



## Managing Team Conflict

Conflict is a daily reality for all team members. Team members' needs and values inevitably come into conflict with the needs and values of others. Some of the conflicts are minor and can be managed easily while others have a greater intensity and require a strategy for effective resolution. The ability to resolve team conflict is the most important skill that team members can develop.

### Causes of Team Conflict

To gain better understanding of the causes of conflict, we will examine five perspectives that contribute to conflict situations.

**Personality:** Personality differences contribute the most to creating conflict situations in team settings. Such differences can be as simple as whether members are introverted or extroverted, make decisions based on facts and logic or intuition and feelings, or whether members are spontaneous or planners in how they organize their environment.

**Values:** Team members often express different points of view based on a set of values carried with them into any team situation. When team members discuss the work of the team, their values act as driving forces that control their responses and interactions. For example, if one team member believes in working through a difficult situation in a collaborative manner (value = working collaboratively) and the other believes that competition is the only way to respond (value = competition), team members will have a hard time managing their differences based on the values they bring into the situation.

**Perspective:** Team members have different ways of seeing and experiencing the world. Although differences in team member perspectives can be a positive attribute for the team, the differences in perspective can be the cause of conflict on the team.

**Goals:** Some team members have personal agendas that may be different from team goals. These are called "hidden agendas"

or undisclosed individual outcomes. Such agendas may be achieved at the expense of other team members.

**Culture:** Since many teams are make up of individuals from diverse backgrounds, different cultural attitudes, values, and beliefs may cause conflict within the team. The inability of team members to understand different world views and appreciate the richness that diversity brings to the team contributes to team conflict.