

# Stop the Drama! Eliminating Conflict in Your Practice

## Understanding Conflict Quick Reference

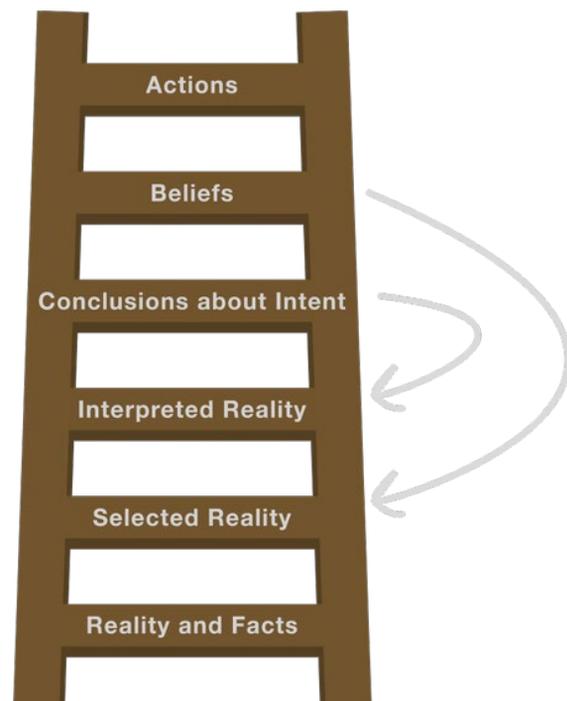
### What is “Unresolved” Conflict?

Disagreements happen on most teams. In fact, successful teams are composed of people who have different and diverse thoughts, ideas, opinions, and points of view. Normal, healthy disagreements and differences can help teams to grow and evolve. However, unlike normal differences of opinion, unresolved conflict will cause problems within the team and become detrimental to your practice.

### How Unresolved Conflicts Start

Understanding how conflict starts will help you to better identify conflicts as soon as they arise. Inference of negative intent, or assuming someone is acting in a negative way, is the root of all conflict. While simply having these kinds of thoughts may seem harmless, our thoughts dictate our actions.

The *Ladder of Inference* provides a visual representation of how inference of negative intent can influence our actions. First, there are the **reality and facts** of what actually happened. Then, we filter the situation through our **selected reality**. Next, we attach meaning to the situation through our **interpreted reality** and make **conclusions about the intent** of the other person. We make **assumptions** about the other person’s motivation and begin to **believe** these assumptions. Finally, these beliefs may lead us to take **actions** that reinforce our inference of negative intent.



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### How Unresolved Conflicts Grow

Inferences of negative intent create the conditions for unresolved conflict to arise. Once unresolved conflict has started, gossip and time will help it grow.

#### **Gossip**

Gossip creates additional instability and causes more thoughts of negative intent within the practice. Gossip can turn a simple misunderstanding into a toxic situation. When this happens, you may find yourself thinking about the gossip rather than delivering phenomenal care or service.

#### **Time**

Time can cause additional strain on a relationship compromised by inference of negative intent. Generally, conflict grows over time even though we often believe it will fade instead.

### Eliminating Conflict in Your Practice

Rational, respectful communication between the people who have a problem with one another is the exact behavior that has the ability to eliminate conflict in your practice. If the people in your practice learn how to have these conversations well, then blow-ups rarely happen and most conflicts are solved quickly and easily.

You can help employees learn how to have these conversations instead of relying on behaviors like gossiping, letting the problem grow, or expecting you to solve the problem for them by taking the following steps:

- Create a collaborative vision for your practice
- Discuss how eliminating conflict will help your team achieve this vision
- Provide tools, techniques, and phrases your employees can use to resolve conflict effectively
- Make the choice, as a team, to commit to using these techniques
- Practice using these techniques

The video modules that appear under the subheadings *Eliminating Unresolved Conflict in Your Practice* and *Present to Your Staff* explain how to complete each of the steps listed above.