

# Navigating Conflict to Create a Thriving Workplace Culture

Alan Butler, Psy.D.

Maresa Aguon, MS



# Learning Objectives

▶ Definition of communication and conflict

▶ Identify common sources of conflict in organizations

▶ Learn strategies for proactive conflict management and active listening

▶ How to build a culture of collaboration and respect

▶ How diversity impacts communication

▶ How to create an action plan for cultivating a positive workplace culture

# True Colors Test

The True Colors Test is based on the work of the personality theorist Don Lowry.

The True Colors Test postulates that human temperament falls into one of four categories, each with its own strengths and weaknesses.



**Scoring Instructions: If any of the scores in the colored boxes are less than 5 or greater than 20 you have made an error. Please go back and read the instructions**



**Total Orange  
Score**

Add the boxes:

A, H, K, N, S



**Total Green  
Score**

Add the boxes:

D, E, L, P, Q



**Total Blue  
Score**

Add the boxes:

C, F, J, O, R



**Total Gold  
Score**

Add the boxes:

B, G, I, M, T

# Oranges

- Are free and spontaneous
- Are impulsive risk-takers
- Are active & optimistic
- Resist commitment
- Can become virtuosos
- Thrive on crisis
- Like to be the center of attention
- Have great endurance
- Need variety
- Are dynamic, animated communicators
- Are competitive
- Deal with the here and now
- Are bold in relationships
- Are generous
- Have difficulty finding acceptance
- Bring excitement to society



# Greens

- Are innovative and logical
- Seek to understand the world
- Need to be competent
- Require intellectual freedom
- Question authority
- Push themselves to improve
- Seek perfection in play
- Are slow to make decisions
- Value concise communication
- Enjoy intriguing discussions
- Are sometimes oblivious to emotions
- Are detached
- Believe work is play
- Analyze and rearrange systems
- Focus on the future
- Bring innovation to society





# Blues

- Are in search of themselves
- Need to feel unique
- Look for symbolism
- Value close relationships
- Encourage expression
- Desire quality time with loved ones
- Compromise and cooperate
- Nurture people, plants and animals
- Look beyond the surface
- Make decisions based on feelings
- Need harmony
- Are adaptable
- Are drawn to literature
- Get involved in causes
- Are committed to ideals
- Bring unity to society





# Golds

- Are dutiful and stable
- Want to be self-sufficient
- Value organization
- Desire punctuality
- Schedule their lives
- Measure worth by completion
- Are goal-oriented
- Value rules
- Prepare for the future
- Believe work comes before play
- Safeguard tradition
- Prefer order and cleanliness
- Are responsible and dedicated
- Enjoy positions of authority
- Desire structure
- Bring stability to society



# As you reflect on True Colors and conflict resolution...

- Think about your own personality style as well as the personality styles you have clashed with the most
- Jot down a scenario you have experienced or witnessed between two people with different styles

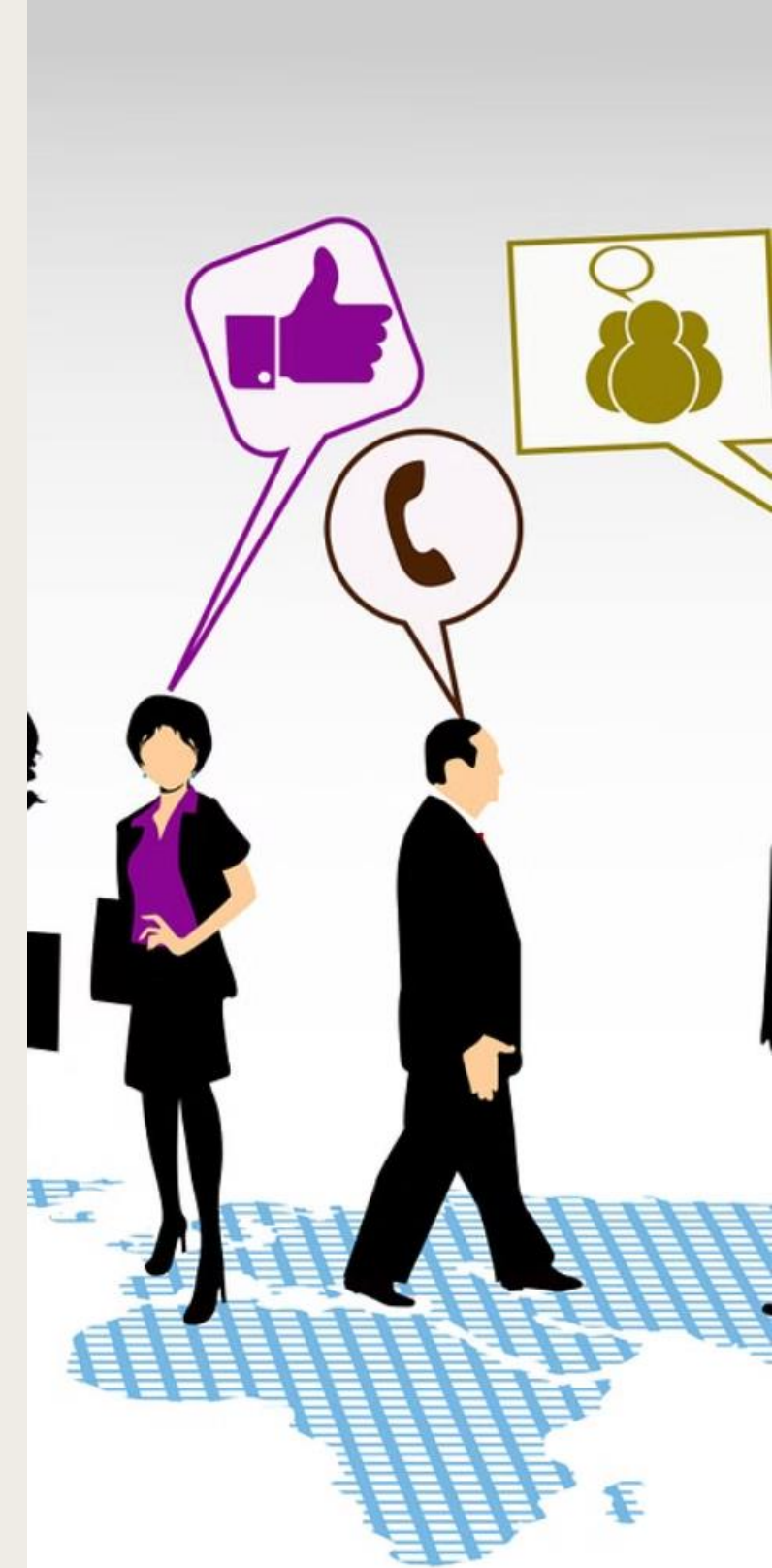


# What is Communication?

**A process by which information is exchanged**

between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior (Merriam-Webster, 2024)

**Includes verbal and non-verbal communication**







# Human Brains are Wired to Build Relationships

- “Hardwired to Connect”
- Brains Grow in Relationships
- Mirror Neurons



# Neuroplasticity

- Neural pathways can change due to positive relationships
  - Improve pathways that we use, lose pathways that we don't.
- For managers and HR, the idea here is that even if we are not used to using effective communication or new practices we talk about here, we can learn them over time because our brains have neuroplasticity.

# Conclusions about Communication

**Communication and relationships are a core part of being human**

Communication and relationships are fundamental aspects of human existence.

**Our brains are wired to encourage connections between people**

The human brain is naturally inclined to foster connections and relationships among individuals.

**Our brains can change over time with interactions between people**

The human brain has the capacity to adapt and change through interactions and experiences with others.

**HR and management can improve the functioning of organizations by encouraging positive communication and conflict practices**

Human Resources and management play a vital role in enhancing organizational performance by promoting positive communication and conflict resolution practices.



# What is Conflict?

- To be different, opposed, or contradictory: to fail to be in agreement or accord (Merriam-Webster, 2024)
- A possible interaction of communication

- Healthy vs Unhealthy conflict
- Healthy conflict results in compromise and understanding, while unhealthy conflict results in resentment, hurt, and anger



# Impact of Chronic Conflict on Workplace Culture

- Impaired work performance
- Low morale
- Low job satisfaction
- Increased costs to your business as a whole
- Negative impact on physical and mental health
- Increased turnover



# Identifying Common Sources of Conflict in Organizations

Disagreements about how to provide services



Dress code policies

Shift changes

Nepotism/feeling you are being treated unfairly

Inadequate training

# Identifying Common Sources of Conflict in Organizations

**Bullying/harassment**



**Tasks added to job description  
("duties as assigned")**



**Personality conflicts**



**Workload disagreements**





## Barriers to communication in the workplace

**Fear of retaliation:** Negative consequences for speaking up or expressing their opinions.

**Fear of losing job:** Concerns about job security can hinder communication and transparency.

**Groupthink (Janis, 1982):** The tendency for group members to conform to consensus views.

**Blame:** Leads to being defensive and withdrawing from communication.

**How we perceive workers (theory Y/X managers):** Differences in managerial perceptions of employees' motivations and capabilities can create communication barriers.



# Culture of separation

- Differences in positions and responsibilities can create barriers in hierarchical structures
- Admin is seen by front-line staff as separate and can't understand the struggles of front-line staff
- Front-line staff are seen by admin as unwilling to follow procedures and rules
- HR can be the bridge between the two

# Strategies for Proactive Conflict Management

1

Instead of blaming, see yourself and the employee as a team trying to problem solve the issue (no-fault problem solving)

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2

Utilize quarterly or semi-annual confidential surveys to identify brewing conflicts

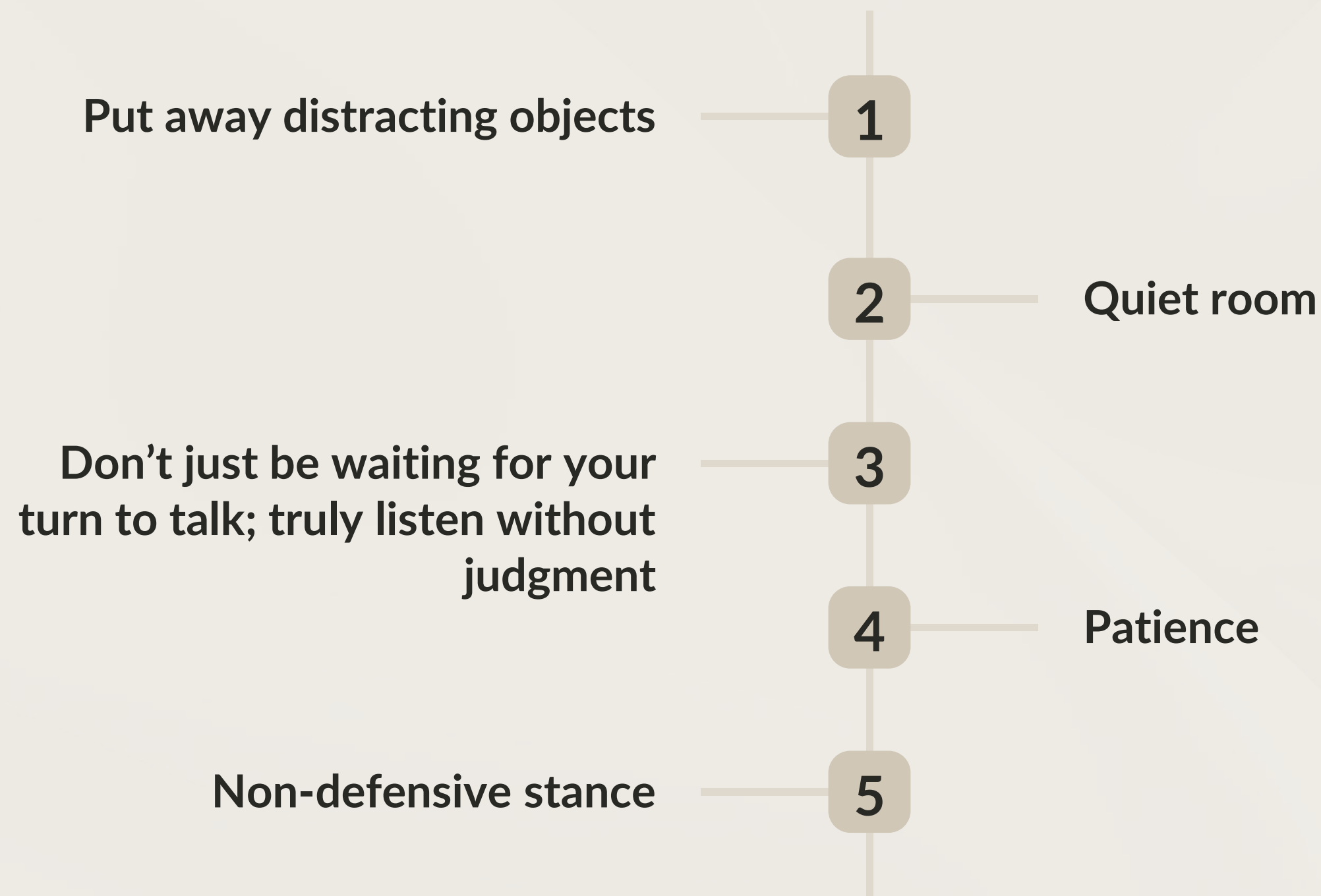
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3

Don't ignore conflict



# Techniques for Effective Communication and Active Listening



# Verbal Active Listening

- Provide accurate reflections
- Ask clarifying questions
- Ask open ended questions
  - Avoid “why” questions

# Body Language Active Listening

- Friendly eye contact
- Open body language
- Nodding head
- Facial expressions








**ARE YOU A GOOD LISTENER?** 

 YouTube 

**4 things all great listeners know...**

Dig into different strategies that can improve your listening skills so you can become a high quality listener. -- It's easy to tell when...

 05:07

# Common Pitfalls: Cognitive Biases

## 1 Halo Effect

Tendency for positive impressions of a person, company, country, brand, or product in one area to positively influence one's opinion or feelings

## 2 Horn Effect

Tendency for positive impressions of a person, company, country, brand, or product in one area to negatively influence one's opinion or feelings

## 3 Confirmation Bias

Tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms or supports one's prior beliefs or values

# Building a Culture of Collaboration and Respect

- Develop organizational surveys that are truly confidential
- Visit front-line staff in their workspace
- Demonstrate these times as priority
- Create safe spaces for open communication through confidentiality and earning trust from employees
- Groupthink: encourage and reward skepticism, appoint someone to play devil's advocate, bring in outside opinions, leadership not stating their opinion before group discussion



# Leveraging Diversity and Inclusion to Mitigate Conflict

- Encourage employees to share their individual cultures
- Celebrate cultural differences and how they contribute to more flexible ways of thinking

# Creating an Action Plan for Cultivating a Positive Workplace Culture

An action plan is essential for fostering a positive workplace culture. It involves identifying key areas for improvement and implementing strategies to promote collaboration, respect, and inclusivity. By creating a clear roadmap, organizations can actively work towards a harmonious and supportive work environment.





# Implementing Conflict Resolution Best Practices

- Policies & Procedures
- Be aware of power differences
- Avoid bringing up the past
- Acknowledge criticism and avenues for change



# True Colors Activity

Using the principles of True Colors, let's try to expand our abilities to see things from a different perspective.

Please divide yourselves into groups of 4-6 people







1. Pick a scenario involving a conflict (disagreement, misunderstanding, insubordination)
2. Discuss the True Colors personality styles involved and how each perspective is illustrated
3. Brainstorm 2 strategies to resolve
4. Discuss the importance of expanding our default reactions in light of these insights

# Take aways to implement in professional and personal relationships

- Utilize active listening skills
- Practice non-defensiveness
- Reflect on your own personal communication style
- Engage empathy
- Apply compromise
- Create a culture where employees work together as a team against the problem

# What IHP can offer companies

## **Crisis Response**

Providing support for critical incidents such as suicide and accidents.

## **Individualized Presentations**

Customized presentations tailored to organizations.

## **EAP**

Programs for employees dealing with personal or work-related challenges.

## **Career Counseling**

Guidance and support for employees in their career development.

## **Individual and Couples Therapy**

Therapeutic services for individuals and couples to address psychological and emotional challenges.

## **Psychological Testing**

Assessment services to evaluate psychological traits, abilities, and conditions.





# International Health Providers

**655 Harmon Loop Rd Ste 108 Dededo, Guam 96929**

**[patient.services@ihpmedicalgroup.com](mailto:patient.services@ihpmedicalgroup.com)**

**Phone: (671)633-4447    Fax: (671)633-4452**

**WhatsApp: (671)480-3833**