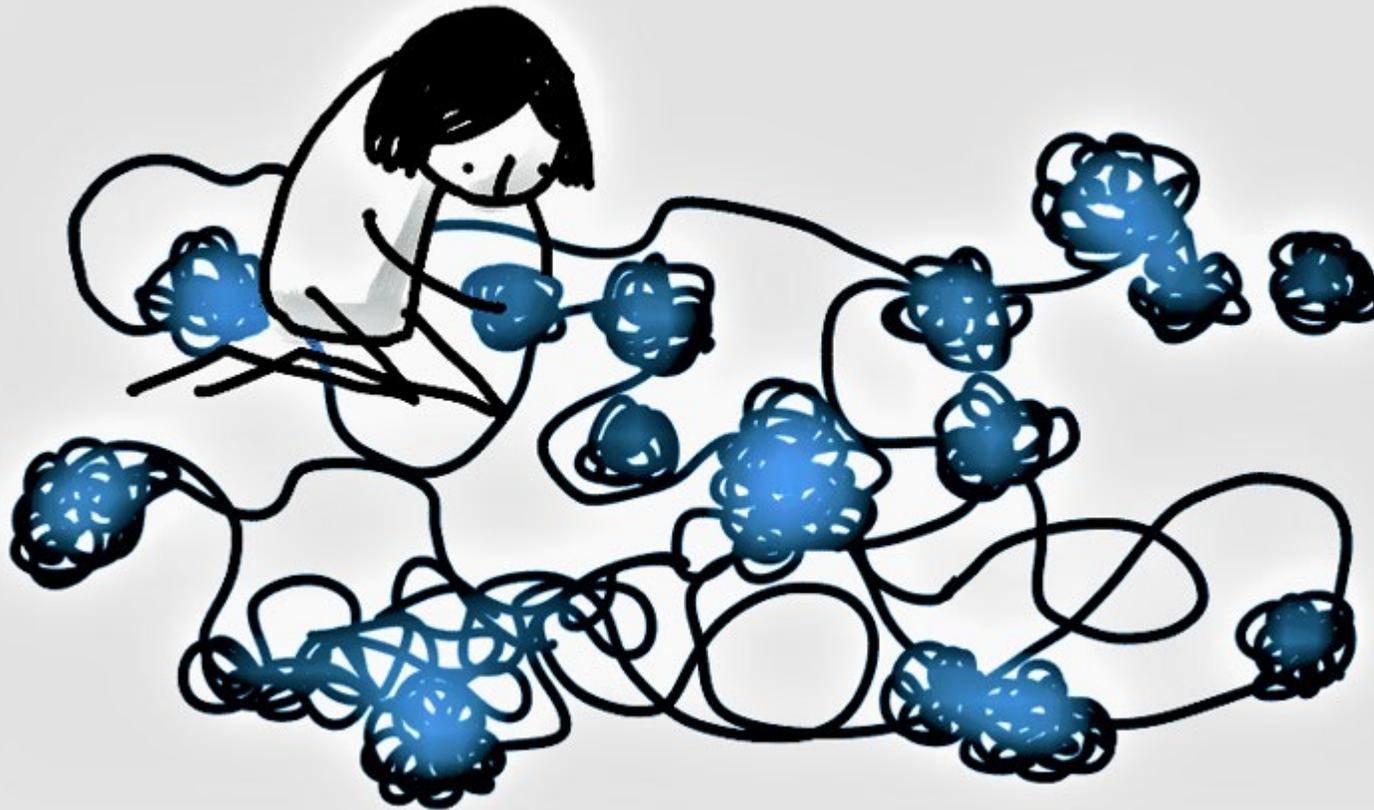


HOW TO OVERCOME WORKPLACE CONFLICT

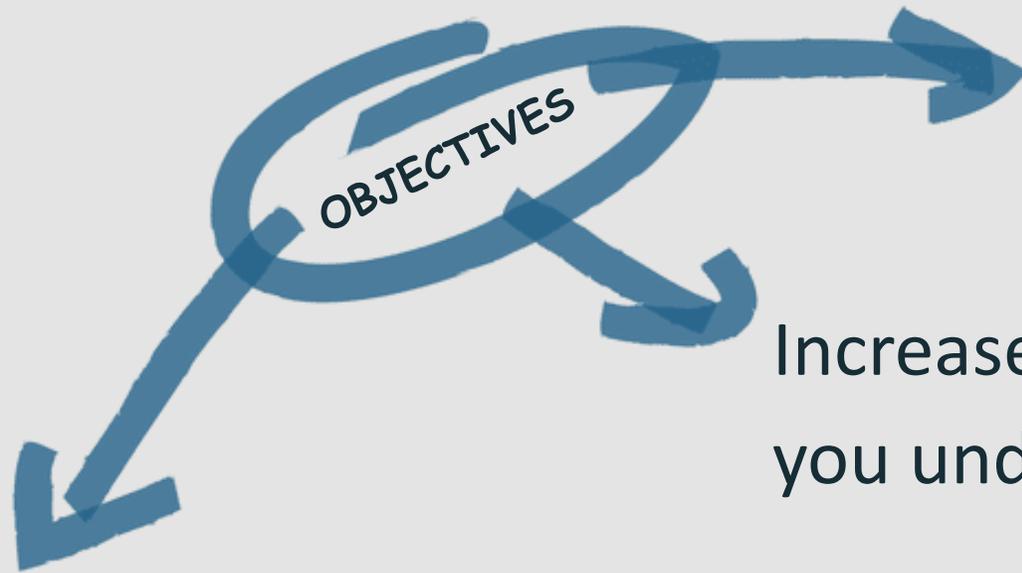
Terry Vida, PhD



AGENDA

- Workshop objectives
 - Icebreaker
 - What is the problem?
 - What we know about workplace conflict
 - What I learned from Federal Public Service executives
 - What does this mean for you?
 - Case Study
 - Wrap-up
- 

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES



Gain knowledge about different ways to understand workplace conflict.

Increase self-awareness on how you understand workplace conflict.

Practice applying new skills in managing workplace conflict.

ICEBREAKER

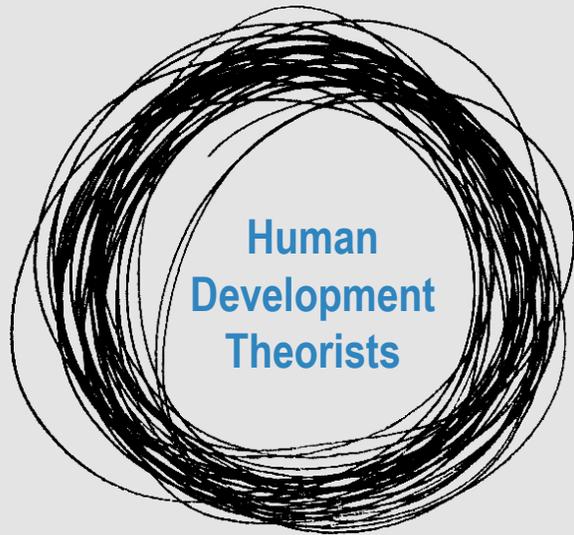
- Work in groups of 3
- Use Post-it[®] notes to record answers to the question:
What is your biggest challenge in managing workplace conflict?
- Select the top 3 responses from your group to include in the debrief

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- Unresolved conflict continues to be a significant problem in the Federal Public Service.
- 9 out of 10 cases I worked on led to the executive being removed from his/her position.
- The APEX 2017 survey says executives still have concerns about workplace incivility, harassment and mental health.
- The Public Service Employee Survey (PSES) shows that harassment, workplace stress, and psychological well-being are issues for employees.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT WORKPLACE CONFLICT

Theoretical influences on conflict



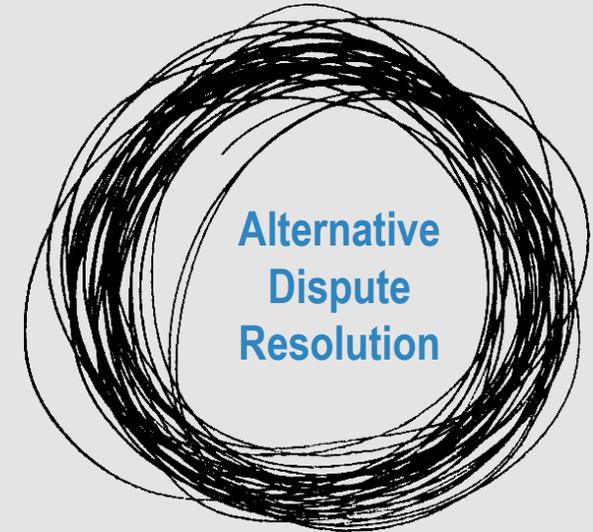
- ❖ Contribution – intrapersonal activity
- ❖ Negative experience to be resolved quickly or avoided



- ❖ Scientific and rational management processes



- ❖ Structural model
- ❖ Process model



- ❖ Conflict resolution
- ❖ Separate people from the problem

1800s

1950s | 1970s

1990s

WHAT I LEARNED FROM FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE EXECUTIVES

- ✓ Key themes consistently appear in executive conflict stories
- Executives have a preferred way of understanding conflict
- Executives have both positive and negative conflict situations

CONSISTENT THEMES IN CONFLICT STORIES

CONTEXT & DECISION-MAKING

- Details of major issues
- Organizational structures
- Demographics

PROFESSIONAL & SKILLS TRAINING

- Techniques
- Knowledge
- Abilities
- Competencies

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- HR management
- Delegations
- Supervision

BEHAVIORS

- Way a person acts or conducts himself/herself

RELATIONSHIPS

- An association with someone or a group of people in the workplace

VALUES

- Reflection of a person's sense of right or wrong

WHAT I LEARNED FROM FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE EXECUTIVES

- Key themes consistently appear in executive conflict stories
- ✓ Executives have a preferred way of understanding conflict
- Executives have both positive and negative conflict situations

A PREFERRED WAY OF UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT?

FUNCTIONAL way of understanding conflict

- The way something works or operates

CONTEXT & DECISION-MAKING

- Details of major issues
- Organizational structures
- Demographics

PROFESSIONAL & SKILLS TRAINING

- Techniques
- Knowledge
- Abilities
- Competencies

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- HR management
- Delegations
- Supervision

RELATIONAL way of understanding conflict

- Expressions of behaviours, feelings and values about people

BEHAVIORS

- Way a person acts or conducts himself/herself

RELATIONSHIPS

- An association with someone or a group of people in the workplace

VALUES

- Reflection of a person's sense of right or wrong

WHAT I LEARNED FROM FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE EXECUTIVES

- Key themes consistently appear in executive conflict stories
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BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CONFLICT SITUATIONS

- Executives use their **preferred** way of understanding conflict to explain why there was a *positive* outcome
- Executives use their **non-preferred** way of understanding conflict to explain why there was a *negative* outcome

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US?

- Determine your preferred way of understanding workplace conflict
 - Psychometric tool
 - Coaching
 - Journaling
 - Feedback
- Collect data on all 6 themes when dealing with a conflict situation
 - Observe
 - Listen
 - Gather facts
- Identify your assumptions and validate/refute with data
- Create a new narrative/story
 - New perspective

CASE STUDY

INDIVIDUAL WORK (10 minutes)

- Read the case study and answer the following questions:
 - *What do you believe happened?*
 - *What is your supporting data? (data collection on the 6 themes)*
 - *What would you recommend for a positive outcome?*

CASE STUDY

Paul, a director general, was in a closed-door meeting with a colleague when his director, Marcus, knocked on his door to tell him that two of his other directors, Francine and Richard, just had a shouting match in the middle of floor in front of several employees. Paul ended his meeting and called Francine and Richard into his office.

Paul told his directors what he heard and asked for an explanation. Both Francine and Richard started speaking at the same time. Paul asked Francine to share her side of the story first and then he would let Richard speak. Francine alleged that Richard was withholding information from her which was affecting her ability to get her part of their joint project completed. Richard argued that what he was working on was his responsibility and she had no business being involved with that portion of the work. They both stated that they would no longer work together, and Paul should find someone else to complete the project.

Paul was left with a problem. The project was a high-profile one that the Assistant Deputy Minister wanted to use as an example of collaboration and teamwork in her sector. It had to be completed in two weeks. Paul was surprised by this outburst from Francine and Richard because he just had a staff meeting one week ago and neither of them raised any issues about this project.

What should Paul do?

CASE STUDY

INDIVIDUAL WORK (10 minutes)

- Read the case study and answer the following questions:
 - *What do you believe happened?*
 - *What is your supporting data? (data collection on the 6 themes)*
 - *What would you recommend for a positive outcome?*

GROUP WORK (20 minutes)

- In groups of 3, select one person to observe while the other two discuss their answers to the questions. Observer notes the following:
 - **Try to identify each participant's preferred way of understanding conflict (functional/relational) and collect supporting data**
 - **Did anyone change opinions/strategies based on the conversation?**

PLENARY DEBRIEF (10 minutes)

- What are the key takeaways?

WRAP UP

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROCESS:

- Determine your preferred way of understanding workplace conflict
- Collect data on all 6 themes when dealing with a conflict situation
- Identify your assumptions and validate/refute with data
- Create a new narrative/story

OTHER IDEAS TO HELP OVERCOME CONFLICT:

- Find ways to develop self-awareness
 - Strength Deployment Inventory, Thomas-Kilmann Model
 - Coaching
 - Dialogue with your executive colleagues

THANK YOU!



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