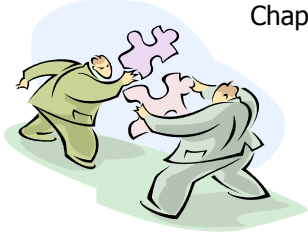


Conflict in the Small Group

Chapter 11



Conflict in the Small Group



Definition

Conflict is the process that occurs when group members, due to their interdependence, their real and perceived differences, and their emotions, engage in an expressed struggle that impedes task accomplishment

Conflict in the Small Group



Three dimensions of conflict

1. The affective dimension refers to the negative emotions group members associate with conflict
2. The behavioral dimension refers to the behaviors group members use during conflict
3. The cognitive dimension refers to the differences in opinion among group members

Types of Small Group Conflict



Types of Small Group Conflict



Substantive conflict centers on group members' critical evaluation of ideas and can occur over a fact, an interpretation of a fact, a definition, or a choice

Affective conflict centers on individual group members' communication and personality traits

Types of Small Group Conflict



Procedural conflict centers on the procedures group members use to critically evaluate ideas or confront member behavior

Inequity conflict centers on a group member's perceived imbalance between his contribution to the group and the contributions made by the group members

Conflict-handling Styles



Conflict-handling Styles



Five conflict-handling styles

1. Avoiding has a low concern for both the self and the group members
2. Dominating places a priority on satisfying her own concerns instead of satisfying the concerns of group members
3. Compromising agrees to be agreeable and strives to find a middle ground between satisfying his own needs and satisfying his group members' needs

Conflict-handling Styles



Five conflict-handling styles

4. Obliging is concerned highly with the needs of group members and emphasizes finding commonalities among members
5. Integrating works toward developing a solution that satisfies the needs of all members

Conflict-handling Styles



Although the choice of a conflict-handling style usually is habitual, it can be situational, particularly if the group member considers the use of conflict important or if the circumstance dictates the use of a particular style

Guidelines for Handling Conflict



Guidelines for Handling Conflict



Five guidelines

1. Group conflict sometimes causes decreased affect for the group
2. Group conflict may have nothing to do with the task
3. Group conflict may prove irresolvable
4. Group conflict has both short- and long-term benefits
5. Group conflict produces both short- and long-term consequences

A Final Note



Conflict creates both constructive and destructive consequences

To make conflict as constructive as possible, group members should reflect on not only how they define the conflict but how best to handle it as well
