



Massachusetts
Municipal
Association

MIIA

Nonprofit
Locally based
Member driven

Serving Massachusetts communities since 1982

Coping with Conflict: Internal Resolution Strategies

March 28, 2023

ALLONE
HEALTH

Session Objectives

1. Understanding conflict and why it happens

2. Types of conflict in municipal settings

3. Understanding the impact of conflict

4. Skill building: tools to manage conflict

5. Strategies to resolve conflict

What is Conflict?

Is conflict good or bad?



What comes to mind when you hear the word “conflict”?

Why does conflict happen?

Differences in personalities

Competitive nature

Inadequate communication

Difference in values, experiences

Perceived performance issues

Healthy vs. unhealthy conflict

Healthy	Unhealthy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parties respect other's viewpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of respect for different view
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calm, non-defensive approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anger, yelling, defensiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mindset: solution/ compromise focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mindset: my way or the highway!
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not taking it personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is personal!
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conflict with positive focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conflict for the sake of conflict

Top 3 Types of Municipal Conflict

1. Responsibilities/ Expectations
 2. Role confusion/ lack of clarity
 3. Values/ Personality
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- The background of the slide features a 3D-rendered scene of four yellow, stylized human figures. They are positioned in a line, each holding onto a thick, grey rope that runs horizontally across the frame. The figures appear to be in the middle of a tug-of-war or a team-building exercise, with their bodies leaning forward and their arms extended towards the rope. The lighting is soft, creating subtle shadows on the ground beneath them. The overall color palette is muted, with the yellow of the figures contrasting against the grey of the rope and the dark, desaturated background.

Impact of Unmanaged Conflict



Resolving Conflict



Mitigating Conflict

1. Set expectations and clarify as needed

2. Create alignment

3. Lower tolerance of unmanaged conflict

4. Early intervention

5. Enhance our interpersonal and communication skills

Questions to Ask Ourselves

Do we have a policy/code of conduct?

Do I/ we know what it says?

Am I following expectations?

Is this a skill area that I could improve?

Am I setting the right example?

What is my conflict style?

Addressing Conflict

1. Remain CALM (don't escalate)
2. Use neutral or positive language
3. Focus on interpersonal skills
4. Be timely and objective
5. Be strategic

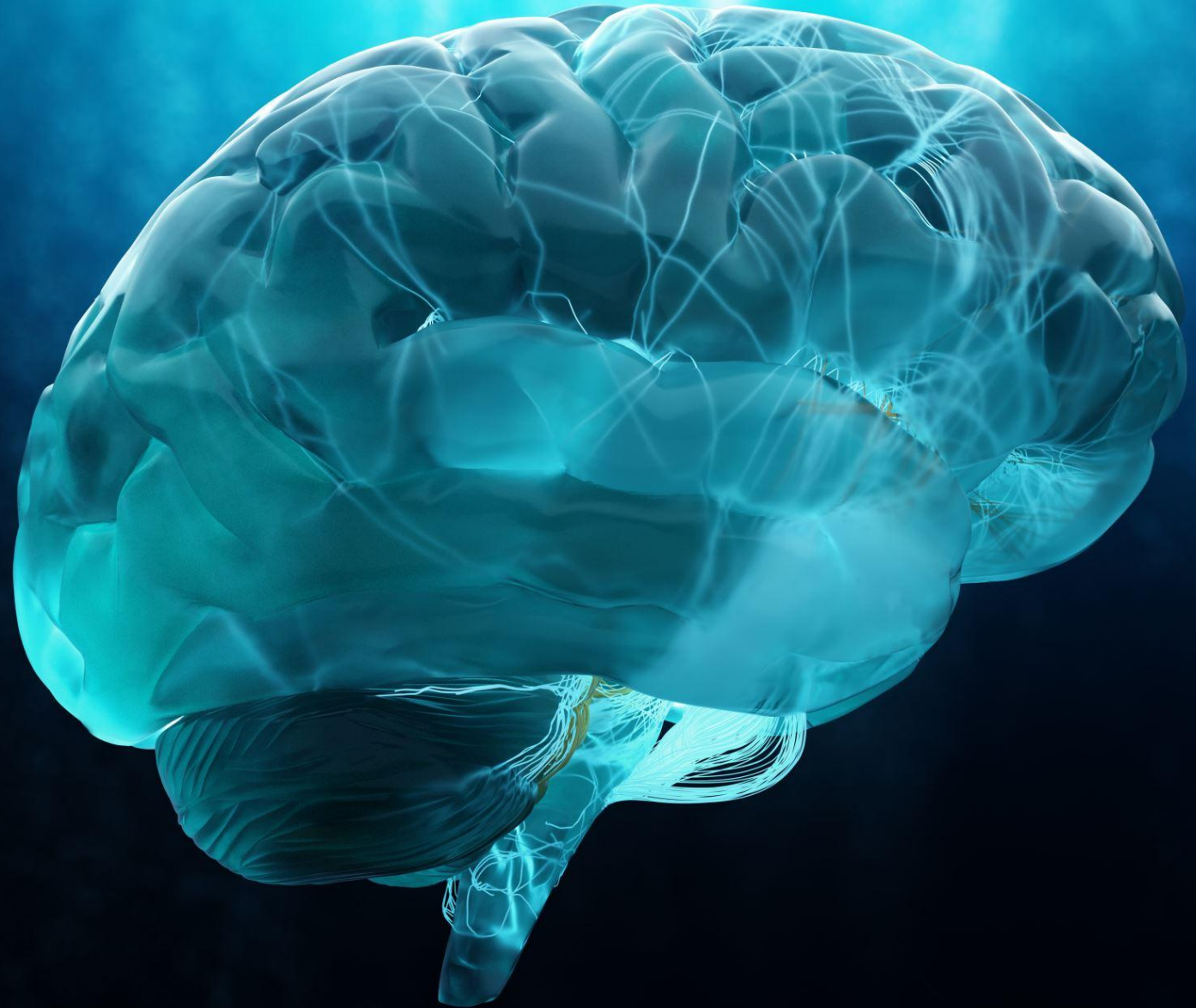


When the amygdala gets in our way

It's just a little part of our brain that processes fearful and threatening stimuli.

Once it's activated, the reasoning side of the brain shuts down.

At that point, no one is listening to logic



Remaining Calm

1. Prevents escalation
2. You can choose how you “react”
3. Prevents “fight or flight”
4. Words matter (as does voice tone and volume)
5. Think about HR

CALM

COOL

COLLECTED

Using Neutral or Positive Language

1. More effective in communicating your position
2. Can reduce tension/ prevent escalation
3. Less likely to exacerbate tension/ prolong the conflict



WORDS
HAVE
POWER

What can I do?

Understand the policies

Correlate policies with your role and performance

Create a culture of cohesion

Expect cohesion and teamwork

Lead by example

Enhancing Our Interpersonal Skills

1. Sharpening Emotional Intelligence (self-awareness and empathy)
2. Conflict management style
3. Developing emotional agility
4. The power of positivity
5. Communicating effectively



Communication

1. Eye contact/ body language
2. Avoid distractions and an audience
3. Demonstrate that you are listening
4. “Listening allows you to learn”
5. Be timely in communication
6. Do not just focus on communicating when things do not go according to plan



Helpful hints

NEVER ATTEMPT TO ADDRESS AN EMOTIONALLY CHARGED PERSON WITH LOGIC.



GIVE THE PERSON A TIME OUT TO COLLECT THEMSELVES (AND YOURSELF TOO).



ONLY WHEN THE PERSON IS CALMER, WILL THEY BE ABLE TO TAKE IN INFORMATION.

Being Proactive

1. Talk about conflict
2. Engage early when there is appearance of conflict
3. Communicate effectively



A group of people in a meeting or workshop setting, with their hands raised in a gesture of participation or agreement. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark green filter. The text is centered and reads:

What are five things that I can do starting NOW to build cohesion, enhance teamwork, and reduce/ mitigate conflict?

How the MIIA EAP can help with Conflict

1. Management Consultation
2. Supervisor Training
3. Conflict Resolution Services
4. Counseling and Coaching

