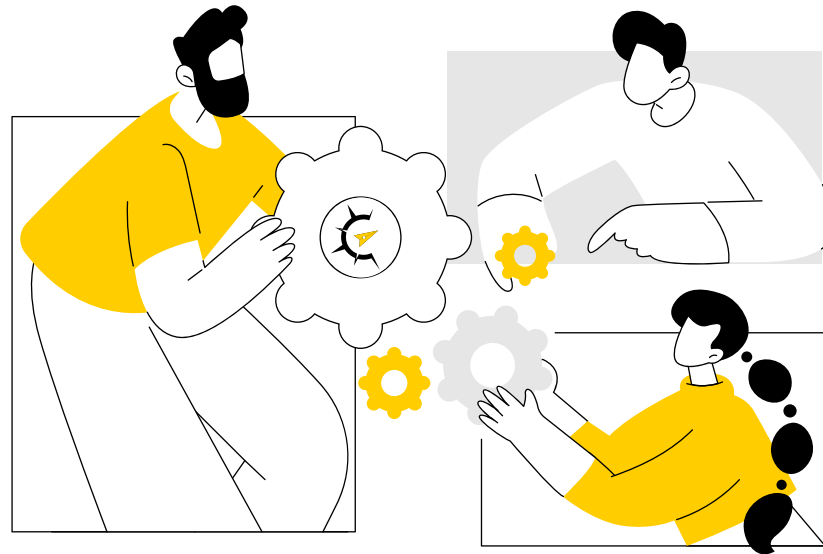


ADDRESSING TEAM CONFLICT TOOL



GUIDANCE FOR SUPERVISORS

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA HUMAN RESOURCES

This document is a tool to diagnose and address common team conflict issues, offering practical strategies to enhance trust, morale, and engagement.

If you would like more assistance in addressing team conflict, reach out us at oe-leader@uiowa.edu for help.



Support Needed	Warning Signs	Action Steps
Recognize the Signs of Conflict	Increased tension or emotional outbursts during meetings. Sudden changes in communication style (e.g., becoming defensive, curt, or withdrawn). Team members avoiding each other or working in isolation. A noticeable drop in collaboration or team productivity	Monitor team dynamics closely during meetings and interactions. Ask open-ended questions to assess any underlying issues. Hold individual check-ins to understand if there are personal concerns affecting work. Encourage regular feedback and open lines of communication.
Respond Quickly and Proactively	Conflict seems to be simmering beneath the surface but hasn't been addressed. Team morale starts to decline. Tension affecting decision-making or work output.	Step in at the first sign of conflict—don't wait for it to escalate. Initiate a team meeting or one-on-one discussions to address any issues. Make sure everyone knows the company's conflict resolution processes. Reinforce that it's okay to discuss issues early before they grow.
Create a Safe Space for Open Dialogue	Team members are hesitant to speak up during meetings. People seem uncomfortable or anxious when discussing team issues. Conversations feel tense or defensive.	Set up individual meetings in a private, comfortable environment to allow open communication. Use neutral language to avoid escalating the situation. Encourage empathy and active listening during conversations. Reaffirm that all team members' viewpoints are valuable and should be respected.



Support Needed	Warning Signs	Action Steps
Encourage Collaborative Problem-Solving	Individuals are stuck in "my way or the highway" thinking. Team members aren't engaging in finding solutions or seem disengaged. A solution is being forced on the group without discussion.	Lead brainstorming sessions where everyone can offer solutions. Ask open-ended questions like, "What would be a fair resolution for everyone?" Facilitate discussions around mutual interests, not individual demands.
Establish Clear Communication and Boundaries	Miscommunication or misunderstandings are frequent. Some team members are crossing boundaries (e.g., personal attacks, passive-aggressive comments). Conversations are dominated by one or two voices, with others staying silent.	Establish and reiterate communication norms (e.g., no interrupting, speaking respectfully). Set clear guidelines for how team members should handle disagreements. Step in when necessary to moderate discussions and keep things respectful.
Be a Role Model	Supervisors or leaders become defensive or engage in negative behavior. Lack of follow-through on resolving conflicts effectively. Supervisors avoid confrontation, signaling to the team that conflict isn't important.	Demonstrate calm, objective decision-making in tense situations. Hold yourself accountable by addressing issues promptly and fairly. Practice empathy and lead by example in communication and problem-solving. Model how to accept feedback gracefully and respectfully.

The University of Iowa offers a variety of resources to assist employees and supervisors in navigating difficult conversations and conflict situations.

[Visit the University Conflict Resources Page](#)

