker and grammar checker, which will catch most of the errors. Perhaps you could also get Marieke to check it out because she's got an eagle eye for that sort of thing. The cleaner the writing is, the more the execs will see it as a credible piece worth considering.
3. Sincere, specific praise	Otherwise, the report is really great. The abstract is right on point, and the evidence you've pulled together makes a really convincing case for investing in blockchain. I totally buy your conclusion that it'll be the future of financial infrastructure.

Source: *Communication at Work by Jordan Smith, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.*

Of course, this style of feedback may develop a bad reputation if done poorly, such as giving vague, weak praise (called "damning with faint praise") when more specific, stronger praise is possible. If done well, however, the sandwich tends to make those receiving it feel good about themselves even as they're motivate to do better.

Sandwiching feedback can be challenging, however, if the receiver hasn't done enough praiseworthy work to get two pieces of bread together. In such cases, you can always reach for something to flatter them with ("I like your hair today, but . . . ") in an attempt to put them at ease, then carefully word the constructive criticism so that it doesn't put the receiver down. After all, the entire point of the sandwich is to make the constructive criticism more palatable by keeping it positive with feel-good sentiment.

The ability to give and receive feedback is integral to a healthy working relationship. Feedback is intended to provide information and observations about an individual's work behaviour or performance and can be positive and/or negative. All too often feedback is perceived as negative and associated with criticism. However, if given in the right way and at the right time, feedback can be highly beneficial for both the giver and the receiver.

Let's Focus: Guidelines for Giving Effective Feedback

The following are general guidelines on how to give feedback:

- **Relax and take** a few deep breaths if you are anxious.
- **Remain respectful and calm** at all times. If you are angry or unable to control your emotions, wait until you have calmed down.
- **Remember** that feedback is both positive and negative. Make sure the information you convey does not focus only on only one or the other.
- **Provide** the feedback in an appropriate location. Negative feedback should be given in private space without interruption. Providing negative feedback in front of others is inappropriate.
- **Put** your feedback into context, particularly if it is negative. This will help the receiver understand the points you are making. If you notice that the receiver is distressed, slow down, take a short break, or reschedule the discussion if necessary.
- **Allow** the receiver the opportunity to answer or ask questions and provide their own input. This will require active listening on the part of the giver.
- **Focus** on the issues and not the person. Giving constructive criticism is important but should never be made to feel personal. It is important to recognize that even though you are not intending on making the feedback personal that some people will still take it that way. You should be prepared to address this, as conflict may arise from this miscommunication.
- **Provide** feedback at the appropriate time so that an employee or co-worker can address the issues. Don't stockpile the feedback or criticism and unload it void of context. It is far better to address issues as they occur so that frustrations cannot build, and memories are fresh.
- **Make** sure that it is within your purview to provide the feedback.
- **Ensure** that you are not only giving negative feedback. While it is necessary to give constructive criticism, it is also important to recognize the positive accomplishments of others. If you are consistently giving negative feedback and never give positive feedback it can be hard for others to know whether you believe they are successful.
- **Acknowledging** the accomplishments of others when appropriate lets them know they are a valuable member of the team.

Self-Evaluation

Don't forget, you can also give yourself feedback. Self-evaluation can be difficult, because people may think their performance was effective and therefore doesn't need critique, or they may become their own worst critic, which can negatively affect self-efficacy. The key to effective self-evaluation is to identify strengths and weaknesses, to evaluate yourself within the context of the task, and to

set concrete goals for future performance. Here are some guidelines for student self-evaluation for presentations.

- **Identify strengths and weaknesses.** We have a tendency to be our own worst critics, so steer away from nit-picking or over focusing on one aspect of your performance that really annoys you and sticks out to you. It is likely that the focus of your criticism wasn't nearly as noticeable or even noticed at all by others.
- **Evaluate yourself within a context.** People have a tendency to overanalyze certain aspects of their performance, which usually only accounts for a portion of their overall effectiveness or productiveness, and under analyze other elements that have significant importance.
- **Set goals for next time.** Goal setting is important because most of us need a concrete benchmark against which to evaluate our progress. Once goals are achieved, they can be "checked off" and added to our ongoing skill set, which can enhance confidence and lead to the achievement of more advanced goals.
- **Revisit goals and assess progress at regular intervals.** We will not always achieve the goals we set, so it is important to revisit the goals periodically to assess our progress. If you did not meet a goal, figure out why and create an action plan to try again. If you did achieve a goal, try to build on that confidence to meet future goals.

Receiving Constructive Criticism

No one's perfect, not even you, so your professional success depends on people telling you how to improve your performance. When you receive well-phrased constructive criticism, accept it in good faith as a gift because that's what it is. If a close friend or colleague nicely tells you to pick out the broccoli between your teeth after lunching with them, they're doing you the favour of telling you what you don't know but need to in order to be successful or at least avoid failure. Your enemies, on the other hand, would say nothing, letting you go about your day embarrassing yourself in the hopes that it will contribute to your failure. Constructive criticism is an act of benevolence or mercy meant to improve not only your performance but also that of the team and company as a whole. Done well, constructive criticism is a quality assurance task rather than a personal attack. Be grateful and say thank you when someone is nice enough to look out for your best interests that way.

Receiving constructive criticism gracefully may mean stifling your defensive reflex. Important skills not only in the workplace but in basic communication include being a good listener and being able to take direction. Employees who can't take direction well soon find themselves out of job because it puts them at odds with the goals of the team and company. Good listening means stifling the defensive reflex in your head before it gets out and has you rudely interrupting the speaker. Even if you begin mounting defenses in your head, you're not effectively listening to the constructive criticism.

Receiving constructive criticism in a way that assures the speaker that you understand involves

completing the communication process. You can indicate that you're listening first with your nonverbals:

- Maintaining **eye contact** shows that you're paying close attention to the speaker's words and nonverbal inflections
- **Nodding your head** shows that you're processing and understanding the information coming in, as well as agreeing
- **Taking notes** shows that you're committing to the information by reviewing it later

Once you understand the constructive criticism, paraphrase it aloud to confirm your understanding. "So you're basically saying that I should be doing X instead of Y, right?" If the speaker confirms your understanding, follow up by explaining how you're going to implement the advice to assure them that their efforts in speaking to you won't be in vain. Apologizing may even be necessary if you were clearly in the wrong.

Of course, if the constructive criticism isn't so constructive—if it's mere criticism, you would be right to ask for more help and specific direction. If the criticism is just plain wrong, perhaps there's been a mistake or miscommunication. When disagreeing, focus on the faulty points rather than on your feelings even if you've taken the feedback as a personal insult. Always maintain professionalism throughout such exchanges.

Guidelines for Receiving Feedback

The following are general guidelines on how to receive feedback:

- Relax and take a few deep breaths if you are anxious.
- Actively listen to what is being said. Ask questions or for clarification if required at the appropriate time.
- Remain respectful at all times. If you are angry or unable to control your emotions, wait until you are calm to respond or ask questions.
- Remember that feedback is both positive and negative. Acknowledge the feedback by paraphrasing it and asking for clarification on any points if necessary.
- Take responsibility for your role. Acknowledge any errors you have made or situations that could have been handled better. Ask for advice on how to handle these situations better in the future.
  If you disagree with the assessment, be assertive, not aggressive. Clearly address the issues.

Adapted Works

10.5 Communication and Conflict

In this section:

- Common Communication Behaviours During Conflict
- Conflict Management Strategies
- STLC Conflict Model

Common Communication Behaviours During Conflict

In this section, we will discuss some common communication behaviours that observed during conflict including apologies/concessions; excuses/justifications; refusals; appeasement/positivity; avoidance/evasion; gunnysacking; serial arguing; incivility; and hurtful messages.

Apologies/Concessions

Most common of the remedial strategies, an apology is the most straightforward means by which to admit responsibility, express regret, and seek forgiveness. Apologies are most effective if provided in a timely manner and involve a self-disclosure. Apologies occurring after the discovery of a transgression by a third party are much less effective. Though apologies can range from a simple, "I'm sorry" to more elaborate forms, offenders are most successful when offering more complex apologies to match the seriousness of the transgression.

Excuses/Justifications

Rather than accepting responsibility for a transgression through the form of an apology, a transgressor who explains why they engaged in behavior is engaging in excuses or justifications. While excuses and justifications aim to minimize blame on the transgressor, the two address blame minimization from completely opposite perspectives. Excuses attempt to minimize blame by focusing on a transgressor's inability to control their actions (e.g., "How would I have known my ex-girlfriend was going to be at the party.") or displace blame on a third party (e.g., "I went to lunch with my ex-girlfriend because I did not want to hurt her feelings."). Conversely, a justification

minimizes blame by suggesting that actions surrounding the transgression were justified or that the transgression was not severe. For example, a transgressor may justify having lunch with a past romantic interest, suggesting to their current partner that the lunch meeting was of no major consequence (e.g., “We are just friends.”).

Refusals

Refusals are where a transgressor claims no blame for the perceived transgression. This is a departure from apologies and excuses/justifications which involve varying degrees of blame acceptance. In the case of a refusal, the transgressor believes that they have not done anything wrong. Such a situation points out the complexity of relational transgressions. The perceptions of both partners must be taken into account when recognizing and addressing transgressions. Research has shown that refusals tend to aggravate situations, rather than serve as a meaningful repair strategy.

Appeasement/Positivity

Appeasement is used to offset hurtful behavior through the transgressor ingratiating themselves in ways such as promising never to commit the hurtful act or being overly kind to their partner. Appeasement may elicit greater empathy from the offended, through soothing strategies exhibited by the transgressor (e.g., complimenting, being more attentive, spending greater time together). However, the danger of appeasement is the risk that the actions of transgressors will be viewed as being artificial. For example, sending your partner flowers every day resulting from infidelity you have committed, may be viewed as downplaying the severity of the transgression if the sending of flowers is not coupled with other soothing strategies that cause greater immediacy.

Avoidance/Evasion

Avoidance involves the transgressor making conscious efforts to ignore the transgression (also referred to as “silence”). Avoidance can be effective after an apology is sought and forgiveness is granted (i.e., minimizing discussion around unpleasant subjects once closure has been obtained). However, total avoidance of a transgression where the hurt of the offended is not recognized and forgiveness is not granted can result in further problems in the future. As relational transgressions tend to develop the nature of the relationship through drawing of new rules/boundaries, avoidance of a transgression does not allow for this development. Not surprisingly, avoidance is ineffective as a repair strategy, particularly for instances in which infidelity has occurred.

Gunnysacking

In Chapter 7, we learned about gunnysacking (or backpacking) as the imaginary bag we all carry into which we place unresolved conflicts or grievances over time. Gunnysacking may be expressed by bringing up previous behaviors the other has engaged in or previous arguments you felt were unresolved. Bottling up your frustrations only hurts you and can cause your current relationships to suffer. By addressing, or unpacking you can better assess the current situation with the current patterns and variables. We learn from experience but can distinguish between old wounds and current challenges, and try to focus our energies where they will make the most positive impact.

Serial Arguing

Interpersonal conflict may take the form of serial arguing, which is a repeated pattern of disagreement over an issue. **Serial arguments** do not necessarily indicate negative or troubled relationships, but any kind of patterned conflict is worth paying attention to. There are three patterns that occur with serial arguing: repeating, mutual hostility, and arguing with assurances (Johnson & Roloff, 2000). The first pattern is repeating, which means reminding the other person of your complaint (what you want them to start/stop doing). The pattern may continue if the other person repeats their response to your reminder. For example, if Marita reminds Kate that she doesn't appreciate her sarcastic tone, and Kate responds, "I'm soooo sorry, I forgot how perfect you are," then the reminder has failed to effect the desired change. A predictable pattern of complaint like this leads participants to view the conflict as irresolvable. The second pattern within serial arguments is mutual hostility, which occurs when the frustration of repeated conflict leads to negative emotions and increases the likelihood of verbal aggression. Again, a predictable pattern of hostility makes the conflict seem irresolvable and may lead to relationship deterioration.

Whereas the first two patterns entail an increase in pressure on the participants in the conflict, the third pattern offers some relief. If people in an interpersonal conflict offer verbal assurances of their commitment to the relationship, then the problems associated with the other two patterns of serial arguing may be ameliorated. Even though the conflict may not be solved in the interaction, the verbal assurances of commitment imply that there is a willingness to work on solving the conflict in the future, which provides a sense of stability that can benefit the relationship. Although serial arguing is not inherently bad within a relationship, if the pattern becomes more of a vicious cycle, it can lead to alienation, polarization, and an overall toxic climate, and the problem may seem so irresolvable that people feel trapped and terminate the relationship (Christensen & Jacobson, 2000). There are some negative, but common, conflict reactions we can monitor and try to avoid, which may also help prevent serial arguing

Incivility

Our strong emotions regarding our own beliefs, attitudes, and values can sometimes lead to incivility in our verbal communication. Incivility occurs when a person deviates from established social norms and can take many forms, including insults, bragging, bullying, gossiping, swearing, deception, and defensiveness, among others (Miller, 2001). In any case, researchers have identified several aspects of language use online that are typically viewed as negative: name-calling, character assassination, and the use of obscene language (Sobieraj & Berry, 2011). What contributes to such uncivil behavior—online and offline? The following are some common individual and situational influences that may lead to breaches of civility (Miller, 2001):

- **Individual differences.** Some people differ in their interpretations of civility in various settings, and some people have personality traits that may lead to actions deemed uncivil on a more regular basis.
- **Ignorance**. In some cases, especially in novel situations involving uncertainty, people may not know what social norms and expectations are.
- **Lack of skill.** Even when we know how to behave, we may not be able to do it. Such frustrations may lead a person to revert to undesirable behavior such as engaging in personal attacks during a conflict because they don't know what else to do.
- **Lapse of control**. Self-control is not an unlimited resource. Even when people know how to behave and have the skill to respond to a situation appropriately, they may not do so. Even people who are careful to monitor their behavior have occasional slipups.
- **Negative intent**. Some people, in an attempt to break with conformity or challenge societal norms, or for self-benefit (publicly embarrassing someone in order to look cool or edgy), are openly uncivil.

Hurtful Messages

> *"Even in the closest, most satisfying relationships, people sometimes say things that hurt each other" (Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998, p. 173)*

We have all been in the position of having our feelings hurt or hurting the feelings of another. When feelings are hurt, individuals respond in many different ways. Though hurtful messages have existed since humans began interacting, it was in 1994 that Anita L. Vangelisti (1994) first developed a typology of hurtful messages. Her work resulted in ten types of messages. She furthered her work by exploring reactions to hurtful messages. First, we will discuss her typology of hurtful messages, and then we will address how individuals respond to hurtful messages.

Types of Hurtful Messages

Evaluations

Evaluations are messages that assess value or worth. These messages are a negative assessment of the other individual that result in hurt. One of the coauthors was once riding in a car with a coworker and his wife. He was driving and made an error. She said, "You are the worst driver ever." The moment was awkward for everyone.

Accusation

The second type of hurtful message is an accusation. Accusations are an assignment of fault or blame. Any number of topics can be addressed in accusations. A common source of conflict in relationships is money. An example of an accusation that might arise for conflict over money is "You are the reason this family is in constant financial turmoil."

Directives

Directives are the third type of hurtful message, and involve an order or a command. In everyday interaction, examples might include, "leave me alone," "don't ever call me again," or "stay away from me."

Informative Statements

Informative statements are hurtful messages that reveal unwanted information. A supervisor might reveal the following to an employee: "I only hired you because the owner made me." Siblings might reveal "I never wanted a younger sister" or "When Mother was dying, she told me I was her favorite." Friends might say something like, "When you got a job at the same place as me, I felt smothered." Informative messages reveal information that could easily be kept a secret, but are intended to hurt.

Statement of Desire

A statement of desire expresses an individual's preference. A romantic partner might state, "the night I met you, I was more interested in your friend and really wanted to go out with him." A friend might say, "Callie has always been a better friend than you." A parent/guardian with multiple children might state, "God only gives you one good child."

Advising Statement

An advising statement calls for a course of action such as "you need to get yourself some help."

One of the coauthors inadvertently communicated an advising statement when a friend was talking about going on so many interviews and not getting hired. The coauthor said, “There are courses that offer interview training. You could take a course in interviewing.” The statement hurt the coauthor’s friend as she was only seeking comfort and not advice that seemingly indicated she had poor interview skills.

Question

A question is another type of hurtful message which, when asked, implies something negative. A very direct hurtful question is, “What is wrong with you?” Another subtler question that might be perceived as hurtful is, “You’ve been at the bank for ten years. Have you been promoted yet?”

Threats

Threats are messages that indicate a desire to inflict harm. Harm can be physical or psychological. For example, a romantic partner might say, “if you go out with your friends tonight, I’m going to break up with you.” A direct physical threat is a statement directed toward inflicting bodily harm.

Jokes

Jokes are another type of hurtful message that involves a prank or witticism. In an organization, a coworker could jokingly comment to a supervisor on the supervisor’s relationship with a subordinate, “I can see who’s really in charge here.” A prank can be hurtful if it results in humiliating or embarrassing the object of the prank. Pranks are sometimes carried too far. Jokes in the form of witticism are often open to interpretation, but hurt may result if the recipient feels that the sender intended to hurt more so than humor. Pranks that embarrass or cause physical harm often create emotional pain for the recipient.

Lies

Lies are deceptive speech acts that result in the hurt of the recipient. Lies can range from the mundane such as “I was late for dinner because I was on the phone with my boss.” to “I’m going to San Diego on business.” Lies, when discovered, may result in feelings of being disrespected or betrayal.

Consider this: Communication Freezers

In addition to hurtful messages, we can think about communication that is likely to make the interaction feel "chilly". **Communication freezers** put an end to effective communication by making the receiver feel judged or defensive. Typical communication stoppers include criticizing, blaming, ordering, judging, or shaming the other person. Some examples of things to avoid saying include the following:

- Telling the other person what to do:

  "You must..."
  "You cannot..."

- Threatening with "or else" implied:

  "You had better..."
  "If you don't..."

- Making suggestions or telling the other person what they ought to do:

  "You should..."
  "It's your responsibility to..."

- Attempting to educate the other person:

  "Let me give you the facts."
  "Experience tells us that..."

- Judging the other person negatively:

  "You're not thinking straight."
  "You're wrong."

- Giving insincere praise:

  "You have so much potential."
  "I know you can do better than this."

- Psychoanalyzing the other person:

  "You're jealous."
  "You have problems with authority."

- Making light of the other person's problems by generalizing:

"Things will get better."
"Behind every cloud is a silver lining."

- Asking excessive or inappropriate questions:

"Why did you do that?"
"Who has influenced you?"

- Making light of the problem by kidding:

"Think about the positive side."
"You think you've got problems!"

Sources: *Adapted from information in Tramel, M., & Reynolds, H. (1981). Executive leadership. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall; Saltman, D., & O'Dea, N. Conflict management workshop PowerPoint presentation. Retrieved July 1, 2008, from http://www.nswrdn.com.au/client_images/6806.PDF; Communication stoppers. Retrieved July 1, 2008, from Mental Health Today Web site: http://www.mental-health-today.com/Healing/communicationstop.htm.*

Conflict Management Strategies

Defensiveness versus Supportiveness

Jack Gibb discussed defensive and supportive communication interactions as part of his analysis of conflict management. Recall from our previous chapters, defensive communication is characterized by control, evaluation, and judgments, while supportive communication focuses on the points and not personalities. When we feel judged or criticized, our ability to listen can be diminished, and we may only hear the negative message. By choosing to focus on the message instead of the messenger, we keep the discussion supportive and professional.

Face-Detracting and Face-Saving

Communication is not competition. Communication is the sharing of understanding and meaning, but does everyone always share equally? People struggle for control, limit access to resources and information as part of territorial displays, and otherwise use the process of communication to engage in competition. People also use communication for collaboration. Both competition and collaboration can be observed in communication interactions, but there are two concepts central to both: face-detracting and face-saving strategies.

Face-detracting strategies involve messages or statements that take away from the respect, integrity, or credibility of a person. Face-saving strategies protect credibility and separate message from the messenger. For example, you might say that "sales were down this quarter," without specifically noting who was responsible. Sales were simply down. If, however, you ask, "How does

the sales manager explain the decline in sales?" you have specifically connected an individual with the negative news. While we may want to specifically connect tasks and job responsibilities to individuals and departments, in terms of language each strategy has distinct results.

Face-detracting strategies often produce a defensive communication climate, inhibit listening, and allow for little room for collaboration. To save face is to raise the issue while preserving a supportive climate, allowing room in the conversation for constructive discussions and problem-solving. By using a face-saving strategy to shift the emphasis from the individual to the issue, we avoid power struggles and personalities, providing each other space to save face (Donohue & Klot, 1992).

In 1988, intercultural communication research Stella Ting-Toomey developed face-negotiation theory to help explain the importance of face within interpersonal interactions. The basic idea behind face-negotiation theory is that face-saving, conflict, and culture are all intertwined. In the most recent version of her theory, Stella Ting-Toomey outlines seven basic factors of face-negotiation theory:

1. People in all cultures try to maintain and negotiate face in all communication situations.
2. The concept of face is especially problematic in emotionally vulnerable situations (such as embarrassment, request, or conflict situations) when the situation identities of the communicators are called into question.
3. The cultural variability dimensions of individualism-collectivism and small/large power distance shape the orientations, movements, contents, and styles of facework.
4. Individualism-collectivism shapes members' preferences for self-oriented facework versus other-oriented facework.
5. Small/large power distance shapes members' preferences for horizontal-based facework versus vertical-based facework.
6. The cultural variability dimensions, in conjunction with individual, relational, and situational factors influence the use of particular facework behaviors in particular cultural scenes.
7. Intercultural facework competence refers to the optimal integration of knowledge, mindfulness, and communication skills in managing vulnerable identity-based conflict situations appropriately, effectively, and adaptively (Ting-Toomey, 2005).

First and foremost, communication and face are highly intertwined concepts, so when coming to an intercultural encounter, it is important to remember the interrelationship between the two. As far as Ting-Toomey's theory goes, she takes this idea one step further to understanding how face and communication ultimately enable successful intercultural conflict management. Face-negotiation theory ultimately concerned with three different types of face: self-face (concern for our face), other-face (concern for another person's face), and mutual-face (concern for both interactants and the relationship) (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). As you can see from Ting-Toomey's last assumption in her theory above, individuals who are competent in facework can recognize when facework is necessary and then handle those situations appropriately, effectively, and adaptively. As such, facework should be viewed as a necessary component for understanding any form of interpersonal interaction but is especially important when examining interpersonal interactions that occur between people from differing cultural backgrounds.

Empathy

Communication involves not only the words we write or speak, but how and when we write or say them. The way we communicate also carries meaning, and empathy for the individual involves attending to this aspect of interaction. Empathetic listening involves listening to both the literal and implied meanings within a message. For example, the implied meaning might involve understanding what has led this person to feel this way. By paying attention to feelings and emotions associated with content and information, we can build relationships and address conflict more constructively. In management, negotiating conflict is a common task and empathy is one strategy to consider when attempting to resolve issues.

Managing your Emotions

Have you ever seen red, or perceived a situation through rage, anger, or frustration? Then you know that you cannot see or think clearly when you are experiencing strong emotions. There will be times in the work environment when emotions run high. Your awareness of them can help you clear your mind and choose to wait until the moment has passed to tackle the challenge.

"Never speak or make a decision in anger" is one common saying that holds true, but not all emotions involve fear, anger, or frustration. A job loss can be a sort of professional death for many, and the sense of loss can be profound. The loss of a colleague to a layoff while retaining your position can bring pain as well as relief, and a sense of survivor's guilt. Emotions can be contagious in the workplace, and fear of the unknown can influence people to act in irrational ways. The wise business communicator can recognize when emotions are on edge in themselves or others, and choose to wait to communicate, problem-solve, or negotiate until after the moment has passed.

Listen without Interrupting

If you are on the receiving end of an evaluation, start by listening without interruption. Interruptions can be internal and external, and warrant further discussion. If your supervisor starts to discuss a point and you immediately start debating the point in your mind, you are paying attention to yourself and what you think they said or are going to say, and not that which is actually communicated. This gives rise to misunderstandings and will cause you to lose valuable information you need to understand and address the issue at hand.

External interruptions may involve your attempt to get a word in edgewise and may change the course of the conversation. Let them speak while you listen, and if you need to take notes to focus your thoughts, take clear notes of what is said, also noting points to revisit later. External interruptions can also take the form of a telephone ringing, a "text message has arrived" chime, or a coworker dropping by in the middle of the conversation.

As an effective communicator, you know all too well to consider the context and climate of the communication interaction when approaching the delicate subject of evaluations or criticism. Choose a time and place free from interruption. Choose one outside the common space where there may be many observers. Turn off your cell phone. Choose face-to-face communication instead of an impersonal e-mail. By providing a space free of interruption, you are displaying respect for the individual and the information.

Determine the Speaker's Intent

We have discussed previews as a normal part of the conversation, and in this context, they play an important role. People want to know what is coming and generally dislike surprises, particularly when the context of an evaluation is present. If you are on the receiving end, you may need to ask a clarifying question if it doesn't count as an interruption. You may also need to take notes and write down questions that come to mind to address when it is your turn to speak. As a manager, be clear and positive in your opening and lead with praise. You can find one point, even if it is only that the employee consistently shows up to work on time, to highlight before transitioning to a performance issue.

Indicate You Are Listening

In mainstream North American culture, eye contact is a signal that you are listening and paying attention to the person speaking. Take notes, nod your head, or lean forward to display interest and listening. Regardless of whether you are the employee receiving the criticism or the supervisor delivering it, displaying listening behavior engenders a positive climate that helps mitigate the challenge of negative news or constructive criticism.

Paraphrase

Restate the main points to paraphrase what has been discussed. This verbal display allows for clarification and acknowledges receipt of the message.

If you are the employee, summarize the main points and consider steps you will take to correct the situation. If none come to mind or you are nervous and are having a hard time thinking clearly, state out loud the main point and ask if you can provide solution steps and strategies at a later date. You can request a follow-up meeting if appropriate, or indicate you will respond in writing via e-mail to provide the additional information.

If you are the employer, restate the main points to ensure that the message was received, as not everyone hears everything that is said or discussed the first time it is presented. Stress can impair listening, and paraphrasing the main points can help address this common response.

Learn from Experience

Every communication interaction provides an opportunity for learning if you choose to see it. Sometimes the lessons are situational and may not apply in future contexts. Other times the lessons learned may well serve you across your professional career. Taking notes for yourself to clarify your thoughts, much like a journal, serve to document and help you see the situation more clearly.

Recognize that some aspects of communication are intentional, and may communicate meaning, even if it is hard to understand. Also, know that some aspects of communication are unintentional, and may not imply meaning or design. People make mistakes. They say things they should not have said. Emotions are revealed that are not always rational, and not always associated with the current context. A challenging morning at home can spill over into the work day and someone's bad mood may have nothing to do with you.

Try to distinguish between what you can control and what you cannot, and always choose professionalism.

STLC Conflict Model

Ruth Anna Abigail and Dudley Cahn (2014) created a very simple model when thinking about how we communicate during conflict. They called the model the STLC Conflict Model because it stands for stop, think, listen, and then communicate.

Figure 10.8. STLC Conflict Model. Image: Interpersonal Communication by Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. [Click to enlarge].

Stop

The first thing an individual needs to do when interacting with another person during conflict is to take the time to be present within the conflict itself. Too often, people engaged in a conflict say whatever enters their mind before they've really had a chance to process the message and think of the best strategies to use to send that message. Others end up talking past one another during a conflict because they simply are not paying attention to each other and the competing needs within the conflict. Communication problems often occur during conflict because people tend to react to conflict situations when they arise instead of being mindful and present during the conflict itself. For this reason, it's always important to take a breath during a conflict and first stop.

Sometimes these "time outs" need to be physical. Maybe you need to leave the room and go for a brief walk to calm down, or maybe you just need to get a glass of water. Whatever you need to do, it's important to take this break. This break takes you out of a "reactive stance into a proactive one" (Cahn & Abigail, 2014, p. 79).

Think

Once you've stopped, you now have the ability to really think about what you are communicating. You want to think through the conflict itself. What is the conflict really about? Often people engage in conflicts about superficial items when there are truly much deeper issues that are being avoided. You also want to consider what possible causes led to the conflict and what possible courses of action you think are possible to conclude the conflict. Cahn and Abigail argue that there are four possible outcomes that can occur: do nothing, change yourself, change the other person, or change the situation.

First, you can simply sit back and avoid the conflict. Maybe you're engaging in a conflict about politics with a family member, and this conflict is actually just going to make everyone mad. For this reason, you opt just to stop the conflict and change topics to avoid making people upset. One of our coauthors was at a funeral when an uncle asked our coauthor about our coauthor's impression of the current political leader. Our coauthor's immediate response was, "Do you really want me to answer that question?" Our coauthor knew that everyone else in the room would completely disagree, so our coauthor knew this was probably a can of worms that just didn't need to be opened.

Second, we can change ourselves. Often, we are at fault and start conflicts. We may not even realize how our behavior caused the conflict until we take a step back and really analyze what is happening. When it comes to being at fault, it's very important to admit that you've done wrong. Nothing is worse (and can stoke a conflict more) than when someone refuses to see their part in the conflict.

Third, we can attempt to change the other person. Let's face it, changing someone else is easier said than done. Just ask your parents/guardians! All of our parents/guardians have attempted to change our behaviors at one point or another, and changing people is very hard. Even with the powers of punishment and reward, a lot of time change only lasts as long as the punishment or the reward.

There's a risk. As long as people are being punished or rewarded, they will behave in a specific way. If that punishment or reward is ever taken away, the behaviour may also disappear.

Lastly, we can just change the situation. Having a conflict with your roommates? Move out. Having a conflict with your boss? Find a new job. Having a conflict with a professor? Drop the course. Admittedly, changing the situation is not necessarily the first choice people should take when thinking about possibilities, but often it's the best decision for long-term happiness. In essence, some conflicts will not be settled between people. When these conflicts arise, you can try and change yourself, hope the other person will change (they probably won't, though), or just get out of it altogether.

Listen

The third step in the STLC model is listen. Humans are not always the best listeners. Listening is a skill. Unfortunately, during a conflict situation, this is a skill that is desperately needed and often forgotten. When we feel defensive during a conflict, our listening becomes spotty at best because we start to focus on ourselves and protecting ourselves instead of trying to be empathic and seeing the conflict through the other person's eyes.

One mistake some people make is to think they're listening, but in reality, they're listening for flaws in the other person's argument. We often use this type of selective listening as a way to devalue the other person's stance. In essence, we will hear one small flaw with what the other person is saying and then use that flaw to demonstrate that obviously everything else must be wrong as well.

The goal of listening must be to suspend your judgment and really attempt to be present enough to accurately interpret the message being sent by the other person. When we listen in this highly empathic way, we are often able to see things from the other person's point-of-view, which could help us come to a better-negotiated outcome in the long run.

Communicate

Lastly, but certainly not least, we communicate with the other person. Notice that Cahn and Abigail put communication as the last part of the STLC model because it's the hardest one to do effectively during a conflict if the first three are not done correctly. When we communicate during a conflict, we must be hyper-aware of our nonverbal behavior (eye movement, gestures, posture, etc.). Nothing will kill a message faster than when it's accompanied by bad nonverbal behavior. For example, rolling one's eyes while another person is speaking is not an effective way to engage in conflict. One of our coauthors used to work with two women who clearly despised one another. They would never openly say something negative about the other person publicly, but in meetings, one would roll her eyes and make these non-word sounds of disagreement. The other one would just smile, slow

her speech, and look in the other woman's direction. Everyone around the conference table knew exactly what was transpiring, yet no words needed to be uttered at all.

During a conflict, it's important to be assertive and stand up for your ideas without becoming verbally aggressive. Conversely, you have to be open to someone else's use of assertiveness as well without having to tolerate verbal aggression. We often end up using mediators to help call people on the carpet when they communicate in a fashion that is verbally aggressive or does not further the conflict itself. As Cahn and Abigail (2014) note, "People who are assertive with one another have the greatest chance of achieving mutual satisfaction and growth in their relationship" (p. 83).

Let's Focus: Mindfulness in Conflict

The STLC Model for Conflict is definitely one that is highly aligned with our discussion of mindful interpersonal relationships within this book. Taylor Rush (2018), a clinical psychologist working for the Cleveland Clinic's Center for Neuro-Restoration, recommends seven considerations for ensuring mindfulness while engaged in conflict:

1. **Set intentions.** What do you want to be discussed during this interaction? What do you want to learn from the other person? What do you want to happen as a result of this conversation? Set your intentions early and check-in along to way to keep the conversation on point.
2. **Stay present to the situation**. Try to keep assumptions at bay and ask open-ended questions to better understand the other person's perspective and experiences.
3. **Stay aware of your inner reactions**. Disrupt the automatic feedback loop between your body and your thoughts. Acknowledge distressing or judgmental thoughts and feelings without reacting to them. Then check them against the facts of the situation.
4. **Take one good breath before responding**. A brief pause can mean all the difference between opting for a thoughtful response or knee-jerk reaction.
5. **Use reflective statements.** This is a tried and true strategy for staying present. It allows you to fully concentrate on what the other person is saying (rather than form your rebuttal) and shows the other person you have an interest in what they are actually saying. This will make them more likely to reciprocate!
6. **Remember, it's not all about you.** The ultimate objective is that both parties are heard and find the conversation beneficial. Try to actively take the other person's perspective and cultivate compassion (even if you fundamentally do not agree with their position). This makes conflict escalation much less likely.
7. **Investigate afterward**. What do you feel now that the conversation is over? What was the overall tone of the conversation? Do you feel like you understand the other person's perspective? Do they understand yours? Will this require further conversation or has the issue been resolved? Asking these questions will help you to hone your practice for the future.

For this activity, we want you to think back to a recent conflict that you had with another person (e.g., coworker, friend, family member, romantic partner, etc.). Answer the following questions:

1. If you used the STLC Model for Conflict, how effective was it for you? Why?
2. If you did not use the STLC Model for Conflict, do you think you could have benefited from this approach? Why?
3. Looking at Rush's seven strategies for engaging in mindful conflict, did you engage in all of them? If you didn't engage in them all, which ones did you engage in, and which ones didn't you engage in? How could engaging in all seven of them helped your conflict management with this person?
4. If you haven't already, take a moment to think about the questions posed in #7 of Rush's list. What can you learn from this conflict that will help prepare you for future conflicts with this person or future conflicts more broadly?

Source: *Rush, T. (2018, March 15). Applying mindfulness for better conflict management: Tips to try the next time you're facing a dispute with a colleague. ConsultQD. https://tinyurl.com/ulq3vn8; paras. 7-13.*

Adapted Works

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10.6 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms

Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **Communication is** the process of generating meaning by sending and receiving verbal and nonverbal symbols that are influenced by multiple contexts. This process can be summarized using the transactional communication model.
- **Within organizations, organization can** move in many directions – diagonally between departments, laterally to coworkers, upwards to supervisors, downwards to subordinates or through the workplace gossip chain called the grapevine.
- **Types of communication include** written, verbal and nonverbal. Workplace communications that contain a lot of detail may be best communicated using written channels. Topics that may be emotional are often more suited to in-person conversations that provide information through verbal and nonverbal channels.
- **A variety of barriers can impede** the creation of understanding and shared meaning between communicators. Barriers to effective communication include filtering, selective perception, information overload, emotional disconnects, lack of source familiarity or credibility, workplace gossip, lies, bribery and coercion, semantics, gender differences, differences in meaning between communicators, biased language, and ineffective listening
- **Self-esteem is an individual's subjective evaluation of** their abilities and limitations. There is an interrelationship between an individual's self-esteem and their communication skills. In essence, an individual's self-esteem impacts how they communicate with others, and this communication with others impacts their self-esteem.
- **The idea is that people exist on a continuum from** highly extraverted (an individual's likelihood to be talkative, dynamic, and outgoing) to highly introverted (an individual's likelihood to be quiet, shy, and more reserved). Generally speaking, highly extraverted individuals tend to have a greater number of interpersonal relationships, but introverted people tend to have more depth in the handful of relationships they have.
- **In this chapter, three approach and avoidance traits were discussed**: willingness to communicate, shyness, and communication apprehension. Willingness to communicate refers to an individual's tendency to initiate communicative interactions with other people. Shyness refers to discomfort when an individual is interacting with another person(s) in a social situation. Communication apprehension is the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated

communication with another person or persons.

- **Where WTC examines** initiation of interpersonal interactions, shyness discusses actual reserved interpersonal behavior, and CA is focused on the anxiety experienced (or perceived) in interpersonal interactions.
- **Argumentativeness refers to** an individual's tendency to engage in the open exchange of ideas in the form of arguments; whereas, verbal aggressiveness is the tendency to attack an individual's self-concept instead of an individual's arguments.
- **Sociocommunicative orientation refers to** an individual's combination of both assertive and responsive communication behaviors. Assertive communication behaviors are those that initiate, maintain, and terminate conversations according to their interpersonal goals during interpersonal interactions. Responsive communication behaviors are those that consider others' feelings, listens to what others have to say, and recognizes the needs of others during interpersonal interactions. Individuals who can appropriately and effectively utilize assertive and responsive behaviors during interpersonal communication across varying contexts are referred to as versatile communicators (or competent communicators).
- **John Bowlby's theory of attachment starts with** the basic notion that infants come pre-equipped with a set of behavioral skills that allow them to form attachments with their parents/guardians (specifically their mothers). When these attachments are not formed, the infant will grow up being unable to experience a range of healthy attachments later in life, along with several other counterproductive behaviors.
- **Karen Horney's concept of rejection sensitivity examines** the degree to which an individual anxiously expects to be rejected, readily perceives rejection when occurring, and experiences an intensely negative reaction to that rejection. People that have high levels of rejection sensitivity tend to create relational cycles that perpetuate a self-fulfilling prophecy of rejection in their interpersonal relationships.
- **Hearing happens when** sound waves hit our eardrums. Listening involves processing these sounds into something meaningful.
- **The listening process is** hearing, understanding, remembering, interpreting, evaluating and responding.
- **Listening styles include** people, action, content, and time-oriented.
- **Environmental and physical barriers to effective listening include** furniture placement, environmental noise such as sounds of traffic or people talking, physiological noise such as a sinus headache or hunger, and psychological noise such as stress or anger. Cognitive barriers to effective listening include the difference between speech and thought rate that allows us "extra room" to think about other things while someone is talking and limitations in our ability or willingness to concentrate or pay attention. Personal barriers to effective listening include a lack of listening preparation, poorly structured and/or poorly delivered messages, and prejudice.
- **There are several bad listening practices that we should avoid**, as they do not facilitate effective listening: interruptions, distorted listening, eavesdropping, aggressive listening, narcissistic listening, and pseudo-listening. Interruptions that are unintentional or serve an important or useful purpose are not considered bad listening. When interrupting becomes a habit or is used in an attempt to dominate a conversation, then it is a barrier to effective listening.
- **Active listening refers to** the process of pairing outwardly visible positive listening behaviors with positive cognitive listening practices. Active listening during conflict is important to ensure that the needs of the other party are met.

- **Constructive criticism differs from mere negative criticism in that** it is focused on improvement with clear, specific instructions for what exactly the receiver must do to meet expectations.
- **One way to soften criticism is to** use the sandwich method and include criticism along with praise and positive comments.
- **When we receive criticism, we can** manage our emotions and use verbal and nonverbal beahviour to indicate an openness to feedback and willingness to grow.
- **Common communication behaviours during conflict include** apologies/concessions; excuses/justifications; refusals; appeasement/positivity; avoidance/evasion; gunnysacking; serial arguing; incivility; and hurtful messages.
- **Conflict management strategies include** fostering a positive communication climate, saving face, practicing empathy, managing emotions, engaging in active listening including paraphrasing and learning from our experiences.
- **In the STLC model of conflict the steps in conflict are**: Stop, Think, Listen, and Communicate.

Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/conflictmanagement/?p=181#h5p-13

Key Terms

Key terms from this chapter include:

- **Action-oriented listeners**
- **Active listening**
- **Advising**
- **Aggressive listening**
- **Analyzing**
- **Anxious shyness**
- **Argumentativeness**
- **Attachment behaviors**
- **Bribery**
- **Coercion**
- **Communication**
- **Communication apprehension (CA)**
- **Communication dispositions**
- **Communication freezers**
- **Concealment**
- **Constructive criticism**
- **Content-oriented listener**
- **Critical listening**
- **Distorted listening**
- **Eavesdropping**
- **Empathizing**
- **Environmental noise**
- **Equivocation**
- **Evaluating**
- **Falsification**
- **Filtering**
- **Grapevine**
- **Hearing**
- **Information overload**
- **Interruption**
- **Jargon**
- **Listening**
- **Microaggressions**
- **Narcissistic listening**
- **Paraphrasing**
- **People-oriented listening style**
- **Physiological noise**

- **Physiological noise**
- **Polarizing language**
- **Pseudo-listening**
- **Psychological noise**
- **Questioning**
- **Rejection sensitivity**
- **Relational dispositions**
- **Response preparation**
- **Selective perception**
- **Self-compassion**
- **Self-conscious shyness**
- **Self-esteem**
- **Semantics**
- **Serial arguing**
- **Silent listening**
- **Sociocommunicative orientation**
- **Supportive responses**
- **Time-oriented listening style**
- **Transactional model of communication**
- **Verbal aggression**
- **Willingness to communicate**

Appendix A: Case Studies

List of Case Studies

Case Study 1: Handling Roommate Conflicts

Chapter Reference: Section 2.2 Approaches to Conflict

Whether you have a roommate by choice, by necessity, or through the random selection process of your school's housing office, it's important to be able to get along with the person who shares your living space. While having a roommate offers many benefits such as making a new friend, having someone to experience a new situation like college life with, and having someone to split the cost on your own with, there are also challenges. Some common roommate conflicts involve neatness, noise, having guests, sharing possessions, value conflicts, money conflicts, and personality conflicts (Ball State University, 2001). Read the following scenarios and answer the following questions for each one:

1. Which conflict management style, from the five discussed, would you use in this situation?
2. What are the potential strengths of using this style?
3. What are the potential weaknesses of using this style?

Scenario 1: Neatness. Your college dorm has bunk beds, and your roommate takes a lot of time making their bed (the bottom bunk) each morning. They have told you that they don't want anyone sitting on or sleeping in the bed when they are not in the room. While your roommate is away for the weekend, your friend comes to visit and sits on the bottom bunk bed. You tell your friend what your roommate said, and you try to fix the bed back before your roommate returns to the dorm. When they return, your roommate notices that the bed has been disturbed and confronts you about it.

Scenario 2: Noise and having guests. Your roommate has a job waiting tables and gets home around

midnight on Thursday nights. They often brings a couple friends from work home with them. They watch television, listen to music, or play video games and talk and laugh. You have an 8 a.m. class on Friday mornings and are usually asleep when they returns. Last Friday, you talked to your roommate and asked them to keep it down in the future. Tonight, their noise has woken you up and you can't get back to sleep.

Scenario 3: Sharing possessions. When you go out to eat, you often bring back leftovers to have for lunch the next day during your short break between classes. You didn't have time to eat breakfast, and you're really excited about having your leftover pizza for lunch until you get home and see your roommate sitting on the couch eating the last slice.

Scenario 4: Money conflicts. Your roommate got mono and missed two weeks of work last month. Since they have a steady job and you have some savings, you cover their portion of the rent and agree that they will pay your portion next month. The next month comes around and your roommate informs you that they only have enough to pay their half of the rent.

Scenario 5: Value and personality conflicts. You like to go out to clubs and parties and have friends over, but your roommate is much more of an introvert. You've tried to get them to come out with you or join the party at your place, but they'd rather study. One day your roommate tells you that they want to break the lease so they can move out early to live with one of their friends. You both signed the lease, so you have to agree or they can't do it. If you break the lease, you automatically lose your portion of the security deposit

Works Adapted

References

Ball State University. (2001). Roommate conflicts. accessed June 16, 2001, from http://cms.bsu.edu/CampusLife/CounselingCenter/VirtualSelfHelpLibrary/RoommateIssues.asx.

Case Study 2: Salary Negotiation at College Corp

Chapter Reference: Section 2.4 Negotiation

Janine just graduated college, she's ready to head out on her own and get that first job, and she's through her first interviews. She receives an offer of a $28,000 salary, including benefits from COLLEGE CORP, from an entry-level marketing position that seems like a perfect fit. She is thrown off by the salary they are offering and knows that it is lower than what she was hoping for. Instead of panicking, she takes the advice of her mentor and does a little research to know what the market range for the salary is for her area. She feels better after doing this, knowing that she was correct and the offer is low compared to the market rate. After understanding more about the offer and the rates, she goes back to the HR representative and asks for her preferred rate of $32,500, knowing the minimum that she would accept is $30,000. Instead of going in for her lowest amount, she started higher to be open to negotiations with the company. She also sent a note regarding her expertise that warranted why she asked for that salary. To her happy surprise, the company counter offered at $31,000—and she accepted.

Questions:

1. What key points of Janice's negotiation led to her success?
2. What could have Janice done better to get a better outcome for her salary?

Works Adapted

References

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Herner, M. (n.d). 5 things HR wishes you knew about salary negotiation. Payscale.com, accessed October 21, 2018, https://www.payscale.com/salary-negotiation-guide/salary-negotiation-tips-from-hr.

Case Study 3: OECollaboration

Chapter Reference: Section 3.2 Creating, Maintaining, and Changing Culture

At OECollaboration, a technology company that develops virtual collaboration software for new companies, Mike Jones is a new manager. One of the biggest challenges he has faced is that the team that he is managing is well established and because he is an outsider, the team members haven't yet developed trust in him.

Two weeks into his new employment, Mike held a meeting and discussed all of the changes to the remote work agreements as well as implementing new meeting requirements for each employee to have a biweekly meeting scheduled with him to discuss their projects. The team was outraged, they were not excited, and the following days he wasn't greeted in a friendly way; in addition, his team seemed less engaged when asked to participate in team functions.

Tracy James is also a new manager at OECollaboration who started at the same time as Mike, in a similar situation where she is a new manager of an existing team. Tracy was able to hold a meeting the first day on the job to listen to her team and get to know them. During this meeting she also told the team about herself and her past experiences. Additionally, she held one-on-one meetings to listen to each of her team members to discuss what they were working on and their career goals. After observation and discussion with upper management, she aligned her own team goals closely with the skills and experiences of her new team. She met with the whole team to make changes to a few policies, explaining why they were being changed, and set the strategy for the team moving forward.

Because she got her team involved and learned about them before implementing her new strategy, this was well received. Her team still had questions and concerns, but they felt like they could trust her and that they were included in the changes that were being made.

Questions

1. What challenges can a new manager encounter when starting to manage an existing team?
2. What strategies can a new manager implement to ensure that their new team is engaged with them and open to change and growth?

Adapted Works

References

Giang, V. (2013, July 31). The 7 types of power that shape the workplace. *Business Insider.* https://www.businessinsider.com/the-7-types-of-power-that-shape-the-workplace-2013-7

Morin, A. (2018, June 25). How to prevent a workplace bully from taking your power. *Inc.* https://www.inc.com/amy-morin/how-to-prevent-a-workplace-bully-from-taking-your-power.html

Weinstein, B. (n.d.). 10 tips for dealing with a bully boss," *CIO*, accessed October 13, 2018, https://www.cio.com.au/article/198499/10_tips_dealing_bully_boss/.

Case Study 4: The Ohio Connection

Chapter Reference: Section 4.1 Power

Janey worked as an executive assistant to a product manager at her company: Ohio Connection. Overall, she loved her job; she was happy to work with a company that provided great benefits, and she and found enjoyment in her day-to-day work. She had the same product manager boss for years, but last year, her manager left Ohio Connection and retired. Recently her new manager has been treating her unfairly and showcasing bullying behavior.

Yesterday, Janey came into work, and her boss decided to use their power as her manager and her "superior" to demand that she stay late to cover for him, correct reports that he had made mistakes on, and would not pay her overtime. She was going to be late to pick up her son from soccer practice if she stayed late; she told him this, and he was not happy.

Over subsequent days, her boss consistently would make comments about her performance, even though she had always had good remarks on reviews, and created a very negative work environment. The next time she was asked to stay late, she complied for fear of losing her job or having other negative impacts on her job. Janey's situation was not ideal, but she didn't feel she had a choice.

Questions

1. What type of power did Janey's boss employ to get her to do the things that he wanted her to do?
2. What negative consequences are apparent in this situation and other situations where power is not balanced in the workplace?
3. What steps should Janey take do to counteract the power struggle that is occurring with her new manager?

Adapted Works

References

Giang, V. (2013, July 31). The 7 types of power that shape the workplace. *Business Insider.* https://www.businessinsider.com/the-7-types-of-power-that-shape-the-workplace-2013-7

Morin, A. (2018, June 25). How to prevent a workplace bully from taking your power. *Inc.* https://www.inc.com/amy-morin/how-to-prevent-a-workplace-bully-from-taking-your-power.html

Weinstein, B. (n.d.). 10 tips for dealing with a bully boss," *CIO*, accessed October 13, 2018, https://www.cio.com.au/article/198499/10_tips_dealing_bully_boss/.

Case Study 5: Uber Pays the Price

Chapter Reference: Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work

Uber revolutionized the taxi industry and the way people commute. With the simple mission "to bring transportation—for everyone, everywhere," today Uber has reached a valuation of around $70 billion and claimed a market share high of almost 90% in 2015. However, in June 2017 Uber experienced a series of bad press regarding an alleged culture of sexual harassment, which is what most experts believe caused their market share to fall to 75%.

In February of 2017 a former software engineer, Susan Fowler, wrote a lengthy post on her website regarding her experience of being harassed by a manager who was not disciplined by human resources for his behavior. In her post, Fowler wrote that Uber's HR department and members of upper management told her that because it was the man's first offense, they would only give him a warning. During her meeting with HR about the incident, Fowler was also advised that she should transfer to another department within the organization. According to Fowler, she was ultimately left no choice but to transfer to another department, despite having specific expertise in the department in which she had originally been working.

As her time at the company went on, she began meeting other women who worked for the company who relayed their own stories of harassment. To her surprise, many of the women reported being harassed by the same person who had harassed her. As she noted in her blog, "It became obvious that both HR and management had been lying about this being his 'first offense.'" Fowler also reported a number of other instances that she identified as sexist and inappropriate within the organization and claims that she was disciplined severely for continuing to speak out. Fowler eventually left Uber after about two years of working for the company, noting that during her time at Uber the percentage of women working there had dropped to 6% of the workforce, down from 25% when she first started.

Following the fallout from Fowler's lengthy description of the workplace on her website, Uber's chief executive Travis Kalanick publicly condemned the behavior described by Fowler, calling it "abhorrent and against everything Uber stands for and believes in." But later in March, Uber board member Arianna Huffington claimed that she believed "sexual harassment was not a systemic problem at the company." Amid pressure from bad media attention and the company's falling market share, Uber made some changes after an independent investigation resulted in 215 complaints. As a result, 20 employees were fired for reasons ranging from sexual harassment to bullying to retaliation to discrimination, and Kalanick announced that he would hire a chief operating officer to help manage the company. In an effort to provide the leadership team with more diversity, two senior female

executives were hired to fill the positions of chief brand officer and senior vice president for leadership and strategy.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Based on Cox's business case for diversity, what are some positive outcomes that may result in changes to Uber's leadership team?
2. If the case had occurred in Canada, what forms of legislation would have protected Fowler?
3. What strategies should have been put in place to help prevent sexual harassment incidents like this from happening in the first place?

Adapted Works

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Fowler, T. (2017, February 19). Reflecting on one very, very strange year at Uber. https://www.susanjfowler.com/blog/2017/2/19/reflecting-on-one-very-strange-year-at-uber.

Lien, T. (2017, June 6). Uber fires 20 workers after harassment investigation. *Los Angeles Times.* http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-tn-uber-sexual-harassment-20170606-story.html

Uber (2017, February). Company info. https://www.uber.com/newsroom/company-info/

Case Study 6: Diverse Teams Hold Court

Chapter Reference: Section 5.3 Collaboration, Decision-Making and Problem Solving in Groups

Diverse teams have been proven to be better at problem-solving and decision-making for a number of reasons. First, they bring many different perspectives to the table. Second, they rely more on facts and use those facts to substantiate their positions. What is even more interesting is that, according to the Scientific American article "How Diversity Makes Us Smarter," simply "being around people who are different from us makes more creative, diligent, and harder-working."

One case in point is the example of jury decision-making, where fact-finding and logical decision-making are of utmost importance. A 2006 study of jury decision-making, led by social psychologist Samuel Sommers of Tufts University, showed that racially diverse groups exchanged a wider range of information during deliberation of a case than all-White groups did. The researcher also conducted mock jury trials with a group of real jurors to show the impact of diversity on jury decision-making.

Interestingly enough, it was the mere presence of diversity on the jury that made jurors consider the facts more, and they had fewer errors recalling the relevant information. The groups even became more willing to discuss the role of race case, when they hadn't before with an all-White jury. This wasn't the case because the diverse jury members brought new information to the group—it happened because, according to the author, the mere presence of diversity made people more open-minded and diligent. Given what we discussed on the benefits of diversity, it makes sense. People are more likely to be prepared, to be diligent, and to think logically about something if they know that they will be pushed or tested on it. And who else would push you or test you on something, if not someone who is different from you in perspective, experience, or thinking. "Diversity jolts us into cognitive action in ways that homogeneity simply does not."

So, the next time you are called for jury duty, or to serve on a board committee, or to make an important decision as part of a team, remember that one way to generate a great discussion and come up with a strong solution is to pull together a diverse team.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. If you don't have a diverse group of people on your team, how can you ensure that you will have robust discussions and decision-making? What techniques can you use to generate conversations from different perspectives?
2. Evaluate your own team at work. Is it a diverse team? How would you rate the quality of decisions generated from that group?

Sources: Adapted from Katherine W. Phillips, "How Diversity Makes Us Smarter," Scientific American, October 2014, p. 7–8.

Adapted Works

Glossary of Key Terms

Ability to focus

Within an organizational context, Methot (2010) defines ability to focus as "the ability to pay attention to value-producing activities without being concerned with extraneous issues such as off-task thoughts or distractions" (p. 47). *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Accommodating approach to conflict

In the KTI model this approach to conflict demonstrates a low commitment to goals and high commitment to relationship. This approach is the opposite of competing. It occurs when a person ignores or overrides their own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other party. *See Section 2.2 Approaches to Conflict*

Action-oriented listeners

Action-oriented listeners are focused on what the source wants and prefer brief and logical communications. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Active listening

Active listening refers to the process of pairing outwardly visible positive listening behaviors with positive cognitive listening practices. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Acute stressors

Acute stressors are time-specific events of high intensity and short duration that occur infrequently, such as a performance review, a car accident, or unexpected encounter. *See Section 7.2 Stress*

Advising

Advising is a listening response that occurs that offers counsel or direction to another. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Affect

Affect is the experience of feeling or emotion. *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Affective conflict

Seen in situations where two individuals simply don't get along with each other. *See section 1.2 Levels and Types of Conflict*

Affective orientation

Affective orientation is "the degree to which people are aware of their emotions, perceive them as important, and actively consider their affective responses in making judgments and interacting with others" (Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1994, p. 332). *See Section 9.2 Cognitive and Personal-Social Dispositions*

Aggressive communicators

Aggressive communicators will come across as standing up for their rights while possibly violating the rights of others. This person tends to communicate in a way that tells others they don't matter or their feelings don't matter. *See Section 8.3 Asserting Your Needs*

Aggressive listening

Aggressive listening is a bad listening practice in which people pay attention in order to attack something that a speaker says. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Alexithymia

Alexithymia is "a general deficit in emotional vocabulary—the ability to identify emotional feelings, differentiate emotional states from physical sensations, communicate feelings to others, and process emotion in a meaningful way" (Friedman et al., 2003). *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Amygdala

Amygdala is the region in the limbic system that is primarily responsible for regulating our perceptions of, and reactions to, aggression and fear. The amygdala has connections to other bodily systems related to emotions, including the facial muscles, which perceive and express emotions, and it also regulates the release of neurotransmitters related to stress and aggression (Best, 2009). When we experience events that are dangerous, the amygdala stimulates the brain to remember the details of the situation so that we learn to avoid it in the future (Sigurdsson et al., 2007; Whalen et al., 2001). *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Amygdala hijacking

Amygdala hijacking occurs where you can no longer access the prefrontal cortex, this is the part of the brain that regulates empathy, decision making, problem solving, and much more. You can often see people experience an amygdala hijacking, some people lash out (fight), some people run away (flight), and some people sink into themselves (freeze). *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Analyzing

Analyzing is a listening response in which an individual offers different alternatives and perspectives by interpreting the speaker's message. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Anxiety

Anxiety is a feeling of inability to deal with anticipated harm. Anxiety occurs when people do not have appropriate responses or plans for coping with anticipated problems. *See Section 7.3 Stress at Work*

Anxious shyness

Anxious shyness involves the fear associated with dealing with others face-to-face. Anxious shyness is initially caused by a combination of strangers, novel settings, novel social roles, fear of evaluation, or fear of self-presentation. *See Section 10.2 Self-Esteem, Communication and Relationship Dispositions*

Arbitrator

The arbitrator is a neutral third party, but the decision made by the arbitrator is final (the decision is called the "award"). Awards are made in writing and are binding to the parties involved in the case. *See Section 2.4 Negotiation*

Argumentativeness

Argumentativeness is a communication trait that involves verbally attacking the positions of others. *See Section 10.2 Self-Esteem, Communication and Relationship Dispositions*

Assertive communicators

Assertive communicators respect their rights and the rights of others when communicating. This person tends to be direct but not insulting or offensive. The assertive communicator stands up for his or her own rights but makes sure the rights of others aren't affected. *See Section 8.3 Asserting Your Needs*

Attachment behaviors

Attachment behaviors in Bowlby's model of attachment behaviours that humans engage to help them to fulfil their biological drive to attach themselves with others. *See Section 10.2 Self-Esteem, Communication and Relationship Dispositions*

Attribution theory

Attribution theory concerns "the process by which an individual interprets events as being caused by a particular part of a relatively stable environment" (Kelly, 1980, p. 193). In attribution theory, the likelihood that we will attribute behaviour to the internal, stable traits of an individual compared to external, situational factors is influenced by three factors: consensus (the extent to which you believe that the person being observed is behaving in a manner that is consistent with the behavior of their peers); . consistency (whether the person being observed behaves in a similar manner in other situations); and distinctiveness (the extent to which you believe that

the person being observed would behave consistently when faced with different situations). *See Section 6.3 Attributions*

Attrition

Refers to the natural process in which the candidates who do not fit in will leave the company. *See Section 3.2 Creating, Maintaining, and Changing Culture*

Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism is a form of social organization where individuals favor absolute obedience to authority (or authorities) as opposed to individual freedom. *See Section 9.2 Cognitive and Personal-Social Dispositions*

Authority

Authority represents the right to seek compliance by others; the exercise of authority is backed by legitimacy.. *See Section 4.1 Power*

Avoidance approach to conflict

In the KTI model, this approach to conflict demonstrates a low commitment to both goals and relationships. This is the most common method of dealing with conflict, especially by people who view conflict negatively. *See Section 2.2 Approaches to Conflict*

Avoiders

Avoiders - in the ABC model of conflict management, avoiders are individuals who tend to use avoidance as their preferred method of conflict management. Common avoidance tactics used during conflict are summarized in Table 9.1. *See Section 9.3 ABCs of Conflict*

Bargaining impasse

When the two parties are unable to reach consensus on the collective bargaining agreement. *See Section 2.5 Labour Relations*

BATNA

BATNA: stand for the “Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement”, which can be taken as a measure of the objective strength of a party’s bargaining stance. *See Section 2.4 Negotiation*

Battlers

Battlers - in the ABC model of conflict management, battlers are individuals who engage in distributive approaches to conflict and value "winning" the conflict, even if it is at the cost of their relationships. Common strategies used during conflict by battlers are summarized in Table 9.2. *See Section 9.3 ABCs of Conflict*

Behavioral conflict

Exists when one person or group does something that is unacceptable to others. *See section 1.2 Levels and Types of Conflict*

Big 5 personality traits

Big 5 personality traits:

Openness is the degree to which a person is curious, original, intellectual, creative, and open to new ideas.

Conscientiousness refers to the degree to which a person is organized, systematic, punctual, achievement-oriented, and dependable

Extraversion is the degree to which a person is outgoing, talkative, sociable, and enjoys socializing

Agreeableness is the degree to which a person is affable, tolerant, sensitive, trusting, kind, and warm.

Neuroticism refers to the degree to which a person is anxious, irritable, temperamental, and moody.

See Section 9.1 Personality

Bribery

Bribery, which is offering something in return for an expected favour; is considered to be unethical because it sidesteps normal, fair protocol for personal gain at the audience's expense. *See Section 10.1 Communication*

Bullying

Bullying is similar to harassment and comprises repeated actions or verbal comments that lead to mental harm, isolation, or humiliation of a worker (or group), often with the intent to wield power over them. *See Section 4.4 Bullying, Violence, and Harassment*

Burnout

Burnout is a general feeling of exhaustion that can develop when a person simultaneously experiences too much pressure to perform and too few sources of satisfaction (Jackson et al., 1986). *See Section 7.3 Stress at Work*

Career strategizing

Career strategizing is the process of creating a plan of action for one's career path and trajectory. *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Catastrophic stressors

Catastrophic stressors are a subset of acute stressors but differ in their intensity, threatening life, safety, or property. Robbery and physical assault are examples of catastrophic stressors. *See Section 7.2 Stress*

Chronic stressors

Chronic stressors are stressors that persist over a sustained period of time, and include job insecurity, work overload, or lack of control. *See Section 7.2 Stress*

Coalition tactics

Coalition tactics refer to a group of individuals working together toward a common goal to influence others). *See Section 4.2 Politics and Influence*

Coercion

Coercion is the use of power to make someone do something they would not choose to do freely. *See Section 10.1 Communication*

Coercive power

Is the ability to take something away or punish someone for noncompliance, often through the use of fear tactics. *See Section 4.1 Power*

Cognitive appraisal

Cognitive appraisal are the cognitive interpretations that accompany emotion. *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Cognitive complexity

Cognitive complexity - According to John Daly (2002), "cognitive complexity has been defined in terms of the number of different constructs an individual has to describe others (differentiation), the degree to which those constructs cohere (integration), and the level of abstraction of the constructs (abstractness)". *See Section 9.2 Cognitive and Personal-Social Dispositions*

Cognitive conflict

Can result when one person or group holds ideas or opinions that are inconsistent with those of others. *See section 1.2 Levels and Types of Conflict*

Cognitive dispositions

Cognitive dispositions refer to general patterns of mental processes that impact how people respond and react to the world around them. These dispositions (or one's natural mental or emotional outlook) take on several different forms. This chapter examines four cognitive dispositions identified by John Daly (2011): locus of control, cognitive complexity,

authoritarianism/dogmatism, and emotional intelligence. *See Section 9.2 Cognitive and Personal-Social Dispositions*

Collaborating approach to conflict

This is a conflict approach that demonstrates a high commitment to goals and also a high commitment to relationships. *See Section 2.2 Approaches to Conflict*

Collaborative group work

Collaborative work is "a coordinated, synchronous activity that is the result of a continued attempt to construct and maintain a shared conception of a problem" (Roschelle and Teasley, 1995, p. 70). *See Section 5.3 Collaboration, Decision-Making and Problem Solving in Groups*

Collaborators

Collaborators - in the ABC model of conflict management, collaborators are individuals who engage in a range of collaborating choices, from being completely collaborative in an attempt to find a mutually agreed upon solution, to being compromising when you realize that both sides will need to win and lose a little to come to a satisfactory solution. In both cases, the goal is to use prosocial communicative behaviors in an attempt to reach a solution that works for everyone. Common strategies used by collaborators are summarized in Table 9.3. *See Section 9.3 ABCs of Conflict*

Collective bargaining

Collective bargaining is the process of negotiations between the company and representatives of the union. The goal is for management and the union to reach a contract agreement, which is put into place for a specified period of time. Once this time is up, a new contract is negotiated. *See Section 2.5 Labour Relations*

Collegial peers

The second class of relationships in the workplace are collegial peers or relationships that have moderate levels of trust and self-disclosure and is different from information peers because of the more openness that is shared between two individuals. *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Communication

Communication is the process of generating meaning by sending and receiving verbal and nonverbal symbols and signs that are influenced by multiple contexts. *See Section 10.1 Communication*

Communication apprehension (CA)

Communication apprehension (CA) as the fear or anxiety "associated with either real or

anticipated communication with another person or persons" (McCrosky, 1977, p. 28). *See Section 10.2 Self-Esteem, Communication and Relationship Dispositions*

Communication dispositions

Communication dispositions are general patterns of communicative behavior. Examples include introversion/extraversion, approach and avoidance traits, argumentativeness /verbal aggressiveness, and sociocommunicative orientation (Daly, 2011). *See Section 10.2 Self-Esteem, Communication and Relationship Dispositions*

Communication freezers

Communication freezers put an end to effective communication by making the receiver feel judged or defensive. *See Section 10.4 Giving and Receiving Feedback*

Competing Values Framework

The two axes in the framework, external focus versus internal focus, indicate whether or not the organization's culture is externally or internally oriented. The other two axes, flexibility versus stability and control, determine whether a culture functions better in a stable, controlled environment or a flexible, fast-paced environment. Combining the axes offers four cultural types: **(1)** the dynamic, entrepreneurial Adhocracy Culture—an external focus with a flexibility orientation; **(2)** the people-oriented, friendly Clan Culture—an internal focus with a flexibility orientation; **(3)** the process-oriented, structured Hierarchy Culture—an internal focus with a stability/control orientation; and **(4)** the results-oriented, competitive Market Culture—an external focus with a stability/control orientation.. *See Section 3.3 Frameworks for Assessing Organizational Culture*

Competition

A rivalry between two groups or two individuals over an outcome that they both seek. In a competition there is a winner and a loser. *See section 1.1 Conflict Defined*

Competition

Compromising approach to conflict

A compromising approach strikes a balance between a commitment to goals and a commitment to relationships. *See Section 2.2 Approaches to Conflict*

Concealment

Concealment is a form of deception in which the source deliberately withholds information. *See Section 10.1 Communication*

Conciliator

A conciliator is a trusted third party who provides communication between the negotiating parties. *See Section 2.4 Negotiation*

Conflict

Conflict occurs in interactions in which there are real or perceived incompatible goals, scare resources, or opposing viewpoints. *See section 1.1 Conflict Defined*

Consensus rule

Consensus rule is a decision-making technique in which all members of the group must agree on the same decision. On rare occasions, a decision may be ideal for all group members, which can lead to unanimous agreement without further debate and discussion. *See Section 5.3 Collaboration, Decision-Making and Problem Solving in Groups*

Constructive criticism

Constructive criticism differs from mere negative criticism in that it is focused on improvement with clear, specific instructions for what exactly the receiver must do to meet expectations. *See Section 10.4 Giving and Receiving Feedback*

Consultant

A consultant is a third-party negotiator who is skilled in conflict management and can add their knowledge and skill to the mix to help the negotiating parties arrive at a conclusion. A consultant will help parties learn to understand and work with each other, so this approach has a longer-term focus to build bridges between the conflicting parties. *See Section 2.4 Negotiation*

Consultation

Refers to the influence agent's asking others for help in directly influencing or planning to influence another person or group. Consultation is most effective in organizations and cultures that value democratic decision making. *See Section 4.2 Politics and Influence*

Content-oriented listener

Content-oriented listener, or a listener who focuses on the content of the message and process that message in a systematic way. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Cooperative group work

In *The Construction of Shared Knowledge in Collaborative Problem Solvin*g, Roschelle and Teasley define cooperative group work as "the division of labour among participants, as an activity where each person is responsible for a portion of the problem solving). *See Section 5.3 Collaboration, Decision-Making and Problem Solving in Groups*

Cortisol

Cortisol is frequently referred to as the "stress hormone," and it is commonly measured by researchers in order to assess the activation of the HPA axis in response to stress. *See Section 7.2 Stress*

Cost escalation

Cost escalation involves tactics that are designed to make the cost of maintaining the relationship higher than getting out of the relationship. For example, a coworker could start belittling a friend in public, making the friend the center of all jokes, or talking about the friend behind the friend's back. *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Counterculture

Defined as shared values and beliefs that are in direct opposition to the values of the broader organizational culture. *See Section 3.1 Organizational Culture*

Critical listening

Critical listening is the "careful, systematic thinking and reasoning to see whether a message makes sense in light of factual evidence" (Wrench et al., 2017, p. 61). *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Cultural display rules

Cultural display rules is one of a collection of culturally specific standards that govern the types and frequencies of displays of emotions that are acceptable (Malatesta & Haviland, 1982) *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Cultural intelligence

Cultural intelligence is a competency and a skill that enables individuals to function effectively in cross-cultural environments. It develops as people become more aware of the influence of culture and more capable of adapting their behavior to the norms of other cultures. There is the cognitive component of cultural intelligence, a physical component (demeanor, eye contact, posture, accent) and an emotional commitment and motivation to understand the new culture. *See Section 5.4 Working in Diverse Teams*

Depersonalization

Depersonalization can come in one of two basic forms. First, an individual can depersonalization a relationship by stopping all the interaction that is not task-focused.. The second way people can depersonalize a relationship is simply to avoid that person. *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Depression

Depression is a psychological disorder characterized by varying degrees of disappointment,

guilt, hopelessness, loneliness, sadness, and self-doubt, all of which negatively impact a person's general mental and physical wellbeing. *See Section 9.2 Cognitive and Personal-Social Dispositions*

Deviant workplace behaviour

Deviant workplace behaviour is defined as voluntary behavior of organizational members that violates significant organizational norms and practices or threatens the wellbeing of the organization and its members. *See Section 9.3 Types of Deviant Workplace Behaviour*

Devil's advocate

The devil's advocate intentionally takes on the role of critic. Their job is to point out flawed logic, to challenge the group's evaluations of various alternatives, and to identify weaknesses in proposed solutions. This pushes the other group members to think more deeply about the advantages and disadvantages of proposed solutions before reaching a decision and implementing it. *See Section 5.3 Collaboration, Decision-Making and Problem Solving in Groups*

Dispute

is a disagreement between parties. Typically, a dispute is adversarial in nature. *See section 1.1 Conflict Defined*

Distorted listening

Distorted listening is an example of bad listening that occurs from mishearing a message or adjusting the message to fit expectations. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Distributive bargaining

Distributive bargaining is "win-lose" or fixed-pie bargaining. That is, the goals of one party are in fundamental and direct conflict with those of the other party. *See Section 2.4 Negotiation*

Dogmatism

Dogmatism is defined as the inclination to believe one's point-of-view as undeniably true based on faulty premises and without consideration of evidence and the opinions of others. *See Section 9.2 Cognitive and Personal-Social Dispositions*

Downward influence

Is the ability to influence employees lower than you in the institutional hierarchy. This is best achieved through an inspiring vision. *See Section 4.2 Politics and Influence*

Eavesdropping

Eavesdropping is a bad listening practice that involves a calculated and planned attempt to secretly listen to a conversation. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Ego motives

Ego motives include the “thrill of the chase” and the self-esteem boost one may get. *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Emotion

Emotion is a mental and physiological feeling state that directs our attention and guides our behaviour. *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Emotional intelligence (EQ)

Emotional intelligence (EQ) as an individual’s appraisal and expression of their emotions and the emotions of others in a manner that enhances thought, living, and communicative interactions. EQ involves self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Emotional loneliness

Emotional loneliness results when an individual feels that they do not have an emotional connection with others. *See Section 9.2 Cognitive and Personal-Social Dispositions*

Empathizing

Empathizing is used to show that you identify with a speaker’s information. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Empathy

Empathy is often commonly defined as "putting yourself in someone else's shoes". Empathy consists of three components: cognitive, affective, and compassionate. The cognitive component involves thinking about the world from someone else's point of view. The affective component involves feeling the emotions of others. The compassionate component of empathy refers to having a genuine concern for their wellbeing. *See Section 8.2 Meeting Needs Through Communication Climate*

Employee empowerment

Employee empowerment involves management allowing us to make decisions and act upon those decisions, with the support of the organization. *See Section 8.1 Theories of Motivation*

Environmental noise

Environmental noise, such as lighting, temperature, and furniture affect our ability to listen. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Episodic (or daily) stressors

Episodic (or daily) stressors may be similar to acute stressors but occur more frequently, have a

longer duration, and may be of lower intensity. Making repeated requests of a worker to work overtime is an example of an episodic stressor. *See Section 7.2 Stress*

Equity theory

Equity theory, which focuses on our perceptions of how fairly we're treated relative to others. Applied to the work environment, this theory proposes that employees analyze their contributions or job inputs (hours worked, education, experience, work performance) and their rewards or job outcomes (salary, bonus, promotion, recognition). Then they create a contributions/rewards ratio and compare it to those of other people. *See Section 8.1 Theories of Motivation*

Equivocation

Equivocation is a form of deception; when a statement that could be interpreted as having more than one meaning. *See Section 10.1 Communication*

Escalation of commitment

Occurs when the negotiator continues a course of action long after it's been proven to be the wrong choice. *See Section 2.4 Negotiation*

Eustress

Eustress is a term that signifies beneficial stress, either psychological or physical. *See Section 7.2 Stress*

Evaluating

Evaluating is a listening response in which an individual explains speaker's thoughts or behaviors. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Exchange

Exchange refers to give-and-take in which someone does something for you, and you do something for them in return. The rule of reciprocation says that "we should try to repay, in kind, what another person has provided us"(Cialdini, 2000, p. 20). *See Section 4.2 Politics and Influence*

Exit

Exit: The worker decides to get away from the undesired situation, either by quitting the employer or transferring to another location or job within the same employer. *See Section 4.4 Bullying, Violence, and Harassment*

Expert power

Expert power comes from knowledge and skill. *See Section 4.1 Power*

Explicit knowledge

Explicit knowledge is information that is kept in some retrievable format. For example, you'll need to find previously written reports or a list of customers' names and addresses. *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Face Goals

Face Goals – How one's self-image is perceived in a social setting. *See Section 8.4 Understanding Goals in Conflict and The Scarf Model*

Falsification

Falsification is when a source deliberately presents information that is false or fraudulent. *See Section 10.1 Communication*

Fight or flight response

Fight or flight response is an emotional and behavioral reaction to stress that increases the readiness for action. *See Section 7.2 Stress*

Filtering

Filtering is the distortion or withholding of information to manage a person's reactions. *See Section 10.1 Communication*

Formalization

Refers to the extent to which policies, procedures, job descriptions, and rules are written and explicitly articulated. In other words, formalized structures are those in which there are many written rules and regulations. *See Section 3.4 Organizational Codes and Discipline*

Framing

Framing, in communication, is essentially the act of intentionally setting the stage for the conversation you want to have. *See Section 8.3 Asserting Your Needs*

Frustration

Frustration refers to a psychological reaction to an obstruction or impediment to goal-oriented behavior. *See Section 7.3 Stress at Work*

Fundamental attribution error

Fundamental attribution error, refers to our tendency to explain others' behaviors using internal rather than external attributions (Sillars, 1980). *See Section 6.3 Attributions*

General adaptation syndrome

General adaptation syndrome as described by Selye refers to the three distinct phases of physiological change that occur in response to long-term stress: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion. *See Section 7.2 Stress*

Goal conflict

Goal conflict can occur when one person or group desires a different outcome than others do. This is simply a clash over whose goals are going to be pursued. *See section 1.2 Levels and Types of Conflict*

Graduated Reciprocal in Tension-reduction (GRIT)

GRIT stands for Graduated Reciprocation in Tension-reduction, sometimes watered down into Gradual Reduction in Tension. It involves one side initiating a breakthrough in the form of a concession or compromise on one of its demands. The norm of reciprocity obligates the other side to return the favour with a concession of its own, giving up one of its demands. Both sides build trust by reciprocal compromises back and forth till they reach an amicable solution. *See Section 5.5 Conflict Management Strategies for Groups and Teams*

Grapevine

Grapevine is the informal channel of communication in the workplace that transmits workplace gossip and other information. *See Section 10.1 Communication*

Grievance procedure

The grievance procedure outlines the process by which grievances over contract violations will be handled. As you have probably already identified, the grievance procedure is a formalized conflict. *See Section 2.5 Labour Relations*

Group climate

Group climate refers to the relatively enduring tone and quality of group interaction that is experienced similarly by group members. To better understand cohesion and climate, we can examine two types of cohesion: task and social. *See Section 5.2 Small Group Dynamics*

Group fantasies

In group communication, group fantasies are verbalized references to events outside the "here and now" of the group, including references to the group's past, predictions for the future, or other communication about people or events outside the group (Griffin, 2009). *See Section 5.2 Small Group Dynamics*

Groupthink

Groupthink, or the tendency to accept the group's ideas and actions in spite of individual

concerns, can also compromise the process and reduce efficiency. Personalities, competition, and internal conflict can factor into a team's failure to produce, which is why care must be taken in how teams are assembled and managed. *See Section 5.2 Small Group Dynamics*

Gunnysacking

Gunnysacking (backpacking) - refers to the imaginary bag we all carry, into which we place unresolved conflicts or grievances over time. *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Hardiness

Hardiness represents a collection of personality characteristics that involve one's ability to perceptually or behaviorally transform negative stressors into positive challenges. These characteristics include a sense of commitment to the importance of what one is doing, an internal locus of control, and a sense of life challenge. *See Section 7.3 Stress at Work*

Hearing

Hearing refers to a passive activity where an individual perceives sound by detecting vibrations through an ear. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

HPA axis

HPA axis is a physiological response to stress involving interactions among the hypothalamus, the pituitary gland, and the adrenal glands. The HPA response begins when the hypothalamus secretes hormones that direct the pituitary gland to release the hormone ACTH. The ACTH then directs the adrenal glands to secrete more hormones, including epinephrine, norepinephrine, and cortisol, a stress hormone that releases sugars into the blood to help prepare the body to respond to threat (Rodrigues et al., 2009). *See Section 7.2 Stress*

I statements

I statements are an assertive way to express your experiences and tries to minimize defensive reactions of the receiver. Often an I statement consists of three parts: a nonjudgemental description of someone's behaviour; a specific feeling; and how someone's behaviour directly impacts you. *See Section 8.3 Asserting Your Needs*

Individualistic vs collectivistic cultures

People in individualistic cultures value individual freedom and personal independence, and cultures always have stories to reflect their values. Collectivist cultures, including many in Asia and South America, focus on the needs of the nation, community, family, or group of workers. *See Section 5.4 Working in Diverse Teams*

Information overload

Information overload occurs when our mental resources are not sufficient to address the rate or quantity of information from the external environment. *See Section 10.1 Communication*

Information peers

Information peers are so-called because we rely on these individuals for information about job tasks and the organization itself. *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Ingratiation

Refers to different forms of making others feel good about themselves. Ingratiation includes any form of flattery done either before or during the influence attempt. *See Section 4.2 Politics and Influence*

Inspirational appeals

Inspirational appeals seek to tap into our values, emotions, and beliefs to gain support for a request or course of action. Effective inspirational appeals are authentic, personal, big-thinking, and enthusiastic. *See Section 4.2 Politics and Influence*

Instrumental values

Instrumental values according to Rokeach, instrumental values represent those values concerning the way we approach end-states. Examples of instrumental values include ambition, cleanliness, honesty, and obedience. *See Section 6.1 Values*

Integrated approach to bargaining.

In this approach, both parties look for ways to integrate their goals. That is, they look for ways to expand the pie, so that each party gets more. This is also called a win–win approach. *See Section 2.4 Negotiation*

Intergroup conflict

Usually involves disagreements between two opposing forces over goals or the sharing of resources. *See section 1.2 Levels and Types of Conflict*

Interorganizational conflict

Disputes between two companies in the same industry, two companies in different industries or economic sectors, or two or more countries. *See section 1.2 Levels and Types of Conflict*

Interpersonal conflict

Where two individuals disagree on some matter. such as coworkers, a manager and an employee, or CEOs and their staff. *See section 1.2 Levels and Types of Conflict*

Interpersonal violence

interpersonal violence involves acts of aggression such as an intent to harm or actual physical or psychological harm to another or their property. *See section 1.1 Conflict Defined*

Interpretation

Interpretation is the third part of the perception process, in which we assign meaning to our experiences using mental structures known as schemata. *See Section 6.2 Perceptions*

Interruption

Interruption is an example of bad listening that occurs when the listener interjects during the speaker's turn. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Intrapersonal conflict

Intrapersonal conflict is a conflict within one person. In the workplace, this is often the result of competing motivations or roles. *See section 1.2 Levels and Types of Conflict*

Jargon

Jargon is the language of specialized terms used by a group or profession. *See Section 10.1 Communication*

Job enlargement

Job enlargement is defined as the adding of new challenges or responsibilities to a current job, can create job satisfaction. Assigning us to a special project or task is an example of job enlargement. *See Section 8.1 Theories of Motivation*

Job enrichment

means to enhance a job by adding more meaningful tasks to make our work more rewarding. *See Section 8.1 Theories of Motivation*

Job motives

Job motives include gaining rewards such as power, money, or job security. *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Karasek's job demands-control model

Karasek's job demands-control model demonstrates that t the degree of control a worker has in their job plays a significant role in whether the demands of a job and job-related stress will be positive or negative and whether ill health results (Karasek, 1979). *See Section 7.3 Stress at Work*

Labour union

A labour union, or union, is defined as workers banding together to meet common goals, such as better pay, benefits, or promotion rules. *See Section 2.5 Labour Relations*

Leadership

The ability of one individual to elicit responses from another person that go beyond required or mechanical compliance. *See Section 4.1 Power*

Legitimate power

Is power that comes from one's organizational role or position. It is synonymous with authority. *See Section 4.1 Power*

Legitimating tactics

Legitimating tactics occur when the appeal is based on legitimate or position power.. *See Section 4.2 Politics and Influence*

Limbic system

Limbic system is one of the evolutionarily oldest parts of our brain and includes several structures (amygdala, thalamus, hypothalamus) that help us to experience emotio. *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Listening

Listening is "focused, concentrated attention for the purpose of understanding the meanings expressed by a [source]" (Wrench et al., 2017, p. 50). *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Love motives

Love motives include the desire for genuine affection and companionship. Despite the motives, workplace romances impact coworkers, the individuals in the relationship, and workplace policies. *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Low-power distance vs high-power distance

In low-power distance cultures, according to Dutch researcher Geert Hofstede, people relate to one another more as equals and less as a reflection of dominant or subordinate roles, regardless of their actual formal roles as employee and manager, for example. In a high-power distance culture, you would probably be much less likely to challenge the decision, to provide an alternative, or to give input. *See Section 5.4 Working in Diverse Teams*

Machiavellianism

Machiavellianism- named after the 16th century author Nicolo Machiavelli. In modern times, an individual with Machiavellian tendencies has four characteristics according to Christie and Gies. They are a lack of affect; lack of concern for others; rational view of others and focus on short-term goals. *See Section 9.2 Cognitive and Personal-Social Dispositions*

Maintenance difficulty

Maintenance difficulty can be defined as "the degree of difficulty individuals experience in interpersonal relationships due to misunderstandings, incompatibility of goals, and the time and effort necessary to cope with disagreements" (Merthot, 2010, p. 49). *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Majority rule

Majority rule is a commonly used decision-making technique in which a majority (one-half plus one) must agree before a decision is made. A show-of-hands vote, a paper ballot, or an electronic voting system can determine the majority choice. *See Section 5.3 Collaboration, Decision-Making and Problem Solving in Groups*

Masculine vs feminine orientation

Hofstede describes the masculine-feminine dichotomy not in terms of whether men or women hold the power in a given culture, but rather the extent to which that culture values certain traits that may be considered masculine or feminine. Thus, "the assertive pole has been called 'masculine' and the modest, caring pole 'feminine.' *See Section 5.4 Working in Diverse Teams*

Mediator

A mediator is a neutral, third party who helps facilitate a negotiated solution. *See Section 2.4 Negotiation*

Mentor

A mentor is a trusted person who provides an employee with advice and support regarding career-related matters. *See Section 3.2 Creating, Maintaining, and Changing Culture*

Mentoring relationship

The mentoring relationship can be influential in establishing or advancing a person's career, and supervisors are often in a position to mentor select employees. In a mentoring relationship, one person functions as a guide, helping another navigate toward career goals (Sias, 2009). *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Microaggressions

Microaggressions are subtle slights, remarks and actions that occur both consciously and unconsciously and are often linked to our unconscious bias and stereotypes. *See Section 10.1 Communication*

Minority rule

Minority rule is a decision-making technique in which a designated authority or expert has final say over a decision and may or may not consider the input of other group members. When a

designated expert makes a decision by minority rule, there may be buy-in from others in the group, especially if the members of the group didn't have relevant knowledge or expertise. *See Section 5.3 Collaboration, Decision-Making and Problem Solving in Groups*

Monochromatic vs polychromatic

In monochromatic time, interruptions are to be avoided, and everything has its own specific time.. Polychromatic time looks a little more complicated, with business and family mixing with dinner and dancing. Greece, Italy, Chile, and Saudi Arabia are countries where one can observe this perception of time; business meetings may be scheduled at a fixed time, but when they actually begin may be another story. *See Section 5.4 Working in Diverse Teams*

Motivation

Motivation refers to an internally generated drive to achieve a goal or follow a particular course of action. *See Section 8.1 Theories of Motivation*

Narcissism

Narcissism is defined a personality trait characterized by overly high self-esteem, self-admiration, and self-centeredness. *See Section 9.2 Cognitive and Personal-Social Dispositions*

Narcissistic listening

Narcissistic listening is a form of self-centered and self-absorbed listening in which listeners try to make the interaction about them by interrupting or changing the topic. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Neglect

Neglect: The worker does nothing, based on the belief that the situation will not change or might grow worse. The worker might try to avoid the source of the situation but will generally take no action to change the situation. Workers choose this option when the costs of exiting are too high and their relationship to the organization is sufficiently damaged to prevent either voice or patience (Leck & Saunders, 1992; Rusbult et al., 1988). *See Section 4.4 Bullying, Violence, and Harassment*

Negotiation

Negotiation is the process by which individuals or groups attempt to realize their goals by bargaining with another party who has at least some control over goal attainment. *See Section 2.4 Negotiation*

Nominal group technique

The nominal group technique guides decision making through a four-step process that includes idea generation and evaluation and seeks to elicit equal contributions from all group members

(Delbecq & Ven de Ven, 1971). *See Section 5.3 Collaboration, Decision-Making and Problem Solving in Groups*

Onboarding

Refers to the process through which new employees learn the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors required to function effectively within an organization. *See Section 3.2 Creating, Maintaining, and Changing Culture*

Organization

Organization is the second part of the perception process, in which we sort and categorize information that we perceive based on innate and learned cognitive patterns. Three ways we sort things into patterns are by using proximity, similarity, and differences (Coren, 1980). *See Section 6.2 Perceptions*

Organizational culture

Refers to a system of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs that show employees what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior. *See Section 3.1 Organizational Culture*

Organizational culture profile (OCP)

OCP is a framework for examining organizational culture in which culture is represented by seven distinct values. *See Section 3.3 Frameworks for Assessing Organizational Culture*

Outcome fairness

Outcome fairness refers to the judgment that we make with respect to the outcomes we receive versus the outcomes received by others with whom we associate with at work. When assessing whether an outcome is fair, individuals often look at consistency, bias suppression, information accuracy, correctability, representativeness and ethicality. *See Section 8.1 Theories of Motivation*

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is defined as restating in your own words, the message you think the speaker just sent. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Parasympathetic nervous system (PNS)

Parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) is the division of the autonomic nervous system that is involved in resting, digesting, relaxing, and recovering. *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Passive communicators

Passive communicators tend to put the rights of others before their own. Passive communicators tend to be apologetic or sound tentative when they speak. They do not speak up if they feel like they are being wronged. *See Section 8.3 Asserting Your Needs*

Patience

Patience: The worker decides to do nothing in the hopes that the situation will eventually improve. Workers adopt a patience approach when their loyalty to the organization or the cost of exiting is greater than the price of experiencing the negative situation. *See Section 4.4 Bullying, Violence, and Harassment*

Peer coworker relationship

According to organizational workplace relationship expert Patricia Sias (2009), peer coworker relationships exist between individuals who exist at the same level within an organizational hierarchy and have no formal authority over each other. *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Peer influence

Occurs all the time. But, to be effective within organizations, peers need to be willing to influence each other without being destructively competitive. *See Section 4.2 Politics and Influence*

People-oriented listening style

People-oriented listeners tend to be more focused on the person sending the message than the content of the message. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Perception

Perception is the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting information. *See Section 6.2 Perceptions*

Perception checking

Perception checking is a way to ensure that we are understanding how another person is thinking or feeling. Three steps to creating a perception checking statement are:

Step 1: Describe the behavior or situation without evaluating or judging it. Perception checks include "I" language and a clearly stated observation or fact: *"I heard you mention ____.*

Step 2: Think of some possible interpretations of the behavior, being aware of attributions and other influences on the perception process. This is followed by 2 possible interpretations: *"I am wondering if **or** is the case for you?"*

Step 3: Verify what happened and ask for clarification from the other person's perspective. Be aware of punctuation, since the other person likely experienced the event differently than you.

The perception check is completed with a clarification request: *"Can you clarify?"*. *See Section 6.4 Examining our Perceptions in Conflict*

Perceptual defense

Perceptual defense is the tendency to distort or ignore information that is either personally threatening or culturally unacceptable. *See Section 6.4 Examining our Perceptions in Conflict*

Personal appeals

Personal appeals refers to helping another person because you like them and they asked for your help. We enjoy saying yes to people we know and like. *See Section 4.2 Politics and Influence*

Personal control

Personal control represents the extent to which an employee actually has control over factors affecting effective job performance. *See Section 7.3 Stress at Work*

Personality

Personality encompasses a person's relatively stable feelings, thoughts, and behavioral patterns. *See Section 9.1 Personality*

Physiological noise

Physiological noise is a type of noise that bridges physical and cognitive barriers to effective listening. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Polarizing language

Polarizing language is language that presents people, ideas, or situations as polar opposites. Such language exaggerates differences and overgeneralizes. *See Section 10.1 Communication*

Political skill

Refers to peoples' interpersonal style, including their ability to relate well to others, self-monitor, alter their reactions depending upon the situation they are in, and inspire confidence and trust (Ferris et al., 2000). *See Section 4.2 Politics and Influence*

Politics

we will adopt Pfeffer's (2011) definition of **politics** as involving "those activities taken within organizations to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to obtain one's preferred outcomes in a situation in which there is uncertainty or dissensus about choices". *See Section 4.2 Politics and Influence*

Positive psychology

Positive psychology is the science of happiness; it is an area of study that seeks to identify and promote those qualities that lead to greater fulfillment in our lives. This field looks at people's strengths and what helps individuals to lead happy, contented lives. *See Section 7.4 Coping with Stress*

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a medical syndrome that includes symptoms of anxiety, sleeplessness, nightmares, and social withdrawal. *See Section 7.2 Stress*

Power

Power can be defined as an interpersonal relationship in which one individual (or group) has the ability to cause another individual (or group) to take an action that would not be taken otherwise. *See Section 4.1 Power*

Prefrontal cortex

Prefrontal cortex is the part of the brain that regulates empathy, decision making, problem solving, and much more. *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Pressure

Refers to exerting undue influence on someone to do what you want or else something undesirable will occur. *See Section 4.2 Politics and Influence*

Primary (basic) emotions

Primary (basic) emotions are the most fundamental emotions (anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise). The basic emotions are determined by the limbic system and have a long history in human evolution, and they have developed in large part to help us make rapid judgments about stimuli and to quickly guide appropriate behaviour (LeDoux, 2000). The basic emotions are determined by the limbic system and are displayed in much the same way across cultures (Ekman, 1992; Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002; Fridlund et al., 1987). *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Primary tension

Primary tension is tension based on uncertainty that is a natural part of initial interactions. It is only after group members begin to "break the ice" and get to know each other that the tension can be addressed and group members can proceed with the forming stage of group development.. *See Section 5.5 Conflict Management Strategies for Groups and Teams*

Procedural justice

Procedural justice is the process used to determine the outcomes received. *See Section 8.1 Theories of Motivation*

Process Goals

Process Goals – how events or processes unfold, how decisions are made, and how communication takes place. *See Section 8.4 Understanding Goals in Conflict and The Scarf Model*

Progressive discipline

Refers to the process of using increasingly severe steps or measures when an employee fails to correct a problem after being given a reasonable opportunity to do so. The underlying principle of sound progressive discipline is to use the least severe action that you believe is necessary to correct the undesirable situation. *See Section 3.4 Organizational Codes and Discipline*

Pseudo-listening

Pseudo-listening is behaving as if you're paying attention to a speaker when you're actually not. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Psycho-social hazards

Psycho-social hazards are the social and psychological factors that negatively affect worker health and safety. *See Section 7.3 Stress at Work*

Psychological noise

Psychological noise, or noise stemming from our psychological states including moods and level of arousal, can facilitate or impede listening. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Punctuation

Punctuation refers to the structuring of information into a timeline to determine the cause (stimulus) and effect (response) of our communication interactions (Sillars, 1980). *See Section 6.2 Perceptions*

Qualitative role overload

Qualitative role overload consists of being taxed beyond one's skills, abilities, and knowledge. It can be seen as a continuum ranging from too-easy work to too-difficult work. *See Section 7.3 Stress at Work*

Quantitative overload

Quantitative overload consists of having more work than can be done in a given time period. Overload can be visualized as a continuum ranging from too little to do to too much to do. *See Section 7.3 Stress at Work*

Questioning

Questioning is a listening style in which an individual poses questions to gain understanding or get information. Questions can be open, closed, or leading. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Rational persuasion

Rational persuasion includes using facts, data, and logical arguments to try to convince others

that your point of view is the best alternative. This is the most commonly applied influence tactic. *See Section 4.2 Politics and Influence*

Reframing

Reframing is taking a conversation and bringing it back to the topic at hand if things get off track. *See Section 8.3 Asserting Your Needs*

Rejection sensitivity

Rejection sensitivity can be defined as the degree to which an individual expects to be rejected, readily perceives rejection when occurring, and experiences an intensely adverse reaction to that rejection. *See Section 10.2 Self-Esteem, Communication and Relationship Dispositions*

Relational dispositions

Relational dispositions are general patterns of mental processes that impact how people view and organize themselves in relationships. *See Section 10.2 Self-Esteem, Communication and Relationship Dispositions*

Relational maintenance

The definition of the term "relational maintenance" can be broken down into four basic types: to keep a relationship in existence; to keep a relationship in a specified state or condition; to keep a relationship in a satisfactory condition, and to keep a relationship in repair. *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Relationship Goals

Relationship Goals – How people relate to one another. *See Section 8.4 Understanding Goals in Conflict and The Scarf Model*

Relationship management

Relationship management refers to our ability to communicate clearly, maintain good relationships with others, work well in teams, and manage conflict *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Response preparation

Response preparation refers to our tendency to rehearse what we are going to say next while a speaker is still talking. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Reward power

Is the ability to grant a reward, such as an increase in pay, a perk, or an attractive job assignment. *See Section 4.1 Power*

Right-wing authoritarians (RWAs)

Right-wing authoritarians (RWAs) tend to have three specific characteristics: RWAs believe in submitting themselves to individuals they perceive as established and legitimate authorities. RWAs believe in strict adherence to social and cultural norms. RWAs tend to become aggressive towards those who do not submit to established, legitimate authorities and those who violate social and cultural norms. *See Section 9.2 Cognitive and Personal-Social Dispositions*

Role ambiguity

Role ambiguity occurs when individuals have inadequate information concerning their roles at work.. Uncertainty over job definition takes many forms, including not knowing expectations for performance, not knowing how to meet those expectations, and not knowing the consequences of job behavior. Role ambiguity is particularly strong among managerial jobs. *See Section 7.3 Stress at Work*

Role overload

Role overload is a condition in which individuals feel they are being asked to do more than time or ability permits. Individuals often experience role overload as a conflict between quantity and quality of performance. *See Section 7.3 Stress at Work*

Role underutilization

Role underutilization occurs when employees are allowed to use only a few of their skills and abilities, even though they are required to make heavy use of them. The most prevalent characteristic of role underutilization is monotony, where the worker performs the same routine task (or set of tasks) over and over. Other situations that make for underutilization include total dependence on machines for determining work pace and sustained positional or postural constraint. *See Section 7.3 Stress at Work*

Safety culture

In organizations where safety-sensitive jobs are performed, creating and maintaining a safety culture provides a competitive advantage, because the organization can reduce accidents, maintain high levels of morale and employee retention, and increase profitability by cutting workers' compensation insurance costs. *See Section 3.3 Frameworks for Assessing Organizational Culture*

Salience

Salience is the degree to which something attracts our attention in a particular context. According to Fiske & Taylor (1991), the degree of salience depends on three features: visually or aurally stimulating; things that meet our needs or interests; and our expectations. *See Section 6.2 Perceptions*

SCARF model

SCARF model is a model of social experience by Rock et al. that identifies five domains of human experience: status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness, and fairness. Threats to one or more of these domains may result in conflict. *See Section 8.4 Understanding Goals in Conflict and The Scarf Model*

Schemata

Schemata are like databases of stored, related information that we use to interpret new experiences. *See Section 6.2 Perceptions*

Secondary emotions

Secondary emotions are more complex, social emotions that are generated by slow pathways in the brain and the prefrontal cortex. *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Secondary tension

Secondary tension emerges after groups have passed the forming stage of group development and begin to have conflict over member roles, differing ideas, and personality conflicts. These tensions are typically evidenced by less reserved and less polite behavior than primary tensions.. *See Section 5.5 Conflict Management Strategies for Groups and Teams*

Selection

Selection is the first part of the perception process, in which we focus our attention on certain incoming sensory information. *See Section 6.2 Perceptions*

Selective perception

Selective perception refers to the often unconscious process of filtering what we see and hear to suit our own needs. *See Section 10.1 Communication*

Self-awareness

Self-awareness refers to a person's ability to understand their feelings from moment to moment. *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Self-compassion

Self-compassion also involves offering nonjudgmental understanding to one's pain, inadequacies and failures, so that one's experience is seen as part of the larger human experience" (Neff, 2003, p. 86-87). Neff argues that self-compassion can be broken down into three distinct categories: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. *See Section 10.2 Self-Esteem, Communication and Relationship Dispositions*

Self-conscious shyness

Self-conscious shyness involves feeling conspicuous or socially exposed when dealing with others face-to-face. *See Section 10.2 Self-Esteem, Communication and Relationship Dispositions*

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is an individual's subjective evaluation of their abilities and limitations. *See Section 10.2 Self-Esteem, Communication and Relationship Dispositions*

Self-management

Self-management refers to our ability to manage our emotions and is dependent on our self-awareness ability. *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Self-monitoring

Self-monitoring proposes that individuals differ in the degree to which they can control their behaviors following the appropriate social rules and norms involved in interpersonal interactions. *See Section 9.2 Cognitive and Personal-Social Dispositions*

Self-serving bias

Self-serving bias is a perceptual error through which we attribute the cause of our successes to internal personal factors while attributing our failures to external factors beyond our control. *See Section 6.3 Attributions*

Self-talk

Self-talk refers to the thoughts we have about ourselves and situations throughout the day. Positive self-talk is an important part of self-management. *See Section 7.3 Stress at Work*

Semantics

Semantics is the study of meaning in communication. *See Section 10.1 Communication*

Serial arguing

Serial arguing is a repeated pattern of disagreement over an issue. *See Section 10.4 Giving and Receiving Feedback*

Service culture

What differentiates companies with service culture from those without such a culture may be the desire to solve customer-related problems proactively. In other words, in these cultures employees are engaged in their jobs and personally invested in improving customer experience such that they identify issues and come up with solutions without necessarily being told what to do. *See Section 3.3 Frameworks for Assessing Organizational Culture*

Sexual harassment

The Canada Labour Code's definition of sexual harassment is quite broad, but oriented more toward the perception of the person offended than the intentions of the offender. According to Provision 241.1 of the Code, sexual harassment means any conduct, comment, gesture or contact of a sexual nature that is likely to cause offence or humiliation to any employee, or that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived by that employee as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or on any opportunity for training or promotion. (Government of Canada, 1985, p. 214). *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Short-term vs long-term orientation

If you work within a culture that has a short-term orientation, you may need to place greater emphasis on reciprocation of greetings, gifts, and rewards. Long-term orientation is often marked by persistence, thrift and frugality, and an order to relationships based on age and status. *See Section 5.4 Working in Diverse Teams*

Silent listening

Silent listening occurs when you say nothing. It may or may not an appropriate listening response, depending on the situation. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Social awareness

Social awareness is our ability to understand social cues that may affect others around us. *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Social cohesion

Social cohesion refers to the attraction and liking among group members. Ideally, groups would have an appropriate balance between these two types of cohesion relative to the group's purpose, with task-oriented groups having higher task cohesion and relational-oriented groups having higher social cohesion. *See Section 5.2 Small Group Dynamics*

Social loneliness

Social loneliness results from a lack of a satisfying social network. *See Section 9.2 Cognitive and Personal-Social Dispositions*

Social support

Social support is the extent to which organization members feel their peers can be trusted, are interested in one another's welfare, respect one another, and have a genuine positive regard for one another. *See Section 7.3 Stress at Work*

Social-personal dispositions

Social-personal dispositions refer to general patterns of mental processes that impact how

people socially relate to others or view themselves. Dispositions discussed in the chapter include loneliness, depression, self-esteem, narcissism, Machiavellianism, empathy, and self-monitoring. *See Section 9.2 Cognitive and Personal-Social Dispositions*

Sociocommunicative orientation

Sociocommunicative orientation is the combination of assertiveness and responsiveness (considering the needs of others). *See Section 10.2 Self-Esteem, Communication and Relationship Dispositions*

Special peers

Kram and Isabella (1985) note that special peer relationships "involves revealing central ambivalences and personal dilemmas in work and family realms. Pretense and formal roles are replaced by greater self-disclosure and self-expression" (p. 121). *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

State-of-the-relationship talk

The first strategy people use when disengaging from workplace friendships involves state-of-the-relationship talk. State-of-the-relationship talk is exactly what it sounds like; you officially have a discussion that the friendship is ending. The goal of state-of-the-relationship talk is to engage the other person and inform them that ending the friendship is the best way to ensure that the two can continue a professional, functional relationship. *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Status

Status an be defined as a person's perceived level of importance or significance within a particular context. *See Section 5.2 Small Group Dynamics*

Stereotype

Stereotype is a widely held generalization about a group of people. *See Section 6.4 Examining our Perceptions in Conflict*

Strain

Strain is the damage that results from stress when an individual is not able to cope with the demands of their environment. *See Section 7.2 Stress*

Stress

Stress is the physical and psychological reactions that occur whenever we believe that the demands of a situation threaten our ability to respond to the threat (Lazarus, 2000; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). *See Section 7.2 Stress*

Stressors

Stressors are situations causing stress. Stressors can be acute, episodic, chronic or catastrophic.*See Section 7.2 Stress*

Subculture

A culture that emerges within different departments, branches, or geographic locations is called a subculture. Subcultures may arise from the personal characteristics of employees. *See Section 3.1 Organizational Culture*

Substantive Goals

Substantive Goals – our ability to secure tangible resources and/or something measurable and visible that we desire. *See Section 8.4 Understanding Goals in Conflict and The Scarf Model*

Supervisor-subordinate relationships

The supervisor-subordinate relationships can be primarily based in mentoring, friendship, or romance and includes two people, one of whom has formal authority over the other. *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Supportive communication climate

Supportive communication climate is defined as an environmental where the overall tone of the relationship is warm and supportive. Communication behaviours in this climate are less likely to elicit defensiveness. Supportive behaviours include description, straightforwardness, collaboration, empathy, equality and flexibility. *See Section 8.2 Meeting Needs Through Communication Climate*

Supportive responses

Supportive responses include agreement, offers to help, praise, reassurance, and diversion and show support. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Symbolic convergence

Symbolic convergence refers to the sense of community or group consciousness that develops in a group through non-task-related communication such as stories and jokes. *See Section 5.2 Small Group Dynamics*

Sympathetic nervous system (SNS)

Sympathetic nervous system (SNS) is the division of the autonomic nervous system that is involved in preparing the body to respond to threats by activating the organs and the glands in the endocrine system. *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

Sympathy

Sympathy is feeling bad for someone; to pity them or their situation. Unlike empathy, an individual who expresses sympathy is not engage in the cognitive component of empathy - they are just considering the situation from their own worldview. Individuals who are expressing sympathy also fail to exhibit the affective or compassionate aspects of empathy. *See Section 8.2 Meeting Needs Through Communication Climate*

Tacit knowledge

Tacit knowledge, on the other hand, is the knowledge that's difficult to capture permanently (e.g., write down, visualize, or permanently transfer from one person to another) because it's garnered from personal experience and contexts. *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Task cohesion

Task cohesion refers to the commitment of group members to the purpose and activities of the group. *See Section 5.2 Small Group Dynamics*

Tend-and-befriend response

Tend-and-befriend response is a behavioral reaction to stress that involves activities designed to create social networks that provide protection from threats. *See Section 7.2 Stress*

Terminal values

Terminal values, according to Rokeach, are those end-state goals that we prize. Examples of terminal values include a comfortable life, a sense of accomplishment, and equality among all people. *See Section 6.1 Values*

Thalamus

Thalamus is a part of the brain involved in perception and starting to create an interpretation of external stimuli. *See Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence*

The five domains of human social experiences

The five domains of human social experiences. David Rock and his team found that there are 5 areas of our brains that light up (via brain scan technology) during our social experiences. *See Section 8.4 Understanding Goals in Conflict and The Scarf Model*

Time-oriented listening style

Time-oriented listening style are always in a hurry and want a source of a message to speed things up a bit. *See Section 10.3 Listening*

Transactional model of communication

Transactional model of communication describes communication as a process in which communicators generate social realities within social, relational, and cultural contexts. *See Section 10.1 Communication*

Trust

Methot (2010) defines trust as "the willingness to be vulnerable to another party with the expectation that the other party will behave with the best interest of the focal individual" (p. 45). *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Type A personality

Type A personality is characterized by impatience, restlessness, aggressiveness, competitiveness, polyphasic activities (having many "irons in the fire" at one time), and being under considerable time pressure. Work activities are particularly important to Type A individuals, and they tend to freely invest long hours on the job to meet pressing (and recurring) deadlines. Type B people, on the other hand, experience fewer pressing deadlines or conflicts, are relatively free of any sense of time urgency or hostility, and are generally less competitive on the job. *See Section 7.3 Stress at Work*

Uncertainty-accepting vs uncertainty-rejecting cultures

When we meet each other for the first time, we often use what we have previously learned to understand our current context. We also do this to reduce our uncertainty. Some cultures, such as the United States and Britain, are highly tolerant of uncertainty, while others go to great lengths to reduce the element of surprise. Other cultures are high in uncertainty avoidance; they tend to be resistant to change and reluctant to take risks. *See Section 5.4 Working in Diverse Teams*

Upward influence

Upward influence, as its name implies, is the ability to influence your manager and others in positions higher than yours. *See Section 4.2 Politics and Influence*

Value

A value may be defined as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence." (Rokeach, 1973, p. 5). Rokeach (1973) has identified two fundamental types of values: instrumental and terminal. *See Section 6.1 Values*

Verbal aggression

Verbal aggression is the communication trait in which an indvidual tends to attack the other

person instead of their positions. *See Section 10.2 Self-Esteem, Communication and Relationship Dispositions*

Voice

Voice: The worker decides to speak up in an attempt to change the situation. Voice can take a number of forms, including attempting to repair the situation directly, lodging a complaint, filing a grievance or, less constructively, retaliating with their own inappropriate behaviour. *See Section 4.4 Bullying, Violence, and Harassment*

Willingness to communicate

Willingness to communicate examines an individual's tendency to initiate communicative interactions with other people. *See Section 10.2 Self-Esteem, Communication and Relationship Dispositions*

Winner's curse

A common error in negotiations in which a negotiator makes a high offer quickly and it's accepted just as quickly, making the negotiator feel as though he is being cheated. *See Section 2.4 Negotiation*

Workplace harassment

Workplace harassment is behaviour aimed at an individual (or group) that is belittling or threatening in nature. This can include actions (e.g., unwanted touching) or words (e.g., insults, jokes) that have the effect of causing psychological harm to victim(s). Harassment can take a variety of forms, including racial/ethnic harassment, sexual harassment, and general workplace harassment. *See Section 4.4 Bullying, Violence, and Harassment*

Workplace romances

Workplace romances involve two people who are emotionally and physically attracted to one another (Sias, 2009). *See Section 5.1 Interpersonal Relationships at Work*

Workplace violence

Workplace violence is any act in which a person is abused, threatened, intimidated, or assaulted in their employment. It can include physical attack, threats of physical attack, threatening language or behaviour (e.g., shaking a fist), or physically aggressive behaviour. *See Section 4.4 Bullying, Violence, and Harassment*

You statements

You statements tend to place blame on the other person and may evoke defensiveness compared to using I statements. *See Section 8.3 Asserting Your Needs*

Appendix B: Self-Assessments

Assessments in this section include:

- What Is Your Approach to Conflict Resolution?
- Conflict Capability Assessment
- Do You Have the Characteristics of Powerful Influencers?
- What Are Your Power Bases?
- How Political are You?
- Working in Diverse Teams: Cultural Intelligence
- Which Values Are Most Important to You?
- Emotional Intelligence
- How Stable Is Your Life?
- How Stressful Is Your Job?
- Are You Suffering from Burnout?
- ABCs of Conflict
- Listening Styles Questionnaire

Chapter 2 Assessments

Chapter Resource

- Please refer to Section 2.2 Approaches to Conflict

What Is Your Approach to Conflict Resolution? Assessment

Download a PDF version of this assessment.

Instructions

Think of a typical situation in which you have a disagreement with someone. Then answer the following items concerning how you would respond to the conflict. Circle the number that you feel is most appropriate.

	Highly Unlikely			Highly Likely	
1. I firmly push for my goals.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I always try to win an argument.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I try to show my opponent the logic of my position.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I like to discuss disagreements openly.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I try to work through our differences.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I try to get all concerns on the table for discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I try to work for a mutually beneficial solution.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I try to compromise with the other person.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I seek a balance of gains and losses on each side.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I don't like talking about disagreements.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I try to avoid unpleasantness for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I avoid taking positions that may incite disagreement.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I try to think of the other person in any disagreement.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I try to preserve relationships in any conflict.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I try not to hurt the other person's feelings.	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring

In this exercise there are no right or wrong answers. Instead, you are simply asked to describe your own approach to conflict resolution. To do this, score the instrument as follows:

Competition	(add up items 1–3)
Collaboration	(add up items 3–6)
Compromise	(add up items 7–9)
Avoidance	(add up items 10–12)
Accommodation	(add up items 13–15)

Compare the relative strengths of your preferences in each of the five conflict-resolution modes. The higher your score on any of the scales, the more you favor this mode of resolution. What pattern do you see in this analysis? How will this inform you in future negotiations?

Source: "Conflict and Negotiations" in Organizational Behaviour by OpenStax is licenced under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Conflict Capability Assessment

Download a PDF version of this assessment.

Instructions

- To take this self-assessment, please navigate to The University of Alabama's Conflict Capability Questionnaire. You'll receive your score once you complete the assessment.

Chapter 4 Assessments

Chapter Resource

- Please refer to Section 4.2 Politics and Influence

Do You Have the Characteristics of Powerful Influencers?

Download a PDF version of this assessment.

People who are considered to be skilled influencers share the following attributes. How often do you engage in them? 0 = never, 1= sometimes, 2 = always.

1. present information that can be checked for accuracy
2. provide a consistent message that does not change from situation to situation
3. display authority and enthusiasm (often described as charisma)
4. offer something in return for compliance
5. act likable
6. show empathy through listening
7. show you are aware of circumstances, others, and yourself
8. plan ahead

Scoring

If you scored 0–6: You do not engage in much effective influencing behavior. Think of ways to enhance this skill. A great place to start is to recognize the items on the list above and think about ways to enhance them for yourself.

If you scored 7–12: You engage in some influencing behavior. Consider the context of each of these influence attempts to see if you should be using more or less of it depending on your overall goals.

If you scored 13–16: You have a great deal of influence potential. Be careful that you are not manipulating others and that you are using your influence when it is important rather than just to get your own way.

Source: "Power and Politics" in An Introduction to Group Communication by Phil Venditti and Scott McLean is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

What Are Your Power Bases?

Download a PDF version of this assessment.

Instructions

Using a current or former job, answer each of the following items by circling the response that most suits your answer.

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
1. I always try to set a good example for other employees.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My coworkers seem to respect me on the job.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Many employees view me as their informal leader at work.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I know my job very well.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My skills and abilities help me a lot on this job.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I continually try to improve the way I do my job.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I have considerable authority in my job.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Decisions made at my level are critical to organizational success.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Employees frequently ask me for guidance.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am able to reward people at lower levels in the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I am responsible for evaluating those below me.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I have a say in who gets a bonus or pay raise.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I can punish employees at lower levels.	1	2	3	4	5

14. I check the work of lower-level employees.	1	2	3	4	5
15. My diligence helps to reduce the errors of others on the job.	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring

This instrument examines the five bases of power. When you have finished the questionnaire, add up your score for each scale as follows:

Referent power	(add up items 1–3)
Expert power	(add up items 4–6)
Legitimate power	(add up items 7–9)
Reward power	(add up items 10–12)
Coercive power	(add up items 13–15)

To interpret the scores, consider the following:

- A score of 3–6 points indicates a weak power base on a particular scale.
- A score of 7–11 points indicates a moderate power base on a particular scale.
- A score of 12–15 points indicates a strong power base on a particular scale.

On the basis of all of this, what does your power profile look like? Does this seem to be an accurate reflection of your actual situation? If you wished to change your power bases, which would you change? How would you try to change these bases?

How Political are You?

Download a PDF version of this assessment.

Instructions

To determine your political appreciation and tendencies, please answer the following questions. Select the answer that better represents your behavior or belief, even if that particular behavior or belief is not present all the time.

1. You should make others feel important through an open appreciation of their ideas and work.	_____ True _____ False
2. Because people tend to judge you when they first meet you, always try to make a good first impression.	_____ True _____ False
3. Try to let others do most of the talking, be sympathetic to their problems, and resist telling people that they are totally wrong.	_____ True _____ False
4. Praise the good traits of the people you meet and always give people an opportunity to save face if they are wrong or make a mistake.	_____ True _____ False
5. Spreading false rumors, planting misleading information, and backstabbing are necessary, if somewhat unpleasant, methods to deal with your enemies.	_____ True _____ False
6. Sometimes it is necessary to make promises that you know you will not or cannot keep.	_____ True _____ False
7. It is important to get along with everybody, even with those who are generally recognized as windbags, abrasive, or constant complainers.	_____ True _____ False
8. It is vital to do favors for others so that you can call in these IOUs at times when they will do you the most good.	_____ True _____ False
9. Be willing to compromise, particularly on issues that are minor to you but important to others.	_____ True _____ False
10. On controversial issues, it is important to delay or avoid your involvement if possible.	_____ True _____ False
Source: Adapted from Joseph F. Byrnes, "Connecting Organizational Politics and Conflict Resolution," Personnel Administrator, June 1986, p.49.	

Scoring

This questionnaire is designed to measure your political behavior. You have been asked to answer "true" or "false" to 10 questions. When you have finished, consider the following. If you answered true to almost all of the questions, you should consider yourself a confirmed politician. (This is meant to be a compliment!) If you answered false to questions 5 and 6, which deal with deliberate lies and uncharitable behavior, you have shown yourself to be someone with high ethical standards. Finally, if you answered false to almost all of the questions, you are most definitely not a politician; rather, you are a person who rejects manipulation, incomplete disclosure, and self-serving behavior. On the basis of this instrument, how political are you? How political are your friends? On the basis of your answers to these questions, what have you learned about political behavior in organizations? What implications follow from these results concerning your future management style?

Chapter 5 Assessments

Chapter Resource

- Please refer to Section 5.4 Working in Diverse Teams

Working in Diverse Teams, Cultural Intelligence

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One of the latest buzz-words in the business world is "cultural intelligence," which was initially introduced to the scholarly community in 2003 by P. Christopher Earley and Soon Ang. In the past decade, a wealth of research has been conducted examining the importance of cultural intelligence during interpersonal interactions with people from other cultures. **Cultural intelligence (CQ)** is defined as an "individual's capability to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity"(Earley & Ang, 2008).

Four Factors of Cultural Intelligence

In their original study on the topic, Earley and Ang argued that cultural intelligence is based on four distinct factors: cognitive, motivational, metacognitive, and behavioral dimensions. Before continuing, take a minute and complete the Cultural Intelligence Questionnaire in the table below:

Instructions

Read the following questions and select the answer that corresponds with your perception. Do not be concerned if some of the items appear similar. Please use the scale below to rate the degree to which each statement applies to you.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

_____1. When I'm interacting with someone from a differing culture, I know when I use my knowledge of that person's culture during my interactions.

_____2. When I interact with someone from a culture I know nothing about, I have no problem adjusting my perspective of their culture while we talk.

_____3. During intercultural interactions, I am well aware of the cultural knowledge I utilize.

_____4. I always check my knowledge of someone from another culture to ensure that my understanding of their culture is accurate.

_____5. During my intercultural interactions, I try to be mindful of how my perceptions of someone's culture are either consistent with or differ from reality.

_____6. I pride myself on knowing a lot about other people's cultures.

_____7. I understand the social, economic, and political systems of other cultures.

_____8. I know about other cultures' religious beliefs and values.

_____9. I understand how daily life is enacted in other cultures.

_____10. I know the importance of paintings, literature, and other forms of art in other cultures.

_____11. I enjoy reaching out and engaging in an intercultural encounter.

_____12. I would have no problem socializing with people from a new culture.

_____13. Although intercultural encounters often involve stress, I don't mind the stress because meeting people from new cultures makes it worth it.

_____14. I would have no problems accustoming myself to the routines of another culture.

_____15. I enjoy being with people from other cultures and getting to know them.

_____16. I know how to interact verbally with people from different cultures.

_____17. I know how to interact nonverbally with people from different cultures.

_____18. I can vary my rate of speech if an intercultural encounter requires it.

_____19. I can easily alter my behaviors to suit the needs of an intercultural encounter.

_____20. I can alter my facial expressions if an intercultural encounter requires it.

Scoring

Add items 1-5 (Intercultural Understanding) = _____

Add items 6-10 (Intercultural Knowledge) = _____

Add items 7-15 (Intercultural Motivation) = _____

Add items 16-20 (Intercultural Behavior) = _____

Interpreting Your Scores

Scores for each of the four factors (intercultural understanding, intercultural knowledge, intercultural motivation, and intercultural behavior) can be added together to get a composite score. Each of the four factors exists on a continuum from 5 (not culturally intelligent) to 25 (highly culturally intelligent). An average person would score between 12-18.

Based on:

Van Dyne, L., Ang, S., & Koh, C. (2008). Development and validation of the CQS: The Cultural Intelligence Scale. In S. Ang & L. Van Dyne (Eds.), Handbook of cultural intelligence: Theory, measurement, and application (pp. 16-38). Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

Cognitive CQ

First, cognitive CQ involves knowing about different cultures (intercultural knowledge). Many types of knowledge about a culture can be relevant during an intercultural interaction: rules and norms, economic and legal systems, cultural values and beliefs, the importance of art within a society, etc.... All of these different areas of knowledge involve facts that can help you understand people from different cultures. For example, in most of the United States, when you are talking to someone, eye contact is very important. You may have even been told by someone to "look at me when I'm talking to you" if you've ever gotten in trouble. However, this isn't consistent across different cultures at all. Hispanic, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Native American cultures often view direct contact when talking to someone superior as a sign of disrespect. Knowing how eye contact functions across cultures can help you know more about how to interact with people from various cultures.

Motivational CQ

Second, we have motivational CQ, or the degree to which an individual desires to engage in intercultural interactions and can easily adapt to different cultural environments. Motivation is the key to effective intercultural interactions. You can have all the knowledge in the world, but if you are not motivated to have successful intercultural interactions, you will not have them.

Metacognitive CQ

Third, metacognitive CQ involves being consciously aware of your intercultural interactions in a manner that helps you have more effective interpersonal experiences with people from differing cultures (intercultural understanding). All of the knowledge about cultural differences in the world will not be beneficial if you cannot use that information to understand and adapt your behavior during an interpersonal interaction with someone from a differing culture. As such, we must always be learning about cultures but also be ready to adjust our knowledge about people and their cultures through our interactions with them.

Behavioral CQ

Lastly, behavioral CQ is the next step following metacognitive CQ, which is behaving in a manner that is consistent with what you know about other cultures (Ang & VanDyne, 2008). We should never expect others to adjust to us culturally. Instead, culturally intelligent people realize that it's best to adapt our behaviors (verbally and nonverbally) to bridge the gap between people culturally. When we go out of our way to be culturally intelligent, we will encourage others to do so as well.

As you can see, becoming a truly culturally intelligent person involves a lot of work. As such, it's important to spend time and build your cultural intelligence if you are going to be an effective communicator in today's world.

Adapted Works

Adapted Works

References

Earley, P. C., & Ang, S. (2003). Cultural intelligence: Individual interactions across cultures. Stanford University Press.

Ang, S., & Van Dyne, L. (Eds.). (2008). Preface and Acknowledgements. In Handbook of cultural intelligence: Theory, measurement, and applications (pp. xv-xviii). M. E. Sharpe; pg. xv.

Ang, S., & Van Dyne, L. (Eds.). (2008). Conceptualization of cultural intelligence definition, distinctiveness, and nomological network. In Handbook of cultural intelligence: Theory, measurement, and applications (pp. 3-55). M. E. Sharpe.

Chapter 6 Assessments

Chapter Resource

Please refer to Section 6.1 Values

Which Values Are Most Important to You?

Download a PDF version of this assessment.

Instructions

People are influenced by a wide variety of personal values. In fact, it has been argued that values represent a major influence on how we process information, how we feel about issues, and how we behave. In this exercise, you are given an opportunity to consider your own personal values. Below are listed two sets of statements. The first list presents several instrumental values, while the second list presents several terminal values. For each list you are asked to rank the statements according to how important each is to you personally. In the list of instrumental values, place a "1" next to the value that is most important to you, a "2" next to the second most important, and so forth. Clearly, you will have to make some difficult decisions concerning your priorities. When you have completed the list for instrumental values, follow the same procedure for the terminal values. Please remember that this is not a test—there are no right or wrong answers—so be completely honest with yourself.

Instrumental Values

- _____ Assertiveness; standing up for yourself
- _____ Being helpful or caring toward others
- _____ Dependability; being counted upon by others
- _____ Education and intellectual pursuits
- _____ Hard work and achievement
- _____ Obedience; following the wishes of others
- _____ Open-mindedness; receptivity to new ideas
- _____ Self-sufficiency; independence
- _____ Truthfulness; honesty
- _____ Being well-mannered and courteous toward others

Terminal Values

- _____ Happiness; satisfaction in life
- _____ Knowledge and wisdom
- _____ Peace and harmony in the world
- _____ Pride in accomplishment
- _____ Prosperity; wealth
- _____ Lasting friendships
- _____ Recognition from peers
- _____ Salvation; finding eternal life
- _____ Security; freedom from threat
- _____ Self-esteem; self-respect

Scoring Key

This instrument is intended as an informal measure of instrumental and terminal values. There are no right or wrong answers here. This is simply a way for you to see what your value structure looks like.

Simply examine the pattern of responses you made for both sets of values. What did you learn about yourself? Which values are most important to you?

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Chapter 7 Assessments

Chapter Resource

Please refer to Section 7.1 Emotions and Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence

Download a PDF version of this assessment.

Instructions

Read the following questions and select the answer that corresponds with your perception. Do not be concerned if some of the items appear similar. Please use the scale below to rate the degree to which each statement applies to you.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

_____1. I am aware of my emotions as I experience them.
_____2. I easily recognize my emotions.
_____3. I can tell how others are feeling simply by watching their body movements.
_____4. I can tell how others are feeling by listening to their voices.
_____5. When I look at people's faces, I generally know how they are feeling.
_____6. When my emotions change, I know why.
_____7. I understand that my emotional state is rarely comprised of one single emotion.
_____8. When I am experiencing an emotion, I have no problem easily labeling that emotion.
_____9. It's completely possible to experience two opposite emotions at the same time (e.g., love & hate; awe & fear; joy & sadness, etc.).
_____10. I can generally tell when my emotional state is shifting from one emotion to another.
_____11. I don't let my emotions get the best of me.

_____12. I have control over my own emotions.
_____13. I can analyze my emotions and determine if they are reasonable or not.
_____14. I can engage or detach from an emotion depending on whether I find it informative or useful.
_____15. When I'm feeling sad, I know how to seek out activities that will make me happy.
_____16. I can create situations that will cause others to experience specific emotions.
_____17. I can use my understanding of emotions to have more productive interactions with others.
_____18. I know how to make other people happy or sad.
_____19. I often lift people's spirits when they are feeling down.
_____20. I know how to generate negative emotions and enhance pleasant ones in my interactions with others.

Scoring

Perceiving Emotions	Add scores for items 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5	=
Understanding Emotions	Add scores for items 6, 7, 8, 9, & 10	=
Managing Emotions	Add scores for items 11, 12, 13, 14, & 15	=
Using Emotions	Add scores for items 16, 17, 18, 19, & 20	=

How Stable Is Your Life?

Download a PDF version of this assessment.

Instructions:

Place a check mark next to each event you experienced within the past year. Then add the scores associated with the various events to derive your total life stress score.

Life Event	Scale Value
——— Death of spouse	100
——— Divorce	73
——— Marital separation	65
——— Jail term	63
——— Death of a close family member	63
——— Major personal injury or illness	53
——— Marriage	50
——— Fired from work	47
——— Marital reconciliation	45
——— Retirement	45
——— Major change in health of family member	44
——— Pregnancy	40
——— Sex difficulties	39
——— Gain of a new family member	39
——— Business readjustment	39
——— Change in financial state	38
——— Death of a close friend	37
——— Change to a different line of work	36
——— Change in number of arguments with spouse	35
——— Mortgage or loan for big purchase (home, etc.)	31
——— Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30
——— Change in responsibilities at work	29
——— Son or daughter leaving home	29
——— Trouble with in-laws	29
——— Outstanding personal achievement	28
——— Spouse begins or stops work	26
——— Begin or end school	26
——— Change in living conditions	25
——— Revision of personal habits	24
——— Trouble with boss	23
——— Change in work hours or conditions	20
——— Change in residence	20
——— Change in schools	20
——— Change in recreation	19
——— Change in church activities	19

——— Change in social activities	18
——— Mortgage or loan for lesser purchase (car, etc.)	17
——— Change in sleeping habits	16
——— Change in number of family get-togethers	15
——— Change in eating habits	15
——— Vacation	13
——— Christmas	12
——— Minor violations of the law	11
Total Score = ———	
Source: Adapted from "Scaling of Life Change: Comparison of Direct and Indirect Methods" by L. O. Ruch and T. H. Holmes, Journal of Psychosomatic Research 15 (1971): 224, 1971.	

Scoring

This instrument attempts to assess your rate of life change—that is, how much activity and change do you have that may cause stress? To score this instrument, add up the score or units assigned to the various life units assigned to the events listed in the past year.

- If your total score is less than 150, this suggests that you should remain generally healthy during the next year.
- If your total score is 150 to 300, this suggests that there is a 50 percent chance that you will experience illness during the coming year.
- If your total score is over 300, this suggests that there is a 70 percent chance of impending illness during the coming year.

Remember that when evaluating your result, a high score does not automatically mean an illness is imminent. Rather, it means that statistically speaking an illness is more likely for you than for those with lower scores. Where did you score? Is this a reasonable description of your current situation? If so, what actions could you undertake to reduce your score?

Source: "Stress and Wellbeing" in Organizational Behaviour by OpenStax, Rice University and is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

How Stressful Is Your Job?

Download a PDF version of this assessment.

Instructions

This instrument focuses on the stress level of your current (or previous) job. Think of your job, and answer the following items as frankly and honestly as possible.

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
1. I am often irritable with my coworkers.	1	2	3	4	5
2. At work, I constantly feel rushed or behind schedule.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I often dread going to work.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I often experience headaches, stomachaches, or backaches at work.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I often lose my temper over minor problems.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Everything I do seems to drain my energy level.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I often interpret questions or comments from others as a criticism of my work.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Time is my enemy.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I often have time for only a quick lunch (or no lunch) at work.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I spend considerable time at home worrying about problems at work.	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring

To score this instrument, first add up your score:

- If you scored 1–18 points, you see yourself as having a normal amount of stress.
- If you scored 19–38 points, you feel that stress is becoming a problem.
- If you scored 39–50 points, you feel that stress is a serious problem.

Where did you score on this instrument? Does this seem like an accurate description of the real situation? On the job you described, what could you do to reduce stress levels?

Source: Chapter 18: Stress and Wellbeing in Organizational Behaviour by OpenStax, Rice University and is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Are You Suffering from Burnout?

Download a PDF version of this assessment.

Instructions:

Check whether each item is “mostly true” or “mostly untrue” for you. Answer as honestly as you can. When you have finished, add up the number of checks for “mostly true.”

	Mostly True	Mostly Untrue
1. I usually go around feeling tired.	_____	_____
2. I think I am working harder but accomplishing less.	_____	_____
3. My job depresses me.	_____	_____
4. My temper is shorter than it used to be.	_____	_____
5. I have little enthusiasm for life.	_____	_____
6. I snap at people fairly often.	_____	_____
7. My job is a dead end for me.	_____	_____
8. Helping others seems like a losing battle.	_____	_____
9. I don’t like what I have become.	_____	_____
10. I am very unhappy with my job.	_____	_____

Scoring

This instrument measures your self-perceptions regarding burnout. To score it, add up the number of times you answered “mostly true.” If you answered mostly true seven or more times, you may be suffering from burnout. If you received a high score, consider what actions you can undertake to reduce the level of burnout.

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Chapter Resource

- Please refer to Section 9.3 ABCs of Conflict

ABCs of Conflict

Download a PDF version of this assessment.

Instructions

Read the following questions and select the answer that corresponds with how you typically behave when engaged in conflict with another person. Do not be concerned if some of the items appear similar. Please use the scale below to rate the degree to which each statement applies to you.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

When I start to engage in a conflict, I _____

_____1. Keep the conflict to myself to avoid rocking the boat.

_____2. Do my best to win.

_____3. Try to find a solution that works for everyone.

_____4. Do my best to stay away from disagreements that arise.

_____5. Create a strategy to ensure my successful outcome.

_____6. Try to find a solution that is beneficial for those involved.

_____7. Avoid the individual with whom I'm having the conflict.

_____8. Won't back down unless I get what I want.

_____9. Collaborate with others to find an outcome OK for everyone.

_____10. Leave the room to avoid dealing with the issue.

_____11. Take no prisoners.

_____12. Find solutions that satisfy everyone's expectations.

_____13. Shut down and shut up in order to get it over with as quickly as possible.

_____14. See it as an opportunity to get what I want.

_____15. Try to integrate everyone's ideas to come up with the best solution for everyone.

_____16. Keep my disagreements to myself.

_____17. Don't let up until I win.

_____18. Openly raise everyone's concerns to ensure the best outcome possible.

Scoring

Avoiders

- Add Items 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16_____

Battlers

- Add Items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17_____

Collaborators

Add Items 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18_____

Interpretation

Scores for each subscale should range from 6 to 30. Scores under 14 are considered low, scores 15 to 23 are considered moderate, and scores over 24 are considered high.

Source: "Conflict in Relationships" in Interpersonal Communication by Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

Chapter 10 Assessments

Chapter Resource

Please refer to Section 10.3 Listening

Listening Styles Questionnaire

Download a PDF version of this assessment.

Instructions:

Read the following questions and select the answer that corresponds with how you tend to listen to

public speeches. Do not be concerned if some of the items appear similar. Please use the scale below to rate the degree to which each statement applies to you:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

_____1. I am very attuned to public speaker's emotions while listening to them.

_____2. I keep my attention on a public speaker's feelings why they speak.

_____3. I listen for areas of similarity and difference between me and a public speaker.

_____4. I generally don't pay attention to a speaker's emotions.

_____5. When listening to a speaker's problems, I find myself very attentive.

_____6. I prefer to listen to people's arguments while they are speaking.

_____7. I tend to tune out technical information when a speaker is speaking.

_____8. I wait until all of the arguments and evidence is presented before judging a speaker's message.

_____9. I always fact check a speaker before forming an opinion about their message.

_____10. When it comes to public speaking, I want a speaker to keep their opinions to themself and just give me the facts.

_____11. A speaker needs to get to the point and tell me why I should care.

_____12. Unorganized speakers drive me crazy.

_____13. Speakers need to stand up, say what they need to say, and sit down.

_____14. If a speaker wants me to do something, they should just say it directly.

_____15. When a speaker starts to ramble on, I really start to get irritated.

_____16. I have a problem listening to someone give a speech when I have other things to do, places to be, or people to see.

_____17. When I don't have time to listen to a speech, I have no problem telling someone.

_____18. When someone is giving a speech, I'm constantly looking at my watch or clocks in the room.

_____19. I avoid speeches when I don't have the time to listen to them.

_____20. I have no problem listening to a speech even when I'm in a hurry.

Scoring

People-Oriented Listener

A: Add scores for items 1, 2, 3, 5 and place total on line. _____

B: Place score for item 4 on the line._____

C: Take the total from A and add 6 to the score. Place the new number on the line._____

Final Score: Now subtract B from C. Place your final score on the line._____

Content-Oriented Listener

A: Add scores for items 6, 8, 9, 10 and place total on line._____

B: Place score for item 7 on the line._____

C: Take the total from A and add 6 to the score. Place the new number on the line._____

Final Score: Now subtract B from C. Place your final score on the line._____

Action-Oriented Listener

Final Score: Add items 11, 12, 13, 14, 15_____

Time-Oriented Listener

A: Add scores for items 16, 17, 19 and place total on line._____

B: Add scores for items 18 & 20 and place total on line._____

C: Take the total from A and add 12 to the score. Place the new number on the line._____

Final Score: Now subtract B from C. Place your final score on the line._____

Interpreting Your Score

For each of the four subscales, scores should be between 5 and 25. If your score is above 18, you are considered to have high levels of that specific listening style. If your score is below 12, you're considered to have low levels of that specific listening style.

Based on:

Watson, K. W., Barker, L. L., & Weaver, J. B., III. (1992, March). **Development and validation of the Listener Preference Profile**. Paper presented at the International Listening Association in Seattle, WA.

Versioning History

This page provides a record of edits and changes made to this book since its initial publication. Whenever edits or updates are made in the text, we provide a record and description of those changes here. If the change is minor, the version number increases by 0.1. If the edits involve a number of changes, the version number increases to the next full number.

The files posted alongside this book always reflect the most recent version.

Version	Date	Change	Affected Web Page
1.0	22 August 2022	First Publication	N/A
1.1 to 1.29	1 January 2024	First Edition updates	For a detailed list of changes and their corresponding pages, please refer to the following Google Doc: Conflict Management – First Edition Update Log