Strategic orientations include the structures, goals, styles of interaction and all other components we believe are helpful to accomplishing our objectives. Again, our ideology and philosophical stance affect our strategic orientation. In our discussion of leadership styles, we addressed how different groups are affected by those leadership roles that seek to structure tasks and maintain group stability. As well, we indicated how there might be times when these roles are in conflict with each other throughout the development of any group. Communication styles, relationship issues and the degree of structure individuals require when they work in a group all have the potential for conflict when decisions are being made.

All three potential sources of conflict are clearly areas of vital importance to our personal belief systems. However, when conflict occurs, we experience the product of that belief system, not necessarily the belief system itself. In other words, belief systems actualize themselves with behaviours that often mask differing interests. Conflict is a good thing when we work at understanding each other's point of view and work toward a healthy resolution of issues. Conflict can help bring about creative idea sharing and motivate change for the better. At the same time, conflict can enhance group trust and cohesion, as group members share ideologies, philosophies and strategies.

Unfortunately conflict can also be destructive to group process, as those behaviours that mask differing interests become detrimental to group process. If not given the opportunity for mutual understanding, conflict behaviours can lead to accusations and negative emotions. Issues become more complex because emotion and misinterpretation complicate them. When conflict is not recognized, issues fester and affect groups, leading to unnecessary stress, divisiveness and low levels of personal effectiveness.

Conflict Behaviour

Exercise 6.5 helps to identify possible strategies you use in conflict situations. The works of Blake and Mouton (1970), Hall (1996), Filley (1975), and Thomas-Kilmann (1974) are most often cited when discussing **conflict styles**. The quick test you completed in Exercise 6.5 offers some insight into your natural (or dominant) approach to conflict situations. Conflict styles are a product of our culture, values, beliefs and attitudes in decision-making contexts. Our first response in any confrontational situation will usually be a reflection of our dominant conflict style. Remember that your habitual responses to conflict may not always be consistent. That is, they may change, depending on the nature of the conflict and the people with whom you are in conflict.

Two factors affect your natural style of handling conflict: the degree to which you place importance upon meeting your own needs, and the value you place upon the relationship with the other person or people involved. The five conflict styles described in this section are defined by the combination of these two factors. Each conflict style brings different opportunities and risks to group decision-making situations.

The following scenario will help clarify the five conflict styles and suggests the risks and opportunities implicit in their approaches.

> Brenda works in an outreach program at the regional child development centre in a northern Alberta community. She works with another

family support worker (Makayla) under the supervision of a registered clinical counselor and has happily worked with this organization for about four years. Makayla has worked at the centre for about three months. Brenda has some autonomy regarding when she visits families off site and often creates her own schedule to accommodate some of her personal appointments. She feels very conscientious about fulfilling her work obligations and has never had any complaints about her work.

Her supervisor has recently questioned her about her whereabouts on the last three Friday afternoons. Brenda realizes that Makayla is the only person who could have commented to the supervisor about her Friday schedule. Even though Brenda knows that she has fulfilled her work responsibilities, she is upset that Makayla has passed on information to the supervisor before checking with her.

The Avoiding Conflict Style

People who avoid conflict have usually had very negative experiences in confrontational situations. They choose to withdraw totally from conflict, either by leaving it up to others in the group to settle any disagreements or by letting the situation simply play itself out. Those who avoid conflict are not committed to their own needs or the needs of others. Hall (1996) calls this the "lose-leave style" of conflict management because those who avoid conflict have low commitment to their own needs and little regard for building relationships with others.

If Brenda were to avoid conflict, she would simply talk to her supervisor and explain her ways of scheduling clients, without confronting Makayla about her suspicions. She would feel safe with this approach and would not have to face the discomfort of a confrontation. Avoiding has, however, the potential for pent-up frustration and further distrust, with the risk of a poor working relationship with both Makayla and the supervisor. People who avoid conflict might rationalize their behaviour by thinking that it is not important enough to talk about or that it may never happen again. Either way, this kind of avoidance lowers the commitment in any work situation and decreases trust.

If you are someone who tends to avoid conflict at all costs, it is important to recognize the risks involved in not expressing your point of view. How you manage to tell others what is bothering you will be a blend of respectful listening, paraphrasing and the ability to communicate your feelings in conflict situations. If avoiding conflict has become a pattern for you, this will not be an easy process.

The Competing Conflict Style

Those who approach conflicts with a competing style see their own needs as the focus of any argument or confrontation. People with this conflict style do not like to lose, believe that they are always right and have little regard for relationship building in groups. Competing can take many forms, from outright bullying to passive-aggressive, coercive manipulation. This stance is not open or flexible and is focused on pushing until the individual gets his or her own way. This style is termed an *I-win-and-you-lose* way of thinking, with little regard for the human relationships that deteriorate during the process.

If Brenda approached her situation with a competing conflict style, her primary objective would be to make Makayla understand that her behaviour was unacceptable. She would take the opportunity to meet with her, if possible, and with the supervisor, and tell both of them that her family visitation schedule is her business and that Makayla should mind her own business in the future. It would be important to Brenda that both Makayla and the supervisor know she is right. She might even try hard to catch Makayla not using her time well with clients, because being right is of utmost importance to her. Obviously Brenda risks any relationship with Makayla and may alienate her supervisor with her response to this situation. She will feel quite powerful in all of this and may gain some temporary satisfaction from showing them that she is not slacking off on the job.

You may be someone with a competing conflict style or work with someone who has a high need to be right, with little regard for your feelings. Sometimes this assertive way of approaching conflict can be useful. Advocacy for a worthwhile cause (e.g., standing up for the rights and needs of your clients) may require an assertive style that clearly represents what you believe to be to the betterment of those clients. However, in most group decision-making situations, fighting for goals with little respect for others could jeopardize your working relationships.

If you see some competitive characteristics in yourself, take the time to reflect on the outcome of recent conflict situations for you. Did you experience any loss of relationships, friendships or comfort as a result of your need to meet your goals at any cost? If so, re-think this approach: the risks to group cohesion are high.



Have you ever used a competing style of conflict resolution? If so, did that style of conflict resolution have any repercussions for you?

The Accommodating Conflict Style

People who use an accommodating conflict style value relationships at the risk of not meeting their own needs and goals. They do not trust that relationships will stand the test of confrontation and back off from their point of view as soon as they see that it may not be in agreement with the rest of the group. It is another kind of avoidance technique, in which the individual comes to the conflict believing that his or her thoughts, ideas and goals are not nearly as important as those of other group members. Often this conflict style is more about the need to be liked than it is about putting the needs of others above one's own. The process of yielding to others may take the form of re-directing the conversation in some way or using humour to mask any discomfort.

If Brenda were using an accommodating conflict style she might ask Makayla if they could meet over coffee (Brenda would buy). Without any mention of her meeting with their supervisor, she would talk about how sometimes people wonder about how she schedules her visits with families. By doing this, she would be sidestepping her real concern about Makayla's focus on her work commitments. Her motivation would be to make Makayla understand her better and perhaps approve of her creative scheduling,

but she would be avoiding the real concern she has about someone else questioning her ethics. She may succeed in building her relationship with Makayla, yet would be still avoiding the real issue.

You may find that using an accommodating style is helpful with less important issues that you are not particularly concerned about. At times we all use this style of conflict in those kinds of situations, when our backing off will help the group move forward. However, if you are always the one giving in for the sake of group cohesion, you risk a certain loss of power in the group that may erode the effectiveness of your role in the eyes of other group members.

The Compromising Conflict Style

The compromising style of approaching conflict has as its goal that everyone can win a little bit if they simply all give a little. People who use this style avoid working through the discomfort of a conflict by suggesting to group members that splitting the difference and having each member sacrifice something will move the group forward. As positive as it might sound, compromising does not work through the conflict in ways that incorporate everyone's needs and can leave group members feeling somewhat dissatisfied. Often, people who use a compromising conflict style end up manipulating people and issues in order to find common ground. The atmosphere becomes somewhat tense and competitive as group members are asked to assess what they might give up for the common good. Creativity gets lost in this process of meeting people halfway, and decision making moves out of healthy consensus and into a less interactive approach.

If Brenda were to use a compromising style of conflict resolution, she would have to begin by meeting with Makayla and her supervisor and openly discussing how everyone in the centre validates his or her use of time. More than likely she will ask the supervisor to call this meeting, with the primary objective of finding some way for everyone to post her client schedules so that there is little or no question about the hours that are devoted to the families. Brenda's situation is not as much about compromise as it is about confronting Makayla and finding out why she questioned her (Brenda's) ethics. By suggesting some kind of open scheduling process, she is still not unearthing the real issue, yet is contributing to team cohesion by suggesting ways everyone might work differently. Her loss (and possibly Makayla's) is the freedom and trust implicit in a more autonomous way of scheduling visits.

If compromise is your preferred conflict style, think carefully about whether you are actually getting at the issues that may be stalemating the decision-making process. Is the process of asking group members to "give a little" actually masking the opportunity to work through conflicts? Compromise does come with a cost, as group members pull back on achieving their goals in the zest for everyone to meet halfway.

The Collaborating Conflict Style

When using the collaborating conflict style, everyone's goals are considered important. As well, the relationships amongst all group members are equally important in achieving those goals. The two are not mutually exclusive, as those who seek to collaborate see

value in working through conflict. When they face a conflict stalemate, they see it as a chance for creative problem solving and team building. If all group members value this process, then cohesion, trust and creativity flourish through the active exchange of ideas. When exploring differences of opinion openly, conflict has the potential of moving a group into creative solutions that meet everyone's needs. Everyone's rationales for thinking the way he or she does must be on the table, or the chance for this kind of win-win problem solving diminishes.

In Brenda's situation, collaboration would begin in a meeting with Makayla, with the objective of finding out from her what concerns she may have about how she (Brenda) schedules her family visitations. There would be open and respectful questioning about these concerns, with the objective of engaging in a dialogue about scheduling issues, flexibility and ways of preserving autonomy while also trusting each other's work ethic. Even though both Makayla and Brenda have the families they work with to support, the ultimate goal of this conversation would be to ensure that both felt they had an equitable workload. This would build trust, cohesion and a team-work atmosphere.

A collaborative conflict-resolution style contributes to the environment of consensus building discussed earlier. If you can overcome your fear of confrontation and see it as an opportunity for group growth, then it will be that much easier for you to start from a collaborative place when conflict builds. As with our discussion of consensus building, approaching conflict with a collaborative style requires enough time to fully listen to each other's points of view and to explore all of the rationales on both sides of issues. It is not always possible to take this kind of time when quick decisions have to be made.

EXERCISE 6.5 HOW YOU ACT IN CONFLICTS

Objectives:

1. To identify typical responses in conflict
2. To provide the foundation for further learning about conflict styles

The following proverbs can be thought of as descriptions of some of the different strategies for resolving conflicts. Proverbs state traditional wisdom; the proverbs below articulate traditional wisdom for resolving conflicts. Read each proverb carefully, and, using the following scale, indicate how typical each proverb is of your actions in a conflict.

5 = very typical of the way I act in a conflict
4 = frequently typical of the way I act in a conflict
3 = sometimes typical of the way I act in a conflict
2 = seldom typical of the way I act in a conflict
1 = never typical of the way I act in a conflict

Try to make a clear choice rather than rely on number 3.

_____ 1. It is easier to refrain than to retreat from a quarrel.
_____ 2. If you cannot make a person think as you do, make him or her do as you think.
_____ 3. Soft words win hard hearts.
_____ 4. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours.
_____ 5. Come now and let us reason together.
_____ 6. When two quarrel, the person who keeps silent first is the most praiseworthy.
_____ 7. Might overcomes right.

_____ 8. Smooth words make smooth ways.
_____ 9. Better half a loaf than no bread at all.
_____ 10. Truth lies in knowledge, not in majority opinion.
_____ 11. He who fights and runs away lives to fight another day.
_____ 12. He hath conquered well that hath made his enemies flee.
_____ 13. Kill your enemies with kindness.
_____ 14. A fair exchange brings no quarrel.
_____ 15. No person has the final answer, but every person has a piece to contribute.
_____ 16. Stay away from people who disagree with you.
_____ 17. Fields are won by those who believe in winning.
_____ 18. Kind words are worth much and cost little.
_____ 19. Tit for tat is fair play.
_____ 20. Only the person who is willing to give up his or her monopoly on truth can ever profit from the truths that others hold.
_____ 21. Avoid quarrelsome people, as they will only make your life miserable.
_____ 22. A person who will not flee will make others flee.
_____ 23. Soft words ensure harmony.
_____ 24. One gift for another makes good friends.
_____ 25. Bring your conflicts into the open and face them directly; only then will the best solution be discovered.
_____ 26. The best way of handling conflicts is to avoid them.
_____ 27. Put your foot down where you mean to stand.
_____ 28. Gentleness will triumph over anger.
_____ 29. Getting part of what you want is better than not getting anything at all.
_____ 30. Frankness, honesty and trust will move mountains.
_____ 31. There is nothing so important you have to fight for it.
_____ 32. There are two kinds of people in the world, the winners and the losers.
_____ 33. When one hits you with a stone, hit him or her with a piece of cotton.
_____ 34. When both give in halfway, a fair settlement is achieved.
_____ 35. By digging and digging, the truth is discovered.

SCORING

Each number in the columns below corresponds to the questions you have just answered. Transfer the number that you assigned to each question to its proper column placement, and total each column.

Avoiding	Competing	Accommodating	Compromising	Collaborating
_____ 1	_____ 2	_____ 3	_____ 4	_____ 5
_____ 6	_____ 7	_____ 8	_____ 9	_____ 10
_____ 11	_____ 12	_____ 13	_____ 14	_____ 15
_____ 16	_____ 17	_____ 18	_____ 19	_____ 20
_____ 21	_____ 22	_____ 23	_____ 24	_____ 25
_____ 26	_____ 27	_____ 28	_____ 29	_____ 30
_____ 31	_____ 32	_____ 33	_____ 34	_____ 35
_____ Total	_____ Total	_____ Total	_____ Total	_____ Total

The higher the total score for each conflict management strategy, the more frequently you tend to use that strategy. The lower the total score for each conflict management strategy, the less frequently you tend to use that strategy.

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A Model for Resolving Conflict

The following **model of conflict resolution**, based on the work of Thomas Gordon (1975), outlines a clear process that will help guide you through any conflict situation. The process involves defining the problem, brainstorming ideas to solve the problem, choosing an idea that every group member is comfortable with, implementing it and then evaluating whether it meets everyone's needs after it has been implemented. If only this process was as easy to follow in conflict situations as it is to explain on paper! However, by following a step-by-step model of conflict resolution, those stalemates you might face during the process of decision making will have some hope of resolution.

Step 1: Defining the Problem Affecting Group Members

This step is usually ignored because it is assumed to be obvious in conflict situations. This step is not just about defining the problem; it is about defining the problem as it affects each group member. We usually assume that everyone knows what is causing a conflict. In reality, unless each group member has the opportunity to describe the problem from his or her perspective and come to a shared understanding of it, a lot of energy may go into solving a problem that does not address what everyone is really concerned about. Often when groups get stuck trying to solve a problem, it is because they have not adequately defined it in the first place. Interestingly, this can be the most difficult step to work through (see Exercise 6.6).

EXERCISE 6.6 DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Objectives:

1. To practise stating your personal perspective in conflict situations
2. To practise discriminating the definition of a problem from the description of solutions
3. To envision a problem from another person's perspective

Think about a conflict you have faced in the recent past that you are comfortable revisiting and then discussing with others.

Ask yourself (you may want to record this information) the following:

1. Who was involved in the conflict?
2. What was the issue?
3. What is your definition of the problem?
4. Would others involved define the problem in the same way?

Move into your Base Group and share the answers to your questions. When you are sharing your conflict and you are answering Question 3, have other group members assess whether or not you have truly defined the problem. Then, when you answer Question 4, have other group members assist you in defining the problem from the perspectives of others in your example.

Group members have to agree to clearly state their perspectives about how they view the problem. Sometimes people jump to offer solutions when they think they are describing the problem. A statement like, "When you two are side talking, I cannot concentrate on the project" states the problem someone might have when a group of students are attempting to work on an assignment together, and the work is blocked. It states someone's perception of the reason that her or she cannot work and the group seems stalled on the project. In contrast, a statement that does not focus on the problem but jumps to a solution might be "This work would go a lot faster if we would all be quiet and listen to each other." This statement may evoke defensive arguments from other group members. In the first statement, the person is taking responsibility for his or her point of view and is explaining what is bothering him or her. In the second statement, the person is trying to solve the problem, but the group might not understand this.

After hearing everyone's perspective, the next step a group must take is to attempt to define the overall problem for everyone involved. Essentially what the group is saying is, "You have a problem. I have a problem. What is the problem we have together?" For example, you and your partner may have conflicts about the way you spend money. One day your partner decides to look at a new boat, and you are not very happy about it because you have both agreed to curb your spending. You define this problem as, We have made an agreement, and he is not living up to our deal; I am worried about owing money. Your partner's definition of the problem might be, We have enough money coming in to justify looking at new investments; I feel pressured by the reaction I get when I want to spend money and have some fun. Each of you has defined the problem for himself or herself. The next step is to move away from your personal perspective and focus on the problem you have together. In this case it might be, We have a different outlook on the importance of budgeting, and we cannot seem to agree on how to spend our money.

In defining the problem, the questions you ask yourself might be:

- How am I affected by this situation?
- What is really going on here?
- What is blocking the group, and how does that affect all of us?

When defining the problem for the whole group, all members clarify their perspectives and assist each other in supporting that process in order to reach a shared understanding of the issue that is stalling progress. Again, defining the problem is the most difficult part of conflict resolution. However, once this work is done, the other steps will follow more smoothly. You will find that in some decision making you may move back to defining the problem when other steps in the conflict resolution process seem to get held up.

Challenges to this step in the resolution of any conflict include:

- Figuring out how you are affected by the situation.
- Risking talking about difficult issues.
- Taking personal responsibility for your perception of the problem.
- Being able to all state your perceptions of the problem during more emotional conflict situations.
- Being able to manage your emotions while stating the effect the problem is having on you.

- Taking the time you need to define the problem to everyone's satisfaction.
- Stepping back and looking at the problem objectively.



How might what you have learned about defining the problem help you in other conflicts you experience in your life?

Step 2: Brainstorming Solutions

Once the problem is defined for all group members the task is then to generate as many ideas as possible to reach a solution. This process should be organized, with time for each person in the conflict situation to generate ideas. You may choose to openly brainstorm everyone's ideas, recording them for all to see (using a flipchart, board or other kind of observable medium). Another alternative, after everyone has agreed on the definition of the problem, is to have each member privately list his or her own ideas and then share them later as a group. There are many ways of brainstorming (some are described in Kaner, Fisk and Toldi, 1996). Ultimately the goal is to accumulate as many ideas as possible from all members of the group. It is important to include all ideas, even if some seem unrealistic. Often there is something valuable in every idea that might serve as a foundation for a workable solution.

All of these solutions should be recorded, even if only two people are in conflict. This helps everyone actually see what they have to work with for Step 3.

Challenges in this step of conflict resolution include:

- Evaluating solutions prematurely and rejecting them before writing them down.
- Not respecting everyone's ideas.
- Stopping after all obvious solutions are generated and not taking the time to come up with new, unique and creative ideas.

Step 3: Evaluating All Solutions and Choosing One

In this step of conflict resolution, well-developed communication skills are vital. Each member of the group is now expected to evaluate all the ideas that have been collected during the brainstorming exercise. We refer you now to the process of consensus building described from pages 156 to 159. Essentially this process investigates the pros and cons of each idea, exploring its possibilities and its short- and long-term consequences.

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of respectful speaking and listening behaviour at this stage of conflict resolution. This means remembering some basic communication rules. When taking the opportunity to respond to someone's suggestion, remember to use language that makes explicit that this is your interpretation. This means using "I" statements and taking responsibility for your opinion. When listening to others, respectful acknowledgment (waiting for others to finish their thoughts before clarifying them) is vital. You should be focusing consistently on factors that appear to have the potential for agreement by making connections between ideas brainstormed, while at the same time building on others' ideas. The last important communication rule

is being mindful of your body language and the message it sends. Do you look judgmental, uncomfortable or bored, or do you convey interest and hopefulness? Building an evaluation climate that is mutually respectful takes great patience and refined communication ability.

The question remains, How do you decide which brainstormed solution is the one that will work for everyone? Obviously, with each situation, the criteria for evaluation will differ in some way. As suggested by Kaner, Fisk and Toldi (1996), group members should decide what these criteria should be before evaluating any solutions. For example, the criteria might be that the solution is simple to implement, that it falls within a certain budget allocation and that it can be achieved by all employees. Other criteria might include identifying the challenges and opportunities implicit in each suggestion, as well as the ability of the group to realistically accomplish the chosen solution.

As each solution is considered, group members should have some way of identifying their level of acceptance of that solution. You must determine ahead of time whether decisions are to be made by consensus or some other method of decision making (e.g., taking a vote). There are innovative methods some groups use to give group members a sense of the degree to which they support ideas being discussed. For example, one can use hand gestures to quickly gauge group-member support for an idea. A closed fist indicates no support and an open hand with outstretched fingers indicates full support. The openness of the hand defines the level of support. This can be used in two ways. It can be a way of getting a quick idea of how much support the group has for each given solution, with those having no support being eliminated immediately. Or, the group can decide what level of support is needed to move any solution forward to implementation. For example, only those choices that receive a half-open fist from all group members will be considered as a viable option.

Challenges in this step of conflict resolution include:

- Jumping too quickly to a solution.
- Not being able to step out of your own frame of reference to consider other alternatives.
- Not creating evaluation criteria that are workable.
- Getting off topic to the point where group members become frustrated with the process, and it falls apart.

Step 4: Implementing the Solution

This is the time to try out the solution that is chosen. It is helpful to agree on a time frame in order to move to the next step, assessing the solution's effectiveness. If all group members have agreed to the solution and the first steps in conflict resolution have been followed, the challenges in this step should be minimal.

Step 5: Evaluating the Solution

This is the time to re-convene and assess whether the agreed-upon solution is meeting everyone's needs. Knowing ahead of time that this step is built into the implementation process helps alleviate any fears that group members will somehow be trapped into a

solution that does not work. When the solution is working, this step is very expedient, as group members check back and acknowledge that the problem seems to be solved and the process can continue. If there are problems with the chosen solution, group members must start over. Chances are they may have neglected to fully explore the issues and did not adequately define the problem or moved to a solution prematurely. Challenges arise if people are unwilling to start the process over.

Final Comment

Conflict resolution takes time, effort and a willingness to carefully work through the issues that stall progress. Sometimes issues are resolved quickly, and sometimes they require the time and effort necessary to move the group back on task. It is hard to risk exploring the real issues and sharing your perspective when you anticipate the discomfort this brings to any group. Decision making and conflict resolution skills are the tools that support you in taking this risk. As you work in groups, the process will become more comfortable for you over time. Successful conflict resolution will likely produce higher group creativity, some innovative solutions, heightened group productivity and enhanced cohesion.

Summary

When groups reach a shared understanding about the way members will work together, the processes of decision making, problem solving and conflict resolution become opportunities for creative exchange. This process is in direct contrast to the traditional expectation that conflict is uncomfortable and should be avoided at all cost.

Commonly understood decision-making models include decision making by an authority figure with or without discussion, decision by an expert assigned by either the group or assigned leader, decision through the averaging of group member opinion, decision by a minority group assigned to make the decision on its own, decision by a majority vote and decision through consensus. All of these methods have advantages and disadvantages, depending on the authority structures and other elements of the group situation.

The decisions made in a group are affected by the procedures it creates to complete its tasks. As well, the group's stage of development at the time of making the decision will affect the decision's quality and its level of acceptance by all group members. Certain personality types also affect the process and product of group decision making. Challenging, difficult personality types include bullies, snipers, know-it-alls, yes-persons, whiners and jokers. Dealing with these behaviours detracts from the group and impairs decision making.

Conflicts arise when individuals in the group have differing ideologies, philosophical orientations or strategies for the way the group should be structured or for how people should interact with each other. All individuals have certain natural conflict styles. Some avoid conflict, and some compete assertively for their needs. Others see great importance in preserving relationships with other group members and focus less on getting their own needs met, while others choose to work toward some kind of compromise on everyone's

part. Finally, there are those who seek to collaborate and work through conflict in ways that meet everyone's goals.

A model of conflict resolution built from a collaborative approach is one where group members note the conflict, define the problem from everyone's perspective, brainstorm solutions, evaluate the solutions offered by everyone and then choose one. Finally, in this model of conflict resolution, group members implement the decision made with a promise to evaluate its effectiveness later, to see if it meets all group members' needs. Conflict resolution that seeks to meet everyone's goals takes time and energy, yet builds group cohesion and trust.

Key Terms

Conflict *(p. 165)*
Conflict styles *(p. 168)*
Consensus *(p. 156)*
Decision making *(p. 151)*
Disagreement *(p. 165)*
Majority *(p. 156)*
Minority *(p. 155)*
Model of conflict resolution *(p. 172)*
Personality problems *(p. 161)*
Procedural problems *(p. 160)*
Process problems *(p. 160)*
Shared understanding *(p. 151)*
Synergy *(p. 157)*

Case Studies

The following case studies, taken from classroom, human service team and community contexts will help clarify the topics covered in this chapter, using real-world examples. These case studies focus on ways of responding to conflict styles and conflict resolution strategies that enhance the decision-making process.

Case Study 6.1 The Disrespectful Student

CATEGORY: STUDENT

A group of 24 human service students have been together for about two months (in a four-month semester). It is becoming increasingly evident to most class members that one of the student's attitudes in this class (and all of the other classes in the program) is highly negative, sarcastic and generally erodes the classroom environment. Not only is this student disruptive with other students, he also side talks and is generally disrespectful of the instructors in all of the classes. A small group of students has now approached the chairperson of the human service program to discuss this student and complain about his behaviour. The chairperson, after listening to their concerns, rightfully explains that she cannot discuss this particular student with them and that, because they are students learning how to work in groups, they should handle this situation themselves.