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The UCSF Conflict Competence Training for Managers

A model for building a workplace community of practice



Facilitator Guide

Maga Jackson-Triche, MD, MSHS

Ellen Goldstein, MA

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Annette Cañeda, EdD

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For those willing to take a step towards harmony and peace

The image of the dove is used throughout this guide to symbolize advocacy for peace.



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This program reflects the collective effort of many individuals committed to fostering respectful dialogue, psychological safety, and strong leadership across UCSF.

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Finally, we thank the facilitators, coaches, managers, supervisors, and emerging leaders who engage in this work. Your willingness to reflect, practice, and grow is what turns learning into lasting impact.

Contributing Authors

The contributing authors bring experience in leadership development, conflict competence, coaching, and inclusive facilitation across academic, clinical, and administrative settings. Their combined perspectives ensure this guide is practical, research-informed, and grounded in real workplace contexts.

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deck for the following sessions:



Program Foundations

Facilitating Conflict Competence with
PRIDE



Introduction

During and immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic, many healthcare institutions, including ours, experienced a noticeable increase in staff stress, burnout, and workplace tension. These challenges were shaped not only by the intensity of the pandemic itself, but also by a broader external climate marked by polarization and ongoing uncertainty. At UCSF, this showed up as an increase in both informal and formal reports of workplace disputes, each requiring different levels of response and support.

As we looked more closely at these situations, a consistent pattern emerged. In many cases, the conflict had not been addressed early. Sometimes it went unrecognized; other times it was acknowledged but minimized, or avoided altogether in the hope that it would resolve on its own. Just as important, many managers shared that they felt unprepared and undertrained to handle conflict situations effectively. They wanted to do the right thing—for their teams and for the organization—but felt that they lacked practical tools and confidence.

This reality became the impetus for the **UCSF Conflict Competence Training for Managers (CCTM)**. The purpose of CCTM—and of this facilitator guide—is to support managers at all levels in developing the awareness, skills, and confidence needed to recognize and navigate the kinds of conflicts that commonly arise in the workplace. This includes conflict rooted in differences across culture, ethnicity, race, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, professional roles, and lived experience. At its core, this work is about upholding our shared commitment to the UCSF stated PRIDE values of **Professionalism, Respect, Integrity, Diversity, and Excellence (PRIDE)**—especially when conversations are difficult.

The need for this skill is echoed in leadership research and practice. In the July/August 2025 cover article of *Harvard Business Review*, “**The Conflict-Intelligent Leader**,” Peter Coleman emphasizes that organizations thrive when leaders intentionally build conflict intelligence and skill at every level (Coleman, 2025). Rather than treating conflict as something to avoid, effective leaders create safe, facilitated spaces for difficult conversations and model constructive engagement. Research from Columbia University’s CIQ-Leadership team reinforces this finding: when leaders demonstrate strong conflict intelligence, employees report more collaborative and less avoidant organizational cultures. In short, how leaders handle conflict shapes how everyone else does.

One of the earliest lessons new managers learn is that conflict is common and inevitable because people bring different experiences, assumptions, and expectations to the workplace, and unintended misunderstandings are part of that reality. When conflict remains unresolved, it can erode trust, weaken collaboration, and contribute to disengagement, burnout, and unprofessional behavior. The challenge is not the presence of conflict but addressing and mitigating the adverse impact of conflict when it is ignored or mishandled.

For this reason, the ability to recognize and address conflict is a foundational leadership skill. Throughout this training, we intentionally use the term **conflict competence** rather than *conflict resolution*. Using the term “conflict competence” reflects the understanding that becoming competent is not a one-time fix, but a learnable, practice-based skill. With the right mindset, tools, and support, managers can strengthen their capacity to assess conflict thoughtfully and respond in ways that preserve dignity, foster inclusion, and support both people and performance.

Thank you to all of you who take on the challenge of developing and transmitting these skills. Your dedication, curiosity, and commitment to modeling conflict competence play a critical role in helping managers—and organizations—grow.

Maga Jackson-Triche, MD, MSHS
Program Founder

PRIDE in Practice: What This Program Asks of Facilitators

This program is grounded in UCSF's **PRIDE values**, which guide not only *what* is taught, but *how* it is facilitated:

- **Professionalism:** Approach conflict as a leadership responsibility, not a personal failure.
- **Respect:** Honor diverse perspectives, identities, and lived experiences—especially in moments of disagreement.
- **Integrity:** Facilitate with honesty, neutrality, and consistency, even when conversations are uncomfortable.
- **Diversity:** Recognize how culture, power, and identity shape conflict and communication.
- **Excellence:** Commit to continuous learning, reflection, and skill-building in conflict competence.

Facilitators model these values by creating psychologically safe spaces where difficult conversations can lead to understanding, growth, and stronger working relationships.

About the Program

The Conflict Competence Training for Managers (CCTM) equips leaders with the skills, confidence, and shared language needed to navigate conflict constructively in complex, people-centered environments. (Runde & Flanagan, 2010; Center for Creative Leadership, 2019) Grounded in UCSF PRIDE values, the program strengthens leaders' ability to engage in respectful dialogue, build psychological safety, and make thoughtful decisions about resolution, repair, and referral. (Edmondson, 2018)



CCTM is intentionally designed as a **three-part learning model** that builds individual capability while cultivating a sustainable **workplace community of practice**, as shown in the image.

First, participants develop a **skills foundation** through interactive sessions that normalize conflict as a natural part of work and help leaders recognize conflict as a source of information rather than failure (Jehn, 1997; Gallo, 2015). These sessions provide practical tools such as reflective listening, conflict style awareness, ARTS, and structured facilitation approaches (Rogers, 1957;

CPP, 2007; Stone et al., 2010; Moore, 2014). Emphasis is placed on awareness, preparation, and repeated practice to support confident application in real workplace situations. (Siegel, 2012; Argyris, 1990)

Second, **peer coaching** in small group sessions provides a confidential space for participants to apply these skills to current challenges. Through guided reflection, peer inquiry, and feedback, participants deepen insight, strengthen judgment, and adapt tools to their specific roles and contexts. (Parker et al., 2008; Schein, 2013). Learning is accelerated through observation as well as practice, allowing participants to benefit from multiple perspectives and shared sense-making. (Bandura, 1977)

Finally, **mentoring through peer learning** emerges across sessions and coaching groups. Participants learn from one another's experiences, perspectives, and strategies—reducing isolation, building trust, and reinforcing conflict competence as a shared leadership practice rather than an individual responsibility. (Runde & Flanagan, 2010; Edmondson, 2018)

Together, these components foster a community of practice that supports consistent, values-aligned approaches to conflict across teams and departments, contributing to stronger relationships, effective collaboration, and a healthier workplace culture at UCSF. (Senge, 1990; Center for Creative Leadership, 2019)

Beyond structure and content, the success of this program depends on how learning is facilitated—particularly the ability to maintain psychological safety, encourage inquiry over advice, and model emotional regulation under pressure. (Chou & Cooley, 2018; Goleman, 2006)

How Learning Occurs

The Conflict Competence Training for Managers (CCTM) is grounded in **adult learning principles**, recognizing that experienced professionals learn best when learning is relevant, practice-based, and connected to real workplace challenges. Rather than relying on lecture, the program emphasizes shared language, experiential learning, and reflection. Participants apply tools such as reflective listening, conflict style awareness, and structured dialogue in realistic scenarios—drawing on prior experience while building new skills. This approach reflects UCSF PRIDE values of **Professionalism and Excellence** through disciplined practice and continuous improvement.

The learning design is also informed by **neuroscience**, particularly how the brain responds to threat, emotion, and psychological safety. Structured practice in listening and regulated dialogue helps reduce defensiveness, support emotional regulation, and increase openness to learning. Facilitators create environments that promote **Respect, Integrity, and Diversity** by encouraging multiple perspectives, acknowledging identity and power dynamics, and normalizing discomfort as part of growth. Over time, repeated practice, feedback, and peer learning help participants integrate skills into daily leadership behaviors—strengthening trust, collaboration, and values-aligned conflict engagement.

Understanding the Learners

Participants typically include managers, supervisors, and emerging leaders from both clinical and administrative settings, with varying levels of leadership experience. While their roles differ, they share responsibility for navigating complex interpersonal dynamics under time pressure and high stakes. Participants bring a wide range of experiences with conflict—some approach it directly, others avoid it, and many hold mixed beliefs shaped by past experience, culture, identity, and organizational norms. Emotionally, participants may arrive cautious or guarded, particularly if they are managing active or recent conflicts.

Readiness for learning varies across the group. Many participants are motivated to improve communication and build trust, yet may feel discomfort practicing new behaviors or discussing conflict openly. The program meets participants where they are by emphasizing psychological safety, pacing learning intentionally, and moving from reflection to practice. Facilitators play a critical role in recognizing these dynamics—supporting engagement, reinforcing confidentiality and respect, and helping participants see discomfort not as risk, but as a signal of meaningful learning.

The Program Arc and Learning Progression

The program follows a **progressive arc of leadership growth**, with each session building on the last to deepen awareness, strengthen skill, and expand discernment—an approach consistent with adult learning and systems-based leadership development. (Senge, 1990; Runde & Flanagan, 2010)

Early sessions focus on **awareness and mindset**—how conflict works, how it escalates, and how personal history and default styles shape reactions. (Jehn, 1997; Argyris, 1990; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974; CPP, 2007) By helping participants recognize patterns, assumptions, and stress responses, these sessions establish the foundation needed to respond to conflict with greater intention rather than reactivity. (Siegel, 2012; Goleman, 2006)

The program then moves into **preparation and practice**, introducing structured approaches for engaging conflict conversations, giving feedback, and facilitating dialogue between others. (Stone et al., 2010; Rogers, 1957; Moore, 2014) These sessions emphasize reflective listening, clarity of impact and expectations, and maintaining psychological safety while addressing real workplace issues. (Edmondson, 2018; Rosenberg, 2003)

Later sessions emphasize **judgment and leadership maturity**, supporting participants in discerning when to resolve, when to repair relationships, and when to involve neutral third parties such as Human Resources or the Ombuds. (Runde & Flanagan, 2010; Center for Creative Leadership, 2019; Bush & Folger, 2005) This discernment helps leaders balance care, fairness, and accountability while staying within appropriate role boundaries. (Edmondson, 2018)

Small group coaching in peer learning groups complements this arc by reinforcing integration through real-world application, reflection, and peer inquiry. (Parker et al., 2008; Schein, 2013) Learning is strengthened through observation as well as practice, allowing participants to normalize challenges, test judgment, and expand their range of responses. (Bandura, 1977)

Taken together, the sessions form a coherent narrative—from reacting to reflecting, from avoiding or fixing to engaging skillfully, and from individual capability to shared leadership practice. (Runde & Flanagan, 2010; Senge, 1990) This intentional progression builds confidence over time while supporting a consistent, values-aligned approach to conflict across the organization. (Center for Creative Leadership, 2019)

Overview of Sessions

1 Understanding Conflict & Listening to Build Trust

Understand why conflict escalates and how listening reduces defensiveness.

2 Conflict Types & Styles—Choosing Effective Responses

Increase self-awareness of default styles and choose more effective responses.

3 Preparing for Difficult Conversations

Apply tools that strengthen confidence in productive conflict conversations.

4 Having Conflict Conversations—The ARTS Framework

Use ARTS to engage conflict with empathy, clarity, and psychological safety.

5 Giving Feedback That Builds Trust

Give feedback that builds trust, learning, and performance.

6 Facilitating Conflict Between Others

Facilitate conflict between others with neutrality, structure, and safety.

7 Resolve, Repair, or Refer—Making the Right Call

Apply judgment to resolve, repair, or refer while preserving collaboration.

Peer Coaching: How Conflict Competence Grows—and How Practice Accelerates Learning

Apply skills to real situations with peer support and guided feedback.



SESSION 1

Understanding Conflict & Listening to Build Trust



Eucharistic Dove. 1215-1235. French.

*We think we listen, but very rarely do we listen
with real understanding, true empathy. Yet
listening of this very special kind is one of the
most potent forces for change that I know*

*Carl Rogers, A Way of Being (1995)
American psychologist and founder of the
humanistic approach to psychology*

Purpose

The purpose of this session is to normalize conflict as a common part of work and help managers build a foundation for handling it well. Participants learn how past experiences shape their reactions to conflict and practice reflective listening to reduce tension, build trust, and prevent small issues from escalating. This session establishes listening and curiosity as core leadership skills that everything else in the series builds on.

Learning Objectives

In this session, participants will practice how to:

- **Notice** how their past experiences influence their reactions to conflict.
- **Listen** without interrupting and reflect back what they hear.
- **Use** reflective listening to reduce tension and build understanding.

Conflict Foundations & Reflective Listening

Conflict is a natural and neutral part of human interaction—neither good nor bad on its own, but a signal that needs, expectations, or interpretations differ. (Runde & Flanagan, 2010; Jehn, 1997) When approached with curiosity rather than judgment, conflict can clarify roles, strengthen trust, and generate better decisions (Gallo, 2015; Coleman, 2025); when avoided or escalated, it can erode psychological safety, productivity, and relationships. (Edmondson, 2018; Center for Creative Leadership, 2019)

Because people interpret conflict through their history, identity, and assumptions, even small disagreements can feel personal or threatening. (Argyris, 1990; Senge, 1990) Under stress, these interpretations are often automatic, increasing the likelihood of reactive responses rather than thoughtful engagement. (Siegel, 2012; Goleman, 2006)

Reflective listening helps interrupt this escalation by reducing defensiveness, calming the threat response, and creating space for understanding. (Rogers, 1957; Siegel, 2012) Its strengths include building trust, de-escalating tension, and improving clarity (Edmondson, 2018; Schein, 2013); its limitations include requiring time, emotional regulation, and

willingness from both parties—listening alone cannot fix issues rooted in power imbalance, persistent disrespect, or lack of accountability. (Bush & Folger, 2005; Center for Creative Leadership, 2019)

Facilitators can emphasize that conflict competence starts with awareness: noticing what the conflict is really about, how we show up in it, and when reflective listening creates the conditions for productive dialogue —rather than attempting to fix or resolve too quickly. (Runde & Flanagan, 2010; Schein, 2013)

Common Workplace Scenarios

Here are a few everyday workplace scenarios that show how small misunderstandings, tone differences, or unclear expectations can quickly create tension.

- **Scheduling Strain:** Two coordinators disagree about who should handle late appointment changes; tone becomes curt in messages.
- **Email Misread:** A manager’s direct email feels “harsh” to a staff member who prefers more context.
- **Shift Report Misunderstanding:** Clinical and admin staff disagree on what information belongs in shift notes.
- **Task Ownership:** One team member feels excluded when decisions are made without their input.

Facilitator Tips

- **Begin building trust** within the learning cohort: small self-disclosures help build links between people. The first session sets the tone for open sharing through the course.
- **Normalize conflict early:** Invite reflection with, *“In your early experiences, was conflict typically avoided, solved, or confronted?”* Emphasize that conflict is normal—and can be productive when managed well. Discomfort doesn’t mean danger.
- **Model effective listening:** Demonstrate the value of role modeling responses in conversations with interest and reflection rather than immediate reactions from your own perspective: *“You’re overreacting!”* → *“It sounds like you’re frustrated—did I get that right?”*
- **Keep practice simple:** Use paired activities—listen, reflect, and ask—to reinforce

active engagement.

- **Explore underlying beliefs:** Prompt discussion with, *“A belief I hold about conflict is...”* to surface assumptions and mindset patterns.
- **Lead by example:** Your tone sets the climate. Calm, curiosity, and presence model psychological safety; avoidance and defensiveness can quickly spread.
- **Integrate insight from neuroscience:** Reflective listening activates the brain’s calming response, reduces defensiveness, and helps rebuild trust.

Session 1 Schedule

Materials & Support

Scan here to access PDF slide deck for the following sessions:



- Handout 1 —Asking Skillful Questions
- HBR Guide to Dealing with Conflict by Amy Gallo

Slides 1–2 | Welcome & Why the Series Is Important (5 min)

Purpose

Welcome participants, set the tone, and explain why conflict competence matters in this organization and moment.

What to say

“Welcome to the Conflict Competence Training for Managers. This series is about where calm meets courage in leadership.”

“UCSF work is complex and high-stakes. Managers shape team climate—and how we handle conflict has real consequences for trust, performance, and people’s experience at work.”

Facilitator tips

- Name the reality: conflict is already happening.
- Emphasize skill-building over fixing people.

If time allows

Invite a quick show of hands: “Who’s had to manage conflict recently?”

If running long

Move directly to About the Program.

Transition

“Let me briefly share how this program is designed.”

Slides 3–5 | About the Program (5 min)

Purpose

Set expectations for the series structure and learning approach.

What to say

“This program is built around practice, reflection, and peer learning over time.”

“You’ll learn tools, try them out, reflect, and come back to build skill—session by session.”

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize that progress comes from repetition.
- Reinforce that peer coaching is part of the design.

If time allows

Ask: “What helps you actually use new skills at work?”

If running long

Summarize in one sentence.

Transition

“Let’s focus on today’s session.”

Slides 6–7 | Understanding Conflict & Listening to Build Trust + Why It’s Important (5 min)

Purpose

Frame listening as the foundation of conflict competence.

What to say

“Conflict is often an early warning sign of misalignment.”

“Listening well helps prevent small tensions from turning into bigger problems.”

Facilitator tips

- Avoid positioning listening as passive.
- Emphasize prevention as well as response.

Transition

“Here’s what you’ll practice today.”

Slides 8–9 | Today’s Focus & Community Agreements (5 min)

Purpose

Set learning goals and create psychological safety.

What to say

“Today you’ll practice noticing how experience shapes reactions, and listening without fixing.”

“Listening is participation.”

Review community agreements briefly.

Facilitator tips

- Normalize silence and reflection.
- Reinforce speaking from experience.

If time allows

Invite participants to name one agreement they want to practice.

If running long

Read agreements and move on.

Transition

“Let’s start by getting to know each other.”

Slide 10 | Icebreaker: Hello! Small-Group Sharing (12 min)

Purpose

Build connection and model reflective listening.

What to say

“One person shares; one person reflects back what they heard—no fixing or advising.”

Facilitator tips

- Time-keep tightly.
- Remind reflectors to paraphrase, not summarize.

If time allows

Ask: “What was it like to be listened to without interruption?”

If running long

Reduce sharing time per person.

Transition

“Let’s zoom out to conflict more broadly.”

Slide 11 | Conflict Is Normal (3 min)

Purpose

Normalize conflict and reduce stigma.

What to say

“Conflict is normal and often signals something that needs attention.”

Facilitator tips

Keep this short and affirming.

Transition

“Let’s see how common this really is.”

Slide 12 | How Many of You Have... (5 min)

Purpose

Surface shared experience and normalize uncertainty.

What to say

Read prompts and invite hands.

Facilitator tips

- Keep energy light.
- Avoid commentary after each prompt.

Transition

“Our experiences shape how we respond to conflict.”

Slides 13–14 | Our Experience Shapes Our Responses – Pair Share (10 min)

Purpose

Build awareness of learned conflict patterns.

What to say

“Think about what conflict looked like early in your life and what messages you learned.”

Explain timing and roles clearly.

Facilitator tips

- Encourage specificity.
- Monitor emotional intensity.

If time allows

Add a second reflection question.

If running long

Do one round instead of two.

Transition

“Let’s come back together.”

Slide 15 | Debrief: Experience Shapes Responses (5 min)

Purpose

Help participants connect insight to workplace behavior.

What to ask

“What did you notice about how past experiences show up at work?”

Facilitator tips

- Validate differences.
- Avoid therapy framing.

Transition

“Let’s take a short break before we shift into listening skills.”

Slide 16 | Break (5 min)

Slides 17–18 | Reflective Listening & the Brain (7 min)

Purpose

Explain why listening reduces conflict escalation.

What to say

“When people feel dismissed, the brain goes into threat mode.”

“Reflective listening signals safety and helps the thinking part of the brain re-engage.”

Facilitator tips

- Keep neuroscience high-level and practical.
- Link back to trust.

Transition

“Listening also helps us slow down our assumptions.”

Slide 19 | Ladder of Inference (5 min)

Purpose

Introduce how assumptions escalate conflict.

What to say

“We often jump from data to conclusions without realizing it.”

Facilitator tips

- Use a simple example.
- Emphasize curiosity.

Transition

“One way to slow this down is to shift the question.”

Slide 20 | Shift the Question (3 min)

Purpose

Introduce skillful questioning.

What to say

“Skillful questions help us get out of fix-it mode and back into understanding.”

Transition

“Let’s practice.”

Slides 21–22 | Practice: Asking Skillful Questions (17 min)

Purpose

Build skill through individual and small-group practice.

What to say

“Choose a scenario, notice the story you’re telling yourself, and write 2–3 curious questions.”

Facilitator tips

- Watch for leading questions.
- Reinforce open-ended phrasing.

If time allows

Invite groups to rewrite one question.

If running long

Shorten sharing time per person.

Transition

“Let’s debrief what you noticed.”

Slide 23 | Debrief: Asking Skillful Questions (5 min)

Purpose

Reinforce insight and confidence.

What to ask

“What changed when you asked a curious question instead of fixing?”

Facilitator tips

Highlight emotional shifts.

Transition

“Let’s capture the key takeaways.”

Slide 24 | Key Takeaways (4 min)

Purpose

Anchor learning.

What to say

“Conflict is normal and gives us information.”

“Listening well helps prevent escalation.”

Transition

“Here’s what to do before next session.”

Slide 25 | Before the Next Session (4 min)

Purpose

Set up transfer and continuity.

What to say

“Practice reflective listening once this week—understand first, don’t fix.”

Explain readings/assessment briefly.

Transition

“Before you go...”

Slide 26 | Evaluation & Close (3 min)

Purpose

Close Session 1 and gather feedback.

What to say

“Please take a minute to complete the evaluation. Your feedback helps us improve the series.”

“Thank you for starting this work together.”



SESSION 2

Conflict Types & Styles: Choosing Effective Responses



Dove. 10th-11th Century. Spanish.

*The quality of our lives depends not
on whether or not we have conflicts,
but on how we respond to them.*

*Thomas Crum
Aikido Instructor and Founder of The Aiki
Approach*

Purpose

The purpose of this session is to help managers better understand what kind of conflict they are facing and how their default conflict style affects outcomes. Participants learn to distinguish between surface issues and underlying drivers of conflict, recognize their own tendencies under stress, and practice flexing their style to better fit the situation. The focus is on increasing choice and effectiveness, rather than reacting out of habit.

Learning Objectives

In this session, participants will practice how to:

- **Identify** the visible type of a conflict and what may be driving it underneath.
- **Recognize** their default conflict style under stress.
- **Explain** how different styles can help or hurt depending on the situation.

Conflict Type & Sources

Conflict at work often shows up as something visible and concrete—missed deadlines, tense meetings, sharp emails, or avoidance—but those surface behaviors are rarely the full story. (Senge, 1990; Runde & Flanagan, 2010) Conflicts generally fall into a few common types, such as **task conflict** (disagreements about priorities, goals, roles, or how work should be done), **relationship conflict** (tension rooted in trust, respect, tone, or past interactions), **process or resource conflict** (friction about workload, staffing, decision-making authority, or access to information), and **values conflict** (differences in beliefs, fairness, professionalism, or what “good work” looks like). (Jehn, 1997; Schein, 2013)

At the same time, conflicts are often driven by deeper **sources** beneath the surface, including past experiences with conflict, cultural and identity-based differences in communication, role and power dynamics, high stress or workload, unclear expectations, or unresolved issues from earlier situations. (Argyris, 1990; Goleman, 2006) When managers focus only on what’s visible, conflicts tend to repeat; when they take time to understand both the type of conflict and what’s driving it underneath, they’re better able to respond with curiosity, choose an approach that fits the situation, and decide whether the issue needs to be resolved, repaired, or referred. (Runde & Flanagan, 2010; Center for Creative Leadership, 2019)

Understanding Conflict Styles

The Thomas-Kilmann Model (TKI) describes five conflict management styles—Competing, Collaborating, Compromising, Avoiding, and Accommodating—based on the balance of assertiveness (concern for one’s own needs) and cooperativeness (concern for others’ needs). (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974; CPP, 2007) Each style has strengths and limitations depending on context.

- **Competing** can be useful for quick decisions or emergencies but may damage relationships if overused.
- **Collaborating** can lead to high-quality, durable solutions but requires time, trust, and emotional readiness.
- **Compromising** is efficient and pragmatic but may result in partial satisfaction for all parties.
- **Avoiding** can reduce immediate tension or create space to think, but unresolved issues may resurface.
- **Accommodating** can preserve harmony and relationships, but important needs or concerns may go unaddressed.

The TKI is most powerful when used situationally—helping managers assess the stakes, timing, relationships, and emotional climate before choosing an approach. (CPP, 2007; Runde & Flanagan, 2010) Rather than labeling styles as good or bad, the model encourages flexibility, showing participants how to leverage their natural tendencies while expanding their range of responses to handle conflict more effectively. (Center for Creative Leadership, 2019)

Common Workplace Scenarios

A variety of scenarios can serve as opportunities to explore effective conflict responses using TKI modes.

- **Competing Priorities:** Two project leads each claim top priority for the same analyst.
- **Feedback Resistance:** A long-tenured staff member dismisses coaching from a newer manager.
- **Meeting Overload:** Disagreement on cutting meetings for efficiency vs. maintaining communication.
- **Unequal Workload:** One team member quietly takes on extra tasks while another coasts.
- **Shared Resource:** Two departments dispute who “owns” shared clinic space.

Facilitator Tips

- **Start with real experiences:** Ask, “What’s a recent situation where something felt off at work?” to ground the discussion in real examples.
- **Use everyday language:** Replace jargon with relatable terms such as *misunderstanding*, *tension*, or *power struggle*.
- **Reframe blame:** Emphasize that conflict often stems from unmet needs or differing perspectives—not fault.
- **Acknowledge power dynamics:** Ask, “How might role, hierarchy, or authority be influencing this conflict?”
- **Consider identity and bias:** Prompt reflection with, “Could assumptions, culture, or bias be adding to the tension?”
- **Balance structure with stories:** Use simple frameworks to guide discussion while allowing time for personal examples and reflection.
- **Foster psychological safety:** Make participation flexible—encourage journaling, pair-sharing, or silent reflection as alternatives to large group discussion.

Session 2 Schedule

Materials & Support

Scan here to access PDF slide deck for the following sessions:



- Handout 2—Flexing Your Conflict Style
- HBR Guide to Dealing with Conflict by Amy Gallo

Before the Next Session

- Set up peer group assignments based on role and business function; notify participants before Session

Slides 27–28 | Welcome & Why This Is Important (5 min)

Purpose

Frame conflict types and styles as tools for choice, not labels or judgments.

What to say

Today is about understanding *what kind* of conflict you're in and *how* you tend to respond under stress."

"When we don't recognize the type of conflict or our default style, we often make things worse without meaning to."

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize fit over correctness.
- Normalize that everyone has a default style.

If time allows

Ask: "Who noticed a tense moment since our last session?"

If running long

Move directly to Today's Focus.

Transition

"Let's look at what you'll be practicing today."

Slides 29–30 | Today's Focus & Community Agreements (5 min)

Purpose

Set learning goals and reinforce psychological safety.

What to say

"Today you'll practice identifying conflict types and flexing your response."

"Conflict styles are strategies, not personalities."

Review community agreements briefly.

Facilitator tips

- Reinforce curiosity over judgment.
- Encourage pattern-level reflection, not blaming.

If time allows

Ask participants to name one agreement they want to practice.

If running long

Read agreements and continue.

Transition

“Let’s connect this to what you practiced last session.”

Slides 31–32 | From the Last Session to Today (5 min)

Purpose

Bridge from reflective listening to diagnostic skills.

What to say

“Last session focused on listening to understand before fixing.”

“What did you notice when you slowed down and reflected instead of reacting?”

Facilitator tips

- Highlight prevention and de-escalation.
- Reinforce listening as a foundation.

If time allows

Reflect a theme you hear.

If running long

Use a show of hands.

Transition

“Now let’s add another layer: understanding what kind of conflict you’re in.”

Slide 33 | Conflict Types & Sources (6 min)

Purpose

Introduce visible vs. underlying sources of conflict.

What to say

“What we see on the surface isn’t always what’s driving the conflict.”

“If we only address what’s above the waterline, the conflict often comes back.”

Facilitator tips

- Keep examples work-focused.
- Avoid oversharing.

Transition

“Let’s practice looking beneath the surface.”

Slide 34 | Pair-Share: Seeing Beneath the Surface (10 min)

Purpose

Build skill in diagnosing conflict types and sources.

What to say

“Choose a real, recent work conflict. One person shares; the other reflects.”

Explain timing and roles clearly.

Facilitator tips

- Monitor emotional intensity.
- Encourage descriptive language.

If time allows

Invite partners to switch scenarios.

If running long

Reduce sharing time.

Transition

“Let’s come back together.”

Slide 35 | Debrief: Seeing Beneath the Surface (5 min)

Purpose

Reinforce insight and application.

What to ask

“What changed when you looked at what was underneath?”

Facilitator tips

- Validate ambiguity.
- Reinforce curiosity.

Transition

“Now let’s look at how we tend to respond.”

Slide 36 | Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles (7 min)

Purpose

Introduce conflict styles as flexible strategies.

What to say

“Conflict styles describe *how* we respond under stress—not who we are.”

“No style is right or wrong; effectiveness depends on the situation.”

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize adaptability.
- Normalize discomfort with lower styles.

Transition

“Let’s connect your style to impact.”

Slide 37 | Pair-Share: Conflict Style & Impact (10 min)

Purpose

Increase self-awareness of style strengths and limits.

What to say

“Share when your style helped—and when another style might have helped more.”

Facilitator tips

- Keep focus on behavior, not identity.
- Watch for defensiveness.

If time allows

Ask participants to name one style they want to practice.

If running long

Do one round instead of two.

Transition

“Let’s debrief what you noticed.”

Slide 38 | Debrief: Conflict Style & Impact (5 min)

Purpose

Normalize flexibility and learning.

What to ask

“What surprised you about your style’s impact?”

Facilitator tips

Reinforce growth over perfection.

Transition

“Before we practice flexing styles, let’s take a short break.”

Slide 39 | Break (5 min)

Slide 40 | Flexing Your Style – Practice (15 min)

Purpose

Build skill in choosing a different style intentionally.

What to say

“You’ll practice responding using a style you don’t usually default to.”

Explain roles and timing clearly.

Facilitator tips

- Watch for overacting or caricatures.
- Encourage realism.

If time allows

Let groups try a second style.

If running long

Reduce practice rounds.

Transition

“Let’s come back together.”

Slide 41 | Debrief: Flexing Your Style (5 min)

Purpose

Help participants name learning and confidence.

What to ask

“What was hard about flexing your style?”

“What felt more effective than expected?”

Facilitator tips

- Normalize discomfort.
- Reinforce choice over habit.

Transition

“Let’s capture the key takeaways.”

Slide 42 | Key Takeaways (4 min)

Purpose

Anchor learning.

What to say

“What we see isn’t always what’s driving conflict.”

“No style is best—flexibility matters.”

Transition

“Here’s what to practice next.”

Slide 43 | Before the Next Session (4 min)

Purpose

Set up application and continuity.

What to say

“Pay attention to one tense moment this week. What was it really about—and how did you show up?”

Facilitator tips

Emphasize observation over action.

Transition

“Before you go...”

Slide 44 | Evaluation & Close (3 min)

Purpose

Close the session and gather feedback.

What to say

“Please take a minute to complete the evaluation. Your feedback helps us improve the series.”

“Thank you for continuing to build this skill together.”



SESSION 3

Preparing for Difficult Conversations



Dove. 1368-1644. Ming Dynasty. China

*Learning is the process whereby
knowledge is created through the
transformation of experience.*

*David Kolb
American educational theorist,
psychologist, and professor*

Purpose

The purpose of this session is to help managers prepare intentionally for difficult conversations instead of reacting in the moment. Participants learn how to calm strong emotions, slow down assumptions, clarify their purpose, and plan a constructive opening. By practicing preparation skills, managers increase their ability to stay steady, communicate clearly, and set conversations up for success.

Learning Objectives

In this session, participants will practice how to:

- **Cool down** strong emotions before a difficult conversation.
- **Slow down** assumptions and clarify their purpose.
- **Prepare** an opening that supports a constructive conversation.

The Conflict Competence Model

The Conflict Competence Model, developed by Craig Runde and Tim Flanagan, describes three practical steps for responding effectively to conflict: cool down, slow down, and engage constructively. (Runde & Flanagan, 2010) Rather than reacting automatically, the model emphasizes awareness, regulation, and intentional choice as the foundation for productive conflict engagement.

Cooling down means settling strong emotions so leaders can choose how to respond rather than react impulsively. (Siegel, 2012; Goleman, 2006) By regulating the nervous system and reducing threat responses, managers are better able to remain steady and present during challenging interactions.

Slowing down involves pausing automatic assumptions, separating observable facts from interpretations, and clarifying one's purpose before speaking. (Argyris, 1990; Senge, 1990) This step helps interrupt defensive reasoning and supports more thoughtful, curiosity-driven responses.

Once leaders are regulated and clear, they can engage constructively by listening to understand, sharing their perspective respectfully, and working collaboratively toward next

steps. (Rogers, 1957; Edmondson, 2018) Engaging constructively creates psychological safety while maintaining accountability and forward momentum.

Together, these three steps help managers stay steady under pressure and handle conflict in ways that protect trust, strengthen relationships, and move work forward. (Runde & Flanagan, 2010; Edmondson, 2018)

Common Workplace Scenarios

Consider these examples when thinking about how to start a conversation that establishes psychological safety.

- **Missed Hand-off:** A recurring data error frustrates a colleague; tension rises before meetings.
- **Role Confusion:** Two leads both direct the same staff, causing mixed messages.
- **Boundary Setting:** A manager needs to tell a peer to stop bypassing them and going to their team directly.
- **Performance Concern:** A high performer's behavior creates friction; manager prepares for conversation.

Facilitator Tips

- **Begin with grounding:** Briefly revisit the Conflict Competence Model—keep it relevant and actionable.
- **Normalize discomfort:** Acknowledge that feeling uneasy about role-play is natural and part of learning.
- **Set a growth mindset:** Emphasize curiosity, reflection, and skill-building over “getting it right.”
- **Prompt purposeful setup:** Ask, “What outcome do you want from this conversation?”
- **Offer quiet prep time:** Give 2-3 minutes for participants to plan or jot key phrases.
- **Observe with intention:** Listen and take notes without interrupting—save insights for the debrief.
- **Debrief with focus:** Ask, “What worked? What was challenging? What will you try next time?”
- **Acknowledge progress:** Highlight tone, pacing, empathy, and repair efforts.
- **Encourage authenticity:** If time allows, use real or current team situations to deepen application.

Session 3 Schedule

Scan here to access PDF slide
deck for the following sessions:



Materials & Support

- Handout 3—Preparing for a Difficult Conversation
- HBR Guide to Dealing with Conflict by Amy Gallo

Slides 45–46 | Welcome & Why This Is Important (5 min)

Purpose

Frame preparation as the difference between reacting and responding.

What to say

“Today is about what happens *before* the conversation.”

“Preparation helps you stay calm, clear, and intentional instead of reacting in the moment.”

Facilitator tips

- Normalize that most people skip preparation under pressure.
- Emphasize prevention over repair.

If time allows

Ask: “What makes a conversation feel hard to prepare for?”

If running long

Move directly to Today’s Focus.

Transition

“Let’s ground ourselves in what you’ll practice today.”

Slides 47–48 | Today’s Focus & Community Agreements (5 min)

Purpose

Set learning goals and psychological safety for drafting and practice.

What to say

“Today you’ll practice calming your nervous system, slowing down assumptions, and preparing a clear opening.”

“Draft language can be rough. Preparation over perfection.”

Facilitator tips

- Reinforce that silence and reflection are allowed.
- Normalize imperfect first drafts.

If time allows

Invite participants to name one agreement they want to practice.

If running long

Read agreements and continue.

Transition

“Let’s connect this to what you noticed last session.”

Slides 49–50 | From the Last Session to Today (5 min)

Purpose

Bridge from conflict styles to intentional preparation.

What to say

“Last session focused on choosing effective responses in the moment.”

“What did you notice about how you showed up in a tense moment?”

Facilitator tips

- Highlight awareness as progress.
- Connect style under stress to need for preparation.

If time allows

Reflect a theme you hear.

If running long

Use a show of hands.

Transition

“Before we prepare, we need to check readiness.”

Slides 51–52 | Check Your Readiness & Preparation Framework (7 min)

Purpose

Introduce readiness and the Cool Down → Slow Down → Engage Constructively framework.

What to say

“Not every conversation should start right away.”

“Preparation helps you choose how to show up.”

Walk through readiness (Not ready / Maybe / Ready) and the three steps.

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize self-regulation before communication.
- Normalize postponing a conversation.

Transition

“Let’s look at the first step: cooling down.”

Slide 53 | Cool Down (5 min)

Purpose

Teach emotional regulation before conversation.

What to say

“Cooling down helps you get regulated enough to choose, not react.”

Briefly guide breath and naming emotions.

Facilitator tips

- Keep this brief and practical.
- Avoid therapeutic tone.

If time allows

Invite a 30-second breathing pause.

Transition

“Once emotions settle, we slow down our thinking.”

Slide 54 | Slow Down (5 min)

Purpose

Interrupt assumptions and clarify intention.

What to say

“Slowing down helps you pause the story you’re telling yourself.”

“Choose your intention before choosing your words.”

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize separating facts from assumptions.
- Keep examples simple.

Transition

“Let’s practice cooling down and slowing down.”

Slide 55 | Practice: Cool Down & Slow Down (8 min)

Purpose

Build self-awareness through guided reflection and pair share.

What to say

“Think of a recent tense moment. Notice what showed up in your body and the story you started telling yourself.”

Explain timing and roles clearly.

Facilitator tips

- Monitor emotional intensity.
- Reinforce reflective listening in pairs.

If time allows

Add a second reflection question.

If running long

Shorten sharing time.

Transition

“Now we’re ready to think about how to engage.”

Slides 56–57 | Engage Constructively & How to Open (7 min)

Purpose

Introduce constructive engagement and effective openings.

What to say

“How you open the conversation shapes everything that follows.”

“Short and clear beats perfect.”

Walk through elements of engaging constructively and sample openers.

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize curiosity over conclusions.
- Keep openings brief.

Transition

“Before we practice, let’s take a short break.”

Slide 58 | Break (5 min)

Slides 59–60 | Name the Move & Debrief (6 min)

Purpose

Reinforce awareness of Cool Down / Slow Down / Engage Constructively.

What to say

“Each of these examples reflects a different move.”

Ask participants to identify the move and notice patterns.

Facilitator tips

- Keep this quick and interactive.
- Emphasize awareness over correctness.

If time allows

Ask: “Which move do you tend to skip?”

Transition

“Let’s put this together by practicing an opener.”

Slides 61–62 | Practice the Opener & Debrief (16 min)

Purpose

Build skill in drafting and sharing a prepared opening.

What to say

“Individually, draft an opening for a real or likely conversation.”

“In small groups, share and reflect back what you hear.”

Facilitator tips

- Watch for over-explaining.
- Encourage brevity and clarity.

If time allows

Invite participants to revise their opener.

If running long

Reduce group sharing time.

Transition

“Let’s capture what to remember.”

Slide 63 | Key Takeaways (4 min)

Purpose

Anchor session learning.

What to say

“Calming yourself first prevents reactive conversations.”

“Preparation shapes how the conversation starts.”

Transition

“Here’s what to do before next session.”

Slides 64–65 | Before the Next Session & Peer Coaching (5 min)

Purpose

Set up transfer and peer support.

What to say

“Meet with your peer coaching group and walk through one conversation that feels a little hard.”

“Peer coaching helps turn preparation into clarity.”

Facilitator tips

Emphasize listening over advising.

Transition

“Before you go...”

Slide 66 | Evaluation & Close (3 min)

Purpose

Close the session and gather feedback.

What to say

“Please take a minute to complete the evaluation. Your feedback helps us improve the series.”

“Thank you for practicing preparation instead of reaction.”

SESSION 4

Having Conflict Conversations: The ARTS Framework





Dove. 15th Century. South Netherlandish.

Empathy has no script. There is no right way or wrong way to do it. It's simply listening, holding space, withholding judgment, emotionally connecting and communicating that incredibly healing message of 'you're not alone.'

Brene Brown, *Atlas of the Heart (2021)*
Researcher and Author

Purpose

The purpose of this session is to provide managers with a clear structure for having difficult conversations in a way that reduces defensiveness and supports understanding. Participants learn and practice the ARTS framework—Ask, Respond, Tell, Seek—to guide conversations from tension toward clarity and next steps. The emphasis is on using structure to stay respectful, focused, and constructive when it matters most.

Learning Objectives

In this session, participants will practice how to:

- **Ask** about the other person's perspective before stating their own.
- **Respond** without judgment to reduce defensiveness.
- **Use** the ARTS structure to guide a real conflict conversation.

ARTS Framework

The ARTS framework—Ask, Respond, Tell, Seek Solutions—provides a simple, repeatable structure for navigating difficult conversations with clarity and psychological safety. (Stone et al., 2010; Edmondson, 2018) By balancing inquiry and advocacy, ARTS helps leaders slow escalation while maintaining respect and purpose.

Ask invites the other person's perspective, signaling respect and reducing defensiveness by prioritizing curiosity over judgment. (Schein, 2013; Chou & Cooley, 2018) Beginning with inquiry helps establish psychological safety and shared understanding.

Respond uses reflective listening to acknowledge feelings or concerns before offering one's own viewpoint, helping people feel heard and lowering threat responses. (Rogers, 1957; Siegel, 2012) This step supports de-escalation and builds trust.

Tell offers one's perspective or key message clearly and non-judgmentally, focusing on observable behavior and impact rather than blame. (Rosenberg, 2003; Stone et al., 2010) Clarity at this stage supports accountability without undermining relationships.

Seek Solutions guides both parties toward shared solutions or next steps, turning understanding into forward movement through collaboration. (Fisher & Ury, 2011; Edmondson, 2018)

The strength of ARTS lies in its balance of empathy and clarity—it slows escalation, supports trust-building, and helps both people feel heard. (Edmondson, 2018; Goleman, 2006) However, the framework can feel structured or slow when urgency is high, and inexperienced users may over-focus on the steps rather than the relational tone. (Stone et al., 2010) When applied mechanically, it may sound scripted rather than authentic—an outcome cautioned against in relationship-centered communication approaches. (Chou & Cooley, 2018)

When applied with presence and flexibility, ARTS helps leaders maintain emotional steadiness, communicate expectations compassionately, and move conflict conversations toward constructive resolution. (Runde & Flanagan, 2010; Edmondson, 2018)

Common Workplace Scenarios

You can practice tone and structure with some of these scenarios.

- **Cross-functional Friction:** IT and clinical operations disagree about ticket response times.
- **Equity Perception:** A staff member feels favoritism in shift assignments.
- **Email Escalation:** A misinterpreted message leads to public tension.
- **Team Collaboration:** One person dominates discussions; others disengage.

Facilitator Tips

- **Set the Stage:** Reinforce psychological safety. Offer sample scenarios for those who prefer structure.
- **Model It Briefly:** Demonstrate the ARTS steps using a simple, relatable example.
- **Use Triads or Pairs:** Assign clear roles—speaker, Responder, and Observer—to ensure active engagement.
- **Keep It Moving:** Time each round and provide quiet, supportive guidance rather than correction.
- **Debrief with Intention:** Ask reflective questions such as, “What worked? What was challenging? What shifted for you?” and use reflective listening almost every time.
- **Close with Action:** Invite commitment by asking, “What’s one thing you’ll try differently next time?”

Session 4 Schedule

Scan here to access PDF slide deck for the following sessions:



Materials & Support

- Handout 4—Using ARTS in Conversations
- HBR Guide to Dealing with Conflict by Amy Gallo

Slides 67–68 | Welcome & Why This Is Important (5 min)

Purpose

Frame ARTS as a structure that makes difficult conversations safer and more productive.

What to say

“Today we’re focusing on *how* to have the conversation—when tension is already present.”

“Structure helps reduce defensiveness and keeps conversations from spiraling.”

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize that ARTS is a support, not a script.
- Normalize anxiety about saying the wrong thing.

If time allows

Ask: “What tends to derail hard conversations for you?”

If running long

Move directly to Today’s Focus.

Transition

“Let’s ground ourselves in what you’ll practice today.”

Slides 69–70 | Today’s Focus & Community Agreements (5 min)

Purpose

Set learning goals and psychological safety for live conversation practice.

What to say

“Today you’ll practice asking first, responding without judgment, and keeping conversations focused on understanding and next steps.”

“Trying matters more than getting it right.”

Review community agreements briefly.

Facilitator tips

- Reinforce permission to pause or reset.
- Emphasize feedback is about behavior, not character.

If time allows

Invite participants to name one agreement they want to practice.

If running long

Read agreements and continue.

Transition

“Let’s connect this to what you practiced last session.”

Slides 71–72 | From the Last Session to Today (5 min)

Purpose

Bridge from preparation to live conversation.

What to say

“Last session focused on preparing—cooling down, slowing down, and opening well.”

“How did preparation change how you felt about an upcoming conversation?”

Facilitator tips

- Reinforce preparation as emotional regulation.
- Highlight confidence and clarity.

If time allows

Reflect a theme you hear.

If running long

Use a show of hands.

Transition

“Now we’ll focus on the conversation itself.”

Slides 73–74 | Using ARTS to Engage Constructively (6 min)

Purpose

Introduce ARTS as a conversation structure.

What to say

“ARTS gives you a way to stay curious, clear, and collaborative—even when it’s hard.”

Briefly name each step:

- **Ask**
- **Respond**
- **Tell**
- **Seek**

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize sequence matters.
- ARTS helps prevent jumping to conclusions or solutions.

Transition

“Let’s look at each step more closely.”

Slide 75 | Ask About Their Perspective (4 min)

Purpose

Highlight the importance of leading with curiosity.

What to say

“Asking first lowers defensiveness and signals respect.”

“An open-ended question opens the door.”

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize genuine curiosity.
- Avoid stacked or leading questions.

Transition

“Here are better ways to ask.”

Slide 76 | Better Ways to Ask (4 min)

Purpose

Provide concrete language examples.

What to say

Read or paraphrase examples.

Facilitator tips

Encourage participants to adapt language to their voice.

Transition

“Once you’ve asked, how you respond matters.”

Slide 77 | Respond Without Judgment (4 min)

Purpose

Teach how to receive what’s shared without escalating.

What to say

“Responding without judgment helps people feel heard—even if you disagree.”

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize naming what you hear, not what you think.
- Pause solutions.

Transition

“Here are better ways to respond.”

Slide 78 | Better Ways to Respond (4 min)

Purpose

Model neutral, reflective language.

What to say

Read or paraphrase examples.

Facilitator tips

Reinforce tentative language (“It sounds like…”).

Transition

“Once understanding is established, you can share your perspective.”

Slide 79 | Tell Your Perspective (4 min)

Purpose

Help participants share clearly without blame.

What to say

“Telling your perspective is about being clear—not being right.”

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize brevity.
- Use “I” statements and observable behavior.

Transition

“Here are better ways to tell.”

Slide 80 | Better Ways to Tell (4 min)

Purpose

Provide structured language for clarity.

What to say

Read example formula.

Facilitator tips

Avoid speeches or verdicts.

Transition

“The last step is about moving forward.”

Slide 81 | Seek a Path Forward (4 min)

Purpose

Shift from understanding to action.

What to say

“Seeking a path forward turns understanding into shared action.”

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize collaboration.
- Avoid pre-deciding outcomes.

Transition

“Here are better ways to seek.”

Slide 82 | Better Ways to Seek (4 min)

Purpose

Provide concrete future-focused language.

What to say

Read or paraphrase examples.

Transition

“Before we practice, let’s take a short break.”

Slide 83 | Break (5 min)

Slide 84 | Practicing ARTS (30 min)

Purpose

Build skill through realistic conversation practice.

What to say

“You’ll practice a real or realistic conflict conversation using ARTS.”

Explain roles, timing, and observer focus.

Facilitator tips

- Circulate and coach quietly.
- Watch for skipped steps or rushing to Tell.

If time allows

Encourage a second round with role switch.

If running long

Reduce rounds or shorten practice time.

Transition

“Let’s come back together.”

Slide 85 | Debrief: Practicing ARTS (6 min)

Purpose

Surface insight and normalize difficulty.

What to ask

“What did you notice about how ARTS changed the conversation?”

Facilitator tips

Reinforce effort over polish.

Transition

“Let’s capture the key takeaways.”

Slide 86 | Key Takeaways (4 min)

Purpose

Anchor learning.

What to say

“Asking and listening first reduces defensiveness.”

“Structure helps conversations stay constructive.”

Transition

“Here’s what to practice next.”

Slide 87 | Before the Next Session (4 min)

Purpose

Set up application.

What to say

“Use one ARTS step in a real conversation this week.”

Facilitator tips

Emphasize small, intentional practice.

Transition

“Before you go...”

Slide 88 | Evaluation & Close (3 min)

Purpose

Close the session and gather feedback.

What to say

“Please take a minute to complete the evaluation. Your feedback helps us improve the series.”

“Thank you for practicing conversations that build trust.”

SESSION 5

Giving Feedback That Builds Trust





Figure of a Dove. 1830-70. American.

*If we manage conflict constructively, we harness its
energy for creativity and development.*

*Kenneth Kaye
American Psychologist and Author*

Purpose

The purpose of this session is to help managers use feedback as a tool for learning, trust, and sustained performance. Participants practice giving both reinforcing and modifying feedback using the ARTS framework, with attention to clarity, impact, and psychological safety. The session emphasizes balance—helping people understand what’s working, what needs to change, and how to improve without damaging relationships.

Learning Objectives

In this session, participants will practice how to:

- **Give** feedback that is clear, respectful, and specific.
- **Balance** empathy and accountability in feedback conversations.
- **Use** ARTS to reinforce or adjust behavior in a constructive way.

Using ARTS for Reinforcing and Modifying Feedback

Using the ARTS framework for feedback helps strengthen performance by making expectations clear while protecting trust. (Stone et al., 2010; Edmondson, 2018) By combining empathy with clarity, ARTS supports feedback conversations that are both respectful and actionable.

Reinforcing feedback uses ARTS to highlight what is working—asking for reflection, acknowledging effort or context, telling the specific behavior and its positive impact, and seeking continuation—so effective behaviors become visible, valued, and repeatable. (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Zenger & Folkman, 2013) Reinforcing feedback builds confidence and motivation while clarifying what success looks like. (London, 2003)

Modifying feedback also uses ARTS, but to address what needs to change—opening with purpose and respect, acknowledging context, clearly naming the behavior and its impact, and seeking a future-focused adjustment and support. (Rosenberg, 2003; Stone et al., 2010) When delivered with care and clarity, modifying feedback supports accountability without eroding trust or psychological safety. (Edmondson, 2018)

Together, reinforcing and modifying feedback create balance: people know what to keep doing, what to do differently, and how their work contributes to team success. (London, 2003; Ashford & Cummings, 1983) This balanced approach supports learning, accountability, and sustained performance over time. (Edmondson, 2018; Zenger & Folkman, 2013)

Common Workplace Scenarios

Focus: feedback for trust and performance

Key Skill: Balancing candor and care in feedback delivery.

- **Interruptions in Meetings:** A team member frequently cuts others off.
- **Quality Concerns:** Reports are consistently late or contain errors.
- **Strengths Feedback:** Recognizing a staff member's effort but guiding them toward collaboration.
- **Peer Feedback:** Two team leads must discuss differing standards for documentation.

Facilitator Tips

- **Start light:** Normalize that feedback can feel awkward—it's a learnable skill.
- **Set norms:** Use ground rules like convert judgment into curiosity and maintaining confidentiality.
- **Give choice:** Offer 2-3 realistic scenarios or let participants bring their own.
- **Model first:** Show a quick example before practice—use a script or demonstration.
- **Use triads:** One gives, one receives, one observes. Rotate roles.
- **Debrief simply:** Ask, "What worked? What was tough? What would you try next time?"
- **Make it stick:** Have them draft a real feedback message using ARTS before they leave.

Session 5 Schedule

Materials & Support

Scan here to access PDF slide deck for the following sessions:



- Handout 5—Giving Feedback Using ARTS
- HBR Guide to Dealing with Conflict by Amy Gallo

Slides 89–90 | Welcome & Why It Matters (5 min)

Purpose

Set tone. Reframe feedback as a trust- and performance-building leadership skill.

What to say

“Today we’re focusing on feedback—not as correction or judgment, but as information that helps people learn, improve, and stay aligned.”

“In complex, high-stakes work, silence is rarely neutral. Clear, respectful feedback helps teams perform without damaging trust.”

Facilitator tips

- Normalize discomfort: feedback can feel risky even for experienced managers.
- Emphasize continuity: this session builds directly on ARTS.

If time allows

Ask: “What’s one word that describes how feedback feels for you at work?”

If running long

Move directly to Today’s Focus.

Transition

“Let’s look at what you’ll be practicing today.”

Slides 91–92 | Today’s Focus & Community Agreements (5 min)

Purpose

Create psychological safety and shared expectations for practice.

What to say

“Today is about being clear *and* respectful—balancing empathy with accountability.”

“Feedback is information, not a verdict. We focus on impact, not intent.”

Facilitator tips

- Reinforce that both giving and receiving feedback are skills in progress.
- Invite participants to pause or reset during practice.

If time allows

Ask participants to name one agreement they want to lean into today.

If running long

Read agreements and continue.

Transition

“Let’s connect this to what you practiced last session.”

Slides 93–94 | From the Last Session to Today (5 min)

Purpose

Bridge from ARTS conflict conversations to feedback conversations.

What to say

“Last session, you practiced using ARTS to structure conflict conversations.”

“Which ARTS step felt easiest to try? Which felt hardest?”

Facilitator tips

- Validate partial attempts.
- Highlight patterns rather than individual stories.

If time allows

Reflect a theme you’re hearing (e.g., Respond felt hardest under pressure).

If running long

Use a show of hands instead of discussion.

Transition

“Now let’s zoom out and talk about performance.”

Slides 95–96 | Performance, Safety, and Growth (7 min)

Purpose

Explain why feedback is essential for sustained performance.

What to say

“High-performing teams don’t just fix problems—they reinforce strengths and course-correct early.”

“Sustained performance depends on two things: psychological safety and a growth mindset.”

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize *both* reinforcing and modifying feedback.
- Tie to real workload and pace.

If time allows

Ask: “Which do you give more often—reinforcing or modifying feedback?”

If running long

Summarize both slides in two sentences.

Transition

“That brings us to how we think about work itself.”

Slide 97 | The Workplace as a Practice Gym (4 min)

Purpose

Reframe work as a learning environment, not a pass/fail test.

What to say

“Work is a practice gym. People get better through feedback, not silence.”

“Psychological safety gives people room to practice. Growth mindset turns practice into progress.”

Facilitator tips

- Keep this short and grounded.
- Avoid theory-heavy explanations.

Transition

“Let’s get concrete about what we reinforce.”

Slide 98 | Behaviors to Reinforce (4 min)

Purpose

Clarify what reinforcing feedback targets.

What to say

“Reinforcing feedback shows people what ‘good’ looks like so they can repeat it.”

Briefly highlight examples (solutions, follow-through, supporting peers, clarity).

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize specificity.
- Reinforcing feedback is often underused.

If time allows

Ask participants to silently name one behavior they could reinforce this week.

Transition

“So what makes reinforcing feedback effective?”

Slide 99 | What Is Reinforcing Feedback (5 min)

Purpose

Define reinforcing feedback clearly and simply.

What to say

“Reinforcing feedback calls out what’s working, explains why it matters, and encourages continuation.”

“It builds confidence, clarity, and trust.”

Facilitator tips

- Contrast with vague praise (“Good job”).
- Reinforcing feedback is not fluff—it’s instructional.

Transition

“Let’s look at how ARTS helps structure reinforcing feedback.”

Slides 100–101 | Using ARTS for Reinforcing Feedback (8 min)

Purpose

Show how ARTS applies to reinforcing feedback.

What to say

Walk through each step:

- **Ask** – invite reflection
- **Respond** – acknowledge effort or context
- **Tell** – name specific behavior and impact
- **Seek** – reinforce continuation or growth

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize brevity and specificity.
- Reinforcing feedback should be timely.

If time allows

Invite participants to jot one reinforcing feedback sentence.

If running long

Summarize examples verbally.

Transition

“Before we shift to modifying feedback, let’s take a quick break.”

Slide 102 | Break (5 min)

What to say

“Let’s take a 5-minute break. When we return, we’ll shift to modifying feedback—how to address gaps without damaging trust.”

Slide 103 | Behaviors to Modify (4 min)

Purpose

Name behaviors that require modifying feedback.

What to say

“Modifying feedback helps prevent small issues from becoming bigger problems.”

Highlight examples briefly.

Facilitator tips

- Keep neutral tone.
- Avoid shaming language.

Transition

“So what does effective modifying feedback do?”

Slide 104 | What Is Modifying Feedback (5 min)

Purpose

Clarify the purpose and value of modifying feedback.

What to say

“Modifying feedback explains what needs to change, why it matters, and what to do differently next time.”

“It supports accountability and improvement.”

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize future focus.
- Impact over intent.

Transition

“ARTS helps keep this kind of feedback constructive.”

Slides 105–106 | Using ARTS for Modifying Feedback (8 min)

Purpose

Demonstrate how to structure modifying feedback safely.

What to say

Walk through ARTS with emphasis on:

- Clear expectations
- Support for change
- Collaboration

Facilitator tips

- Normalize discomfort.
- Watch for over-explaining or defensiveness.

If time allows

Ask: “Which ARTS step feels hardest here?”

Transition

“Balance matters when it comes to feedback.”

Slide 107 | Healthy Ratio of Feedback (4 min)

Purpose

Highlight importance of balance (4:1 reinforcing to modifying).

What to say

“This isn’t about avoiding hard feedback—it’s about making sure people know what success looks like.”

Facilitator tips

Emphasize trend, not perfection.

Transition

“Now let’s practice.”

Slide 108 | Practice: Giving Feedback (36 min)

Purpose

Build skill through realistic practice.

What to say

“You’ll rotate roles: feedback giver, receiver, and observer.”

“Observers—watch for clarity, tone, and psychological safety.”

Facilitator tips

- Circulate and coach quietly.
- Watch for skipped Ask or Seek steps.

If time allows

Add a second scenario.

If running long

Reduce to two rounds.

Transition

“Let’s come back together.”

Slide 109 | Debrief: Giving Feedback (6 min)

Purpose

Surface learning and normalize effort.

What to ask

- “What difference did structure make?”
- “What helped feedback feel clearer or safer?”

Facilitator tips

Reinforce progress over polish.

Transition

“Let’s capture the key takeaways.”

Slide 110 | Key Takeaways (4 min)

Purpose

Anchor learning.

What to say

“Feedback works best when it’s clear, respectful, and specific.”

“Balanced feedback supports learning and accountability.”

Transition

“Here’s what to practice next.”

Slides 111–112 | Before the Next Session & Peer Coaching (5 min)

Purpose

Set up transfer to work and peer coaching.

What to say

“Give one short piece of feedback using ARTS—reinforcing or modifying.”

“Peer coaching turns real moments into insight and next steps.”

Facilitator tips

Emphasize small, doable actions.

Transition

“Before you go...”

Slide 112 | Evaluation & Close (3 min)

Purpose

Close the session and gather feedback.

What to say

“Please take a minute to complete the evaluation. Your feedback helps us improve the series.”

“Thank you for practicing something that directly affects trust and performance.”

SESSION 6

Facilitating Conflict Between Others





Gold Earring in the Form of a Dove. 2nd Century BCE. Hellenistic.

*Peace is not the absence of conflict,
but the ability to cope with it.*

*Mahatma Gandhi
Leader of India's independence
movement who pioneered nonviolent civil
disobedience (Satyagraha)*

Purpose

The purpose of this session is to help managers support others through conflict without taking sides or adding harm. Participants learn when facilitation is appropriate, how to stay neutral, and how to guide conversations using a clear process rather than solving the problem for others. The focus is on managing the process of conflict so people can hear each other and move forward fairly.

Learning Objectives

In this session, participants will practice how to:

- **Stay** neutral while facilitating a conflict between others.
- **Use** a structured process to guide two people toward understanding.
- **Recognize** when facilitation is appropriate and when escalation is needed.

The FACET Model for Neutral Facilitation

The FACET model—Frame, Ask & Acknowledge, Clarify, Explore Options, Track Agreements—helps managers stay neutral while guiding others toward understanding and resolution. (Runde & Flanagan, 2010; Moore, 2014) By providing a clear process rather than directing outcomes, FACET supports leaders in facilitating conflict without taking sides.

By framing purpose and ground rules, listening reflectively, and clarifying shared meaning before exploring solutions, FACET creates psychological safety and signals fairness—both essential for building or restoring trust. (Rogers, 1957; Edmondson, 2018; Schein, 2013) These practices help reduce defensiveness and allow participants to feel heard and respected, even in tense conversations.

The strengths of FACET include providing structure during high emotion, reducing power struggles, ensuring both voices are heard, and supporting accountability without taking sides. (Moore, 2014; Bush & Folger, 2005) Neutral facilitation focuses on stewarding a fair process rather than resolving issues on behalf of others.

FACET also has important limitations. It requires emotional discipline and self-regulation from the facilitator, may be difficult when one party is unregulated or unwilling to participate, and cannot substitute for formal intervention when conflicts involve policy violations, bias, or significant power imbalance. (Runde & Flanagan, 2010; Center for Creative Leadership, 2019)

In these situations, referral to Human Resources, the Ombuds, or other neutral supports is often more appropriate.

Facilitators can emphasize that neutrality is not passivity—it is an active practice of holding space, modeling curiosity, and ensuring a fair process that allows people to work through conflict with dignity. (Bush & Folger, 2005; Chou & Cooley, 2018)

Common Workplace Scenarios

Focus: neutral facilitation, escalation discernment

Key Skill: Using FACET (Frame–Ask/Acknowledge–Clarify–Explore–Track) to facilitate constructively.

- **Workload Fairness:** Two employees disagree about who takes after-hours calls.
- **Communication Breakdown:** One team member feels disrespected by another's tone.
- **Process Dispute:** Two staff members argue over how tasks should be tracked in the system.
- **Misunderstood Email Chain:** Tone escalates; manager must facilitate joint conversation.
- **Cultural Norms Clash:** Differing expectations about direct vs. indirect feedback cause tension.

Facilitator Tips

- **Clarify your role:** You're a facilitator to support both party's opportunity to work through the conflict. Ultimately, as the manager, you may need to step in with a decision.
- **Use structure:** Apply a simple framework like ARTS to maintain focus and balance.
- **Stay neutral:** Center understanding and shared goals rather than assigning blame or solving for others.
- **Practice in triads:** Rotate roles (facilitator, participant, observer) and timebox practice and feedback.
- **Prompt reflection:** Ask, "What did you hear them say? What feels most important to resolve right now?"
- **Model before practice:** Demonstrate a brief facilitation example before group activity.
- **Debrief with purpose:** Ask, "What worked well? What felt challenging? What would you try differently next time?"
- **Know when to escalate:** Refer serious or ongoing issues to Human Resources, Ombuds, or appropriate organizational resources.

Session 6 Schedule

Scan here to access PDF slide deck for the following sessions:



Materials & Support

- Handout 6—Facilitating Conflict Between Others
- HBR Guide to Dealing with Conflict by Amy Gallo

Slides 114–115 | Welcome & Why It Matters (5 min)

Purpose

Frame neutral facilitation as a core leadership skill that protects trust, fairness, and forward movement.

What to say

“Today we’re shifting from being *in* a conflict to helping *others* work through conflict.”

“When managers jump in too quickly—or take sides—conflict often escalates. Neutral facilitation helps teams move forward without adding harm.”

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize that neutrality is not indifference.
- Normalize that this role can feel uncomfortable or unnatural.

If time allows

Ask: “How many of you have been pulled into someone else’s conflict recently?”

If running long

Move directly to Today’s Focus.

Transition

“Let’s ground ourselves in what we’ll be practicing today.”

Slides 116–117 | Today's Focus & Community Agreements (5 min)

Purpose

Set expectations and psychological safety for facilitation practice.

What to say

“Today is about guiding the *process*—not deciding who’s right.”

“Neutrality means supporting understanding, not outcomes.”

Facilitator tips

- Reinforce: facilitators don’t solve the problem *for* people.
- Highlight psychological safety as a prerequisite.

If time allows

Ask participants to name one agreement they want to practice today.

If running long

Read agreements and move on.

Transition

“Let’s connect this to last session.”

Slides 118–119 | From the Last Session to Today (5 min)

Purpose

Bridge from feedback conversations to facilitation.

What to say

“Last session focused on giving feedback clearly and respectfully.”

“What difference did structure make in how feedback landed?”

Facilitator tips

- Highlight that structure lowers defensiveness.
- Connect ARTS → FACET as parallel tools.

If time allows

Reflect a theme you hear (e.g., structure helped me stay calm).

If running long

Ask for a show of hands.

Transition

“Now let’s look at what managers can do when conflict shows up.”

Slide 120 | What to Do When There’s Conflict (5 min)

Purpose

Introduce the manager’s decision point in conflict.

What to say

“When conflict shows up, managers often feel pressure to fix it.”

“Today we’re focusing on *when* facilitation is appropriate—and when it’s not.”

Facilitator tips

- Avoid jumping ahead to FACET yet.
- Keep focus on role clarity.

Transition

“So what does it mean to act as a neutral facilitator?”

Slide 121 | Manager as Neutral Facilitator (5 min)

Purpose

Clarify the role and responsibilities of neutral facilitation.

What to say

“Neutral facilitators guide the conversation, not the outcome.”

“They ensure both people are heard, keep the conversation respectful, and help clarify next steps.”

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize neutrality toward people, not toward safety or policy.
- This is a *skill*, not a personality trait.

If time allows

Ask: “Which part of this role feels hardest?”

Transition

“Before facilitating, we need to check readiness.”

Slide 122 | Am I Ready to Be a Neutral Facilitator? (5 min)

Purpose

Help managers assess readiness before stepping in.

What to say

“Neutral facilitation requires emotional steadiness and fairness.”

“If you answer ‘no’ to more than one of these, pause and prepare.”

Facilitator tips

- Normalize choosing *not* to facilitate.
- Emphasize self-awareness, not self-judgment.

If time allows

Invite silent reflection.

Transition

“Once you decide to facilitate, staying neutral takes intention.”

Slide 123 | How to Stay Neutral (5 min)

Purpose

Provide practical behaviors that support neutrality.

What to say

“Neutrality shows up in small behaviors—language, tone, pacing.”

Briefly walk through examples (equal airtime, balanced language, pausing reactions).

Facilitator tips

- Watch for participants equating neutrality with passivity.
- Reinforce boundaries.

Transition

“Now let’s make a key decision: facilitate or escalate?”

Slides 124–125 | Facilitate or Escalate? (8 min)

Purpose

Clarify when facilitation is appropriate vs. when escalation is required.

What to say

“Not every conflict should be facilitated.”

“Safety, policy, power imbalance, and emotional readiness matter.”

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize escalation as leadership—not failure.
- Keep examples neutral and non-sensational.

If time allows

Ask: “What makes this decision tricky in real life?”

If running long

Summarize criteria quickly.

Transition

“When facilitation *is* appropriate, structure helps.”

Slides 126–127 | Facilitate Using FACET (8 min)

Purpose

Introduce FACET as a neutral facilitation structure.

What to say

Walk through FACET:

- **Frame** – purpose and ground rules
- **Ask & Acknowledge** – each perspective
- **Clarify** – themes and differences
- **Explore** – options and next steps
- **Track** – agreements and follow-up

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize pacing.
- FACET keeps the facilitator out of content battles.

Transition

“Before we practice, let’s take a quick break.”

Slide 128 | Break (5 min)

What to say

“Let’s take a 5-minute break. When we return, we’ll practice facilitating a conflict using FACET.”

Slide 129 | Practice: FACET (40 min)

Purpose

Build facilitation skill through realistic role practice.

What to say

“You’ll rotate roles: facilitator, peer A, peer B, and observer.”

“Facilitators—focus on the process, not solving the problem.”

Facilitator tips

- Circulate and listen for:
 - o Taking sides
 - o Rushing to solutions
 - o Skipping Clarify or Track
- Offer quiet coaching.

If time allows

Keep the same scenario for deeper practice.

If running long

Reduce to one full round instead of two.

Transition

“Let’s come back together to reflect.”

Slide 130 | Debrief: Practicing FACET (6 min)

Purpose

Help participants name learning and normalize difficulty.

What to ask

- “Which part of FACET helped most?”
- “What was hardest about staying neutral?”

Facilitator tips

- Reinforce effort over mastery.
- Highlight transferable skills.

Transition

“Let’s capture what to remember.”

Slide 131 | Key Takeaways (4 min)

Purpose

Anchor learning.

What to say

“Facilitating conflict is about process, not taking sides.”

“Neutral structure helps people hear each other.”

“Not every conflict should be facilitated—some need escalation.”

Transition

“Here’s what to practice next.”

Slide 132 | Before the Next Session (5 min)

Purpose

Set up application and continuity.

What to say

“Try one facilitation skill this week: summarize perspectives, ask a neutral question, or slow the conversation.”

Facilitator tips

Emphasize small, realistic actions.

Transition

“Before you go...”

Slide 133 | Evaluation & Close (3 min)

Purpose

Close the session and gather feedback.

What to say

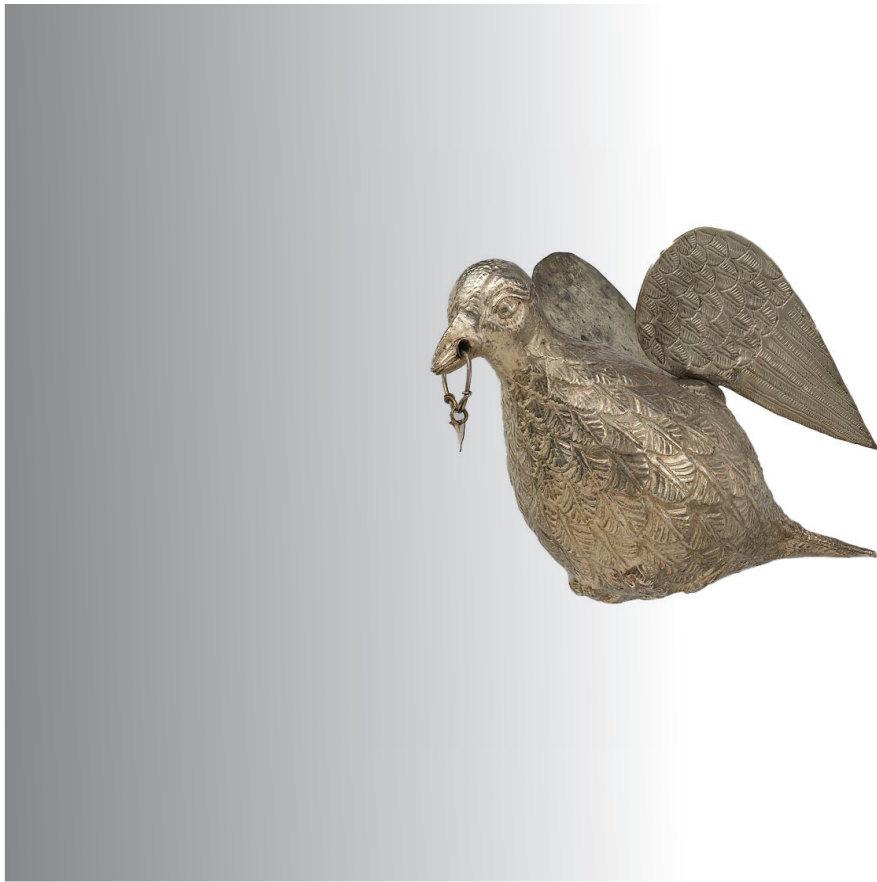
“Please take a minute to complete the evaluation. Your feedback helps us improve the series.”

“Thank you for practicing a skill that directly affects trust and fairness.”

SESSION 7

Resolve, Repair, or Refer: Making the Right Call





The Attarouthi Treasure - Silver Dove. 1830-70. American.

*In case of dissension, never dare to judge
till you've heard the other side.*

*Euripedes (484-406 BCE)
Ancient Greek playwright*

Purpose

The purpose of this final session is to help managers develop sound judgment about how to respond to different conflict situations. Participants learn to assess readiness, check bias, and decide whether a conflict should be resolved, repaired, or referred to additional support. The session integrates skills from the full series and emphasizes that choosing the right path—rather than fixing everything—is a critical leadership responsibility.

Learning Objectives

In this session, participants will practice how to:

- **Decide** whether a conflict needs resolution, repair, or referral.
- **Communicate** boundaries and referrals with clarity and respect.
- **Protect** psychological safety while maintaining accountability.

Discernment: Resolve, Repair, or Refer

Effective resolution in conflict requires discernment—the ability to understand what the situation truly needs: resolution, repair, or referral. (Runde & Flanagan, 2010) Rather than defaulting to a single response, conflict-competent leaders assess readiness, impact, and role boundaries before acting.

Resolution focuses on acknowledgment, accountability, clarity, and closure, helping parties move forward with restored understanding and shared expectations. (Stone et al., 2010; Fisher & Ury, 2011) When appropriate, resolution supports forward momentum while preserving working relationships.

Discernment also helps managers recognize when a relationship is ready for repair—often requiring mutual willingness, acknowledgment of harm, and time to rebuild trust—and when deeper harm, power imbalance, or recurring patterns indicate the need for referral to a neutral third party such as Human Resources or the Ombuds. (Bush & Folger, 2005; Center for Creative Leadership, 2019) Referral, when used appropriately, protects fairness and psychological safety rather than escalating conflict.

The strengths of this discernment-based approach include reducing unnecessary escalation, promoting fairness, preserving trust, and ensuring that managers stay within their scope while still providing meaningful support. (Edmondson, 2018; Runde & Flanagan, 2010)

However, important limitations exist. Resolution is not always possible; repair requires willingness from all parties; and referral may be misunderstood as punitive if it is not communicated with care and clarity. (Bush & Folger, 2005; Center for Creative Leadership, 2019) Discernment also demands emotional neutrality and self-awareness from managers, which can be difficult to maintain under pressure. (Goleman, 2006)

Facilitators can emphasize that navigating conflict well is less about fixing every problem and more about choosing the response that protects trust, psychological safety, and long-term collaboration—while modeling care, clarity, and appropriate boundaries. (Edmondson, 2018; Runde & Flanagan, 2010)

Common Workplace Scenarios

These examples help us think about opportunities to discern how we respond (engage, repair, or refer).

- **Repeated Conflict:** Same two employees keep clashing despite mediation attempts.
- **Policy Dispute:** Staff questions fairness of overtime approvals—possible HR issue.
- **Bias Allegation:** Conflict may involve perceived discrimination or exclusion.
- **Broken Trust:** Team member feels betrayed after promises weren't kept.

Facilitator Tips

- **Normalize:** Emphasize that conflict is natural; resolution and repair are learnable leadership skills—not indicators of failure.
- **Clarify roles:** Help participants distinguish when to support, when to escalate, and when to refer to a third party (Ombuds, HR).
- **Use real scenarios:** Ground discussion in relatable examples from the workplace.
- **Teach repair readiness:** Guide managers in assessing whether a relationship is open and ready for repair.
- **Use triads:** One gives, one receives, one observes. Rotate roles.
- **Model referral language:** Provide a clear, confident, and empathetic way to suggest a neutral third party such as Ombuds or HR.
- **Foster safety:** Create a reflective, judgment-free environment for discussing past conflict experiences and growth.

Session 7 Schedule



Scan here to access PDF slide
deck for the following sessions:

Materials & Support

- Handout 7—Resolve, Repair, or Refer
- HBR Guide to Dealing with Conflict by Amy Gallo

Slides 134–135 | Welcome & Why This Is Important (5 min)

Purpose

Frame this as a capstone skill: choosing the right response protects people, trust, and the organization.

What to say

“This final session is about judgment—not fixing everything, but choosing the right path.”

“Knowing when to resolve, when to repair, and when to refer is a core leadership skill—especially in complex, high-stakes environments.”

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize discernment over action.
- Normalize the pressure managers feel to “handle it themselves.”

If time allows

Ask: “Which of these—resolve, repair, or refer—do you think managers underuse?”

If running long

Move directly to Today’s Focus.

Transition

“Let’s ground ourselves in what we’ll focus on today.”

Slides 136–137 | Today's Focus & Community Agreements (5 min)

Purpose

Set expectations and reinforce dignity, boundaries, and psychological safety.

What to say

“Referral is not avoidance—it’s choosing the right level of support.”

“Boundaries are a form of care.”

Facilitator tips

- Reinforce that this session involves ethical and relational judgment.
- Emphasize dignity in every path.

If time allows

Invite participants to name one agreement they want to practice today.

If running long

Read agreements and move on.

Transition

“Let’s connect this to what you practiced last session.”

Slides 138–139 | From the Last Session to Today (5 min)

Purpose

Bridge from neutral facilitation to decision-making.

What to say

“Last session focused on facilitating conflict between others.”

“What helped you stay neutral instead of jumping in to fix?”

Facilitator tips

- Highlight that neutrality supports better judgment.
- Emphasize readiness and boundaries.

If time allows

Reflect a theme you hear.

If running long

Ask for a show of hands.

Transition

“Today builds on that by helping you decide what kind of response is needed.”

Slide 140 | Elements of Effective Resolution (6 min)

Purpose

Introduce the core outcomes managers are aiming for—regardless of path.

What to say

“Effective resolution isn’t just about closing the issue—it’s about safety, accountability, clarity, and trust.”

Briefly walk through how these show up across resolve, repair, and refer.

Facilitator tips

- Keep focus on outcomes, not techniques.
- Avoid positioning “resolve” as the best option.

Transition

“Before choosing a path, we need to check readiness.”

Slide 141 | Check Readiness for Resolution (5 min)

Purpose

Help managers pause before acting.

What to say

“Not all conflicts are ready for resolution.”

“Emotional readiness, safety, and clarity matter.”

Facilitator tips

- Normalize delaying action.
- Emphasize that pushing too soon can cause harm.

If time allows

Invite silent reflection.

Transition

“Once you check readiness, the next step is choosing the right path.”

Slide 142 | Choosing the Right Path (6 min)

Purpose

Introduce the resolve–repair–refer decision lens.

What to say

“The goal isn’t to fix everything yourself—it’s to choose the response that best protects people, trust, and the organization.”

Briefly walk through the checklist questions.

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize judgment over speed.
- This is a leadership decision, not a formula.

Transition

“Let’s look at each path more closely.”

Slide 143 | Refer (5 min)

Purpose

Clarify when and how referral is the right leadership choice.

What to say

“Referral is appropriate when safety, fairness, or policy is at risk.”

“Referring with clarity and dignity is an act of leadership.”

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize transparency and follow-through.
- Avoid framing referral as punishment.

Transition

“Sometimes the issue is addressed—but trust still needs attention.”

Slide 144 | Repair (5 min)

Purpose

Clarify when repair—not resolution—is needed.

What to say

“Repair focuses on restoring trust when harm or strain remains.”

“Repair takes time and often requires follow-up.”

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize responsibility for impact.
- Repair may involve multiple conversations.

Transition

“And sometimes, resolution *is* possible.”

Slide 145 | Resolve (5 min)

Purpose

Clarify when resolution is appropriate.

What to say

“Resolution works when people are willing, emotions are manageable, and the issue is clear and work-related.”

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize clarity and closure.
- Avoid rushing resolution when trust is fragile.

Transition

“Before we practice, let’s take a short break.”

Slide 146 | Break (5 min)

What to say

“Let’s take a 5-minute break. When we return, we’ll practice choosing the right path.”

Slide 147 | Check Your Bias (6 min)

Purpose

Surface blind spots that can distort judgment.

What to say

“Bias can quietly push us toward the wrong path.”

“Pausing to check bias protects fairness and consistency.”

Facilitator tips

- Keep tone non-accusatory.
- Emphasize self-awareness over self-criticism.

If time allows

Invite silent reflection on one question.

Transition

“Now let’s apply this in practice.”

Slide 148 | Choosing the Right Path – Activity (16 min)

Purpose

Build decision-making skill using realistic scenarios.

What to say

“You’ll review scenarios and decide whether resolve, repair, or refer is the strongest choice—and why.”

Facilitator tips

- Watch for:
 - o Over-resolving
 - o Avoiding referral
 - o Skipping readiness checks
- Emphasize rationale, not just the answer.

If time allows

Ask groups to capture one sentence a manager could say.

If running long

Use fewer scenarios.

Transition

“Let’s come back together to debrief.”

Slide 149 | Debrief: Choosing the Right Path (6 min)

Purpose

Help participants integrate judgment and confidence.

What to ask

- “What signals helped you decide?”
- “What made the decision harder than expected?”

Facilitator tips

- Normalize ambiguity.
- Reinforce that thoughtful pauses are leadership.

Transition

“Let’s capture the key takeaways.”

Slide 150 | Key Takeaways (4 min)

Purpose

Anchor session-specific learning.

What to say

“Not all conflicts need the same response.”

“Referral can be an act of leadership and care.”

“Repair requires willingness and emotional readiness.”

Transition

“Let’s zoom out to the full series.”

Slide 151 | What to Remember (From the Series) (5 min)

Purpose

Integrate learning across all seven sessions.

What to say

Briefly walk through the series arc:

- Conflict is normal.
- Calm first, then slow down.
- Use structure to engage constructively.
- Choose the right response.

Facilitator tips

- Keep this reflective and affirming.
- Name growth you've seen in the group, if appropriate.

Transition

"Skill builds through practice and support."

Slide 152 | Keep Practicing (4 min)

Purpose

Encourage ongoing application beyond the series.

What to say

"Choose one conflict skill you'll keep practicing—and where you'll use it first."

Facilitator tips

- Emphasize realism.
- Small steps matter.

Transition

"Before we close..."

Slide 153 | Evaluation & Close (4 min)

Purpose

Close the series and gather feedback.

What to say

"Please take a moment to complete the evaluation. Your feedback helps us improve future cohorts."

"Thank you for showing up, practicing, and leaning into conversations that matter."



PEER
COACHING
SESSIONS

How Conflict Competence Grows—

and How Practice Accelerates Learning



Limestone Statue Fragment of a Left Hand Resting on a Dove. 3rd-1st century BCE. Cypriot.

*Practice isn't the thing you do once you're good.
It's the thing you do that makes you good.*

*Malcom Gladwell, Outliers (2008)
Canadian Journalist and Author*

Purpose

Small-group coaching sessions give participants the space to apply conflict competence skills to real-world situations. These sessions emphasize reflection, peer learning, and practice in a psychologically safe, confidential environment.

Learning Objectives

In the small-group coaching cycle, participants will practice how to:

- **Listen** to peers without jumping to advice.
- **Ask** open questions that support insight and clarity.
- **Help** peers identify one realistic next step.

Peer Coaching for Conflict Competence

Peer coaching for conflict competence creates a structured, psychologically safe space where managers can explore real workplace challenges, practice conflict skills, and deepen self-awareness with the support of peers. (Edmondson, 2018; Parker et al., 2008) When designed intentionally, peer coaching provides a supportive container for learning that encourages openness, reflection, and growth.

Through shared reflection, inquiry-based coaching, and scenario analysis, participants learn to apply frameworks such as ARTS, FACET, and the Conflict Competence Model to authentic situations, strengthening both confidence and discernment. (Schein, 2013; Runde & Flanagan, 2010) Inquiry-based approaches emphasize curiosity over advice, helping participants build judgment rather than dependency on others' solutions.

The strengths of peer coaching include exposure to diverse perspectives, real-time feedback, normalization of common leadership challenges, and accelerated learning through observation as well as practice. (Bandura, 1977; Parker et al., 2008) Learning alongside peers allows participants to test ideas, reflect on impact, and expand their range of responses in a low-risk environment.

However, group coaching also has important limitations. It requires strong facilitation to maintain psychological safety, balance participation, and keep conversations aligned with learning goals; some participants may hesitate to share vulnerable scenarios; and peer advice

can drift into unhelpful problem-solving without clear guidance. (Schein, 2013; Center for Creative Leadership, 2019) Without clear norms and facilitation, the quality of learning and safety can erode.

Facilitators can emphasize that the goal of group coaching is not to fix each other's conflicts, but to build insight, emotional regulation, and skillfulness that participants carry back to their teams—strengthening conflict competence as an ongoing leadership practice rather than a one-time solution. (Runde & Flanagan, 2010; Edmondson, 2018)

Facilitator Tips

- **Set the tone early:** Revisit confidentiality, respect, and learning norms at each session.
- **Ground in reality:** Encourage participants to bring authentic, current challenges rather than hypothetical examples.
- **Ask before advise:** Use inquiry-based coaching questions to deepen understanding rather than offering solutions.
- **Link to frameworks:** Tie discussions back to course tools.
- **Use peer reflection:** Invite participants to notice strengths in others' approaches and offer appreciative feedback.
- **Balance depth and time:** Guide conversation flow so each participant has equal time to share and receive feedback.
- **Close with action:** Always end with a one-sentence reflection prompt, e.g., What's one thing you'll try before the next session?

Session Schedule

Time	Facilitator Actions
	Welcome & Grounding • Reconnect the group and set a supportive tone • ASK: What's one word that describes your week? • Review Community Agreements • Emphasize confidentiality and purpose
	Concept Connection • Revisit one key idea from recent sessions • Provide a short recap or quick scenario • ASK: Where have you seen this show up lately?
	Case Sharing • Apply tools to real workplace cases; foster peer learning • 1-2 participants share a specific case • ASK ◦ What's the conflict situation? ◦ What have you tried so far? ◦ What do you think is needed next?
	Peer Coaching & Reflection • Encourage peers to coach through inquiry and feedback • ASK ◦ What strengths do you hear in their approach? ◦ What other options might they explore?
	Commitments & Closing • Consolidate learning and set follow-up intentions • ASK: What's one insight or action you'll take forward? • Summarize group themes and thank participants
	Homework • Read HBR Guide to Dealing with Conflict (Amy Gallo, 2017), Chapters 10 & 12

APPENDIX A

Creating the Conditions—

Facilitator and Coaching Presence for
Conflict Competence

Facilitation

Creating the Conditions for Learning

Facilitation in this program is about creating the conditions for learning, not delivering content. Facilitators model UCSF PRIDE values by leading with professionalism, respect, and integrity while fostering inclusive dialogue and psychological safety. Through presence, structure, and curiosity, facilitators guide participants to explore conflict, practice skills, and reflect on real workplace experiences.

Before the Session: Preparing Yourself to Lead

Your presence sets the tone for learning.

Pause and reflect:

- **Presence** – How am I arriving today? What do I need to release or ground?
- **Intent** – What do I want participants to experience (safety, curiosity, growth)?
- **Bias & Triggers** – What might challenge my neutrality? How will I respond rather than react?
- **Energy** – What small adjustment (breathing, posture, pacing) will help me stay calm and focused?
- **Connection** – How will I show warmth and genuine interest in participants' perspectives?

You don't need to have all the answers. Your role is to hold space for reflection, learning, and honest dialogue. Center curiosity over control and trust the process to guide growth.

2-Hour Facilitation Flow

10 min	Arrival, grounding, welcome, objectives (Set tone, continuity, & psychological safety)
20 min	Core concept framing (Introduce session's key framework or mindset)
15 min	Guided reflection or low-risk application (Connect concept to lived experience)
10 min	Practice setup & instructions (Prepare participants for applied learning)
10 min	Break
30 min	Core practice lab (Skill-building through experience)
15 min	Debrief & sense-making (Turn experience into insight)
10 min	Integration, evaluation, close (Consolidate learning and support transfer)

After the Session: Turning Experience into Insight

Reflection strengthens skill and models lifelong learning.

Pause and reflect:

- **Learning & Engagement** – Where did insight, energy, or connection show up?
- **Psychological Safety** – Did all voices have space? How did I respond to tension or silence?
- **Facilitation & Coaching** – What strategies worked well? What will I adjust next time?
- **Personal Awareness** – How did I feel throughout the session? What does that tell me?
- **Key Takeaways** – What themes, moments, or quotes should carry forward?

Each group will have its own rhythm. Growth happens through reflection, small adjustments, and continued presence. Record one insight or commitment to carry forward; for example:

“Next time, I’ll pause longer before inviting debriefs.”

“I’ll balance small-group time with more collective reflection.”

“I’ll name when discomfort shows up to help normalize it.”

Session Readiness Checklist

Before each session, be sure to check the following, at a minimum:

- Review evaluations
- Test technology
- Check accessibility (mic use, captions, visual contrast)
- Set up the room
- Print handouts
- Review scenarios
- Prepare & check QR codes

Room Setup

- Chairs arranged for small-group work
- Whiteboard and/or two flip charts at the front
- Clear pathways for moving into groups

Coaching

Creating the Conditions for Insight

Coaching in this program deepens learning through inquiry, reflection, and peer support. Coaches embody UCSF PRIDE values by listening without judgment, honoring diverse perspectives, and building trust through confidentiality and respect. Rather than offering solutions, coaches help participants strengthen insight, choice, and discernment in real conflict situations.

Before the Session: Prepare to Hold the Space

Your stance shapes safety, depth, and learning.

Pause and reflect:

- **Presence** – How am I arriving today? What do I need to release to be fully present?
- **Intent** – How will I support reflection, insight, and shared learning rather than problem-solving?
- **Bias & Fixing Instincts** – What situations might pull me toward advice or solutions? How will I stay in inquiry?
- **Energy** – What will help me maintain calm pacing and attentive listening?
- **Connection** – How will I convey warmth, respect, and trust in participants' lived experience?

Your role is not to solve the problem. Your role is to create the conditions for insight, choice, and accountability.

90-Minute Coaching Flow

10 min	Welcome & Grounding
10 min	Concept Connection
40 min	Case Sharing
20 min	Peer Coaching & Reflection
10 min	Commitments & Closing

During the Session: Guide, Don't Drive

Coaching deepens learning through inquiry.

Anchor your facilitation in:

- **Confidentiality** – Revisit norms and psychological safety.
- **Equitable Space** – Monitor airtime and invite quieter voices.
- **Inquiry Before Advice** – Ask before offering frameworks or suggestions.
- **Connection to Tools** – Gently link cases back to ARTS, TKI, Conflict Competence, or FACET.
- **Reflection-in-the-Moment** – Pause the group to name insights, shifts, or patterns.

Helpful coaching prompts:

- “What feels most important to explore right now?”
- “What options are you seeing?”
- “What might you try differently next time?”
- “What support would be most helpful from this group?”

Trust the group. Insight emerges when participants feel heard, respected, and free to express their thoughts openly.

After the Coaching Session: Turn Dialogue into Insight

Integration happens through reflection.

Pause and reflect:

- **Depth of Reflection** – Where did participants move from story to insight?
- **Psychological Safety** – Did participants take risks? Where did safety deepen or tighten?
- **Coaching Skills** – How well did I stay in inquiry? Where did I intervene too early or too late?
- **Personal Awareness** – When did I feel pulled to fix, advise, or redirect? What does that tell me?
- **Emerging Themes** – What patterns or shared challenges surfaced across cases?

Session Readiness Checklist

- Review prior session notes or themes.
- Revisit confidentiality and coaching norms.
- Prepare timing cues for equitable sharing.
- Review relevant frameworks (ARTS, TKI, FACET).
- Test technology and accessibility supports (for online sessions).

APPENDIX B

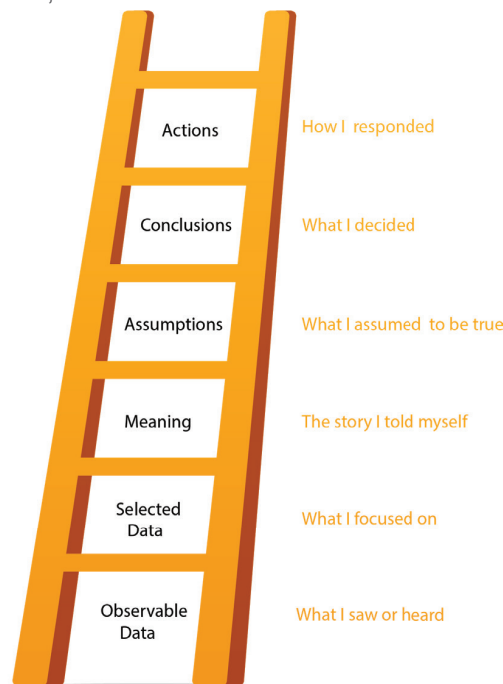
Handouts

1 Asking Skillful Questions

In moments of tension, our brains quickly shift from observation to judgment—often without our awareness. Asking thoughtful, neutral questions helps slow this process, reduce defensiveness, and create space for shared understanding. This skill is essential for navigating conflict, giving feedback, and facilitating dialogue with clarity and respect. Curiosity is a leadership skill. Questions create choice.

Slowing Down the Ladder of Inference

When we encounter a situation, we often unconsciously move up the “ladder.” Skillful questions help us go down the Ladder of Inference. These types of questions help address emotional reactions, surface assumptions (both yours and theirs), re-anchor the conversation in observable facts, and signal respect and psychological safety. The goal is understanding first, not correction.



Ladder of Inference, Chris Argyris, 1970

Conflict escalates when people act from the top of the ladder without checking the lower rungs.

Skillful Questions

- What feels most important to address right now?
- What would be a helpful next step?
- What else might be going on?
- How do you think they might see it?
- What were you assuming at that point?
- Is there anything you might be filling in?
- What did that mean to you?
- How did you interpret that action?
- What specific facts did I focus on?
- What data did I ignore?
- What did you notice in that moment?
- What was said or done that stood out to you?

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Be aware of these risks when seeking a better understanding.

- Asking “Why did you do that?” (often feels accusatory)
- Leading questions that push your conclusion.
- Jumping to problem-solving before understanding.
- Using questions to win rather than learn.

Practice Activity

1. Choose one of the following scenarios.
 - A colleague’s email felt abrupt or dismissive
 - A team member missed a deadline without explanation
 - A meeting decision left someone feeling excluded
 - A recent situation that was troubling for you
2. For the scenario you chose, reflect on the following questions:
 - What story am I telling myself?
 - What assumption might I be making?
3. From the different categories provided, choose 2-3 questions you could ask to get a better understanding of the situation, or write your own.

4. In your small group, share your questions. Listen to how the questions are asked.

Actionable Insights

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Questions focused on facts before meaning | • Space allowed for the other person to think |
| • Neutral, respectful tone | • Reduced defensiveness or increased clarity |
| • No assumptions embedded in questions | |

Take a Moment

Reflect on these questions to turn this practice into insights.

- Which type of question felt most natural for me?
- Which type felt hardest to ask—and why?
- Where could this skill help me most in my real work right now?

Small shifts in questions can prevent big escalations.



2 Flexing Your Style

Most of us have a default way of responding to conflict—especially under stress. Flexing your conflict style helps you move from reacting automatically to choosing a response that fits the situation, relationship, and stakes. The goal is not to change who you are, but to expand your range. There is no “best” conflict style—only a best fit for the moment.

The Five Conflict Styles (At a Glance)

The Thomas-Kilmann (TKI) model outlines five conflict styles based on assertiveness (getting your needs met) and cooperativeness (meeting others' needs), each with unique strengths and risks. Understanding these modes helps in choosing the best approach for different situations, from quick decisions to long-term relationship building.

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles



Under stress, we tend to **overuse** our default style.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Be aware of these risks when flexing your conflict style.

- Being defensive—refusing to see other perspectives or dismissing complaints.
- Insisting on being “right”—blocking compromise and mutual understanding.
- Psychoanalyzing or mind-reading—assuming you know the other person’s motives or feelings.
- Forgetting to listen—focusing on what you’ll say next rather than truly hearing the other person’s feelings and thoughts.

Interaction Examples

No single mode is best for all situations; effective conflict management requires choosing the most suitable style and opener for the specific context.

Style	Interaction Examples
Competing	• “Given the urgency, I need to be clear about what has to happen next.” • “This decision needs to be made today, and here’s why.”
Collaborating	• “I want to understand what matters most to you before we decide.” • “Can we step back and look for a solution that meets both of our needs?”
Compromising	• “What feels like a fair middle ground we could agree to right now?” • “What are you willing to flex on—and what’s non-negotiable?”
Avoiding	• “This doesn’t feel like the right moment to resolve this—let’s pause and revisit.” • “I’d like to take some time to think before responding.”
Accommodating	• “I’m willing to support your approach this time.” • “Your priority makes sense, and I can flex here.”

Practice Activity

1. In small groups, choose one of the following scenarios.

Scenario A: Competing Priorities

Two team members both need the same person’s time for urgent work. Each believes their request should come first, and deadlines are tight.

Scenario B: Feedback Resistance

A manager gives feedback about a recurring issue. The employee becomes defensive and says, “I’ve always done it this way.”

Scenario C: Uneven Workload

One team member feels overloaded while another seems underused. The overloaded person hesitates to speak up because they don’t want to seem negative or complain.

2. Which conflict style would most people use first? _____

3. Practice one different style.

Partner A: practices the conversation

Partner B: plays the other person

Observer(s) share:

- Style Signals: What words or behaviors showed the conflict style?
- Impact: How did the other person respond (more open, defensive, quiet)?
- Fit: Given time, power, and relationship risk, did the style fit the situation?

4. Switch roles and practice another style.

Actionable Insights

- Style matched the situation
- Tone supported psychological safety
- Language was clear and respectful
- Flexing increased options rather than tension

Take a Moment

Reflect on these questions to help build your conflict range.

- What did I learn about my default style today?
- Which style felt most uncomfortable—and why?
- In a future conflict, one intentional choice I want to make is:

Conflict competence isn't about choosing the "right" style—it's about choosing intentionally.



3 Preparing for a Difficult Conversation

Preparing for a difficult conversation increases the likelihood that the discussion will be productive rather than reactive. Thoughtful preparation helps you regulate emotions, clarify purpose, and create conditions for psychological safety—especially when stakes are high, or trust feels strained.

Getting Ready (At a Glance)

Use the steps below to cool down, slow down, and engage constructively with greater confidence and flexibility.

Steps	What To Do	Why It Matters
Cool Down	1. Breathe 2. Name (silently)	You can't think clearly when your nervous system feels threatened. Cool down restores access to judgment, empathy, and self-control.
Slow Down	1. Choose intention. 2. Pause the story. 3. Pause the mouth.	Most conflict escalates due to assumptions, not facts. Slow down replaces certainty with curiosity and creates psychological safety.
Engage Constructively	1. Listen to understand. 2. Share your perspective clearly. 3. Ask what's next.	Structure helps people feel safe enough to stay in the conversation. Engaging constructively turns tension into understanding and forward movement.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Be aware of these risks when preparing for a conflict conversation.

- Letting emotions dictate the conversation.
- Making assumptions and jumping to conclusions.
- Using blame and absolutes.
- Focusing on “winning” or being right.
- Failing to define a positive goal.

Practice the Opener

Individual (10 minutes)

1. **The Situation.** What's the situation or tension? Brief notes only—no names.

2. **Cool Down.** Calm yourself before the conversation.

- What emotions do you notice coming up?

- What helps you calm yourself before speaking?

3. **Slow Down.** Pause assumptions and choose your approach.

- What story or assumption might you be telling yourself?

- What outcome do you want from this conversation?

- What's one thing you want to understand from the other person?

4. **Engage Constructively.** Draft a simple opening line that shows curiosity and respect. (Invite-Intent-Ask for perspective)

Small Group Practice (6 minutes)

1. Each person reads their opener out loud.
2. After each opener, discuss: What worked about this opener, and what helped it feel inviting? Consider some of the Actionable Insights below.

Actionable Insights

Which of these did you observe in the practice?

Clarity	• Was the opener easy to understand? • Was the goal stated clearly?
Tone	• Did it sound calm, respectful, and neutral? • Did anything sound rushed or tense?
Invitation	• Did the opener invite conversation rather than push a position? • Did it leave space for the other person to respond?
Fit for the Situation	• Did the opener match the level of urgency and context? • Would this work in a busy work setting?
Impact	• How might this opener land with the other person? • Would it likely open the conversation—or shut it down?

Take a Moment

Reflect on these questions to focus on awareness, preparation, and practical next steps.

- What did you notice about how your opener sounded once you said it out loud?
- How did cooling down or slowing down change the way you opened the conversation?
- What's one small change you'd make to your opener before using it at work?

What you notice, you can choose. What you choose, you can change.



4 Using ARTS in Conversations

ARTS provides a simple structure for having difficult conversations with clarity and care. It helps reduce defensiveness, strengthen psychological safety, and keep conversations focused on learning and problem-solving rather than blame. ARTS is about striking a balance between empathy and accountability—not choosing one over the other.

The ARTS Framework (At a Glance)

Use the steps below to slow down, clarify intent, and enter the conversation with greater confidence and flexibility.

Step	How	Example
A sk about their perspective	Invite the other person to share what they see, feel, or need.	• “Can you share how this situation looks from your perspective?” • “What feels most important for me to understand right now?”
R espond without judgment	Acknowledge what you hear to show understanding (not agreement).	• “It sounds like you’re feeling frustrated by the timeline.” • “I hear that this has felt overwhelming.”
T ell your perspective	Share your observations, impact, and concerns clearly and respectfully.	• “From my perspective, I’ve noticed...” • “The impact for me has been...”
S eek a path forward	Collaborate on next steps, adjustments, or agreements.	• “What might help us move forward?” • “What feels like a reasonable next step?”

When ARTS Helps Most

- When emotions are present but dialogue is still possible
- When trust or clarity has been strained
- When feedback or expectations need to be discussed
- When you want to slow the conversation down and reduce defensiveness

Use with Caution When

- There is a serious power imbalance or safety concern
- The issue involves policy violations or requires escalation
- One or both parties are not emotionally regulated

Practicing ARTS

1. Set Up (2 minutes)

- For small groups (3-4 participants)
- Choose one realistic work situation (no names, no solving)
- Assign roles: speaker, partner, observer(s)

2. Prepare (3 minutes)

Speaker	▪ [Ask] What do I want to understand? ▪ [Tell] What's my key point? ▪ [Seek] What outcome or next step am I hoping for?
Observer(s)	Listen and look for behaviors that support the ARTS structure.

3. Practice the conversation (5 minutes)

- Speaker & Partner: role-play the conversation using ARTS
- Observer(s): listen for each ARTS step used and what reduced or increased tension

4. Feedback & Reflection (3 minutes)

Observer(s)	▪ One thing that worked well ▪ One place ARTS helped keep the conversation constructive
Speaker	▪ What felt natural? ▪ What felt challenging?

5. Switch roles. Use the same scenario.

Actionable Insights

Which of these did you observe in the practice?

- Invited the other person's perspective
- Showed understanding without judgment
- Was specific, respectful, and impact-focused
- Invited shared problem-solving
- Tone supported psychological safety

Take a Moment

Reflect on these questions to help build your skills in using ARTS.

- What did you notice about how using the structure changed the conversation?
- What's one thing you want to try in a real conversation this week?



5 Giving Feedback Using ARTS

Feedback builds learning, trust, and performance when it's clear and respectful. The ARTS framework reduces defensiveness, clarifies expectations, and supports behaviors that help individuals and teams succeed. Feedback is about supporting success—not judging character.

ARTS + Feedback (At a Glance)

ARTS helps structure feedback so reinforcing feedback highlights what's working and modifying feedback focuses on specific improvements—keeping the conversation productive.

Step	Reinforcing Feedback Examples	Modifying Feedback Examples
A sk	• “Can we take a minute to talk about how that meeting went?” • “How did you feel about your role in the project?”	• “Can we talk about how our handoffs have been going?” • “How do you think the last few deadlines have landed?”
R espond	• “I hear that you were juggling a lot and still stayed focused.” • “That makes sense given the timeline.”	• “I hear that priorities have been shifting quickly.” • “That sounds frustrating.”
T ell	• “I noticed how clearly you summarized next steps.” • “That helped the team stay aligned and reduced follow-up questions.”	• “I’ve noticed updates coming in after deadlines.” • “When that happens, it makes it harder to plan next steps.”
S eek	• “What helped you approach it that way?” • “How can we make sure this continues?”	• “What might help us stay aligned moving forward?” • “What support or clarity would make this easier?”

NOTE: If reinforcing and modifying feedback must occur in the same conversation, clearly name the transition so it doesn't feel sneaky. For example,

“I have two different kinds of feedback to share—one to reinforce what's working, and one to help adjust something that's getting in the way.”

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- Being vague and non-specific.
- Making it personal (attacking character).
- Poor timing and setting.
- Overloading with negativity or inauthenticity.
- One-way delivery (no dialogue).

Areas that Develop with Effective Feedback



Practice Activity

1. Prepare (2 minutes)—Choose a scenario, type of feedback (reinforcing or modifying) to give, and assign roles (Feedback Giver, Feedback Receiver, Observer).

SCENARIOS

- **Meeting Preparation:** A team member brings thoughtful ideas to meetings but sometimes speaks over others when enthusiastic.
- **Project Deadlines:** A colleague consistently produces high-quality work but occasionally misses deadlines without advance notice.
- **New Team Member Adjustment:** A newer team member asks insightful questions but relies heavily on the manager for decisions they could make independently.
- **Email Communication:** A team member responds promptly and keeps work moving, though their tone can sometimes come across as abrupt.
- **Collaboration Across Roles:** A peer is dependable and takes strong ownership of tasks but doesn't always engage cross-functional partners.

2. Planning (2 minutes)—Reflect on the following preparation questions.
 - What specific behavior am I addressing? (what can be seen or heard—no assumptions)
 - Why does this feedback matter? (impact on work, team, or outcomes)

- What outcome do I hope for?
 - What emotions might I need to manage? (mine or theirs)
 - What might you say for each step of ARTS?
3. Feedback Conversation (5 minutes)—Practice giving the feedback (reinforcing or modifying) using ARTS.
 4. Observer Feedback (3 minutes)—Listen only. Take notes on Actionable Insights (below). Share observations at the end of the practice round.
 5. Repeat step 1 for the next practice round.

Actionable Insights

Which of these did you observe in the practice?

- Clear and respectful opening
- Listening before responding
- Specific behavior-focused language
- Calm, supportive tone
- Invitation to dialogue or next steps

Take a Moment

Reflect on these questions to help you use ARTS in giving feedback.

- Which part of ARTS felt most natural for me in giving feedback?
- What part of giving feedback felt most challenging or uncomfortable?
- One phrase, behavior, or mindset I want to try in a real conversation this week...

Feedback promotes open communication, fosters empathy and understanding, and facilitates constructive dialogue.



6 Facilitating Conflict Using FACET

FACET provides a clear, neutral structure for helping two people navigate conflict safely and productively. It supports psychological safety, keeps the conversation focused, and helps managers avoid fixing, judging, or taking sides.

As a facilitator, your role is to guide the process, not solve the problem.

The FACET Framework (At a Glance)

The FACET framework gives managers a simple, neutral structure for guiding two people through conflict—focusing on safety, clarity, and shared understanding rather than fixing or taking sides.

Step	How	Example
F rame the conversation	Set purpose, boundaries, and expectations for respectful dialogue.	• “My role today is to support a respectful, productive conversation.” • “The goal is understanding and next steps—not assigning blame.”
A sk & acknowledge perspectives	Invite each person to share and reflect back what you hear.	• “Let’s hear from each of you—what feels most important to share?” • “What I’m hearing is…”
C larify understanding	Summarize shared ground, differences, and core issues.	• “It sounds like you agree on ____ but differ on ____.” • “Let me check that I’m capturing this accurately.”
E xplore options	Support the parties in identifying possible paths forward.	• “What options might address both of your concerns?” • “What would feel workable going forward?”
T rack agreements	Capture decisions, next steps, and follow-up clearly.	• “Here’s what I’m hearing you’ve agreed to…” • “What support or follow-up is needed?”

When FACET Helps Most

- When two people are stuck in tension or misunderstanding
- When emotions are present but safety is still possible
- When roles, expectations, or communication have broken down
- When a manager needs to stay neutral and structured

Use with Caution When

- There are allegations of harassment, discrimination, or misconduct
- Power imbalance prevents open dialogue
- One or both parties refuse to participate
- Emotional regulation is not present

Practice Activity

1. **Set Up** (3 minutes)--Choose one of the following scenarios, roles (Facilitator, Peer A, Peer B, Observer), and perspectives for Peer A and B.
 - **Missed Deadlines:** Peer A feels Peer B consistently misses deadlines, creating last-minute pressure. Peer B feels deadlines change without notice and expectations are unclear.
 - **Meeting Participation:** Peer A feels Peer B dominates meetings and shuts down other voices. Peer B believes they are helping the team move efficiently.
 - **Competing Priorities:** Peer A supports urgent stakeholder requests. Peer B supports long-term planning and feels constantly deprioritized.
 - **Decision Speed:** Peer A prefers quick decisions to keep work moving. Peer B wants more discussion before committing.
 - **Feedback Avoidance:** Peer A is frustrated that concerns surface indirectly instead of directly. Peer B fears being perceived as confrontational.
2. **Prepare** (2 minutes)--Reflect on the following preparation questions.

Facilitator

- What kind of conflict is this? (about the work, how it's done, or how people are relating)
- What feels at stake? (trust, fairness, results, or the working relationship)
- What is my role here—and what is not my role?
- How will I open the conversation in a way that feels fair and safe?
- What do I need to watch in myself? (assumptions, rushing, wanting to fix it)

Observer—Review FACET checklist

Peer A and B—Review scenario and perspective to role-play

3. FACET Conversation (10 minutes)

- Facilitator: Practices the conversation using FACET.
- Peer A: Plays the colleague in conflict with Peer B.
- Peer B: Plays the colleague in conflict with Peer A.
- Observer: Listens for “Actionable Insights” and shares at the end of the role play.

4. Observer Feedback (4 minutes)—share Actionable Insights.

5. Rotate roles and choose the same/different scenario.

Actionable Insights

Which of these did you observe in the practice?

- Clear purpose for the conversation
- Both people had a chance to speak
- Each person’s perspective was reflected accurately
- Tone stayed neutral and respectful
- Understanding came before problem-solving
- Agreements or next steps were clearly summarized

Take a Moment

Reflect on these questions to help build your skills in using FACET.

- What helped the conversation feel safer or clearer?
- When did I feel pulled out of the facilitator role, and what triggered that?
- What is one small facilitation move or phrase I want to try in real work?

*FACET reminds us that effective facilitation isn’t about fixing conflict—it’s about holding a clear, neutral structure that helps people feel safe, heard, and able to move forward together.**



7 Resolve, Repair, or Refer

Not every conflict needs the same response. Some issues can be addressed, others need repair, and some require neutral support. The Resolve-Repair-Refer framework helps you pause, assess what's needed, and choose a response that protects trust, dignity, and safety. Discernment is a leadership skill—how you respond matters as much as whether you respond.

Resolve-Repair-Refer (At a Glance)

A quick guide to help you decide whether to address the issue, repair trust, or refer for neutral support—based on what's needed.

Resolve	Repair	Refer
• The issue is about work or process. • Both people are open to talking. • There's little or no past harm. • A clear agreement feels possible.	• Trust has been strained. • Feelings or impact haven't been acknowledged. • Both people want to understand and repair. • Working together going forward matters.	• There are concerns about bias, harassment, or misconduct. • Power differences make fairness hard. • Emotional safety is at risk • The issue hasn't improved despite efforts.

Choosing the Right Path

Use this checklist to decide the right path forward:

1. Is this **safe and appropriate** for me to handle?
2. Are people **calm enough** to talk?
3. Is there **unaddressed** impact?
4. Can **clarity** close this?

Common Pitfalls—and What to Do Instead

These pitfalls highlight common missteps and offer guidance for choosing an effective response.

MISSTEP	WHAT TO DO INSTEAD
1. Addressing too quickly	Pause and ask: <i>Is this about the task or about trust?</i> If trust is strained, shift to Restore .
2. Trying to restore without safety	Check readiness first. If safety or neutrality isn't possible, Refer .
3. Waiting too long to refer	Name your limits early and involve neutral support before it escalates.
4. Seeing referral as failure	Reframe referral as good judgment that protects fairness and safety.
5. Choosing based on comfort	Ask: <i>Which response best protects trust, dignity, and safety right now?</i>

Practice Activity

1. **Solo Review of Scenario A** (3 minutes)—Silently read Scenario A and decide: Resolve, Repair, or Refer. Be ready to explain why using the checklist.

Scenario A: The Abrupt Feedback

A manager gave direct, abrupt feedback during a high-stress moment several weeks ago. Since then, work has continued, but communication feels guarded and trust seems thinner. The employee hasn't raised it again, but engagement has noticeably shifted.

2. **Group Review of Scenario A** (5 minutes)—Share your choices and agree on one path for Scenario A. Review the checklist to guide your discussion.
3. **Group Review Scenario B** (5 minutes)—Read Scenario B assigned to your group. Decide the strongest next step and be ready to justify it.

Scenario B (Focus on the scenario assigned to your group)

B1 The "Joke" Comment	An employee reports repeated comments from a peer that feel dismissive and tied to identity. The peer says they were "just joking." The employee asks whether this should be documented and what options exist.
B2 The Supervisor Concern	A staff member shares concerns about their supervisor's behavior and says they no longer feel safe raising issues directly. They ask what support options are available.

B3 The Ongoing Allegation	Two employees have a long-running conflict. After prior attempts to resolve it, one now alleges retaliation and questions whether the process has been fair.
B4 Should This Be Reported?	An employee describes behavior that may violate policy and asks directly whether the manager is required to report it. Emotions are high, and trust in the process feels fragile.

4. **Path-Specific Question** (3 minutes)—(a) Answer **ONLY** the question that matches your Scenario B decision. (b) Write one clear sentence a manager could actually say out loud to take the next step (resolve, repair, or refer).

- Resolve: What clarity or agreement would close this?
- Repair: What must be acknowledged before moving forward?
- Refer: How would you explain the referral with dignity and neutrality?

(b) Write one clear sentence a manager could actually say out loud to take the next step (resolve, repair, or refer).

Take a Moment

Think of a recent or current situation and reflect on these questions.

- What is one real situation where you will use resolve, repair, or refer—and which path will you choose?
- What is one sentence you will practice saying to take that next step?

The right response protects trust, dignity, and the work itself.

APPENDIX C

Program Evaluation

Potential Key Outcomes

Strengthened Professionalism in Conflict Management

Managers may demonstrate increased capability and consistency in preparing for and navigating difficult conversations, using structured frameworks to address conflict with clarity and confidence. (Runde & Flanagan, 2010; Center for Creative Leadership, 2019) As a result, conflict can be handled more professionally and predictably across participating teams, reducing ad hoc or reactive responses. (Stone et al., 2010)

Improved Psychological Safety and Respectful Dialogue

Teams may experience higher levels of psychological safety, with employees reporting greater comfort expressing concerns, differing perspectives, and feedback. (Edmondson, 2018) Conflict conversations may increasingly reflect respect, empathy, and active listening, helping reduce defensiveness and misunderstanding while supporting trust and learning. (Rogers, 1957; Schein, 2013)

Greater Integrity in Decision-Making and Follow-Through

Participants may demonstrate stronger judgment in determining when to resolve, repair, or appropriately refer conflict, rather than defaulting to a single response. (Runde & Flanagan, 2010) Clearer accountability, follow-through, and appropriate use of neutral resources can reinforce fairness, transparency, and trust in leadership actions. (Stone et al., 2010; Center for Creative Leadership, 2019)

More Inclusive and Bias-Aware Communication

Managers may show increased awareness of how identity, assumptions, and power dynamics influence conflict and communication. (Schein, 2013; Chou & Cooley, 2018) Communication practices may increasingly reflect perspective-taking, inquiry, and inclusion, supporting more equitable and constructive engagement across diverse teams. (Edmondson, 2018)

Enhanced Organizational Effectiveness and Culture

The organization may build greater capacity to address conflict early and constructively, contributing to fewer avoidable escalations, stronger collaboration, and improved engagement indicators. (Center for Creative Leadership, 2019; Runde & Flanagan, 2010) Teams may resolve disagreements more efficiently while preserving relationships, supporting a culture of trust, learning, and excellence. (Edmondson, 2018; Senge, 1990)

Evaluation Methods

Program outcomes were assessed using a combination of participant feedback, facilitator observations, follow-up reflections, and organizational indicators collected across the program lifecycle. **Level 1 (Reaction)** data were gathered through brief end-of-session surveys administered immediately after each session to assess psychological safety, relevance, and perceived value. **Level 2 (Learning)** data were collected during sessions through facilitator observation checklists, skill demonstrations, and participant reflections embedded in practice activities and role-plays. **Level 3 (Behavior)** data were gathered through follow-up surveys and small-group coaching reflections approximately **4–6 weeks** after sessions, capturing real-world application of conflict competence skills. **Level 4 (Results)** data were reviewed **3–12 months** post-program using aggregated engagement or pulse indicators, qualitative themes, and trend data (e.g., psychological safety, communication quality, and appropriate escalation patterns) to assess sustained organizational impact.

Session-Level Evaluation

Collect immediately after each session

Session 1 Conflict Awareness & Reflective Listening

1. This session felt relevant to the conflict situations I face at work. (L1)
2. I better understand how my past experiences and assumptions influence my reactions to conflict. (L2)
3. I feel more confident using reflective listening to reduce tension. (L2)

Session 2 Conflict Types & Styles

1. I can identify the type of conflict I am facing and what may be driving it underneath. (L2)
2. I better understand my default conflict style and how it shows up under stress. (L2)
3. This session helped me see how different conflict styles can help or hurt depending on the situation. (L2)

Session 3 Preparing for Difficult Conversations

1. I feel more confident cooling down strong emotions before a difficult conversation. (L2)
2. I can slow down assumptions and clarify my purpose before engaging. (L2)
3. The tools from this session will help me prepare for a real conversation at work. (L1/L2)

Session 4 ARTS for Conflict Conversations

1. I can ask about the other person's perspective before stating my own. (L2)
2. I can use the ARTS structure to guide a conflict conversation. (L2)
3. The structure from this session makes difficult conversations feel more manageable. (L1/L2)

Session 5 Feedback Using ARTS

1. I can give feedback that is clear, respectful, and specific. (L2)
2. I feel more confident balancing empathy and accountability in feedback conversations. (L2)
3. The feedback tools from this session are practical for my role. (L1)

Session 6 Neutral Facilitation (FACET)

1. I can stay neutral while facilitating conflict between others. (L2)
2. I can use a structured process to guide others toward understanding. (L2)
3. I better understand when facilitation is appropriate and when escalation is needed. (L2)

Session 7 Resolve, Repair, or Refer

1. I can decide whether a conflict needs resolution, repair, or referral. (L2)
2. I feel more confident communicating boundaries and referrals with clarity and respect. (L2)
3. This session helped me think more strategically about my role in conflict. (L1/L2)

Optional Question (Rotating)

- What is one insight or tool you are most likely to use from this session?
- What part of this session will be most useful in your work right now?

Peer Coaching

Session 1

1. This peer session felt psychologically safe and respectful. (L1)
2. Learning from peers helped me see my conflict situation from new perspectives. (L2)
3. Hearing how others approached conflict helped normalize common leadership challenges. (L2)

Optional open-ended (choose one):

- What insight from a peer stood out to you in this session?
- How did learning from peers influence your thinking about a current situation?

Session 2

1. This peer session helped me integrate program tools into real situations. (L2)
2. Learning from peers strengthened my confidence in choosing how to approach conflict. (L2)
3. This session helped me think more clearly about next steps in a real conflict situation. (L2)

Optional open-ended (choose one):

- What approach or perspective from a peer are you most likely to apply?
- How did this session influence your readiness to take action?

Behavior Change (Application on the Job)

Collect 30-60 days after the final session

1. I prepare more intentionally before difficult conversations.
2. I use reflective listening to reduce defensiveness during conflict conversations.
3. I use structured approaches (e.g., asking for perspective, clarifying impact) rather than reacting in the moment.
4. I adapt my conflict approach based on the situation instead of relying on a default style.
5. I pause to assess whether a conflict needs resolution, repair, or referral before acting.
6. I apply ideas or approaches I learned from peers when handling conflict situations.

Optional (if space allows):

7. I feel more steady and confident entering difficult conversations.
8. I communicate boundaries or referrals with greater clarity and respect.

Open-ended (strongly recommended):

- Describe one situation where you applied something from this program. What was different?

Results & Impact (Team/Organizational Outcomes)

Collect 3-6 months after the final session

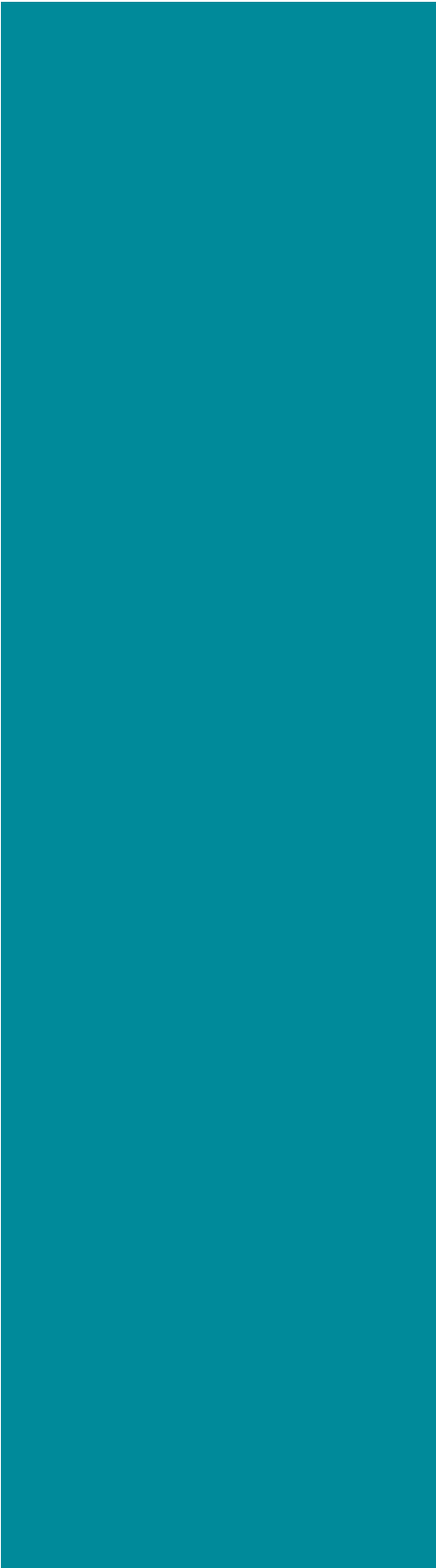
1. Conflict is addressed earlier and more constructively on my team.
2. Conflict conversations feel more professional and less reactive.
3. Team members feel safer expressing concerns or differing perspectives.
4. Feedback conversations more often lead to clarity and follow-through.
5. Conflicts are more consistently resolved, repaired, or appropriately referred.
6. Trust and collaboration on my team have improved.

Optional (organizational lens):

7. There is greater consistency in how conflict is handled across teams.
8. Learning from peers has strengthened shared expectations for handling conflict.

Open-ended (optional but powerful):

What changes have you noticed on your team as a result of this program?



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