



Network Session Summary

Session Topic:	Calming the Waters: Techniques to De-escalate Conflict
Session Date:	January 17, 2024
Session Hosts:	Dr. Andie Bains & Michele Hannay
Session Objectives:	At the end of this webinar, you will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the importance of psychological safety in promoting constructive conflict. • Explain at least 4 strategies for managing conflict that involve leading self and/or leading others

Recommended Resources:

- [Session Recording](#)
- [Clinic Conflict Resolution Norms – sample](#)
- [A Guide to Group Governance Agreements](#)
- Suggested Reading:
 - **Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High**, Joseph Grenny, et al
 - **Managing Conflict: A Practical Guide to Resolution in the Workplace**, David Liddle
- Past Physician Champion Webinar Recording: [March 09, 2022: I'm Okay, You're Okay: Techniques for Managing Conflict](#)

Session Highlights & Themes:

- A study performed by psychologists from Carnegie Mellon, M.I.T. and Union College found that the success of teams had little to do with the intelligence of the individuals and everything to do with the group norms – or culture – of the teams.
- 2 team behaviours that specifically came to the forefront were
 - Equal speaking time amongst members
 - High 'average social sensitivity' of members (i.e., intuiting how others felt based on tone of voice, expression and non-verbal cues)
- These results confirmed the results of many other studies that showed that 'psychological safety' is the most critical aspect of high-performing teams
- Psychological safety is defined as a belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes.
- When psychological safety is high, team members engage in healthy and constructive conflict and are highly productive.

- Conflict is apt to trigger survival mode (fight, flight, freeze or fawn) in the brain's limbic system, and once this happens, we're unable to think clearly, be creative or collaborate effectively.



- Learning to recognize the physical signs that signal the beginning of survival mode (pounding heart, sweating palms, knot in stomach, etc.) and then mentally ‘stepping back’ and getting curious about what is triggering can help engage the pre-frontal cortex and prevent full ‘amygdala hijack’.

- The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles model is widely accepted as a helpful tool for defining and understanding individuals’ behavior in conflict situations.
- The model looks at a person’s degree of assertiveness and cooperativeness in conflict situations and defines 5 conflict styles:
 - Competing (shark)
 - Avoiding (turtle)
 - Collaborating (owl)
 - Accommodating (teddy bear)
 - Compromising (fox)
- We all tend to have one style that is our ‘default’, but we are able to adapt and use other styles when necessary for the situation.
- Understanding the styles and recognizing them in others can help make conflict constructive.

- Tips for leaders to promote psychological safety and healthy conflict:
1. **Regularly frame the work.** When leaders remind the group of what’s at stake and why the work is important, even if it seems like it should be obvious, it really brings everyone back to the common goal and the importance of working through conflict to keep moving forward.
 2. **Model fallibility** by using simple statements like, “I might miss something. I need you help.” Or, “I may get pulled off course in this meeting. I need your help.” This will signal that it’s okay not to be perfect and that leaning on each other is acceptable and encouraged.
 3. **Proactively invite input** by asking questions like, “How that go from your perspective?” or, “What could I do better next time?” or, “What other ideas do you have?”. Then respond with appreciation and gratitude – even if the response was critical.
 4. **Create clear norms and expectations.** This can be a written and posted document on conflict resolutions norms for a clinic or a regularly reviewed clause in a board or committee’s codes of conduct document.

Session Statistics

Total Physician Participants	North Zone Physician Participants	Edmonton Zone Physician Participants	Central Zone Physician Participants	Calgary Zone Physician Participants	South Zone Physician Participants	PCNs Represented
18	1	5	2	9	1	9