



Understanding Conflict

Key message

Understanding the the role that conflict plays in the manifestation of violence and radicalisation, and also understanding the skills we need to manage and resolve conflict through non-violent means, is important when developing intervention strategies for groups and individuals who have become radicalised. It is important that these individuals learn that conflicts can be resolved through non-violent means, that tense relations can be repaired peacefully, that respect and dignity can be restored without resorting to violence, and that there is value in diversity and cultural differences. These are the key messages being highlighted in this exercise.

Key words: understanding conflict, conflict resolution, consequences of conflict, conflict and violence

Summary

In this exercise the participants will look at their understanding of conflict and using their own experiences will explore how peaceful relations between people can be restored, emphasising the importance of dialogue, respectful listening and the value of diversity.

Module	Group size	Group age	Duration
• Prevention	• medium	• 12 - 15	• 1 hour
• Intervention	• large	• 16 - 19	
		• 20 - 24	

Purpose

- To help participants clarify and evaluate their own skills in dealing with hostile or difficult situations
- To explore the relationship between conflict and violence and to engage in a wide ranging discussion about how these issues affect the global community
- Participants are invited to reflect on the consequences of conflict, and how destructive it can be for aggressors as well as victims.

Participants

Suitable for use with a wide range of diverse groups; non-gender specific.

Description

Step 1: The facilitator asks the group to say what springs to mind when they hear the term 'conflict'. Allow a few minutes for some words and themes to circulate.

Step 2: The facilitator gives a brief overview of issues relating to conflict covering what it is, some root causes, and the strategies people adopt in order to deal with these type of difficult situations.

What is Conflict?

Conflict occurs when individuals or groups are not obtaining what they need or want and are seeking their own self-interest. Sometimes the individual is not aware of the need and unconsciously starts to act out. Other times, the individual is very aware of what he/she wants and actively works at achieving that goal.

What are the causes?

The differences upon which conflict can be based come from a variety of factors...

1. Facts...How things got a certain way (who did what to whom, when and how)
2. Needs... What people believe they need in their lives to feel secure and respected? (material things, an identity to feel proud of, a sense of being treated equally, control over their own lives)
3. Values... The beliefs people hold about how things should be? (human rights and democratic values, equality of race, religion and gender and participation in civil society)

Conflict is constructive when it...

- Results in solutions to problems and issues
- Causes authentic communication
- Helps release emotion, anxiety and stress
- Builds cooperation among people, helping individuals develop understanding and interpersonal skills

Conflict is Destructive when it...

- Takes attention away from other important issues
- Undermines morale or self-concept
- Polarizes people and groups
- Leads to irresponsible and harmful behaviour

Step 3: The facilitator then explains that in order to bring the topic to life they are to reflect (individually) on a conflict type situation that they found themselves in. Focus on three questions...

1. *What happened?*
2. *What was your response?*
3. *Did it work for you?*

Step 4: Invite participants to share their example with a partner and discuss what you could have done differently. Get objective feedback from your partner on alternative responses you could have adopted.

Step 5: The facilitator receives the feedback from the pairs and uses this to lead the group towards a discussion on the many different approaches there are to dealing with conflict.

The facilitator gives a brief input on...

The four different types of conflict resolution strategies

1. Avoidance – Prevents the conflict surfacing
2. Defusing – ‘cooling’ the emotions

3. Containment – maintaining tight control over what surfaces
4. Confrontation – Getting all issues out in the open

Group discussion

In your case studies which one did you employ?

Are there times when all four approaches might be appropriate? In what type of situations?

Step 6: The facilitator then follows up with some theories about:

Individual styles for handling conflict

Five styles are identified with each one representing varying degrees of assertiveness (the extent to which individuals endeavour to meet their own needs) and cooperativeness (the degree to which others needs are considered and met) in conflict.

Competitors

Pursue their own interests at the expense of the other person. This win/lose approach to conflict is often based on using power to intimidate or coerce people.

Accommodators

Neglect their own interests in order to meet the needs and concerns of the other. Giving in to the other party rather than standing up for one's rights is a characteristic of an accommodating person.

Avoiders

Will not address conflict. They withdraw from conflict situations or will postpone confrontation indefinitely or manoeuvre around issues to avoid conflict. They do not pursue their interests or the interests of the other party.

Compromisers

Explore the issue of a conflict and seek a common middle ground such as splitting the differences. They are interested in mutually agreeable solutions.

Collaborators

Strive to discover solutions which meet the needs of both parties as fully as possible. They confront people on issues to seek resolution. This is described as a win/win approach to conflict.

Step 7: Group discussion

Do you recognise yourself in any of those listed? Are there any other styles you believe exist other than those mentioned here?

Step 8: The facilitator tells the group that we are now moving from the personal position to the global position and asks participants to comment on how different interest groups (cultural, religious etc.) deal with conflict and how does this relate to the topic of radicalisation?

Materials needed

Summary information sheet covering some key features of conflict (root causes, strategies etc.)

Methodology

Brainstorming, Theoretical inputs, Case study analysis, Working in pairs, Large group discussion

Advice for Trainer

Good opportunity to focus on how people adopt different types of approaches when dealing with conflict, placing the emphasis on the behaviour rather than on the person so the facilitator can address the issue of 'bad' behaviour without personalising things.

Source / Literature

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