

Addressing Team Conflict

No matter how well your team works together, there may be times when two or more of its members have difficulty getting along. These suggestions will help you nip a team conflict in the bud:

1. Consult with Human Resources. Review any relevant policies and disciplinary procedures. If the conflict extends beyond two individuals, consider exploring options for training to manage conflict or address other team-related issues. LifeMatters is also available to provide consultation.

2. Schedule a separate, private meeting with each person. Outline your concerns about the situation and its impact on the team. Clearly explain what behaviors are considered unacceptable.

Sample language: “When you and your co-worker bicker in front of others, it affects team morale. Other people on the team are uncomfortable with the way you are behaving.”

3. Listen. Ask each person to explain what is causing the friction. Encourage the individual to describe events objectively, without assigning blame.

Sample language: “I’d like to get your perspective. Could you please tell me what happened?”

4. Ask what the team member can do to improve the situation. Have the individual focus on her or his



behavior, not that of the other person. If the conflict is due to a workflow issue, ask for insights into where logjams are occurring. Consider ways to streamline processes and decrease the potential for conflict.

Sample language: “What can you do to prevent disagreements from becoming a distraction?”

5. Make a referral to LifeMatters. If the behavior of one or both individuals warrants it, make a performance referral to LifeMatters.

Sample language: “LifeMatters can help you develop strategies for handling conflict. Please call.”

6. Follow up. Schedule a meeting at a later date to review the situation and any improvements in behavior. Failure to follow up is the number one reason employees don’t take a manager’s concerns seriously. If further conflicts arise, consult with Human Resources.

LifeMatters is available 24/7/365 to address management concerns. Call anytime.

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