**Growing Through Conflict: Healthy Workplace Communication**

**Learner Guide**

**Event Description:** We are all so busy! Who has time to deal with conflicts? When conflict occurs, and we are confronted with a colleague, library patron, supervisor, or board member who is frustrated and upset, it can be tempting to identify a quick fix. However, when we do take the time to practice clear communication to uncover what people really need, we can get to better outcomes. Healthy communication involves:

* Actions that show you are really listening
* Communication with people who are angry or upset in a way that their needs can be addressed and resolved
* Knowing your own emotions and needs, and effective ways to express them

Practicing healthy communication skills will boost your self-confidence and contribute to a happier workplace.

Presented by: **Anna Shelton**, WebJunction

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| **What are your goals for viewing this webinar?** |
| **Personal Goals** |  |
| **Team Goals** |  |

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| **Part 1: Growing your own skills**  |
| **Growing your own skills: Activity *[10 minutes]*** |
| 1. Look through the list of values on the next page. **Choose one value** that is very personally important to you – something that you really need in your workplace order to feel happy and be your “best self.” Write it down on a piece of paper.
2. If possible, find a partner for these reflections. Ask your partner:
	1. What value did you write down?
	2. Think of a time (work, home, school, community) when that value or need was really met. What actions did others take that made you feel your value was seen and understood?
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| AccountabilityAppreciationAuthenticity AwarenessBelongingCalmnessChallengeCommitmentCommunication CommunityCompetenceConsiderationConsistencyContributionControlCooperationCreativityDeterminationDignity DiversityEffectivenessEqualityExcellenceFreedomFunGenerosityHard WorkHonestyInclusionIndependenceIntelligenceJusticeLeadershipLearningLoyaltyOrderOriginalityPartnership Peace-of-mind PositivityPracticalityPreparednessProfessionalismPurposeRespect SensitivitySpaceSpeedStabilityStructureSuccessTeamworkThoughtfulnessTrust |

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| **Growing your own skills: Discussion/Reflection Question *[10 minutes]*** |
| Some workplaces already have a **set of values** that guide everyone’s work (such as diversity, teamwork, respect, leadership, etc.). In addition, each of us brings our own **personal values**, and these values often can’t be negotiated or compromised. **What actions within our own control can we take to help express our needs and values, while also respecting others’ needs and values?**  |
| **Part 2: Understanding others** |
| **Understanding others: Scenario *[15 minutes]*** |
| Phuong likes his job, but he really does not like working the same shift as Lisa. They both have the same job. Whenever someone asks Lisa a question, she shrugs and says, “I don’t know” and tells them to ask Phuong. Phuong is frustrated with this, since sometimes he cannot keep up with all the work. He decides to talk with Lisa, and finds a quiet time. He says, “Hey, there’s something I’m hoping we can talk about. I noticed that when we work together it seems like you send lots of people over to talk with me. I of course enjoy helping our customers, but **when I see you** shrug your shoulders and tell people to talk to me instead of you, **I feel** frustrated **because** I don’t understand why you aren’t able to help them sometimes. I want to feel like I can count on you. Can you help me understand what’s going on?”1. Put yourself in Lisa’s shoes. Give her the benefit of the doubt. **Think of as many reasons as you can** for why she might be behaving this way.
2. Imagine that Lisa honestly shares some of these reasons with Phuong. **Think of as many solutions as you can** that they could identify together to address both of their concerns.
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| **Understanding others: Discussion/Reflection Question [15 minutes]** |
| What does it take in order for you **to feel safe raising a concern or frustration** directly with one of your colleagues? Do you have ideas about things we can do in our workplace **to be more open and communicative** with each other?  |
| Review the **reframing examples** Anna shared in the webinar, and with those in mind, keep track of the statements of frustration you hear over the next week from colleagues or patrons. Later, reflect on possible underlying values and consider ways you might provide supportive reframing to acknowledge their values. Next time you hear them express frustration, consider responding with this positive reframing in mind. For more information about reframing, see this 3-minute Marian Conflict Resolution Center Video, “Mediation Skills: Reframing” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=us3jWEy0yqY>

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| **Statement:** | **Positive Reframe:** |
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| **Part 3: Helping others through conflict**  |
| **Helping others through conflict: Activity [15 minutes]** |
| Watch this 9-minute TedX video called “How to talk to your Dad: Turning Conflict into Conversation” featuring Madeline Poultridge: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzhJb5jcH58>. Imagine that two of your co-workers have been in a long-simmering conflict for the past several weeks. You’re friends with both of them, and they have each come to complain to you about the other person, but they haven’t yet talked to each other. You ask them one of the “golden questions” that Madeline mentioned:* **What is your greatest concern?**
* **What do you most want to see happen?**
* **What do you most want the other person to understand?**

After listening to their response, what phrases might you say to them or what questions might you ask to help gently encourage them to talk directly to the person they’re in conflict with?  |
| **Helping others through conflict: Discussion/Reflection [15 minutes]** |
| Many of the participants attending the webinar had questions about **how to handle conflict or difficult situations with their supervisors or managers**. Imagine someone comes to you about a problem they are having with their supervisor. You want to support them, but you also want to help them decide whether it’s the right step to talk directly with their supervisor. **What questions might you ask to help your friend decide what they want to do next? If they don’t feel comfortable talking with their supervisor, what other resources might be available to them?**  |
| **Action Plan:** (include next steps, who, when, etc.) |
| **One action I will take in the next week to practice my conflict management skills:****One thing I will try to share my skills and create a healthier workplace:**  |