



Managing Conflict Productively

Lesson Guide

EQ

DASHBOARD

Goals

This classroom session will enable the learner to:

1. define Productive Conflict
2. utilize the 5 Rules of Productive Conflict
3. identify the 4 Thinking Traps of Conflict and apply the Matrix Competencies for solutions

Pework

Learners need to have a preliminary understanding of what it means to manage conflict productively and its relationship to EQ Agility. The Introduction to Emotional Intelligence provided on the Matrix Insights EQ Dashboard Resource Center gives you the material necessary for introducing EQ to the classroom. See: www.eqdashboard.com/resources center.

1. Have students watch the TED Talk video “Dare to Disagree” by Margaret Heffernan at https://www.ted.com/talks/margaret_heffernan_dare_to_disagree

Summary

Leaders, who are skilled at managing conflict productively, utilize these specific competencies:

- Self-Awareness
- Openness to Others
- Perspective Taking
- Tolerance
- Listening Generously
- Reality Testing
- Collaboration
- Conflict Management
- Effective Confrontation
- Constructive Discontent

Maximize

To maximize this classroom session, set up our class in the EQ Dashboard and pre-select the designated competencies for students to review and be prepared to discuss.

Script

The following script allows for exploring the session topic.

- 0-5 Minutes** Introduce class topic, discuss with the class that using conflict productively can lead to innovation and creativity. Share a personal example of when this has worked. Discuss the ROI for companies with regard to the power of EQ when focused toward leading for productive conflict. Share the Thomas/Kilmann definition of Conflict.
- 6-15 minutes** In small groups, discuss Worksheet #1 – The 5 Rules of Productive Conflict which come directly from the TED Talk “Dare to Disagree”.
- 16-25 minutes** Debrief Worksheet #1 with the class. Have students discuss their findings.
- 26-40 minutes** Worksheet #2, The 4 Thinking Traps. Which of the 10 Identified Matrix Insights Competencies would have a direct and positive effect on these traps? Debrief with class.
- 41-50 minutes** Using Worksheet #3: EQ Related Competencies for Productive Conflict, have students specifically address ways they can develop their ability to manage Productive Conflict.
- 51-55 minutes** Debrief the assignment.

Worksheet #1

5 Rules of Productive Conflict

Directions

Directions: Have students pair up to record and discuss the 5 Rules of Productive Conflict which they should have gleaned from the TED Talk “Dare to Disagree” by Margaret Heffernan.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Handout this out after the students have attempted to remember and discuss the 5 Rules.

1. Appoint a devil's advocate. Someone whose excellence is demonstrated by the quality of questions they ask. Great questions include: “What are the best reasons *not* to do this?” “What don't we know that, if we did know, would change our decision?” “If we had more money or time, what would we do?” “If this were a documentary, what would be the narrative arc?” It's important that different people play the role of devil's advocate: if it is always the same person, they'll get tuned out – and burned out

2. Find allies. If you have concerns, try asking others privately, “Are you okay with this? Does anything about this bother you? Is there another way to frame this question?” Having allies allows you to work together to be creative and solve the problem.

3. Listen for what is NOT being said. If the conversation is being framed about money, consider what is not being talked about. If everyone's talking technology, what have they left out of their equation? Sometimes it's helpful to bring in an outsider to help with this. They should do nothing but listen. Then, ask for their impressions – not recommendations. They may notice trends that people embroiled in the conversation simply can't.

4. Imagine you cannot do what you all want to do. In other words, think about what you would do if you could fire someone, if you could change the timetable, or if you were allowed to cancel the deal. If you could do any of those things – would you still proceed with your plan? What are the hidden orthodoxies nobody is challenging?

5. After a decision is made, declare a cooling off period. Ask everyone to go home and think about the decision on their own as well as discuss it with their family. Come back after a prescribed amount of time and ask the group: does the decision still look great?

Explains Heffernan, “All of these guidelines are neutral and designed to aid exploration rather than judgment. There's never any reason not to try these – who doesn't want to make better decisions?”

Worksheet #2

Thinking Traps 1-4

Thinking Trap 1

The first one is “Assume you are Right,” yet, in conflict we will be more successful if we start thinking this way: “Assume you have partial knowledge.” It’s very easy to draw conclusions from our own frame of reference and our own information base. Yet, when we work in a company, we rarely, if ever, have the complete picture. Give you an example.

Which of the 10 Identified Matrix Insights Competencies would have a direct and positive effect on these traps?

Thinking Trap 2

People “see themselves as more reasonable than others.” You can see why it’s so easy to fall into this trap, because we live in our own heads and own worlds. Yet, when we’re in conflict it is this very thinking trap that shuts down communication and prevents the conflict from being resolved. In conflict, we have to be open to granting legitimacy to other perspectives. It doesn’t mean we have to agree all of the time, but we have to open up our minds to see how other viewpoints might be true for that person.

The people who are most effective at resolving conflicts and driving results are those who really listen to different viewpoints and who challenge themselves to say, “how could that work?” or, “how could that be better than what I was thinking?”

Which of the 10 Identified Matrix Insights Competencies would have a direct and positive effect on these traps?

Thinking Trap 3

We assign negative attributes and motives to others. There is a good deal of research around this and it's called "attribution theory." The theory states that we all look to explain the cause of other people's behavior. And, when the behavior is not favorable we attribute it to negative motives or intentions on that person's part. Even worse, we attribute it to some unchangeable character flaw. For example, when someone doesn't share important information in a timely manner we may assume that the person is "power hungry" and intentionally withholding information because they see information as power, and they want to be the smartest person on the team.

The productive thinking habit would encourage us to change our way of thinking and "assume positive intentions." In this example, that could mean assuming that the person has a very good reason for not sharing the information in a timely manner. Perhaps he wanted to get more complete information before sharing it. Perhaps he wanted to pull the whole team together and share the information at the same time with everyone.

Which of the 10 Identified Matrix Insights Competencies would have a direct and positive effect on these traps?

Thinking Trap 4

We tend to “Hold others accountable for problems.” Well, this sounds perfectly reasonable. We do need to hold people accountable. Yet, this thinking is a trap! Could I be the one accountable? This trap is really about people who point the finger and focus on others, and not examine how they, too, may have very well contributed to the problem. When it comes to conflict, it is very likely that all parties have a role in the situation, and all parties could do things better or differently.

Which of the 10 Identified Matrix Insights Competencies would have a direct and positive effect on these traps?
