



Workplace Conflict Resolution Skills

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Emmet Ore

Hello, everyone, welcome to part three of our March Wednesday webinar series where we've been discussing building and refining critical management skills. My name is Emmet. I'm a marketing specialist over here at Vensure, and I will be your host for the next hour. Today, our panelist, Robin Paggi, will be talking about workplace conflict resolution skills. There will be a Q&A session at the end. We'll do our best to answer the questions that we have, but anything we don't get to we'll respond to individually afterwards. Just a reminder, this is being recorded and we'll share that with you when we're done here. And as always, this webinar is brought to you by Vensure Employer Services. Vensure is the leader of 20-plus PEO partners with clients in all 50 states. Our agenda today includes definition of conflict, conflict resolution strategies, how to collaborate, the role of anger, responding to expressions of anger, and lastly, a Q&A. So, when you logged in to go to webinar, you should have seen a control panel launch, there's a little dropdown section in there for questions, just type your questions and comments into that section hit enter. If you're a client please put "client" in your questions so we can track that. All questions are private so you won't see the questions or comments of others, and we'll try to get everything in the time we have. But if we don't, please contact us at webinarHRhelp@vensure.com. As always, Robin Paggi is our esteemed panelist today. She's a seasoned human resource practitioner specializing in training on topics such as harassment prevention, communication, team building and supervisory skills. And I'll hand it over to Robin.

Robin Paggi

Thanks, Emmet. If you were to Google quotes about conflict, you would find things like difficulties are meant to rouse, not discourage. The human spirit is to grow strong by conflict and other lofty quotes like that. Now, even though conflict is a natural part of life, most people do not like conflict, myself included. However, I agree with author and speaker Thomas Crum, who specializes in conflict, and he said the quality of our lives depends not on whether or not we have conflicts, but on how we respond to them. Before I talk about responding to conflicts. Let's look at the definition.

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Conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two independent parties, the word expressed is key. You might be mad at someone, but if they don't know about it, you're not in a conflict with them. Conflicts usually exist because of the perception of incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others. Let's break that down. You might have the goal of going to the beach, but your partner's goal is to go to the forest and that seems like you have incompatible goals or you need to use the conference room. But one of your coworkers already reserved it, making it seem like you have to battle over scarce resources or you think you deserve a promotion. But your supervisor disagrees, which you perceive as interference with getting what you want. The keyword here is perception. Just because we perceive that we have incompatible goals or scarce resources or that someone's trying to interfere with us getting what we want doesn't mean that's actually what's happening. And that's why we need to talk about it to find out if our perception is reality. Communication is the central element in all interpersonal conflict. They are related in the following ways. Communication behavior often creates conflict. And I like this quote that I saw while I was Googling quotes, "10% of conflicts are due to differences in opinion, 90% are due to the wrong tone of voice." How we communicate when we perceive we have a conflict can make the situation worse or it can make it better. Communication behavior reflects conflict. We can usually tell when people are upset, even when they try to hide it or deny it. And communication is the vehicle for productive or destructive management of conflict. Tenzin Gyatso was the 14th Dalai Lama, and he said dialogue is the most effective way of resolving conflicts. Yes, usually you have to talk in order to resolve a conflict. But dialogue is also the most effective way to destroy relationships and your chances of getting what you want. So, the key is in how you communicate when you're upset with someone else. Our problem is usually not conflict. It's the way we handle it. So, let's go on and look at some conflict resolution strategies.

People tend to have a conflict style that's developed over their lifetime based on their personal characteristics, their life experiences, family background, things like that. For example, I was talking to my mom one day and I said, "I wonder why I'm so aggressive." And she said, "I think your three older brothers might have had something to do with it." My brothers were a rough and tumble bunch who didn't cut me any slack for being a girl. So, by the time you're an adult, your basic orientation to conflicts has developed and remains fairly consistent, meaning you probably have a conflict style that you use in most situations and that style can serve you well, but it can also work against you. So, looking at these styles in front of us—avoidance, what does it mean to avoid conflict? Sounds simple. If you're in a conflict with someone, you don't tell them you are. If they come into a room, you leave the room. If somebody says something, you hold your tongue and don't say something back. So, you just try to avoid the conflict as much as you possibly can. And that can be a really good strategy sometimes. The problem is that when that's always your strategy. So, one of the things that you might not be aware of is that you can choose which style you're going to use. It takes some work, but you can. And one way to choose is based upon how much you value the relationship with the person that you might be in conflict with and how much you value the issue that you are having a conflict over. So, avoidance is good when you don't really value the relationship, or you don't really value the issue or you want to stay out of trouble. So, here's an example. Let's say you just got into an argument with a coworker and tomorrow is the company picnic. Avoiding your coworker at the company picnic could prevent you from battling it out there, which is not the appropriate place, and getting yourself in trouble for doing so. So, sometimes avoidance is the right strategy, however, if you always avoid, then chances are four out of five times you're not getting the result that you want. Accommodate means to give in. And this can be a good strategy when you really value the relationship and you don't value the issue. For example, your manager came to work upset and yelled at you to turn your radio down. Well, you don't think your radio is too loud, but you really value your relationship with the company, meaning you want to stay employed. So, you just give in...do what you're told. Accommodating your supervisor could prevent you from getting in trouble. However, it's not always in your best interest to just give in to the demands of other people. Competing means win-lose. I'm going to win, you're going to lose. And this is my natural method of handling conflict, which does not always work for me. So, this can be a good strategy when you really value the issue more than you value the relationship. For example, if you caught a coworker embezzling. You might value the coworker however, you value honesty, ethical behavior, and your company more. And so,

you tell your supervisor about the coworker's behavior. Now, how is this a win-lose situation? You're not necessarily going to win something, but you are voting in favor of ethical behavior. And by telling your supervisor about your coworker, your coworker is obviously going to lose. Sometimes competition is the best strategy, but a lot of times it's simply not.

Now, compromise. I was in college before I learned what compromise really meant. It means I'm going to give up something in order to get something. And I thought that compromise was the end all be all of conflict resolution. I mean, you should always try to compromise as much as you can. That's just as good as it gets. Well, not necessarily. Compromise is a good strategy when you value the relationship and the issue equally. For example, your officemate, who you think is a bit overzealous about keeping things clean, repeatedly asks you to clean up your workspace. Even though empty coffee cups and your used tissue on your desk might not bother you, you try to do a better job of cleaning up just to keep the peace. You value your coworker and you might realize that insisting on having used coffee cups that are growing mold on your desk is not really an important issue. Is compromising always the best strategy? No, it's not. And then finally, there's collaboration and collaboration means I want to win, but I want you to win also. And it can be a good strategy when you really value the relationship and you really value the issue. For example, let's say your quarterly bonus is not nearly as much as you thought it would be. You really value getting the money you think you've been owed, but you also really value staying employed and the relationship with your supervisor. This actually happened to me and I'll tell you how I handle it and a couple more slides. So, the main point of this story is we tend to have a style that comes naturally to us, and sometimes our style does help us in resolving conflicts the way we want them resolved. But, sometimes our style prevents us from getting the results that we want from people. And let's remember that when we're interacting with people, we usually want a desired response. And so, we want to use the strategy that will get us that desired response. And I'll tell you how to do it. Let's go on to the next slide.

We should usually try to collaborate as much as we can when we are in a conflict. And again, collaboration means I want to win, but I want you to win too, or at least I don't want to put you in a losing situation. So, let's go back to the scenario I presented at the very beginning about the perception of incompatible goals. Sometimes we might think we have incompatible goals when we really don't, and that's the reason that we need to talk about it. So, the scenario that I presented is that you have a goal of going to the beach, but your partner's goal is to go to the forest. So, it seems like that's incompatible. You both can't get what you want, not necessarily. If you talk about what you really want, you might find that both of you really have the goal of just getting out of town. So, you really have a mutual goal, you just expressed it differently so that it appeared to be incompatible. That can resolve a lot of issues from the very beginning is just trying to determine do we really want different things or are we just expressing it differently? Next is separating the people from the problems. One reason that people don't like conflict is because it can get really ugly. Name-calling, finger-pointing...that type of thing. So, if you start saying things like, "You always get your way, you're so selfish, you're such a baby," then that reduces your chances of resolution. So, don't make it personal. Keep it focused on the issue or the problem. Next, focus on interest, not positions. Positions are demands and interests are the reasons behind the demands. So, if you want to go to the beach and your partner wants to go to the forest, create a list of why you both want to go to those places. You might want to go to the beach because the beach relaxes you. Well, can other places relax you? Probably. You might want to go to the beach because you want sunshine. Can other places provide sunshine? Probably. Your partner might want to go to the forest because of wanting solitude. Can other places provide solitude? Probably. So, you get the gist. You list why you want what you want and you might find that you can both get what you want without going to the exact place that you want. Now, I want to tell a story about how important focusing on interests and not possessions is. So, here is the story. As I said earlier, I have three older brothers and we grew up in a small house. We had a kitchen table with six places where the family could sit. But when my older brother started bringing girls home for Thanksgiving and Christmas, there wasn't enough room for all of us to sit around the table to eat. So, some people sat in the living room balancing their plates on

their knees and some people were in the kitchen. And when I was about 13, I just had a vision. Someday I'm going to have a big giant dining room table where everybody can sit around it and we're not going to eat off plastic plates. We're going to have China and we're not going to drink out of peanut butter jars. We're going to have stemware and we're going to have cloth napkins instead of paper towels. And I just created this entire vision for myself. Well, fast forward about 13 more years. When I got married, I told my husband we're having Christmas dinner at my house and we don't have a big giant dining room table, but our living room and dining room connect. And so if we moved a bunch of furniture out of the living room and bought some tables and set them up and bought some chairs, then we could kind of all be sitting together. And then I could spend a bunch of money on a bunch of China that we'd only use once a year. And so, this was what I wanted to have happen. And I demanded that it happen. And of course, I had conflict every Christmas, so much so that I didn't even want to have Christmas dinner at my house anymore. But one Christmas, I said to my husband, "Do you even know why I want all of this?" He said, "I've got no idea." I said, "When I was 13," and I told him all about my vision, the big dining room table, etc. And I said, "You might notice on Christmas Day, I spend so much time setting these tables, pairing these napkins with those placemats, with this silverware, with that stemware. That's the favorite part of my day, is setting all of those tables up. And when everything is set up, and the music is on, and the candles are lit, and I'm all dressed, and ready for everybody to come over, I pour myself a glass of wine, and I walk around the entire house, and I just take it all in." And our house is in a little circle that we can walk through, and after I've gone through my little walk around, I say to my 13-year-old self, "You did it." And that's my Christmas moment. And if I don't get my Christmas moment, Christmas is ruined. And so, I told him that story and it changed the game. And so, now on Christmas, he helps light the candles, he pours me the wine, he puts it in my hand and he says, "Get your walk around, do your walk around before everybody gets here." And it changed everything when I told him why I want what I want. So, focus on interest, not positions and demands. Alright. Now back to our story about you wanting to go to the beach and your partner wanting to go to the forest. After you've determined why you want to go where you want to go, generate alternatives for mutual gain. There are lots of places that you might be able to go that you get what you want. For example, I'm in California and we have many beautiful places along our coast where there is forest right next to the beach. So, you could literally both get what you want. The next thing is to use objective criteria to evaluate options. So, how do you know which alternative is going to be the best one? Well, probably time is an important thing to consider. Do you have the time to go someplace where you can both get what you want? Money usually is a consideration. Childcare is a consideration. So, whatever needs to be met in order for that alternative to become a reality are things that you need to consider, and evaluate each of your alternatives according to that criteria. Now, what typically happens sometimes is that we end up compromising, and remember compromising is I'm going to give up in order to get. It's rare that we can both get exactly what we want when we seem to have a conflict. And so, determine what you're willing to give up and focus on what you got, not what you lost. Because that's one of the things that people do sometimes to sabotage themselves is that they end up going to a lake instead of a beach and it still has sand, but it's not what I wanted. And then the whole time they're on vacation at their lake, they're pouting because they didn't go to the beach. So, don't do that. Focus on the fact that you got to go away and you got to have some sand and some water and some relaxation with your partner, which was the whole point in the first place. Alright. So, that's collaboration. Let's move on and talk about the role of anger in our conflicts.

Chances are you were taught that anger is a bad thing and that you should not feel it. Well, that's not exactly accurate. Anger has played an important role in our evolution and physical survival. As a human species, we have anger. We feel anger for a very good reason. When barriers to food, water, shelter, mating, and safety presented themselves, anger gave humans the energy to attack the barrier, to destroy it, remove it and survive. Alright. Well, that's in the evolution of our species. But do we really need anger now as intelligent human beings that we are? Yes, we need anger. Social change usually does not happen without anger. So, when I think about social change, the first person I think of is Martin Luther King. Do you think that he felt angry about segregation? Yes. Did he express it? Well, he expressed it very eloquently.

I think about Gandhi. Was he angry about the injustice that was happening to people in India? Sure. Did he express it? He expressed it peacefully. So, the problem is not anger. Anger inspires us to do what needs to be done. The problem is in how we express it. Ineffective expressions of anger include physical. Those some people throw things. I was given a coaching client and the reason that she was sent to me by her employer was because a coworker had made her angry. She picked up the telephone, which was a landline. It was on her cell phone. She picked up the telephone and she threw it at her coworker. And so, that got her sent to me so I could help her with her anger management problems. So, throwing things is not good. Slamming doors, assault, hitting people, and even murder. And murder is an expression of anger? Of course. People get so upset that that's how it is resolved. So, obviously, none of that is good, then there is emotional expression of anger, the silent treatment. So, some of us are very good at giving people the silent treatment, and for some people it's very effective. When you are not talking to them, it can really mess with them psychologically. We don't like to be left out of a group. That sends off warning chemicals in our body. We are a people who need each other. And this pandemic really demonstrated how much we need each other, some more than others. And when we are left out, we are threatened. It's a very threatening situation to not be able to be in the group. There's even something fear of missing out (FOMO) when you see pictures of your friends on Facebook and they all got together without you. And so, the silent treatment can really punish some people. And then there's verbal abuse that you spew all sorts of hateful things about people. Holding grudges. Now, there's a good reason that we hold grudges is that we don't want to allow ourselves to be hurt by people again. So, we hold on to how they hurt us. We don't forget it. So, we don't ever allow it. However, that just weighs us down. Pouting, martyr behavior—and martyr behavior is when you're sacrificing yourself for the good of others, but you let them know it. And gossiping. Gossiping, whether you're spreading true information or false information, the information is being spread in order to hurt somebody. So, none of that's good because it ends up hurting you. And then there's self-abuse and we punish ourselves when we get angry. Too much food, too much alcohol, drugs. I mean, there's a lot of people probably who are punishing themselves through alcohol and drugs right now. That's why we have such a pandemic about those things, as well. So, the body was not designed to store anger, anger is going to come out—our body can't help it. It will come out in fits, it will come out in little spurts, it will come out in bits, and pieces. However, it's going to come out, it's going to come out. If you keep it inside of you, it will destroy you. So, we don't have a choice between expressing anger or not. What we do have a choice about is how we express it. So, effective expression of anger. You've probably seen formats like this before because the things I'm going to tell you are just common advice that people have, but they really work. First of all, identify why you are angry. Now, you might know why you're angry, but you might not know why you're angry. So, I will give you an example of this. Many years ago, I was at a Super Bowl party with some friends and one of my friends remarked about how brilliant the actress Angelina Jolie is. Well, at that time, she was married to Billy Bob Thornton and she was walking around with a little vial of his blood hanging around her neck. And I just didn't really think that she was a brilliant person. I mean, I don't know her, but I just didn't think so. Anyway, so my friend said how brilliant she was and I thought, "No, she's not." And a bit later on, I said something and I then said, "But of course, I'm not brilliant like Angelina Jolie." And my friend said, "Robin, that that remark wasn't directed at you," Okay, whatever. And then my husband and I are driving home and I said to my husband, "I can't believe she thinks Angelina Jolie is brilliant." And my husband said, "Why do you care?" And I said, "I don't know. I don't know why I care." So, sometimes we have to try to identify why we're angry. We know we're angry, we just don't know why. So, you got to dig a little bit. Next, approach the situation with an attitude of collaboration. Remember, I want to win. I want you to win, also. So, if you approach the situation, then chances are the other person will be more receptive. Think before speaking. This is very important for those of us who just open mouth and words come out. The words we use are very important. So, it's critical that you think before you speak so that you choose the words that you want to say that are going to help you get the response that you want. Be brief and to the point—don't go on, and on, and on. Be specific and give examples. One of the things that some people have a tendency to do is to say things like, "you never," or "you always." That's not true. And so, be very specific about times, things, events, places, that type of thing. Talk about your feelings and or perceptions. That's it's really important to

remember that these are your perceptions. This is how you feel. It's not that the other person is making you feel something. It's not that your perception is reality. So, you want to use "I" messages. So, saying something like, "I think you're wrong," as opposed to, "You're wrong." Speak slowly and in a low tone. And that's one of the things when we get upset, our voice tends to get louder and higher, and sometimes that just heightens the threatening behavior. Breathe. That helps you get oxygen to your brain, helps you calm your body down. Maintain eye contact. Give the other person a chance to talk. After you've said what you need to say, listen intently what they have to say. And the most important thing about all of this is to make an action plan. So, when you go in to talk to somebody about your perceptions and feelings about an event, try to come up with a suggestion for what they can do differently next time or what the two of you can do differently next time. So, make an action plan so that the next time something comes up, you're ready for it and you know how to handle it in an effective manner. Now, I promised you that I would tell you a story about collaboration. And so, it involved a quarterly bonus I thought I was getting way more than I actually got on my paycheck. Now, this has happened at a place far, far away, not at my current workplace, but when I received my paycheck with that bonus on it, it wasn't as much as I thought it was going to be. And if I would have approached it in my usually competitive way, I probably wouldn't have gotten what I wanted. So, I needed to talk to my supervisor about the fact that I didn't get as much money as I thought I was going to. And if I would have just barged into her office and demanded that I be paid what I felt I was owed, I probably would have ended up losing my job. So, I didn't want that. So instead, I emailed my boss, which was her preferred method of communication, and I told her that I wanted to make an appointment with her at a time that was convenient for her so that we could talk about my quarterly bonus. Now, this is not the normal way I approach situations, but I knew that that would work better for her. She did not like people just stopping into her office and distracting her. She liked electronic communication. She liked to have control over when she talked to people about things. She liked to know what she was going to be talking to them about before the meeting. So, I gave her all of those things. And the day that she said that she was available, I went into her office. So, she's on her territory, so she feels safer in her territory. And I said to her, something like this, "As I said, I'd like to talk to you about my quarterly bonus. I thought based upon my bonus plan, that I was going to make more money than this. I'm frustrated because I thought I did what I needed to do to make more. I'm hoping when we can talk about this and come to an agreement that works for both of us." So, that's an attitude of collaboration. I want to win. I want you to win, too. I didn't say that you cheated me. I just said my perception was that I was getting more. I explained that I was frustrated because I thought I had done what I needed to do and I wanted to work with her so that we could both be happy. That approach worked. I didn't get all the money that I thought because she thought that I had the wrong perception of our agreement, but she was willing to compromise with me. And what do you do when people compromise? You focus on what you got instead of what you did not get. And that's exactly what I did. I focused on the fact that I got a little bit more and now we had a very clear understanding of what my bonus plan was and how I was to achieve it. So, that worked. Did it take work for me? Sure. I had to stifle my natural inclination to go in and compete. Was I better off for it? Absolutely. So, one of the things that you need to remember when going in to talking to somebody about a conflict that you have, think of the response that you want from them and adjust your style to try to get that response. You can do it. It just takes a little work. Okay, so let's move on. And talk about if somebody tells you they're angry with you, how should you respond?

First of all, as somebody approaches you and they say, "I'm mad at you and I want to talk to you about it," show interest and concern. How do you do that? Well, you stop what you're doing. So, it might be an inconvenient time, but obviously, this is important to them. So, stop looking at your computer, stop looking at your phone, stop looking at your watch. Just focus on that person and show them that you care about what they're talking about. Now, people usually are pretty bad about expressing their anger because they don't go through webinars like this. And so, chances are they'll tell you, but you don't know what the problem is. And so, it's important to seek additional clarifying information. Now, remember, tone of voice is 90% of the problem. And so, when you're seeking additional clarifying information, it shouldn't sound like,

well, what did you expect or why would you think that? No, it should sound like, well, can you tell me why that that was a problem for you? So, tone is key. Agree with some aspect of the complaint. And the reason for that is that you want to have some kind of mutuality in there because we feel better when people are on our side. And so, even if the only thing you agree with is I can see that that made you angry, you don't even have to say I see why you're angry, but I can see that that made you angry. And then ask for suggestions or alternatives and remember tone so, "Well, what do you want me to do instead?" No, that's not it. It's, "Okay. Well, what do you think I could do differently next time?" And so, you want to make sure that when someone tells you that they are mad at you, that you respond in a way that helps resolve the conflict. If you get really defensive, which our body naturally makes us go into defense mode when we feel like we're being attacked, and that's what happens when somebody tells us that we made them mad, don't go into defense mode. Go into collaboration mode and keep thinking to yourself, "I want to win, but I want you to win, too." And the most important thing is create an action plan to help resolve the issue and prevent it from happening again. So, Ronald Reagan said that peace is not the absence of conflict, it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means. And hopefully, I've given you some ideas on what you might be able to do to resolve your conflicts more effectively in the future. That's all I have for you. What questions do you have for me?

Emmet Ore

Thank you, Robin. Once again, the instructions are right there on the screen, if you have any trouble filling out the question box. First question we have here is, what can you do if you have to work with someone who you have had a conflict with?

Robin Paggi

Well, one of the things we all are going to have to be around people that we just don't get along with or that we've tried to resolve conflicts with, and there's just no resolving those conflicts. And so, that's just a reality of life. There are things that you can do. Now, the first thing is always remember, you can't necessarily change other people. All you can do is change your response and what you are thinking and feeling. So, if you have to work with somebody that you just can't get along with, stop complaining about it, because the more you talk about it, the worse the situation gets. You just keep it alive by talking about it and it makes you look bad too. Stop trying to collect allies. That's one of the things we have a natural tendency to do, is we seek help from other people. We want people on our side so frequently we go along and we tell our story, our side of the story to everybody that we think will be on our side to get them on our side. And one of the things when we are telling stories about our conflicts, usually we are portraying ourself as the victim and the other person as the villain. And of course, that's not absolutely true. So, stop going around and telling your story to people to get them on your side. Stop feeling sorry for yourself. Conflict is just a part of life and we've always had it and we always will. And so, stop the poor, pitiful me sad story and implement coping strategies. So, do things, create your own action plan for yourself in order to handle the situation. So, I'm good at rewarding myself, buying things, just even getting a cafe mocha at Starbucks. Alright. So, if that's your coping strategy, that if I can just get through this meeting with this person that drives me crazy, I'm going to go to Starbucks and reward myself. Or if I can just get through this project with this person that's driving me crazy, I will get a massage at the end of the week, whatever it is, or that if you've got to deal with the person every single day, make sure that during your lunch hour you're going out and walking around so you can get some exercise to help keep the mental fortitude that you need to have in order to be able to handle that situation. But whatever it is, remember, you are the one who is in charge of how you feel and you can do specific things in order to survive just about anything. The worst thing that you can do is take a victim mentality and continue to keep it alive by talking about it.

Emmet Ore

Okay, here's a question related to that. I believe it is worded this way, how should you paralyze your defense mode if you have a dominant personality?

Robin Paggi

How can you paralyze your defense if you have a dominant personality? Okay, I know exactly what you're talking about because I have a dominant personality, and when anyone seems to threaten me, I automatically go into compete mode. And remember, compete is I'm going to win and you're going to lose. And so, what I have learned to do to paralyze that response is to remind myself, "If you go into compete mode and you put this person in a losing situation, chances are you will end up losing." And you don't want to lose, so keep an attitude of collaboration, try to find out what the issue is, try to create an action plan. Dominants are all about action. And so, try to create an action plan to prevent this from happening in the future or to resolve the issue. If you handle it this way, you are winning. And so, hopefully with that kind of mental coaching that will help paralyze the situation, one of the things too, be careful about smiling. I was told that that's what I do when I feel threatened by somebody, I smile at them and I think I'm mentally thinking, game on. And that doesn't work very well. So, remember facial expressions, body language, speak volumes, and to keep those in control as well.

Emmet Ore

Okay. How should you deal with, work with, communicate with, or resolve conflicts with Generation Z where everything offends them?

Robin Paggi

Oh, well, first of all, we don't say everything offends them. So, that's step number one. And I'm going to be talking about Generation Z in our webinar on April 7th. And so, please tune in for that and I'll tell you a lot more about them. But one of the things that makes a generation, a generation is things that they've experienced during their formative years, which is basically when we were in high school, 14, to 18, or 19...right about there. And so, we experienced different things during those years. And they really affect who we are and our worldview. And because generations tend to experience the same thing at the same time, that's why they have that generation. Now, remember, with Gen Z, for a lot of them, they haven't had to have really tough conversations with people because of technology. I mean, if you are going out with somebody, you don't want to go out with them anymore, you can just text them and tell them that. Or even, better yet, just ghost them, never see them again, don't answer their calls, all of that kind of stuff. So, they haven't really, as a generation learned how to resolve conflicts very well because technology gave them an out. And then the other thing to remember is that parenting styles really started changing with millennials and kind of trickled down to Gen Z as well. And so, teaching styles, parenting styles where there is a lot more positive feedback, and that type of thing. So really, instead of looking at they get offended by everything, look at it as they have not learned how to resolve conflicts yet or to take constructive criticism yet or those types of things. So, then you get to teach them how to do those things. And probably our listener is going, it's not my job to teach them and I don't want to. But one of the things is that we can inspire the people around us to react the way that we want them to by how we interact with them. And so, if you keep that in mind, then that might inspire you to try to teach them how to accept constructive feedback and ways to do that, which, again, I'll talk about on April 7th, is that you make sure that it is constructive. Many of us are really bad at giving feedback to people. It becomes very personal or it's extremely negative or critical or those types of things. And so we've got to learn how to give good, constructive feedback. And so, I'll give you more on that on April 7th.

Emmet Ore

Alright, what strategy would you suggest in this new reality with all these new meetings for resolving workplace conflicts?

Robin Paggi

Well, yeah, it's difficult if you can't be face to face with someone, and I know even with Zoom, one of the really disconcerting things about Zoom, is that we can't make eye contact. And that's one of the things in the format that I

presented to you is that making eye contact is so important in our American culture for most of us. And with Zoom, if it looks like you're making eye contact, you're really looking into the camera at the top of your computer and you're not looking at that person. So, that's one of the things I think that is very problematic. But until we can get face-to-face to resolve our conflicts, we need to be on the phone with people at the very least. And so, I am not a proponent of trying to resolve conflict through email or texting, all it does, in my opinion, and many people share it, is just heighten it because of the tone of the emails. And even when you don't intend to have tone, emails can have tone. So, so much of the conveyance of our message is through our tone of voice. And that's why I really like that quote. That 10% of conflict is a difference of opinions and 90% is having the wrong tone. And so, don't rely upon electronic communication to converse about a conflict. Pick up the phone, at the very least, if you're not on Zoom. And remember a lot of things with Zoom, we don't want to read into what people are doing. And so, if people are looking down or their peers are not paying attention or things like that, we might be reading into things that are just not there. And so, that's one of the reasons that when we're talking to somebody that we talk about our perception of the situation. It seemed to me that when I was making my pitch about what we should do next, that you were not paying attention and I felt offended by that. And I just wondered what was happening and that maybe in the future, when I'm giving an important presentation, that it looks like you're paying attention, those types of things. So, the tone of our voice conveys so much information, and that's why verbal communication is so important and not relying upon electronic.

Emmet Ore

Awesome. How do you resolve conflicts with a narcissist who is never wrong, refuses to apologize or take responsibility for their actions, or even tell the truth?

Robin Paggi

Well, one of the things that really helps me is diving into an analysis of their psychology a little bit. So, I'm working on a master's degree in psychology and I'm a bit of an armchair psychologist at the moment. But, this has helped me for a while that to know that people are the way they are for very good reason and people behave the way that they behave because it totally makes sense to them. And so, somebody who is narcissistic, I would just assume that they did not receive enough love and attention as a child. And there is a lot of support to back that statement up. I'm not just making it up. But one of the things there is a woman named Fran Furter and she was a nun, but then she became a psychologist and she wrote a book that I read. And in it, she was talking about when our needs are not met as children, safety, love, esteem, our physiological needs. When those needs are not met as children they often manifest itself in adulthood and people who are constantly trying to grab the limelight and make everything about them often did not receive enough attention as children. And so, when I'm interacting with the narcissistic coworker, those are my thoughts. I feel sorry for you because you probably had an unhappy childhood and just thinking those thoughts helped me have more compassion toward that person. Now, that doesn't mean that you allow that person to get away with everything, but that's a starting point, to have more compassion. So, repeat the question again to make sure I answer all of it.

Emmet Ore

How do you resolve conflicts with a narcissist who is never wrong and refuses to apologize or take responsibility for their actions or even tell the truth?

Robin Paggi

Okay, so then the other thing about it, they never admit that they're wrong. Well, it's because if they admitted that they were wrong, then that would mean that something's wrong with them. And that is something that can't be. And so, try not to put them into a losing situation, trying to collaborate with them. I want to win, I want you to win. Also means that they

might not have to admit that they're wrong if you're trying to focus on how can we both win and you keep using those words also. And then remember, sometimes people lie because they can't be at fault. And again, I would attribute this to their life experiences, including how they were parented. Perhaps they don't admit that they're ever wrong, because if they were wrong, they were punished extremely. And so, people lie to save face as much as they can because looking bad just brings up all sorts of bad experiences or memories for them. So, if you are approaching the situation with an attitude of empathy and collaboration, then hopefully that will help. Remember, a lot of times when we don't like the response we get from people, we can change our message and how we deliver it. And sometimes that changes how people respond to us.

Emmet Ore

Excellent. OK. What do you suggest when the person gets angry and does not speak at all, essentially shuts down?

Robin Paggi

Yeah, one of the things that is a coping mechanism, and sometimes that's exactly what you want, because if people do say something, then it's going to be quite ugly and could destroy things. And so that is something to appreciate is that this person is refusing to talk. But if they did talk, then chances are it could be really bad. And so shutting down is an automatic response that many people have. And it's a self-preservation response that they can't even really help at the time. So it might not be that they are doing it to hurt you, but that it's just an uncontrollable response that they go into. So first, recognize that, that there is probably a very good reason that this person has this response. It's just a physical response that they have. And then second, give them time and space to not address the issue for a while and then come back a little later on, perhaps send them an email saying, I'd like to discuss when you're ready and. And setting that groundwork beforehand before you actually do talk. So that's one of the things there are some people who want to resolve issues right now and they really need to go into the avoidance, which is I'm going to back off, I'm going to give you time. I'm going to give you space, and then we can come back to it. Now, if they remain quiet for forever and they refuse to talk about it, then you might need some help from a supervisor or someone who can help mediate a conflict for the two of you.

Emmet Ore

All right, this one is slightly related to that one. What do you think about saying I need some time to think about this before I'm ready to talk?

Robin Paggi

I think that's great. I think that's the better way of doing it besides just opening mouth and all of the stuff coming out, that is not going to be good. So, yes, please tell people what you need from them. And so instead of just shutting down, just saying, please give me time. You know, there is an old saying that says never go to bed angry. And I disagree with that, saying I don't use it. When I'm angry I need to be away from the person that I'm angry with for a while, including my spouse. And I give myself space so that I can respond and engage in a way that's going to resolve.

Emmet Ore

OK, what other options could you suggest to control anger?

Robin Paggi

Well, I think exercise is one of the best things, and so that's one of the things if you get upset, get up and go walk around if you can't do anything else. So I have had the best workouts at the gym that I've ever had when I am angry because I've got all that adrenaline in me. And then after I finish working out, it's hard to remember why I got so upset about what I got upset about. So removing yourself from the situation and trying to release that anger in a productive manner and

exercise is the end all be all anecdote to just about all of our ills. So there is that. And then another thing is to practice. So this is what I did with a coaching client once. He was told by his supervisor that he was very defensive when receiving constructive feedback and that he needed to be less defensive. So what I practiced with him was is saying things to him that he did not like and helping him to respond. So I would just say to him, you're not really very good at your job. And the response that I encouraged him to say was, thank you for bringing that to my attention. And so I would just say all sorts of things to him. You didn't do a very good job on that. Thank you for bringing that to my attention. And after a while, he had it. And so and I did that with a couple of people. And one told me I just I was prepared for what was going to happen and so I could control the situation. And I said, OK, well, what happens if somebody just walks up to you and you don't get to get prepared? He said, I just imagine this is Robin talking to me in a way that I don't want to be talked to. And it helps me remember I am prepared for this situation. So that's one of the things that you might do, is role play with people so that you can physically train yourself to react in the way that you want to react.

Emmet Ore

Thank you. OK, we have time for one more, so here is the last one. How should you avoid the conflict, or how can you avoid the conflict if people don't do their jobs and that causes the conflict?

Robin Paggi

Well, if you're in a conflict with somebody because they have not done their job again, first approach the situation with an attitude of collaboration, I want to win, but I want you to win, too. When this is not done, or you do not deliver this, this is how it makes me feel. This is my perception of the situation. I'd like to create an action plan to prevent this from happening. And if it just continues to happen and happen, then getting a supervisor involved is really important. But one of the things it's so important to find out what's going on, because, again, conflict is the perception that someone is preventing us from getting what we need or want. And sometimes that is just simply not the case. And so if we approach them and say, this is my perception of the situation, I'd like to know what's going on. And more importantly, I'd like to know how we can resolve it so that this works for both of us. If you practice having those kinds of conversations, it's amazing how much easier things can get. So, and I want to end with one final little reason that making sure you understand the situation is so important. I have a coaching client and his boss thought that he sent an email that he did not send and the coaching client was on his way to see me. And the boss called me and told me about this email he thought he had sent, which contradicted everything we were trying to work on together. And the boss told me, "I want to fire him now." And I said, "Well, why don't I just tell him he's done for the day and you take some time to gather more information, gather yourself together and talk to him about it tomorrow?" Well, the boss called me the next day and he said, "I was mistaken. He did not send that email. He was forwarding an email from one of his coworkers. And the language that the boss objected to in the email was not my clients, but his coworkers." So the boss was embarrassed that he reacted so strongly to what he perceived the situation to be. That's why we really need to keep in mind that our conflicts are our perception of a situation that's happening and that we need to find out what the situation actually is, and how we talk to people about what we think the situation is helps resolve it, or it helps to make the situation worse. So, fortunately, the boss found out the true information before he fired the employee.

Emmet Ore

All right, well, thanks, Robin, I appreciate that. Thank you, everyone, for the great questions. If you have any other questions, please reach out to us at webinarHRhelp@vensure.com. That will do it for today and we'll see you guys next week for part four. Wow, March is flying by here. So we'll see you guys next week. Same time, same place.