# **EMPLOYEE ADVISORY SERVICE NEWSLETTER**

The New Jersey Civil Service Commission's Employee Advisory Service (EAS) Newsletter contains useful articles and information for managing various well-being and work-life issues in order to create a healthier, happier, and more productive workplace. EAS is committed to improving the quality of life for all New Jersey Civil Service employees by encouraging a good work-life balance.



# **UPCOMING WEBINAR**

## **Relationship Excellence**

### **About the Webinar:**

A relationship skills presentation designed to enhance collaboration, teamwork, and customer service. This important presentation covers the barriers to effective communication, effective listening skills and practical approaches to resolving conflict.

Date: May 25, 2023 Time: 2:00 – 3:00 PM

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# **The 6 Principles of Conflict Resolution**

### By Michael Stewart

Our research has identified behaviors that lead to constructive outcomes of conflict: stronger relationships, creative solutions, better solutions for the company, and more confidence that challenges can be successfully met. The six principles of conflict resolution are to affiliate, empathize, engage, own, self-restrain, and build trust. These principles and guidance for putting them into practice are discussed below.

#### Affiliate vs. Alienate

- Convey that you are not a threat to the person and want to join with them in coming to a fair resolution of the problem.
- Treat the other person respectfully, just as you would want to be treated.
- Focus on what you like about this person.
- Be authentic. Don't be overly friendly or you may be perceived as fake.
- Don't lose your temper and say things you don't mean.
- Be aware that what you regard as acceptable may be offensive to someone else. Be mindful of their values and expectations.

### Be Empathetic vs. Being Egotistical

- Empathy means not only accurately understanding another person's point of view, but also having the ability to communicate this to the other person.
- Being egotistical means only communicating your own point of view without attempting to consider the thoughts and feelings of another person.
   Examples of this behavior include not listening, judging the other person, giving advice or sermons, or simply being interested only in your side.
- Consider the other person's work environment: their organization and team, their past, their pressures, their goals and vision, their wins and losses, what is important to them and why.
- The best way to be empathetic is by listening first.
  Let the other person have their say and then
  paraphrase what you heard for them. That way they
  can correct you if you got it wrong. Only after you
  are both convinced that you not only understand
  their position, but also its importance to the other
  person, should you offer your views.



- Make sure that the other person understands your point of view, as well. Ask questions until you're certain they understand your position and its importance to you.
- While you still may disagree with the other person's position, being empathetic will make their position at least make sense to you, leading to more productive conversation.

### **Engage vs. Avoid**

- Engagement is openly admitting a problem exists, committing to dialogue and understanding, and acting to resolve the issue.
- Avoidance is just that: avoiding the situation by making excuses for the problem or for your lack of willingness to admit there is a problem.
- If engagement is something that builds fear, counter it with courage building exercises like visualizing having a conversation with the other person about the issue before actually doing it.
- Timing is critical for engagement. Done too early, both parties may not be ready for the conversation, and done too late may result in forgotten details or one party may have moved on without ever realizing the importance of the issue.
- Make an appointment when both parties are ready to engage, and also when neither party is dealing with any bigger issues; the issue at hand can seem trivial and a bother if there are bigger fish to fry.
- Be sensitive to communication skills: use "I" statements whenever possible, be careful with body language, and try to not engage with anger or defensiveness.

# ENGAGEMENT

**■ IMMERSE** 

**■ INVOLVE** 

INTERACT

#### Own vs. Blame

- Ownership is honestly considering how you contributed to a problem. By accepting ownership of your actions, you are seeing a more complete picture of the problem, which can lead to a better resolution
- Blaming others completely denies you have contributed to the problem. Blaming yourself completely is also a roadblock to resolving the problem, since it is rare that one person is wholly responsible. Hold yourself and others accountable.
- Use introspection to analyze your role in the conflict. Ask yourself where your passion might be extreme, what are your blind spots with your perspective on yourself, and what might others not see about you that drives your beliefs - people can't understand you unless they know you.
- Ask others how they think you may have contributed to the conflict. Make sure it is somebody objective who will not take your side and blame others - that is not helpful.
- Remember that we all make mistakes. Don't sulk or stew over your failures. Own them, learn from them, and move on.

### **Practice Self-Restraint vs. Getting Emotional**

- Pay attention to your emotional responses and nonverbal behavior: sighing, rolled eyes, furled brow, turning away, avoiding or heavy eye contact, folded arms, etc., are have a negative impact on the situation. Try instead to use engaging body language, such as nodding, smiling, and leaning in to better hear the responses.
- If you feel like you may be emotional, use calming techniques like taking a deep breath and counting to ten or talking yourself down. If you know beforehand that the meeting could be emotional, prepare by taking a walk or working out prior to the meeting.

 Know the tolerance level of other meeting attendees to prepare for how much emotion you can show in the meeting. Some people feel like limited emotion can equal limited engagement, while others feel like the slightest emotional outburst is a non-starter.

### **Build Trust vs. Distrust**

- The main purpose of building trust is so both parties know there will be integrity in the resolution of the conflict. Most people do not believe they always have to get their way if they trust that there was honesty and integrity in the discussions and resulting decisions.
- Trust is based upon a relationship and a "gut" feeling, so to build trust, you must build a relationship. Find something in common with the person, learn about their family, their education, their career interests, and hobbies and passions.
- Transparency begets transparency. Be self-disclosing and open about yourself and they will be more likely to be open about themselves with you. To get to know someone, tell them about your values, your pressures, and your experiences. Don't tell them about your accomplishments - this difference is very important. The former tells about you as a person, while the latter is an attempt to establish power.
- Be authentic. Don't act like your motivation is ultimately the "sale" of your idea to them. Also be aware that people may think that of you anyway based on their prior experiences, so be careful and thoughtful in how you approach relationship building. Present the real you, not the "facebook" version of you.
- In building trust, the goal is to remove any sense of threat. Spend time with the other person doing enjoyable activities, and don't underestimate the power of psychomotor activity synchronization walking together leads to emotional and cognitive synchronicity. A walk-and-talk is a very powerful tool in building trust.
- Be aware of the power of your reputation; even people
  who have never met you may have heard things about
  you and already have an opinion on whether or not you
  are to be trusted. Make every effort to build and
  maintain a reputation as one who can be trusted in
  situations of collaboration as well as conflict.
- Acknowledge the power of your history with the person; it is hard to build trust and easy to build distrust. If you or the other person has any reason to distrust the other - even from decades before - it can be much more difficult to resolve conflict today. If possible, continue to take steps to repair the relationship and rebuild trust to ensure future conflicts have easier resolution results.

# Two Principles of Interest-Based Problem-Solving

Here are two simple (but not always easy) principles of interest-based problem-solving.

### Principle #1: Use conflict as a natural resource.

Conflict is natural. Each person perceives the world around him or her differently and makes decisions differently. People act in various ways due to upbringing, personalities, where they sit in an organization, cultures, or even from what part of the world they come. Everyone has different points of view about different topics, and it would be strange indeed if people did not disagree from time to time.

Conflict can even be a good resource. Conflict can be a first step on the way to improving communication, solving a problem, and even building trust and cooperation.

### Principle #2: Respect people; attack problems.

When you have a difference with someone, it is not unusual to think something like, "We have a problem here, and the problem is you!"

Usual or not, this attitude will not get you moving down the road to mutual problem-solving. Think about it the other way around: When someone feels that you are the problem, you tend to "get the message" (whether through tone of voice, body language, or simply vibes). Your reaction tends to be defensive: "If I am the problem, then we have a big problem—because I am not likely to become someone else in the near future!"





Deciding that "the problem is you" is not only ineffective, it is also usually not true. In fact, the other person is a human being, in many ways like you, with hopes, dreams, fears, and imperfections. If you put people down, they are likely to put you down in return.

Therefore, do whatever you need to do to distinguish between the person and the problem. This is an internal activity, and only you know how to do it for yourself. Some people draw on their religious heritage for guidance; others recommend "going up onto the balcony" in your imagination to see the conflict situation from an outsider's perspective. Find whatever works for you, and go ahead and do it before you move on to the next step. You will know you have succeeded when you can imagine yourself and the other(s) involved in the conflict standing side by side, facing the problem together.



# **Getting the Respect You Deserve**

# How to Change Other People's Behavior by Changing Your Own.

If you wrote down the names of all the living people you respect, who'd be on your list? Would there be coworkers, religious leaders, the president, or maybe sports stars? Would you be on your list? Respect—high regard, esteem, or honor—isn't reserved for the brave and famous. Everyone needs respect. It provides people with a deep sense of value about who they are.

Some people find that respecting others comes to them easily, by virtue of their manner and way of relating—but others find respect hard to come by. They seem cursed with a tendency to attract mean, insensitive people. If you are one of these people, you might have a boss who treats you like a child, friends who don't take you seriously, or children who ignore your parental authority.

You want to be treated with respect, you may have even tried to make other people stop their disrespectful behavior, but it keeps happening. What's going on? You may be familiar with the idea that you must first respect yourself before you can expect others to respect you. If you find that people in your life frequently mistreat you, perhaps they're simply doing what you ask. You may not consciously be telling people that you want mistreatment, but your behavior may be saying just that.

Here are some things that you can do to change the situation:

- Listen to your negative self-talk.
- · Root out the lies.
- Confront disrespectful behavior.

### Listen to your negative self-talk.

Carla arrived at a counseling session with a cup of coffee she bought on her way. As she sat down, the plastic lid on her cup popped off, sloshing coffee on the counselor's sofa. The first words out of her mouth were, "How stupid of me. I'm so sorry." The counselor assured Carla that it was no big deal and thanked her for being concerned. But Carla continued, "I can't believe how clumsy I am sometimes. I promise not to bring any other beverages with me to sessions." Seeing that she wasn't going to easily let herself off the hook, the counselor decided to use the situation in a therapeutic way.

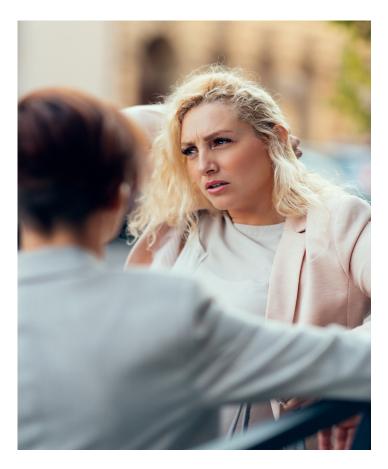
"Carla, why are you being so hard on yourself? It was a mistake," the counselor said. "And I'm not angry with you."

"I know," she said, "but I do a lot of stupid things." Carla wasn't just saying her mistake was stupid, but that she was stupid. She felt compelled to convince the counselor to agree with her view of herself as inept. She was unconsciously inviting the counselor to put her down. Had the counselor done so, she would have felt it was deserved.

Carla was engaging in negative self-talk—putting herself down in her own mind. This is apparent when she says, in effect, "I'm stupid. Don't you agree?"

But the truth is she's quite intelligent. Carla is like many people who give off beacon signals saying, "I don't like myself very much, and neither should you."

People like Carla berate themselves for mistakes they make, they try hard to be perfect and they go to great lengths to please others. If you are one of these people, take heart. You can end any misperceptions that you are perpetuating with your negative self-talk.



#### Root out the lies.

Over time, people's self-talk is shaped by important relationships and circumstances. If you've been exposed to a lot of criticism, rejection, or abuse, you'll most likely have a low opinion of yourself. It doesn't mean you think of yourself as worthless—but that you lack confidence, you're prone to self-doubt, and you find it difficult to ask for what you need. These are symptoms of the lies that are embedded in your negative self-talk. You have to root out these lies. It isn't easy, but with deliberate effort, it's possible.

The best way to start is by listening to what you say. When you make a mistake or disappoint someone, can you acknowledge it, forgive yourself, and move on? Or do you apologize repeatedly? Do you find yourself searching for some type of penance as a way of making up for it? Do you put yourself down, call yourself derogatory names, or use self-deprecating humor?

If you follow a mistake with repeated apologies or selfcriticism, tune into how you do this. Write down the phrases you hear yourself saying. Alongside each negative phrase you write, jot down a way you could have said it differently so as not to put yourself down.

Practice these new approaches in everyday conversations. It will feel unnatural at first, but that's only because you're rewiring your mental circuits. Give it time, and you'll start to believe that the worth you're attaching to yourself truly belongs to you.

#### Confront disrespectful behavior.

So what do you do with all those people in your life who are accustomed to treating you like a doormat? Train them to treat you differently. Start by refusing to speak about yourself in negative terms as you normally would. When other people revert to customary behaviors of disrespect, call them on it. Extend respect to them by helping them understand that you are working on valuing yourself more. Tell them how you'd like to be treated differently.

"One counseling client, Debbie, did this well with her best friend. Debbie decided she needed to confront her friend about her friend's sarcastic putdowns. The next time her friend made a demeaning remark, Debbie said, "I'd appreciate if you don't talk to me that way anymore. It hurts me when you put me down."

"I was just joking," her friend said, misunderstanding. "It never seemed to bother you before."



"But it did bother me," Debbie replied. "I just never spoke up for myself. Now I'm trying to change—to value myself more. You can help me by not putting me down." It took time, but Debbie's friend eventually got the message, and their relationship grew closer.

By asking for what you need from these people, you are validating your worth in a powerful way. It reinforces positive self-talk and clearly communicates that you want others to treat you similarly.

Unfortunately, not everyone is going to comply with your wishes. They may oppose you by intensifying their disrespect. Many of your friends, coworkers, and possibly even family members may not understand the change in you.

This was the case with Tom, who was raised in an unhealthy family. He hated going to family gatherings because his three siblings teased him mercilessly, just as they did when he was a child. He left these events feeling lousy about himself.

Tom asked them several times to stop the teasing, but his pleas only provided ammunition for more taunting. Finally, he decided to write each sibling a letter explaining why this behavior hurt him, and how he wanted to have a different relationship with each of them now that they were all adults.

None of his siblings responded to, or even acknowledged, Tom's letter. It seemed that his siblings were determined to live by the old patterns that Tom wanted to break. So, he decided to skip family gatherings until they stopped denying him the respect he deserved.

Some people are simply toxic to be around. If your efforts to help them understand what you need go unheard or unheeded, sometimes the best route is to spend little or no time with them. A relationship can't grow when it's built on disrespect.

Don't become sidetracked by trying to change these people. The focus of your work is to catch and root out self-talk lies that undermine your worth. Stay the course in this process.

Over time, those who truly care for you will extend respect to you. These will be the relationships that become the most precious because they reflect the truth—that you deserve respect. And the reason you'll get it from others is because you first gave it to yourself.

# **Declutter your Mind with a Mental Spring Clean!**

By Lori Gradley

Spring is the season for new beginnings, a time to renew and recharge. But more importantly just as we do a regular 'spring clean' of our home to declutter our personal space we should also be focused on a 'spring cleanup for our mind' as well.

After all, it is your mental thoughts that create your life's destiny.

### Declutter your mind, what a fabulous idea!

Begin to rid yourself of any negative thoughts and behaviors you have harbored from the past in order to live a fulfilling life now. Let's use a seed we plant in the earth as an analogy. With enough nurturing and care that seed will bloom into a beautiful plant or flower. However, at the same time if you are not taking care of it, weeds will begin to grow and the plant will die off and wither away from a lack of attention.

What I do know for a fact is 'thoughts are things'. When you plant positive thoughts into your magnificent mind you will create positive outcomes. Similar to a seed planted in the earth that has a set pattern destined by nature to grow into fruition, we also have the ability to materialize into any self image we want thru concentrated effort. So, like the seed, if your thought is 'planted', 'nurtured' and cared for, those focused thoughts will manifest into physical reality. Just like the miracle of tulip bulbs that quietly grow beneath the earth's surface popping up thru the cold wintry ground, they manifest into a beautiful flower. Well, we can do the very same thing with a proper mindset!

You have the ability to pull 'negative weeds' from your mind. Replace negative habits by cultivating a new vibrant idea so you can begin again. To become a recharged, brand-new version of yourself just by sweeping out a bit of clutter and doing a 'spring cleaning."

### Here are a few tips:

#### Declutter your home/office.

When the space around you is clear and void of all clutter you can become better organized to start working on yourself. Begin to remove old limiting beliefs and emotional baggage you have carried around with you to become the new and improved person you have always dreamt of becoming. Make a commitment and take action.



### **Build a solid foundation.**

Brand new 'seeds' or positive ideas will have a difficult time being nurtured until you remove the negative habits and foundation from the past. Part of building a solid foundation is to eat healthy, sleep at least 5-6 hours a night and stay active. Abandon the slow sedentary routines you may have harbored over the previous months and get moving!

### Enjoy life.

Be mindful of your thinking patterns by heightening your awareness to only focus on positive thoughts. Are you living the life you really want? If not, visualize the goals you want to achieve and release the self doubts and fears that may have been holding you back.

#### Start afresh.

If you take time out for yourself to relax you can set new goals that you would truly like to achieve. Ask yourself what are the steps to get you there? Write your thoughts and goals down repeating them often. Plan to create a stimulating morning routine for yourself even if it is short and simple. Let the springtime immerse you with inspirational energy and new life!



# **Your Employee Advisory Service**

Employee Advisory Service (EAS) is a program designed to help employees and their immediate family members with personal, family or work-related issues that may adversely impact the employee's work performance.

EAS provides confidential assessment, counseling, and referral services and helps to restore the health and productivity of employees and the workplace as a whole. Problems are addressed in the quickest, least restrictive, and most convenient manner, while maximizing confidentiality and quality.

#### EAS can assist with:

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- Grief Counseling
- Anger Management
- Critical Incident Stress
- Stress Management
- Substance Abuse
- Family Issues
- Job Performance Issues

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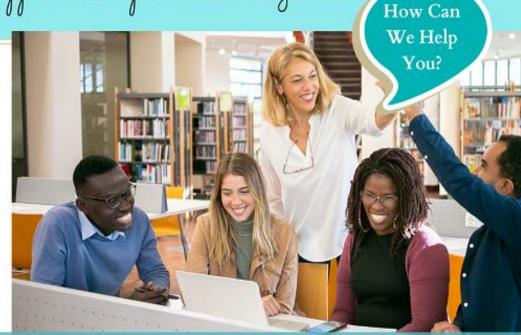
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