

# F.A.I.R Conflict Coaching™



Conflict costs UK business 33 Billion a year (CIPD). With today's economic climate organisations should be taking a more robust approach to the prevention and resolution of workplace disputes.

Managing conflict can be challenging for many people and getting the right intervention to prevent escalation is vital as many processes result in lingering issues and unresolved emotions.

Conflict Coaching is becoming a widely recognised ADR intervention, often facilitated parallel to mediation and other dispute resolution processes. Conflict Coaching is a collaborative relationship between the coach and the client. Through dialogue the coach works with individuals to reflect on how they respond and react to conflict by identifying behaviours which will enable them to change or manage how they engage with others.

## TCM's effective FAIR Mediation:

- TCM's effective FAIR Mediation Model has ensured organisations see over a 90% success rate when this model is used. Inspired by its success TCM have adapted the FAIR Mediation Model for using conflict coaching. We call it the FAIR Coaching Model. Organisations who use both coaching and mediation to resolve disputes see more effective outcomes than relying on systemic process in dispute resolution.

## Conflict coaching is a useful tool for:

- Preventing and resolving workplace and team disputes
- Addressing attitudes and difficult behaviours in the workplace
- Managing change and responding to the aftermath from change

## Who should use conflict coaching?

1. Managers and leaders who are required to manage conflicts and change
2. Disputing parties- as an alternative to mediation where parties are resistant to mediate or as an add on to mediation as it can be used before and after the mediation session
3. Employees who have been affected by conflict or change in the workplace
4. Employees who wish to adapt how they react and engage with others

## Benefits

1. Conflict coaching is a solution-focussed process which promotes empowerment, reflection and a focus on the future.
2. It offers a safe space for the coachee to increase self-awareness and transform the way in which they handle conflict and change.
3. It fosters a culture of collaboration and dialogue and compliments a mediation culture which is emerging in many organisations across the globe.

# The conflict coaching process

## Stage 1: enquiry and setup

### Objectives:

- To build rapport with the client
- To confirm the clients commitment to the coaching process
- To make sure the client is clear on the FAIR coaching model and process
- To ensure the client understands the role of the coach
- To schedule dates and duration of sessions
- To prepare the client for the first session

## Pre session questionnaire

- A questionnaire should be sent to clients and returned prior to the first session. This is to help the client reflect on their goals for coaching and think about the potential barriers for reaching those goals. This form also helps the coach manage expectations of the client and ensure coaching is the right format for resolving the conflict.

## Role of coach

- Be Impartial
- Listen
- Provide honest observations and input that help bring awareness and reach goals
- Help the client strengthen knowledge, skills and abilities to engage more effectively in conflict
- Helps the client identify goals and take the necessary steps required to reach them
- Assist the client to manage or resolve a dispute, or prevent one from escalating
- Help the client to explore possible challenges to reaching their goals.

## Stage 2: hearing the issues

### Objectives:

- To listen to the client's account of the issues/ interactions which precipitate the conflict or dispute
- To let the client vent
- To empower the client to untangle the conflict, separating out issues and possible confusion connected to blame and judgement of self and others

Ask a range of open questions to help the client tell the story.

- Who is the client in conflict with?
- What led up to this situation?
- What events have taken place?
- How has the situation/event impacted on the client?
- What has been done so far to resolve the issue?

It is important to make sure the client has vented enough before moving on to the next stage. Clients may not be ready if they are still stuck in the emotion which surrounds the conflict. The coach should check in if they are ready and assess what might be holding them back on moving forward.

### Identity

A desired and damaged identity lies at the heart of most conflicts. We want to be liked and we want to be seen to be liked. Most people are in conflict because they believe someone or something is preventing them from being who they are or who they want to be. In conflict individuals are self serving; their stories may have a bias that represents them in the best light. Often people in conflict struggle to see how their behaviour might impact on the situation and be contributing to the conflict. Conflict behaviour negatively impacts on the identity of the other. In order to change the others behaviour, they must change their own. The coach helps the client clarify current identity and desired identity of both themselves and the other in meeting their goals for resolving the conflict.

## Stage 3: exploring the issues

### Objectives:

- Drill down and map the conflict( explore the root cause, behaviours and dynamic of the conflict)
- To help the client deconstruct the conflict
- To help the client feel more positive about dealing with the issue/conflict
- To encourage self awareness
- To establish goals for resolving conflict
- Exploring other persons viewpoint

Exploring each issue in detail helps the client really explore their own perceptions, triggers and behaviours which construct the conflict. Once this has been explored the coach can help the client become more aware of how the other person in conflict might perceive the situation.

In this context it might be useful to explore the identity, emotion, needs and power the client has in the conflict.

### Emotion

Emotion is central in conflict. It is the driver that escalates conflict and the key to resolving it. Emotions help the client understand the triggers for the conflict and what needs to change in order to feel better about the situation. Emotions are strongly linked to identity, power and needs. The coach can explore with the client their own emotions and those of the other.

How are these emotions affecting what the client sees as possible options for action?

What needs to happen for the client to have a more positive emotional experience?

## Power

People in conflict often don't realise they have the power to change the situation. There is a lot of blame and finger pointing. The blame is often directed at the other person or the organisation. Often the client feels let down or frustrated by the organisation or the person they are in conflict with. The coach can work with the client to establish goals and help them become aware of what they can do to change the situation.

What is the client's ability to influence the current situation in a way that benefits them?

What does the client need to resolve the situation?

What changes need to be made to create the desired identity and experience more positive emotion?

What factors are in the way of meeting goals?

The conflict coach works with the client to explore these elements and empower the client to make these changes.

## Needs

Identifying needs is important in any conflict. In coaching the coach works with the client to explore needs in order to meet the client's goals. If the client cannot articulate their needs it becomes difficult to identify appropriate outcomes. The client may perceive their needs are being undermined by the other individual or the organisation. The coach works with the client to explore the unmet need and helps the client explore the potential blocks, whilst assisting them to establish goals to get their needs met.

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## Before moving on to stage 4

Exploring the above elements, the coach helps the client to reconstruct the conflict story. In this stage the insights the client has about their own behaviour and needs and that of the other should be reflected back and validated. It takes time for the client to explore these areas and the coach should tread carefully as there is a danger the client could resist movement because they are not ready to view the conflict in a different way. Individuals often become attached to their conflict, this links in with identity.

If the client feels blocked in moving forward one question could be, how does staying in conflict with xxxxx benefit you?

The client could be feeling blocked because of pride, denial, shame, embarrassment and in some cases the client maintains a level of attention from the organisation. As a coach it is important to explore the block before moving forward.

## Stage 4: review goals and explore choices and challenges

Objectives:

- To help the client explore goals
- To help the client think about any risks and opportunities for the goal
- To explore how they would like to form an action plan, step by step
- To discuss tasks to help the client move forward
- To confirm the clients next steps

This stage should focus on goals. The client has constructed the story of the conflict and explored the issues looking at both perspectives. The coach works with the client to look at what they want to achieve and how they can resolve the conflict. Goals may have changed due to new insights formed from stage 3 of the process.

What resources do you need to meet your goal?

How will this goal meet the values which are important to you?

Are there any challenges which will prevent you from meeting your goal?

What ideas do you have to overcome these challenges?

## Before the next session

The coach and client can discuss what tasks might be helpful to work on before the next session. This may involve tasks which help with developing insight into the situation or help focus the client on what resources they need to meet their goals. Completing tasks is a measure of accountability for the client and ensures engagement and commitment. In between sessions there can be further insights about a situation and goals can change. These are important to revisit in following sessions.

Possible options:

- Conflict wheel (similar to the life wheel)
- Working with metaphors
- Drawing a picture that encases the conflict
- Writing a values statement

## End the session

Always end the coaching session on a positive note and recap the progress made and what has been agreed as next steps. Be mindful that the session can stir up a mix of emotions and thoughts and it is important to validate, motivate and inspire the progress made in reaching their goal.