



SAFETY TALK

Conflict in the Workplace

The average healthcare worker engages with more than 20 colleagues each day, providing care for our patients and clients in challenging, uncertain and emotionally-charged settings. Expecting that we will never experience conflict is unrealistic and leaves us unprepared for resolution. This Safety Talk includes insights and tips for addressing conflict in the workplace.

Conflict and Communication

Conflict between coworkers leads to breakdown in communication. The leading type of breakdown is “Errors of Omission” or missed opportunities to share important information.

Breakdown in communication is the leading cause of negative patient outcomes: one in three instances in poor communication results in delay or harm to a patient.

Lingard L, Espin S, Whyte S, Regehr G, Baker GR, Reznick R, Bohnen J, Orser B, Doran D, Grober E. Communication failures in the operating room: an observational classification of recurrent types and effects. *Qual Saf Health Care*. 2004 Oct;13(5):330-4. doi: 10.1136/qhc.13.5.330. PMID: 15465935; PMCID: PMC1743897.



Is All Conflict Bad?

In short: No. Disagreeing or having different perspectives can improve our services by challenging outdated norms and starting conversations about enhancing care.

Conflict and Employee Health

Unresolved conflict isn't just dangerous for our patients; the effects of unresolved workplace conflict result in decreased physical, psychological, emotional and social well-being.

The risk to well-being increases as conflict remains unaddressed, often impacting other members of the work environment. When it comes to workplace conflict, early resolution is illness prevention.

Castellini G, Consonni D, Costa G. Conflicts in the workplace, negative acts and health consequences: evidence from a clinical evaluation. *Ind Health*. 2023 Feb 1;61(1):40-55. doi: 10.2486/indhealth.2021-0283. Epub 2022 Mar 15. PMID: 35296597; PMCID: PMC9902267.

Tips for Healthy Conflict Resolution

- Keep it about the problem, not the person
- Explore how someone's perspective could be different than yours - Remember, both parties usually believe they are “right”
- Address conflict promptly to avoid harm to the relationship and work environment
- Acknowledge each person's right to feel differently from one another
- Appreciate the bravery it might take someone to speak up
- Remember that accepting responsibility for harm caused by our words or actions doesn't admit intent to harm

DATE: _____
FACILITY: _____

SAFETY TALK LEAD BY: _____
DEPARTMENT: _____

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- WHAT ARE SOME COMMON SOURCES OF CONFLICT IN OUR DEPARTMENT?
- WHAT STRATEGIES HAVE YOU FOUND USEFUL FOR RESOLVING INTERPERSONAL ISSUES WITH COWORKERS?
- WHAT RESOURCES EXIST FOR HELP WITH CONFLICT IN THE WORKPLACE?

EMPLOYEE CONCERNS & IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

EMPLOYEES PRESENT:

FOLLOW UP ON CONCERNS:

If you have any feedback on the Safety Talks program or a suggestion for a Safety Talk, please contact a member of the Wellness & Safety Team or email healthpeihr@ihis.org.

Safety Talks can be found on the Staff Resource Centre at: <https://src.healthpei.ca/safety-talks>