Conflict and disagreements are natural parts of a student organization. All in all, the issue is not whether conflicts occur, but rather how they are managed. A properly managed conflict can have considerable value to members, but if not handled constructively, conflicts can bring down and organization and halt progress and productivity. How can you help resolve conflict and encourage valuable learning experiences in your organization?

12 Skills to Aid Conflict Resolution

1. **The "Win-Win" Approach**: Respect all members' needs. Identify solutions that will be beneficial to all.

2. **Manage Emotions:** Express emotions wisely to effect change. Be careful not to express judgments, personal opinions, or negative emotions.

3. **Willingness to Resolve:** Discuss personal issues that hinder resolution of the conflict. All members must set personal issues aside when making decisions and interacting in the organization.

4. **Empathy:** Develop communication tools to build cooperation and compassion among all members. Be sure to listen carefully to clarify understanding.

5. **Cooperative Power:** Eliminate "power over" to build "power with" others. All members of the organization should feel they have a say in each matter.

6. **Development of Options:** Design creative solutions. What would improve the situation going forward? Can you brainstorm imaginative ways to satisfy all members' needs?

7. **Creative Response:** Transform problems into creative learning opportunities.

8. **Negotiation:** Explain and apply effective strategies to reach agreement. Make lists, brainstorm, or discuss the pros and cons of the situation.

9. **Appropriate Assertiveness:** Apply strategies to attack the problem not the person.

10. **Broadening Perspectives:** Evaluate the problem in its broader context. How is it affecting the rest of the group?

11. **Mediation:** Get help from third party for conflicting parties to move towards solutions.

12. **Problem-Solve Together:** Make it a learning conversation. What do you need to do to understand where others are coming from? How can you create a solution that works towards a mutual understanding?

Still unresolved? Don't give up! Build on the cooperation you've established in your first effort. Agree to a time-out and try again. Acknowledge that while a solution may not have been formed, tension has been reduced and communication barriers have been broken.

References

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