



# Conflict Resolution in the Dialysis Clinic

Gail Dewald BS RN CNN




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Thanks to Jennifer Payton, MHCA, BSN, RN, CNN for sharing her slides.

Jennifer is a colleague, a friend, and is the upcoming President-Elect of American Nephrology Nurses Association




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## Learning Objectives

- Outline situations that contribute to conflict in the workplace
- Discuss conflict management skills
- Present a plan for conflict resolution through case study reviews

Oxford Dictionaries (2016). Conflict. Retrieved from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/conflict?q=conflict>




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## Conflict defined

Oxford Dictionary:  
An incompatibility between two or more opinions, principles, or interests.

- Regardless of our position in the dialysis clinic, we can spend a lot of time dealing with conflict.
- Conflict is normal and healthy



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## Conflict

Occurs between a variety of individuals

- Providers and staff members
- Between coworkers
- Providers and patients
- Patients and staff members
- Between patients



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## Conflict is an essential part of a group's cohesion

Conflict helps:

- Identify areas of common values
- Provides greater group stability through shared beliefs
- Balances difference between extreme positions
- Clarifies roles and structures

A safe environment is necessary for effective conflict resolution and is a strong indication of a group's effectiveness

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkmrY0vdd\\_k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkmrY0vdd_k)



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## Situations That Can Contribute to Conflict

Fundamental disagreement about policy

- Won't follow the clinic policy/procedure
  - Staff refusing to wear all their PPE
  - Patients not wanting to wash access arms before treatment
- Disagreement about HR policies (sick time, vacation)
  - Not wanting to make up a missed Saturday



Armstrong, M. (2008) How to be an even better manager: A complete 1-2 of proven techniques and essential skills (7th ed.). London: Kogan.

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## Situations That Can Contribute to Conflict

Rivalry

- Experienced patient care tech having to take directions from a new graduate nurse
- A nurse senior to the charge nurse having to take orders from the less experienced nurse



Armstrong, M. (2008) How to be an even better manager: A complete 1-2 of proven techniques and essential skills (7th ed.). London: Kogan.

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## Situations That Can Contribute to Conflict

Two people having different values or ideas of how things should be done

- Generational gap differences
  - Young employee taking care of an older patient
- Disagreement about how to care for a patient
- One person thinking there's a better way to do something
- Cultural differences



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## Situations That Can Contribute to Conflict

A real or imagined slight from you or a colleague

- Walked by and didn't say good morning to an employee or a patient
- Someone feels their suggestions are being ignored
- Patient thinks an employee is ignoring them



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## Situations That Can Contribute to Conflict

Behavior that is arrogant or perceived to be arrogant

- Someone thinking they do "no" wrong
  - Skipped a step in the water room procedure and they're sure they couldn't have made the error



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When a co-worker acts "too good" to be assigned anything extra!!



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## Situations That Can Contribute to Conflict

When individuals feel they are not valued or that their contributions are not appreciated

- Lack of recognition
- Wanting a simple thank you
- Lack of compliments
- Wanting appreciation for their hard work
  - Voluntary overtime
  - Helping out teammates



Armstrong, M. (2008) How to be an even better manager: A complete 1-Z of proven techniques and essential skills (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). London: Kogan.

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## Situations That Can Contribute to Conflict

Employees or patients not getting the attention they believe they deserve

- Wanting more one-on-one time with someone
- Feeling as if someone else gets all the attention
  - Patient upset because the physician or nurse practitioner spends more time with another patient



Armstrong, M. (2008) How to be an even better manager: A complete 1-Z of proven techniques and essential skills (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). London: Kogan.

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## Situations That Can Contribute to Conflict

Someone not getting their own way

- Patient wanting only a certain technician to take care of them
- Making them do it the “corporate” way
  - Patient not able to eat while on the machine
- Employee coming from a different company
  - “Where I came from, we did it this way...”



Armstrong, M. (2008) How to be an even better manager: A complete 1-Z of proven techniques and essential skills (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). London: Kogan.

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## Situations That Can Contribute to Conflict

Lack of trust

- Not having trust in one another
  - Things disappear or are stolen
  - Another staff member telling everyone something you said in confidence
- Not trusting an employee's skills
  - Employee skipping steps, breaks in technique
  - Health issues
  - Patient not trusting a new employee's skills



Armstrong, M. (2008) How to be an even better manager: A complete 1-Z of proven techniques and essential skills (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). London: Kogan.

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## Situations That Can Contribute to Conflict

### Insecurity of individuals

- Patients worried about their health
- Employees being scared of loosing their job
  - Clinic being bought out by another company
- “Change” makes people feel insecure

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## Situations That Can Contribute to Conflict

### Concern about the impact of change

- Change can be scary and help cause conflict
  - New systems (electronic medical record)
  - New equipment (different machines, new bloodlines, water system upgrades)
- New manager
- New doctor or new employees in the unit
  - Affects staff and patients

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## Situations That Can Contribute to Conflict

### Too much pressure (real or perceived)

- Staff shortage
- Large patient loads
- Patients with complex medical issues

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We now know some of the reasons for the conflict.....

So how do we resolve it?




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## Five Basic Conflict-Handling Styles


- Avoidance
- Accommodation
- Competing
- Compromise
- Collaboration

Hunsaker, P., & Alessandra, T. (2008). *The new art of managing people*. New York, NY: Free Press.




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## Avoidance



- Ignoring the conflict
- Refusing to acknowledge the existence of the conflict
- Withdrawing from or postponing the conflict

Hunsaker, P., & Alessandra, T. (2008). *The new art of managing people*. New York, NY: Free Press.

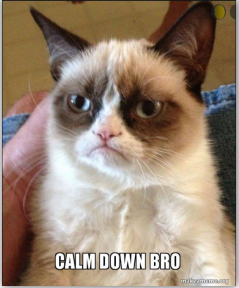


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## Avoidance

When to use this conflict management style

- Issues are trivial
- Emotions are running high
- Time is needed for persons involved to calm down



Hunsaker, P., & Alessandra, T. (2008). *The new art of managing people*. New York, NY: Free Press.

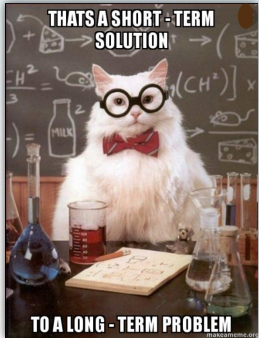


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## Avoidance

When not to use this conflict management style

- A long-term solution is needed
- You are responsible for resolving the conflict



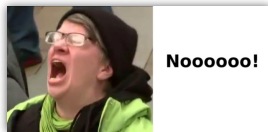
Hunsaker, P., & Alessandra, T. (2008). *The new art of managing people*. New York, NY: Free Press.



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## Accommodation

- Placing another's needs and concerns above your own
- Yielding to someone else's position on an issue because it is more important to them
  - Clinical manager letting a patient move to a different station (chair) away from the air vent because it's more important to the patient



Hunsaker, P., & Alessandra, T. (2008). *The new art of managing people*. New York, NY: Free Press.

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## Accommodating

When to use this conflict management style

- The issues are unimportant to you
- Your knowledge is limited
- There is a long-term give and take
- You have no power



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## Accommodating

- When not to use this conflict management style
  - Others are unethical or wrong
  - You are certain you are correct



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When you've got a deep rage inside of you but you need to act nice because you are at work



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## Competing

Attempt to satisfy your own needs at the expense of the other party

- Making decisions that are best for the overall functioning of the clinic
- Manager could use when there is conflict over a company policy that is nonnegotiable



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Non Sequitur February 03, 2022



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## Competing

When to use this conflict management style

- Time is critical
- Issues are trivial
- Solution is unpopular
- Others lack expertise
- Issues are important to you



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## Competing

When not to use this conflict management style

- Issues are complex and require input and information from others
- Working with powerful, competent others
- Long-term solutions and commitment are needed



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Be an adult....



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## Compromise

- Each party gives up something of value to settle the problem
  - Clinical Manager changes a patient's scheduled treatment time if the patient agrees to dialyze their entire treatment without signing off early



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## Compromising

When to use this conflict management style

- Goals are clearly incompatible
- Parties have equal power
- A quick solution is needed



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## Compromising

When not to use this conflict management style

- An imbalance in power is present
- Problem is complex
- Long-term solutions are needed
- Conflict is rooted in different value systems



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## Collaboration

- All parties to the conflict seek to satisfy their interests
- Work together to find an agreeable solution to the problem
  - Open and honest discussion
  - Active listening of all parties
  - Deliberation over solution alternatives
  - Ultimate win-win solution



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## Collaborating

When to use this conflict management style

- Issues are complex and require input and information from others
- Commitment is needed
- Dealing with strategic issues
- Long-term solutions are needed



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## Collaborating

When not to use this conflict management style

- Time is critical
- Others are not interested or do not have the skills
- Conflict occurs because of different value systems



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Big Nate

February 03, 2022



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In a nutshell....

Avoidance – ignoring conflict when issues are trivial

Accommodation – putting others' needs above yours when you have no power

Competing – satisfying your own needs above others when time is critical



Compromise – complex issues needing input from others and long term solution needed

Collaboration – working together to find an agreeable long-term solution




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## Become skilled at resolving conflict...


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### Skills needed for conflict resolution

- Address issues early on
- Separate the person from the problem
- Don't be defensive or counter-attack others
- Observe non-verbal signals (body language)
- Avoid hot-button issues or words
- Treat everyone with respect
- Avoid arguments
- Actively listen
- Assert your needs to explain the impact to others




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### Skills Needed to Deal With Conflict in the Dialysis Clinic

Confront difficult issues early on

- If we let it go on too long, it builds bad feelings and resentment
- Deal with the issue as soon as possible



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## Skills Needed to Deal With Conflict in the Dialysis Clinic

- Separate the person from the problem
- Actively listen
- Make eye contact
- Focus on the issue, not intent or personal position
- Generate a variety of options
  - Do you need mediation?
  - Can you compromise?
  - Agree to disagree?
- Prepare for failure before it happens



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## Skills Needed to Deal With Conflict in the Dialysis Clinic

Don't promote conflict by causing defensiveness or counter attacks

- Avoid judging, condescending
- Avoid name calling
  - Know it all, trouble-maker
- Don't use a tone of voice that communicates intense dissatisfaction



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## Skills Needed to Deal With Conflict in the Dialysis Clinic



Observe the non-verbal signals of people who are overwhelmed or upset

- Can tell a lot by watching people
  - Deep sighs
  - Tense shoulders
  - Lack of eye contact
  - Sarcasm



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## Skills Needed to Deal With Conflict in the Dialysis Clinic

Avoid using hot-button phrases or words

- Such as always, constantly, never...
  - You are always late for your treatment.
  - You never follow proper technique.
- Instead use: often, usually, sometimes...
  - You are frequently late for your treatment.
  - You sometimes break technique.



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## Skills Needed to Deal With Conflict in the Dialysis Clinic

### Treat people with respect

- Give them the benefit of the doubt
  - Example: "I know that's how it used to be done, but we have to change to the new way."
- Allow them to save face
  - Don't need to embarrass them
  - We all make mistakes



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## Skills Needed to Deal With Conflict in the Dialysis Clinic



### Avoid arguments

- Don't argue or take their comments personally
- Briefly acknowledge their comments/needs, then direct the discussion toward productive action or agreement



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## Skills Needed to Deal With Conflict in the Dialysis Clinic

### Actively listen to people who express strong concerns or complaints

- Avoid the temptation to fix or take on their problem
- Listening may be enough to defuse strong emotions and help resolve a minor problem before it escalates



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## Skills Needed to Deal With Conflict in the Dialysis Clinic

### Assert your needs, and explain the impact of others' actions

- Use "I" statements to prevent tensions from building up (instead of "you" statements)
  - "I feel frustrated when you speak to me that way."
  - Instead of "You frustrate me when you speak to me that way."



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## Skills Needed to Deal With Conflict in the Dialysis Clinic

Release your own tension regularly

- Our own stress can add to conflicts
  - Exercise
  - Vent to friends
  - Spend time relaxing




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### The Do's & Don'ts of Fighting Fair

Are you accidentally lashing out? How to keep it sane:

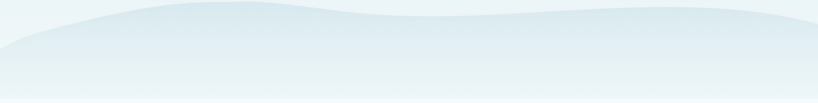



<p><b>DON'T:</b> TOSS OUT BLAME.</p> <p><b>DO:</b> SAY HOW YOU FEEL.</p> <p>When people are accused, they either shut down or retaliate. So always use gentler /statements ("I feel like sometimes you ignore me") instead of you statements ("You always ignore me!").</p>	<p><b>DON'T:</b> INTERRUPT.</p> <p><b>DO:</b> LISTEN QUIETLY.</p> <p>To solve any issue, you need to step into the other person's shoes, even if you disagree with them. When they're done talking, repeat their side back to them so that they know you really heard what they said.</p>	<p><b>DON'T:</b> USE ABSOLUTES.</p> <p><b>DO:</b> FOCUS ON RIGHT NOW.</p> <p>Absolutes like <i>always</i> and <i>never</i> ("You never text me back!") make the issue larger than life, but focusing on the current situation ("You didn't text me back earlier!") gives you a clear problem to solve.</p>	<p><b>DON'T:</b> CROSS YOUR ARMS.</p> <p><b>DO:</b> MAKE EYE CONTACT.</p> <p>Body language counts! Eye contact shows that you're open to hearing the other person's side (yay!), but crossed arms, finger pointing, and clenched fists say you're closed off to it (grrr).</p>
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## CONFLICT WITH PATIENTS





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### How Patients Experience Care




The pyramid is divided into four main sections:

- Top (Purple):** Empathy, Privacy, Choice, Service Recovery
- Middle-Left (Green):** Discharge Prep, Clinical Skills, Pain Control
- Middle-Right (Red):** Environment, Wait, Amenities
- Bottom (Blue):** Culture, Teamwork

Internal labels within the pyramid include: Courtesy, Inform, Personalize, Caring Behaviors, Clinical Excellence, Operational Efficiency.

<https://www.pressganey.com/products/patient-experience>




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## “CONFLICT” Resolution Model

- C** Create a calm environment
- O** Open yourself to understanding
- N** Need a nonjudgmental approach
- F** Focus on the issue
- L** Look for solutions
- I** Implement agreement
- C** Continue to communicate
- T** Take another look

<https://esrdnetworks.org/resources-news/decreasing-patient-provider-conflict-dpc/>




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## Decreasing Dialysis Patient-Provider Conflict (DPC) Project

- Model for responding to various phases of a conflict
- The National Forum of ESRD networks website ([www.esrdnetworks.org](http://www.esrdnetworks.org))
  - Provider manual for staff training
  - Pathway
  - Brochure
  - Cultural awareness tips
  - Quality improvement tools

<https://esrdnetworks.org/resources-news/decreasing-patient-provider-conflict-dpc/>



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### DPC poster

<https://esrdnetworks.org/resources-news/decreasing-patient-provider-conflict-dpc/>




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## Resolving Conflict with Difficult Patients

- Emphasize empathy and identify primary emotions
- Make a conscious attempt to slow down your responses
- A positive approach is the best approach
- Use positive phrasing (examples)
- Don't Take the bait of confrontational behaviors
- Walk away and ask someone else to take over

Guillana, J., How to Resolve Conflict with difficult Patients. DOI: <https://www.hmpgloballearningnetwork.com/site/podiatry/article/5033>



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### Take-aways

1. Conflict can be helpful or harmful in the workplace
2. Recognize conflict and find a solution before the conflict enlarges
3. Practice the skills of conflict resolution and they will become habit
4. Dialysis patients have difficult lives; provide them with respect and dignity- ALWAYS




Dialysis is a complex treatment performed on high-risk patients




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Dennis The Menace:  
Preparing for Conflict




"HOW WILL YOUR PARENTS HANDLE THIS, DENNIS?"




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### Leaving a 12-hour shift like...



Thank you for all you do for our patients!!



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### Questions



- Send questions
- Send me some examples of ways YOU diffused a situation with conflict

[gail.dewald@gmail.com](mailto:gail.dewald@gmail.com)



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## End of Part I - break

We are going to use what we have learned.  
Bring your list of

- “Conflict handling styles”
- “Skills for conflict resolution”.

Be back in 15 minutes.




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## Conflict Resolution – Part II Case studies

Let's use what we have learned.

Gail Dewald BS RN CNN  
Clarica Douglas CCHT



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