CONFLICT, NEGATIVITY, AND THE TOXIC EMPLOYEE

(Too Much Exposure Can Be a Bad Thing!)

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First Things First...

Jon says, "I have a bad attitude in the morning."

Well, some people have to ease into the day.

I feel better after I've killed something.
Start With the Basics:

quivo

有效的肢体语言

有效的倾听

Being Mindful
Effective Body Language: S.O.L.E.R.

- Squarely Faced
- Open Stance
- Lean Forward
- Eye Contact
- Relax, Respond
Listen to your co-workers with the same basic courtesies you extend to customers

- No interrupting
- Reflect back understanding of views
- Ask clarifying questions
- Really listen, don’t prepare your rebuttal until you have HEARD the other person
- BE MINDFUL

“Fight as if you are right, listen as if you are wrong.”
--Karl Weick, University of Michigan
MINDFULNESS:
- Paying Attention
- On-Purpose
- Non-Judgmentally

Paying attention, on purpose, non-judgmentally
A good leader listens to his underlings.

Fine. I'm overworked and underpaid. I hate my co-workers, I don't have the resources to do my job, and we have no clear strategy.

No wonder leaders listen. It's a lot easier than fixing all of that stuff.
So... What Is Conflict?

- It’s an “expressed struggle”
- Between at least two people who perceive the situation differently
- Experiencing interference from the other person in achieving their goal.
- Feeling angry; other’s fault
Conflict is **ALSO** About...

- How you **think** about a situation
- How you **feel** about what is happening
- How you **act** in response to what is happening
- And...
It’s **ALWAYS** about **CHOICE**
Thoughts

YOU and CONFLICT (CHOICE)

Feelings  Behaviors
What Causes Conflict?

- Conflict occurs between people because people are different, and have different needs and wants.
- Therefore, the key cause of conflict is (can be?) the degree to which individuals are different.
What Causes Conflict?

Five (5) basic issues (or more):
1. Control over resources
2. Preferences
3. Values and Beliefs; Goals
4. The nature of the relationship between the partners
5. Organizational issues!!
Conflict at Work:

- Interpersonal friction can negatively affect workplace productivity and harmony, and needs to be managed.
- Sometimes the correct course of action is not entirely clear. Yet often you need to act quickly before things escalate.
- What factors do you need to think about to manage or resolve the conflict?
- Six (6) key elements
Six Key Elements to Consider:

- Interdependency of Parties
- Number of Interested Parties
- Constituent Representation
- Negotiator Authority
- Critical Urgency
- Communication Channels
These six (6) key elements provide a framework for better understanding conflict at work, at home, and in other social situations.

- Look through emotions and “frame” the issues.
Conflict is inevitable and is generally viewed negatively by society because most people do not know how to handle conflict. Despite its negative connotation, conflict can have positive as well as negative effects.
Positive Effects of Conflict

- Promotes growth in a relationship
- Allows for healthy release of feelings
- Increases motivation and self-esteem
What Do You Do When Faced w/ Conflict?

- Fight?
- Run Away?
- Get Hijacked?
- Stay in the “Adult Zone”
Also Responsible for HIJACKING!

To Get at Emotion, Go Deep...

Amygdala is deep within the most elemental parts of the brain (survival)...BUT

Also Responsible for HIJACKING!
“Transactional” Analysis: The Adult Zone

- Parent
- Adult
- Child
- Parent
- Adult
- Child
“Transactional” Analysis

- Parent
  - Adult
  - Child

- Parent
  - Adult
  - Child
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What is Your Style of Conflict Management?

- There are 3 “Behavior Styles” we use in handling opposition and responding to conflict:
1. Passive/Nonassertive Style -

- You respond by avoiding the situation or not responding to it.

- You may remove yourself from the situation by leaving, shutting up, placating, concealing your feelings, or postponing a confrontation until a better time.
Passive/Nonassertive Style

- **Advantage** – You usually don’t experience direct rejection or get blamed for anything.

  Approval from others important.

- **Disadvantage** – You are taken advantage of; store up resentment and anger. Needs not met; no one knows what you want.
2. Aggressive Style

- You may respond to conflict by fighting, verbally or nonverbally.
- Intention to hurt.
Aggressive Style

- **Advantage** – No one pushes you around – you seem to get what you want. “LARGE and IN CHARGE” – your life and the lives of others.

- **Disadvantage** – Control = other person feels humiliated, defensive, resentful, HURT.

  Creates enemies, and you fear losing POWER and CONTROL.
3. Assertive Style

- You may respond to conflict by moving toward your opposition.
- This style is used in compromise, negotiation, and cooperative problem solving.
Assertive Style

- **Advantage** – You generally get more of what you want without making other people mad.

The BEST of the 3 approaches.

- **Disadvantage** – Risky being open, honest, and direct.
  Hard for some to deal with this approach.
The “I” Message:

- Frequently referred to as the focal point of learning to be assertive – is a way of expressing yourself effectively before you become angry and act in self-defeating ways.
The “I” Message Has 4 Parts

1. An objective nonjudgmental description of the person’s behavior in specific terms.
2. How I feel about this.
3. The concrete effects on me.
4. A request and an invitation to respond and provide positive consequences.
Suggestions for delivering an Assertive “I” message:

- Write and practice your message before delivering it.
- Develop assertive body language with your “I” message.
- Don’t be distracted by other’s defensiveness or manipulation.
CRITICIZE THE BEHAVIOR, NOT THE PERSON.

THE EMAIL YOU SENT TO EVERYONE LOOKS AS IF IT HAD BEEN WRITTEN BY A MONKEY ON CRACK.

JUST TO BE CLEAR, YOU ARE TERRIFIC, BUT EVERYTHING YOU DO IS EXACTLY WHAT A MORON WOULD DO.
2 More Things to Try:

- Psychological Jiu Jitsu
- G.R.I.T. (Graduated Reciprocal Initiatives in Tension Reduction)
Psychological Jiu Jitsu: Diffusing/Absorbing the “Angry Energy”

- Agree
- Apologize
- Affirm
G.R.I.T.

- Let’s a “hot” situation cool down.
- Involves a series of “baby steps”
- Allows for reciprocity and “face-saving”.
- At the right time, opens the door for positive problem-solving.
What’s In Your Bag of Tricks for Dealing w/ Conflict and...

- The TOXIC EMPLOYEE
What Is A Toxic Employee?

- A “toxic employee” is to a company like Kryptonite is to Superman.
- Can sap the energy out of the atmosphere and make it almost impossible to work effectively.
- Can create low morale around the workplace and a decrease in productivity.
A Toxic Employee Is:
*Overly Negative*

- Blames others for their problems.
- Fails to hold him/herself accountable for actions.
- Expects the same rights and privileges as others, whether s/he has worked as hard or not.
Some Types of Negative/Toxic People:

- Reaction-Getters: e.g. trying to make you feel guilty so that you’ll respond in a certain way.
- Attention-Seekers: use negativity as a way to get attention.
- Venters: frustrated with just one particular situation and are just expressing their frustration.
A Toxic Employee is:

A Master of Illusion

- Works when s/he feels like it.
- Knows how to look like s/he is working when s/he is not.
- Does just enough to avoid getting reprimanded.
- Takes credit for the work of others.
A Toxic Employee is:

**Creative**

- Draws co-workers into petty competition.
- Only respects those s/he considers to be his/her “equal” or “superior”.
- Does not value the work of others; will disrespect support staff but “kiss-up” to the higher ups.
Which Direction Do You Suck?
A Toxic Employee is:

A Saboteur

- Notorious for backstabbing or withholding information to get ahead of fellow employees.
- Creates chaos by spreading concerns around the office instead of addressing them directly.
- Strategically prevents people from doing their jobs by blocking access to needed materials.
A Toxic Employee is:

Protected

- Hard to get rid of because s/he has managed to hide his/her toxic maneuvers from powerful personnel.
- May have made connections with a superior that keeps them from being fired (personal friends with the boss; boss’s daughter; company owner’s nephew, etc.).
SO, HOW DO YOU PREVENT TOXICITY IN THE WORKPLACE?

SAY NO TO KRYPTONITE
Keeping Toxic Employees Out

- Observe potential employees for signs of toxicity. This includes (but is not limited to):
  - Ignoring the support staff during the interview process.
  - Showing no interest in coworkers’ roles.
  - Focuses only on his/herself.
In the Event of Toxicity in an Employee...Find Out What Happened

- When did it start?
- Is this a new thing?
- Did something occur to trigger this behavior? (i.e. change in health status, family tragedy, etc.)
- Is it really the employee or is it something you are reacting to personally?
- Are there other factors at play? (i.e. friction with other coworkers or even the boss)
In the Event of Toxicity continued...

- Confront the employee about his/her behavior.
- Make sure that they are aware of how others are affected by their actions.
- Offer positive suggestions; be prepared for defensive responses.
- Do NOT stoop to their level.
Dealing with a Toxic Employee

- Model Behavior (Think P-A-C!)
  - As a supervisor or as a fellow employee, you have the ability to heavily influence the behavior of those around you simply by your own actions.

- Seek help
  - It may be a good idea to pair an exemplary employee with a toxic employee so that their effectiveness can “rub off” on them.
  - Asking for feedback from other staff may be helpful in gaining more perspective on the situation – but no bashing!
Dealing with a Toxic Employee

- No Excuses
  - Give that employee tasks that they will be held totally accountable for. Do not accept excuses from them, and document EVERYTHING that transpires.

- Be on the lookout for gradual improvements in behavior.
Some Other “Reframing” Tricks:

- Hope for the best, expect the worst.

- Keep your expectations for the Toxic Person behaviors low, but continue to believe that you will be fine after the ordeal is over.
Another Reframing Trick:

- Develop indifference and emotional detachment.
- Linking your self-worth to how people treat you and putting all of your effort and emotional energy into your workplace is a path to exploitation and self-destruction.
- Can be best for your MENTAL HEALTH until things change.
Reframe Some More...

- Look for small wins.
- The ability to gain control over little, seemingly trivial things is a hallmark of surviving bad situations.
- A series of small actions can bring about noticeable and successful change (G.R.I.T.).
And Two of My Favorites...

- Limit your exposure.
- You suffer less “direct damage” by reducing how often and intensely you face the problem person.
- These tiny bits of control can protect your sense of self, spirit, and physical health.
Favorite Reframe #2

- Build pockets of Safety, Support, and Sanity.
- Find and build pockets where you can hide from T.E.s and hang out with decent people.
- Join or form a “secret network” of anti-T.E.s for POSITIVE emotional support (avoid bitch sessions).
Self-Check!!

- Look out for Self-Toxicity
- Each of us is capable of becoming toxic and creating an uncomfortable environment for our co-workers.
- Make sure to acknowledge all efforts and successes, and remember your manners (“Please” and “Thank You”.)
And... What About Gender Differences? In Childhood:

Boys
1. Get their way by ordering one another around.
2. Tell each other what roles to take in pretend play.

Girls
1. More likely to make proposals for action, using words like “let’s” and “we.” “Let’s go find someone.”
2. More likely to ask each other what role they want to play. “Will you be the patient for a few minutes?”
And As Adults... Men & Women:

- **Men** are described as being more concerned with power and more interested in content than relational issues.
- **Women** are described as being more concerned with maintaining the relationship during a conflict.
- **Need to Learn Flexibility** is what Deborah Tannen suggests:
  a. **Women** who avoid conflict at all costs would be better off if they learned that a little conflict would not kill them.
  b. **Men** who often take oppositional stances would be better off if they broke their addiction to conflict.
Clearing the A-I-R

**Appreciate**
Explicitly tell others you want to hear their point of view
“I appreciate the opportunity to discuss this problem with you”

**Inquire**
The other person has the floor – be an active listener
“Let me make sure I understand your position:…”

**Respond**
Now you have the floor
“Now that I have a sense of your point of view, let me explain where I’m coming from”

*From Workplace Wars*
Finally...

USE YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR

- If you don’t have one, get one.
- Take your job seriously; take yourself lightly.
- Remember...
YOU KNOW WHAT'S FUNNY?
I'LL TELL YOU.

YOU'RE WORKING HARD. I'M DOING NOTHING. IN A HUNDRED YEARS WE'LL BOTH BE DEAD.

YOU MIGHT NOT NEED TO WAIT THAT LONG.

I THINK I'LL SPREAD SOME JOY OVER THIS WAY.
In Conclusion...

- Toxic employees can be “managed”. Waiting too long can have disastrous effects within your place of business, and can even disrupt your business entirely.
- Remember, It’s a PROCESS.
Einstein discovers that time is actually money.
Interested in this and other leadership and organizational development topics?

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