

# Session 5: Handling Conflict

Conflict is virtually inevitable in professional (and certainly personal) settings, and handling conflict is a rather universal leadership challenge. Conflicts can arise due to stress, communication styles, competing interests, problem solving approaches, and a host of other major and minor issues. In general terms, conflict can be divided into two camps: content (related to policies and procedures) and relational (over values, beliefs, control, goals).

## Discuss

Share a conflict (that you're comfortable sharing) that you've recently experienced or witnessed. Was it personal or professional? Was it a content or relational issue? How did it develop and who did it involve? Did it escalate and how? Did it affect others? Was it resolved, and how? How did you feel during the conflict? Are you satisfied with the resolution? Are there lingering effects from the conflict?

## Discover

Take the "Conflict Style Questionnaire", using a personal example for "Person A" and a professional example for "Person B." Score your answers from the scale to see what your dominant styles for handling conflict were in those situations.

- Are they similar?
- Do they confirm or contradict what you understand to be your natural inclinations to be when confronted with conflict?
- If not, what do you think accounts for the discrepancy?
- What are the benefits of this method of handling conflict, and what are the drawbacks? How does the way you handle conflict benefit or hurt you or others? Why?

## Develop

Handling conflict often involves not just communication skills but emotional intelligence and regulation as well. In examining and considering the way you approach and handle conflict, can you identify any steps you can take to more effectively manage conflict that arises? Can you identify any actionable steps or goals that you can put into practice so that you're better able to avoid, manage, and resolve conflict? Write those down and hold each other accountable for addressing those.