

Managing Interpersonal Conflict with Coworkers

Conflict requires three conditions

- an *expressed* struggle (observable behavior)
- struggle must be between at least two parties who are *interdependent*
- the parties must believe one or more of the parties are interfering with the other(s) *reaching their goals* (whether accurate or not—perception counts)

Threat provokes the classic physical “fight or flight” response

- hormones adrenalin and cortisol prepare the body for survival . When a threat is perceived, these hormones increase heart rate and respiration, shunt blood away from the stomach to muscles, and increase blood sugar. Over time, these conditions can make measurable changes to physical appearance and health.

Physical symptoms of threat response

Behavioral examples of fight response

Behavioral examples of flight response

Coping with conflict

- Anticipate conflict, but don't go looking for it.
- Identify physical symptoms of threat response
- Admit/acknowledge your role in the conflict (that you are in conflict)
- Revise your perception of threat
- Admit your dependence on the coworker(s)
- De-escalate the intensity
- Separate bad behavior from conflict

Choices

- Flee (avoid or withdraw) not fair to you
- Fight (bash the other party into submission) not fair to others
- Force higher authority to decide (not fair to anyone)
- Negotiate a compromise
- Collaborate on long-term resolution