**ALL ABOUT CONFLICTS**

**WHAT IS CONFLICT?**

* A disagreement
* An argument or a fight
* To differ or a feeling of opposition
* To be contradictory

**EXAMPLES OF POOR COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

* Yelling at one another or aggressive/standoffish body language
* Interrupting or not listening
* Not considering the other person’s perspective
* Having to be right or not accepting criticism
* Speaking more than you listen
* Making generalizations
* Blowing things out of proportion
* Not being open-minded

**QUESTION: Pick one of the scenarios below:**

**Describe a scene where someone may use poor communication skills in this conflict:**

**SCENARIOS:**

1. **The Babysitter**: **A** is a mother with a baby girl. **B** lives next door and baby sits **A**’s baby. One Saturday night while **B** is babysitting, a friend phones and invites **B** to a party just down the street. It’ll only be for a little while and the **A’s** baby is asleep, so after some serious hesitation **B** decides to go. The scene begins when **A** returns home and finds the baby alone, then **B** enters.
2. **The Lost Ten Dollar Bill:** **A** is the son/daughter of **B**. **A** does the grocery shopping for **B** every week. **A** goes shopping as usual, but as he/she goes to pay she/he realizes that she/he has lost ten dollars of the grocery money and will be giving **B** less change than expected. The scene begins when **A** gets home, gives **B** the change and explains that he/she lost ten dollars. **B** doesn’t believe that **A** lost the 10 dollars and accuses **A** of stealing.
3. **The Dyed Red Hair**: **A** is a married man who has been feeling restless. **B** is his wife. He needs a change so he dyes his hair bright red. **A** is sitting in front of the TV waiting for **B** to come home. The scene begins when **B** enters and reacts to **A**’s new hair, which **B** doesn’t like one bit.
4. **Motorists**: **A** and **B** are both drivers. They are both nice people who hardly ever get angry. **A** likes to solve problems with logic and calmness. **B** tries to avoid conflict at all costs. The scene begins when they get into an accident that they both believe is the other persons fault.
5. **Past Your Curfew:** It is past **B**’s curfew and **A** is sitting on the couch waiting for **B** to come home. The scene begins when **B** walks through the door one hour late and sees **A,** who was worried and very angry. **B** feels if he/she has good grades then what is the big deal if they are a little late?
6. **School vs. Job:** **A** is the parent of a teenager. **B** is the teenager. **B** is very bright and **A** wants **B** to graduate. **B** feels that he/she has outgrown school and is impatient to get stared in the “real” world as soon as possible. **A** wants **B** to get more qualifications in order to get a better job and have more opportunities for the future. **A** doesn’t understand why **B** wants to leave school. The scene begins when **B** comes home from school and tells **A** he/she is fed up with school and wants to quit.

**PRACTICING GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

**GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLSby Elizabeth Scott, M.S.**

**Stay Focused:** Sometimes it’s tempting to bring up past seemingly related conflicts when dealing with current ones. Unfortunately, this often clouds the issue and makes finding mutual understanding and a solution to *the current issue* less likely, and makes the whole discussion more taxing and even confusing. Try not to bring up past hurts or other topics. Stay focused on the present, your feelings, understanding one another and finding a solution.

1. **Listen Carefully:** People often *think* they’re listening, but are really thinking about what they’re going to say next when the other person stops talking. Truly effective communication goes both ways. While it might be difficult, try really listening to what your partner is saying. Don’t interrupt. Don’t get defensive. Just hear them and reflect back what they’re saying so they know you’ve heard. Then you’ll understand them better and they’ll be more willing to listen to you.

**Try To See Their Point of View:** In a conflict, most of us primarily want to feel heard and understood. We talk a lot about our point of view to get the other person to see things our way. Ironically, if we all do this all the time, there’s little focus on the other person’s point of view, and nobody feels understood. Try to really see the other side, and then you can better explain yours. (If you don't 'get it', ask more questions until you do.) Others will more likely be willing to listen if they feel heard.

**Respond to Criticism with Empathy:** When someone comes at you with criticism, it’s easy to feel that they’re wrong, and get defensive. While criticism is hard to hear, and often exaggerated or colored by the other person’s emotions, it’s important to listen for the other person’s pain and respond with empathy for their feelings. Also, look for what’s true in what they’re saying; that can be valuable information for you.

**Own What’s Yours:** Realize that personal responsibility is a strength, not a weakness. Effective communication involves admitting when you’re wrong. If you both share some of the responsibility in a conflict (which is usually the case), look for and admit to what’s yours. It diffuses the situation, sets a good example, and shows maturity. It also often inspires the other person to respond in kind, leading you both closer to mutual understanding and a solution.

**Use “I” Messages:** Rather than saying things like, “*You* really messed up here,” begin statements with “I”, and make them about yourself and your feelings, like, “I feel frustrated when this happens.” It’s less accusatory, sparks less defensiveness, and helps the other person understand your point of view rather than feeling attacked.

**Look for Compromise:** Instead of trying to ‘win’ the argument, look for solutions that meet everybody’s needs. Either through compromise or a new solution that gives you both what you want most, this focus is much more effective than one person getting what they want at the other’s expense. Healthy communication involves finding a resolution that both sides can be happy with.

**Question: Describe the same scene, but using good communication skills:**

**HANDOUT [C]: REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

1. Which good communication skill do you tend to use during a conflict? Explain.

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2. Which poor communication skill do you tend to use during a conflict? Explain.
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3. With whom do you tend to use good communication skills? Why do you think that is? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. With whom do you tend to use poor communication skills? Why do you think that is? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. Where do you think you learned your communication skills from? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

6. Why are good communication skills important?

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7. How do you think you can improve your communications skills?

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