

Conflict Management for coaches / leaders

Offers insight into conflict management techniques for coaches, including outlining the differences between constructive and destructive conflict, and the steps coaches can take to de-escalate a destructive conflict situation

In your role it is almost inevitable that, at some point you will experience conflict in one form or another. The first thing to remember is that conflict is not necessarily bad; nor does it have to be a negative or disruptive aspect of your relationship.

Research (and real life experiences) show that conflict situations can occur for many reasons, including:

- Availability of you or the person(s) you are working with
- Radically different opinions or values leading to disagreement over an issue
- Not agreeing on realistic goals
- A perceived lack of commitment
- Poor communication
- A clash of personalities
- Poor management by the project manager.

Constructive conflict

Constructive conflict, sometimes referred to as '**creative friction**' in research, is more likely to occur in an open relationship, where all those involved **respect each other's views** and are not afraid to challenge each other. This may involve one or more people having to **move out of their current 'comfort zone'** and reflect

critically on all aspects of themselves including their personal or professional opinions, beliefs, values or behaviour.

Outcomes that can come from constructive conflict include:

- Allowing people to air their problems or disagreements, and discuss them constructively
- Releasing tensions
- Prompting new ideas/ alternate ways of looking at an issue
- Helping promote understanding between people in the group
- Building cooperation and solution-finding mindsets within the group.

Destructive conflict

Destructive conflict occurs when an individual is seen to be simply wrong in their beliefs, opinions etc or **intransigent**, in that they **do not appear to be receptive to alternative views**, values or behaviours.

Outcomes that can come from destructive conflict include:

- Acting as a distraction to the group
- Being hurtful to certain members of the group
- Increasing or emphasising the differences in the group
- Undermining parts of the group, or individual members
- Alienating those in the group whose opinions go against the majority.