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# Stop the Drama! Eliminating Conflict in Your Practice

Team Meeting Facilitator Guide

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## Team Meeting Facilitator Guide

In order to move towards eliminating conflict in your practice, your team must have an open and honest discussion about conflict. A staff video has been created to help you and your team through this meeting together. This *Team Meeting Facilitator Guide* is designed to walk you through the steps you need to take before, during, and after this meeting to facilitate it effectively.

Below is an outline of the content you'll find in this guide.

2-3

Steps you can take **before the meeting** to prepare yourself and your employees.

4

Steps you can take **during the meeting** to facilitate it effectively.

5-13

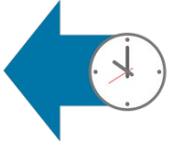
An outline of the activities you and your staff will be asked to do in the staff video and tips for facilitating them effectively.

14-15

Steps you can take **after the meeting** to help your employees maintain momentum as they work to eliminate conflict in your practice

# Stop the Drama! Eliminating Conflict in Your Practice

## Team Meeting Facilitator Guide



### Before the Meeting

- 1. Pick a place and time for your meeting.** Choose a meeting space that is large enough to fit all of your employees and has technology capabilities to show the staff video. Also, be sure you've set aside at least two hours for the meeting.
- 2. Invite your employees to the meeting.** Invite your employees by sending an email and posting the invitation in a common area (breakroom, refrigerator, etc.). You can use the sample email below or create your own.



You are invited to attend an all-staff meeting on **[Month, Day, Year]** from **[Time-Time]**. The goal of this meeting is to become a stronger team, strengthen relationships, and eliminate conflict.

This is an excellent learning and growth opportunity and will help us to increase teamwork. In order for this meeting to be successful, it is important for all team members to be present and engaged.

To prepare for the meeting, think about the following questions:

- How do you handle conflict in the workplace?
- Do you feel comfortable addressing conflict in the workplace? Why or why not?
- How do we communicate with others when we are working at our best as a team?

Please bring a pen and paper to take notes and be prepared to participate in interactive discussion.

# Stop the Drama! Eliminating Conflict in Your Practice

## Team Meeting Facilitator Guide

**3. Prepare yourself for the meeting.** It is recommended that you watch the final module, *Staff-Facing Video*, of this course prior to facilitating the meeting. This module contains the staff video and outlines techniques for resolving conflict. It includes several places where you must stop and discuss topics, so watching it ahead of time will help you to be a more effective facilitator. In addition, spend time thinking about the questions below:

- How will I define success for this meeting?
- What do I want the staff to learn during this meeting?
- What should be different when this meeting is over? If I were looking for small incremental progress, what would I like to see happening in our practice over the next several days or weeks?
- What do I need to do as a leader to make sure this meeting is successful?

**4. Prepare the meeting space.** Prior to beginning the meeting:

- Test all technology to ensure that the video plays correctly.
- Make sure that you have access to a whiteboard or adhesive flip chart paper for recording notes during the meeting.
- Print a copy of the *Staff Video Course Guide* for each employee.

If you completed the course, *Developing a Vision to Create the Practice You Want*, print copies of your practice vision statement to hand out and post any flip chart pages you created during that meeting.

If you did **not** complete this course, write the following discussion questions on a whiteboard or adhesive flip chart paper, one per page:

- What does it feel like when we are working at our best as a team?
- How does our care and service improve when we are at our best as a team?
- How is the day better when we are working at our best as a team?
- If someone has a conflict with us, how would we prefer they handle it?

# Stop the Drama! Eliminating Conflict in Your Practice

## Team Meeting Facilitator Guide



### During the Meeting

- 1. Welcome employees.** When your employees arrive, open by thanking everyone for attending. Then, articulate what you hope to accomplish during the meeting. Share your desire to improve the practice and their working environment, and tell them you've found some outside resources that will help you do this together.
- 2. Discuss the team's vision.** If you completed the course, *Developing a Vision to Create the Practice You Want*, start the meeting by reviewing your team's vision as well as any flipcharts you created together during that meeting.

If you did **not** complete that course, start the meeting by asking your employees to respond to the discussion questions you posted prior to beginning the meeting (see p. 3). As employees respond, capture their thoughts and guide the discussion by asking for clarification or refocusing the conversation as needed. You can do this by saying things like:

- That's a good point, can you elaborate?
- Tell me more about your thoughts on that.
- What are some other thoughts on this question?
- Let's come back to the question on the chart. I want to hear more of your thoughts.

As your employees respond, try to talk less and listen more. Your staff's involvement is a key factor in any change. The less you talk, the more people will engage and share. This holds true even during awkward silences. Silence does not mean disengagement. In fact, it's often a good indicator that people are thinking. Once people begin to see their ideas and thoughts are heard and respected, the conversation may begin to open up.

- 3. Begin the staff video.** Once you have discussed the opening questions, begin the staff video in the final module and follow it as you work through the rest of your meeting. Be prepared to stop, discuss, and complete activities throughout the video. On pages 5-13 you will find an outline for each lesson of the staff video along with any discussion questions or activities associated with each lesson.

# STAFF VIDEO – FACILITATION GUIDE

## Staff Video Outline

Unlike the manager videos, the staff video is not broken up into separate modules. Instead, it plays continuously from start to finish. However, there are visual transitions indicating when the video is moving from one topic to the next.

Below you will find a list of the visual transitions in the order they appear in the staff video. Parts of the video that have activities are indicated with a green leaf. On the following pages, you'll find an overview of each activity, instructions for facilitating them, and possible answers when applicable. Use this information to facilitate the activities in the staff video effectively.

Stop the Drama! Eliminating Conflict in Your Practice

Why Eliminate Conflict in Your Practice?



What is Unresolved Conflict?

Group Activity (pages 6-7)

How Unresolved Conflict Starts



How Unresolved Conflict Grows

Individual Activity (page 8)

Eliminating Conflict in Your Practice



Step #1 Identify Conflicts As Soon As They Happen

Group Activity (page 9)

Individual Activity (page 10)



Step #2 Prepare to Have a Conversation to Address the Conflict

Group Activity (page 11)

Step #3 Have the Conversation and Work on Solutions

What About Gossip?



Step #4 Practice Until This Process Becomes a Habit

Paired Activity (page 12)

Group Activity (page 13)

# STAFF VIDEO – FACILITATION GUIDE

## What is Unresolved Conflict?



### Group Activity

During this section of the video, you will be prompted to complete a group activity by a screen that looks like this and includes the following instructions:



**PAUSE THE VIDEO** AND TAKE A MINUTE TO DISCUSS THE QUESTION BELOW AS A GROUP

*What is the difference between these two examples?*

When you see this, pause the video and ask your employees to discuss the question on the screen as a group. The question refers to the two scenarios on the following page. Each scenario will be read aloud before you're asked to pause the video. The *Staff Video Course Guide* also includes a copy of each scenario and the question.

In addition to the scenarios, you'll find a correct answer on the following page. Don't give this answer to your employees unless they've discussed the question for some time without arriving at the correct response. Instead, guide the discussion so that they're able to arrive at the correct answer on their own. You can do this by asking or saying things like:

- What are some other thoughts on this question?
- That's a great point-say more about that.
- What is different about Amanda and Dana's actions in Scenario 1 and Scenario 2?

# STAFF VIDEO – FACILITATION GUIDE

## Scenario 1

Amanda, a Registered Veterinary Technician, needs someone to hold an animal so she can trim its nails. Everyone seems busy except for Dana, who works at the front desk, so Amanda asks her for help. Dana responds that she's busy working on something for a client, but there aren't any clients in the waiting room.

"It looks like there isn't anyone waiting right now," Amanda says, "and I really need someone to help me with this nail trim. It won't take long at all. Do you think you could wait to finish what you're doing? It would really help me out."

Dana responds that there is a client on hold on the phone who is extremely upset because her dog ate something she thinks might be poisonous. She's working with one of the doctors to fit the animal into the schedule quickly, and can help Amanda as soon as she's done.

Amanda completely understands this and asks Dana to come get her as soon as she's done assisting the client.

## Scenario 2

Amanda, a Registered Veterinary Technician, needs someone to hold an animal so she can trim its nails. Everyone seems busy except for Dana, who works at the front desk, so Amanda asks her for help. Dana responds that she's busy working on something for a client, but there aren't any clients in the waiting room.

*I guess she's just too lazy to help me, Amanda thinks. See if I help her next time she needs something.*

She walks off in a huff and later shares what happened with her fellow RVT. "I asked Dana to help me for five minutes," Amanda tells her, "and she refused even though the lobby is completely empty!"

## Question: What is the difference between these two examples?

**Answer:** In the first example, Amanda shares her concerns with Dana and listens to Dana's point of view. Because of this, they are able to come up with a solution together, and any potential conflict is resolved.

In the second example, Amanda doesn't share her thoughts with Dana or discuss how they can still get the nail trim done. Instead, she makes assumptions about Dana's motivations and even the kind of person she is. Because she doesn't share her thoughts or give Dana a chance to explain her reasons for not helping, something that started as a difference of opinion grows into a conflict. And, because Amanda chooses to share her thoughts about the incident with others, but not directly with Dana, this conflict now begins to negatively affect even more people in the practice.

# STAFF VIDEO – FACILITATION GUIDE

## How Unresolved Conflict Grows



### Individual Activity

During this section of the video, you will be prompted to complete an individual activity by a screen that looks like this and includes the following instructions:



### **PAUSE THE VIDEO AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS INDIVIDUALLY**

- *How can interpersonal conflicts interfere with our ability to deliver our best care or service?*
- *How does gossip change our day or our feelings about the people in our practice?*
- *How would our day be different if there were no drama or gossip in our hospital?*
- *If someone has an issue with my behavior or my work, how would I want them to handle it?*

When you see this, pause the video and ask your employees to answer the questions on the screen by themselves. They can record their answers on a blank sheet of paper or in the *Staff Video Course Guide*.

You do not need to ask your employees to share their responses. Instead, the purpose of this activity is to help them think about the impact conflict is having on your practice.

# STAFF VIDEO – FACILITATION GUIDE

## Step #1 Identify Conflicts As Soon As They Happen



### Group Activity

During this section of the video, you will be prompted to complete a group activity by a screen that looks like this and includes the following instructions:



**PAUSE THE VIDEO** AND READ EACH OF THE SCENARIOS BELOW. THEN, ANSWER THE QUESTIONS AS A GROUP.

#### SCENARIO #1

*The people who work the night shift never complete all of their work, which means you have to do it for them in the morning. You think they're lazy and inconsiderate. You believe they don't care that they're making extra work for you.*

#### SCENARIO #2

*Your manager just hired a new associate veterinarian. She doesn't make any effort to talk to people unless she has to, and she always has a pained expression on her face. You think this is because she believes she is better than everyone else.*

*What else might be causing these actions?*

*Are there other possible reasons for these people's behaviors?*

When you see this, pause the video. Ask your employees to read each scenario, and then discuss the questions as a group.

There are a lot of possible correct answers to these questions. We've included a few below to give you an idea of the kind of response you should be looking for.

#### Scenario #1:

- They may be so busy they don't have time to complete the tasks.
- They may not know they are responsible for completing the tasks.

#### Scenario #2

- She may be shy.
- She may be nervous.

# STAFF VIDEO – FACILITATION GUIDE

## Step #1 Identify Conflicts As Soon As They Happen



### Individual Activity

During this section of the video, you will be prompted to complete an individual activity by a screen that looks like this and includes the following instructions:



**PAUSE THE VIDEO AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION INDIVIDUALLY**

*Do you have any current conflicts within the practice that need to be resolved for the team to be at their best?*

When you see this, pause the video and ask your employees to answer the question on the screen by themselves. They can record their answers on a blank sheet of paper or in the *Staff Video Course Guide*.

You do not need to ask your employees to share their responses. Instead, the purpose of this activity is to help them think about the impact conflict is having on your practice.

# STAFF VIDEO – FACILITATION GUIDE

## Step #2 Prepare to Have a Conversation to Address the Conflict



### Group Activity

During this section of the video, you will be prompted to complete a group activity by a screen that looks like this and includes the following instructions:



**PAUSE THE VIDEO AND ANSWER THE QUESTION BELOW AS A GROUP. ASSIGN ONE PERSON TO CAPTURE YOUR ANSWERS ON A FLIPCHART OR WHITEBOARD.**

*What are some opening statements you can use in your practice?*

*\*Opening statements are statements you can use to open a difficult conversation like, "I'd like to have a conversation with you about something that's bothering me."*

When you see this, pause the video and ask your employees to discuss the question on the screen as a group.

The purpose of this activity is to come up with several opening statements that will work for your employees. Because of this, you'll want to assign one person to capture the opening statements your employees come up with on a flipchart or whiteboard.

Good opening statements inform the person or people the speaker is talking to that they'd like to have a conversation with them, and that the conversation will be about a difficult topic.

You'll want to save the opening statements your employees come up with and share them after the meeting. You can do this by taking a picture of the flipchart or whiteboard where you've captured your employees' opening statements and posting it somewhere everyone can see it, or typing the opening statements they come up with and sending them out via email.

# STAFF VIDEO – FACILITATION GUIDE

## Step #4 Practice Until This Process Becomes a Habit



### Paired Activity

During this section of the video, you will be prompted to complete a paired activity by a screen that looks like this and includes the following instructions:



### **PAUSE THE VIDEO AND COMPLETE THE ACTIVITY BELOW**

*Imagine you need to have a difficult conversation with the person you are paired with. Take turns practicing having this conversation by:*

- *Opening the conversation with an opening statement of your choice*
- *Explaining what the conversation is about*
- *Deciding on the action steps you can take to resolve the conflict.*

When you see this, pause the video. Ask your employees to pair up with a partner. If there is an uneven number of employees in the meeting, you can partner up with one of the employees yourself.

Once everyone has a partner, instruct each person to think of one imaginary but realistic conversation they might have with someone about a conflict. Conversations about conflict can be difficult and emotional, so you want to be sure your employees aren't using actual conflicts they have with one another in the meeting.

Once everyone has a conversation in mind, tell them to follow the instructions on the screen. They should practice having their conflict conversation with one another as if they were having a real conversation. One person should initiate the conversation and the other person should listen and respond.

If you're using the *Staff Video Course Guide*, your employees can use the *Eliminating Conflict – Quick Reference* to complete this activity.

# STAFF VIDEO – FACILITATION GUIDE

## Step #4 Practice Until This Process Becomes a Habit



### Group Activity

During this section of the video, you will be prompted to complete a group activity by a screen that looks like this and includes the following instructions:



**PAUSE THE VIDEO AND TAKE A MINUTE TO SHARE YOUR FINAL THOUGHTS**

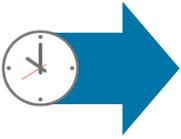
*What are 1-2 things you'd like to do differently because you invested this time today?*

When you see this, pause the video and ask your employees to read the question and think of an answer. When everyone has had time to think, go around the room and ask each of your employees to share his or her answer.

Ending the meeting with this activity is a great way to ensure your employees leave with at least one action they want to take moving forward.

# Stop the Drama! Eliminating Conflict in Your Practice

## Team Meeting Facilitator Guide



### After the Meeting

Once your employees have committed to a new set of behaviors around conflict, your role as a practice owner or manager is to support their efforts as they work through these changes.

Here are some tips that will help you maintain momentum.

- 1. Model new behaviors.** Model the new behaviors that were practiced in this meeting.
- 2. Support employees in resolving their own conflicts.** When your employees come to you to discuss a conflict or complain about another team member, reinforce the message that you are available to help them, but you cannot solve their conflicts for them. You can do this by saying things like:
  - Have you talked to the person or people involved?
  - How can I support you in using the process we agreed to work together on as a team?
- 3. Start the day with a reminder.** Start the day by reminding staff that resolving conflict is the skill you and your employees are working on and invite them to think about how they will make these changes during their shift.
- 4. End the day with a reminder.** If you started the day by asking your employees to consider how they will work towards eliminating conflict, end the day by asking them to revisit those aspirations.
- 5. Discuss progress during staff meetings.** Use staff meetings to quickly touch base on your progress towards eliminating conflict in your practice. Ask questions like: *How are we doing on our conflict efforts? What is working? What is challenging? What can we do better? What do we need to practice more?*
- 6. Use role models.** Encourage employees who become good at using the new process to help others who might be struggling.
- 7. Coach struggling employees.** Coach employees who are not trying the new behaviors. Ask them about their goals in the practice and how using some of these tools can help them achieve those goals.

