

The Five Most Common Types of Conflict In The Workplace

1. **Interdependence Conflicts.** A person's job depends on someone else's co-operation, output or input. For example a sales-person is constantly late inputting the monthly sales figures which causes the accountant to be late with her reports.
2. **Differences in Style.** [People's style for completing a job can differ.](#) For example, one person may just want to get the work done quickly (task oriented), while another is more concerned about having it done a particular way e.g. artistic or by including other people in the project.
3. **Differences in Background/Gender.** Conflicts can arise between people because of differences in [educational backgrounds, personal experiences, ethnic heritage, gender and political preferences.](#)
4. **Differences in Leadership.** [Leaders have different styles.](#) Employees who change from one supervisor to another can become confused, for example one leader may be more open and inclusive whilst another may be more directive.
5. **Personality Clashes.** These types of conflict in the workplace are often fueled by emotion and perceptions about somebody else's motives and character. For example a team leader jumps on someone for being late because she perceives the team member as being lazy and inconsiderate. The team member sees the team leader as out to get him.

How To Handle Personality Clashes

All types of conflict in the workplace can be messy but it is the differences in personality that causes the most grief. **Statistics show that 85% of dismissals in the US are due to personality conflicts.**

Most of you at some point will experience a personality conflict. So here is an important rule to follow if you want to successfully resolve the conflict and improve the relationship.

You Must Subdue Your Own Story

There are two types of stories you can tell yourself.

One story puts a halo over your head and enables you to justify to yourself why you have behaved poorly.

The second type of story is the one you tell yourself about others. This story causes you to see devil horns on the heads of others and has you labeling them in a negative fashion, placing you in a downward spiral of animosity toward them. A few examples:

Situation/Scenario	Story You Tell
Someone lets you down and it's not the first time.	They are irresponsible and unreliable
You let someone down and it's not the first time.	It's because you've been overworked recently.
Someone cuts you off while driving	They are rude, aggressive and inconsiderate.
You cut someone off while you are driving	It's because you are in a hurry and if you don't catch these lights you'll miss your doctor's appointment
One of your peers buys the boss a birthday card	It's because they are soft-soaping the boss and trying to weasel their way in for a promotion.
You buy your boss a birthday card	It's because you are warm and caring.
Someone flies into a rage at the post office clerk	They are bad-tempered
You fly into a rage at the post office clerk	It's because you're tired and this is the 3rd time you've been here trying to resolve the problem and the post office keeps making the same mistake which is costing you money

Sometimes your stories are accurate, but more often than not they are either inaccurate or completely wrong.

The truth is often somewhere in between the story you've told yourself about why the person has acted the way they have and the actual facts.

Subduing your story is important for three reasons:

1. It ensures you don't over-react to a situation
2. You open you up to the possibility of a healthy discussion ... rather than ambushing the other person with your emotions
3. You begin to sift fact from story.

Use this Exercise to Sift Story from Fact

Think of a conflict you have with someone at the moment. On a piece of paper in the left hand column write down all the stories you are telling yourself about the person. All the feelings, thoughts, judgments, labels, conclusions that are running through your head.

On the right hand column write down all the Facts. These are observable, objective, specific actions and information.

As you look at your list you may find that the story you have been telling yourself is not fully supported by all the facts. That you have made many assumptions and interpretations about what the other person's behavior MIGHT mean! Have you ever heard the saying "We judge others by their actions, but ourselves by our intentions"? You don't truly know what the other person's intentions are without asking.

This exercise is not designed to cause you to not address your concern with the other person. It's purpose is to help you wash down any over-heated emotions you may have coursing through your body. Now, you will be more likely to hold the conversation with less accusation and more curiosity.

The number one goal in any type of conflict is to discover the truth. Subduing your story is one sure step in enabling you to achieve this goal.

No matter the types of conflict in the workplace, ignoring it and hoping it will go away, is going to cost you. Possibly cost you quite dearly.

If you are a leader in the business it is going to cost you in terms of wasted time listening to people's complaints or you complaining to others about how tough you've got it, lost productivity as people spend more time worrying about the conflict than the organizational goals, absenteeism, health claims, people withdrawing emotionally, employee turnover, aggression and at times even violence.

If you are involved in the conflict you may feel these emotions: discontent, miserableness, distress, frustration, resentment. Unfortunately, generally, most people are not adept at leaving these feelings in the workplace at quitting time, so they trundle along home with them impacting on and often causing conflict and tenseness on the home-front as well.

You help you and your people to be far happier and far more productive when the skills to deal with any type of conflict in the workplace are learnt and mastered.

The beautiful thing is that this type of training is a gift that keeps on giving - not only in the workplace but into the wider community. Sadly most people never truly learn the art of resolving differences and turning them into successful conversations, which often traps them in a life of unhappiness and suffering.