

Dealing with Member Conflict and Disharmony Effectively

Presented by Elisabeth Stowe

Dealing with member conflict and disharmony effectively

- Identifying conflict causes
- Strategies to overcome conflict
- What next
- Best practices to maintain harmony

Identifying causes of conflict

- In order to resolve conflict, you must first understand the cause of the conflict
- The members having the conflict may or may not know (or admit) the reason for their conflict
- To try to identify the issues, one – on – one conversations will need to happen.
 - Use active listening to get to the cause
 - Active listening is a skill in which you are listening to understand, not solve
 - Use questions to achieve greater understanding

This process may require multiple conversations and needs to be approached without judgement. To best listen, personal bias needs to be set aside.

Active listening and Practice

[Active listening](#) is the **practice of preparing to listen**, observing what verbal and non-verbal messages are being sent, and then providing appropriate feedback for the sake of showing attentiveness to the message being presented. This form of listening conveys a mutual understanding between speaker and listener

Challenge is to listen and not allowing your mind to think ahead to response or resolution

Practice: Pick a partner. Think of a scenario (either specific or in general) that you want to focus on. Practice active listening. Each person should take a turn with listening.

Questions to use to encourage communication:

What? What happened?

Who? Who is involved?

When? When did it happen?

How? How are you feeling?

What? What needs to happen to resolve? This may be or may not be a known for them and may require follow up questions to fully reach.

Strategies to overcome conflict

After getting to the root of the conflict, what is the best way to resolve?

In order to resolve conflict, all parties have to agree to reach a resolution and leave the past behind them.

The cause of the conflict will determine the best resolution

Possible resolutions are:

Reaching an understanding – This conflict is often caused by a miscommunication. Challenges involved is getting past emotions and feelings.

Resolving expectations – This conflict is often caused by lack of communication. Challenges involved is overcoming personal bias

Agreeing to get along – Some conflicts may not be resolved. Goal is to get the members involved to agree that they can work together in relative harmony in order to put the good of the Order ahead of their own desires.

What Next Identifying causes of conflict

Having identified the cause of the conflict and deciding on a course of action to resolve the next step is to get buy in from those involved.

It is not necessarily the job of the mediator to solve the conflict and reach a resolution. It is the job of the mediator to ensure all parties are communicating. The mediator needs to ensure all parties are being heard, that those involved are taking time to listen to the other side, and that respect is being given to all involved.

It is good to ask the members involved if they are willing to reach a resolution. If they are not in a place to reach a resolution, then they need to decide if they can put their feelings aside to work for the good of the Order. If they can not do this either, then a conversation needs to be had about how continuing as things are will affect the Chapter and the Order and explore the best way forward without a resolution.

If a resolution is unable to be had, make an effort to revisit the issue as needed. An eventual resolution may happen as time is allowed to work on the parties.

Active listening and Practice

Go back to your partner from previous practice

Take turns

- Summarize what you understand to be your partners concern/issue
- Verify that your understanding is correct
- Discover (If you didn't previously) what needs to happen to reach a resolution that can allow your partner to move on
- Offer possible resolutions.

Best Practices to maintain harmony

- The best way to maintain harmony is to avoid conflict in the first place.
- Establishing basic ground rules for all members is helpful.
- Feelings often get hurt when our best intentions cause offense.
- Assigning a mentor for new members allows the chapter to establish who should be offering advice and critique.
- Always give members praise for the things that deserve praise. If you have a critique, verify you are the right person to deliver it. If a member has a mentor, or someone they often turn to for advice, then that is the person you should make your notes to. They are better positioned to deliver the critique in a way that the member is willing to listen and correct course.
- If you feel you need to offer critique, make sure the member is open to the critique.
 - Ask if they are willing to receive critique, verify now is the best time to discuss. Yes but not now is a valid response; so is no.

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Best Practices to maintain harmony (cont)

- Venting
 - We all vent. Venting can be helpful to releasing frustrations. Venting can lead to bigger issues
 - If you need to vent, ensure you are venting to a trusted person and that the vent will go no further.
 - If you are the person that is being vented to, use your active listening skills.
 - Recognize that venting is not about a resolution, but a way to release stress and feelings
 - Make it a priority to keep your bias and feeling from entering into the conversation.
 - Ensure that the member that is venting, feels heard and is able to move forward at the end of the session

Best Practices to maintain harmony (cont)

Don't be too busy

- We are often guilty of focusing on our concerns and agenda
- It is easy to be in a hurry and not notice when someone else needs to be heard or has a concern
- Don't be so focused on your plan that you can't take someone else's advice and change direction to reach a better outcome.
- Recognize that sometimes giving someone else an opportunity to lead/follow their plan can be a better option than sticking to your plan.

Apologize

- When you are wrong, apologize
- An apology means you recognize wrongdoing and desire to not repeat the offense.

If time permits.....

Questions/ Comments/ Concerns