



PEACEATWORK
PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT AND CARE ENHANCEMENT

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND ASSERTIVENESS STRUCTURE

UNIT 10

03/2025



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Learning Objectives

- Understand conflict as a normal part of workplace interaction
- Distinguish between constructive and destructive conflict
- Recognize common sources of workplace conflict
- Understand assertiveness as a key well-being and communication skill
- Apply basic conflict management and assertive communication techniques
- Reflect on personal conflict styles and boundaries

1. Introduction: Why Conflict and Assertiveness Matter for Well-being

Conflict is a natural and unavoidable part of working life. Wherever people collaborate, make decisions, share responsibilities, and work under pressure, differences in opinions, expectations, values, and communication styles will arise. Conflict itself is not a problem; rather, it is **how conflict is handled** that determines whether it becomes a source of learning and growth or a cause of stress and harm to well-being.



From a workplace well-being perspective, unresolved or poorly managed conflict is one of the most significant sources of chronic stress. Ongoing tension, unspoken disagreements, and unresolved misunderstandings can drain emotional energy, undermine trust, and negatively affect motivation and mental health. Over time, persistent conflict can contribute to exhaustion, disengagement, and even burnout.

At the same time, conflict can also play a **constructive role**. When differences are expressed respectfully and addressed openly, conflict can improve decision-making, strengthen

relationships, and promote innovation. Constructive conflict allows teams to surface problems early, learn from diverse perspectives, and develop more effective ways of working together.

Assertiveness is a key skill that enables constructive conflict management. Being assertive means **expressing one's thoughts, feelings, needs, and boundaries clearly and respectfully**, while also acknowledging the rights and perspectives of others. Assertiveness is not aggression, dominance, or confrontation. Nor is it passivity or avoidance. Instead, it represents a balanced communication approach that protects both personal well-being and working relationships.

In many workplaces, people struggle to be assertive. Fear of conflict, desire to be liked, power differences, or cultural norms can lead individuals to suppress concerns, avoid difficult conversations, or accept unreasonable demands. While this may reduce discomfort in the short term, it often increases stress and resentment over time. Lack of assertiveness is closely linked to overload, emotional strain, and burnout.

Effective conflict management and assertiveness are therefore essential **well-being skills**, not only communication techniques. They help individuals protect their limits, maintain self-respect, and engage in honest dialogue. At the same time, they support healthier team dynamics, psychological safety, and sustainable collaboration.

This unit explores conflict and assertiveness from a practical and well-being-oriented perspective. It focuses on everyday workplace situations rather than extreme conflicts, and emphasizes awareness, self-reflection, and simple tools that learners can apply immediately. By developing these skills, individuals and organizations can reduce stress, improve relationships, and create work environments where differences are handled constructively rather than avoided or escalated.

2. Description of the Challenge: Conflict in Everyday Work Life

In everyday work life, conflict often appears in **small, subtle, and recurring situations** rather than in open confrontations. Disagreements about priorities, communication styles, responsibilities, or expectations may not escalate into visible arguments, yet they can create ongoing tension and emotional strain. Because these conflicts are often indirect or unspoken, they are easy to ignore—but their impact on well-being can be significant.

Many workplace conflicts arise from **misunderstandings and unspoken assumptions**. People may interpret behavior through their own expectations and values, assuming negative intent where none exists. Differences in working styles, cultural norms, or communication preferences can lead to frustration, even when all parties share common goals. When such

differences are not discussed openly, they often turn into irritation, avoidance, or passive resistance.



Another major challenge is **conflict avoidance**. In many organizations, conflict is viewed as something negative, unprofessional, or disruptive. Employees may fear damaging relationships, appearing difficult, or facing negative consequences. As a result, concerns are often suppressed rather than addressed. While avoidance may reduce discomfort in the short term, it usually increases stress, resentment, and emotional distance over time.

Power dynamics further complicate everyday conflict. Differences in hierarchy, authority, or status can make it difficult for individuals to express concerns or set boundaries, especially toward supervisors or senior colleagues. In such situations, people may comply outwardly while feeling frustrated or powerless internally. This imbalance contributes to chronic stress and undermines psychological safety.

Workplace pressure also intensifies conflict. High workload, time pressure, and uncertainty reduce emotional resources and tolerance. Under stress, people are more likely to react defensively, misinterpret messages, or communicate abruptly. In these conditions, even minor issues can escalate quickly.

Importantly, many conflicts remain **invisible**. Tension may show through silence, reduced cooperation, sarcasm, or emotional withdrawal rather than open disagreement. These hidden conflicts are particularly harmful to well-being because they create a climate of uncertainty and emotional effort.

From a well-being perspective, the challenge is not to eliminate conflict, but to **recognize it early and address it constructively**. Understanding how conflict appears in everyday work life is the first step toward reducing its negative impact and transforming it into an opportunity for clearer communication and healthier relationships.

3. Understanding Workplace Conflict: Types and Sources

To manage conflict effectively, it is important to understand **what kind of conflict is occurring and where it comes from**. Workplace conflict is not a single phenomenon; it arises from different sources and affects people in different ways. Recognizing the type of conflict helps individuals and teams respond more constructively and reduces unnecessary stress.

From a well-being perspective, conflict becomes harmful when it is misunderstood, personalized, or left unresolved. Understanding its underlying causes allows for early intervention and healthier communication.

Task-Related Conflict

Task-related conflict arises from differences in opinions, ideas, or approaches to work tasks. This may include disagreements about goals, priorities, methods, or decisions.

Examples include:

- Different opinions on how to complete a task
- Disagreement about deadlines or quality standards
- Conflicting ideas during planning or problem-solving



When managed constructively, task-related conflict can be **beneficial**, leading to better decisions and innovation. However, when poorly managed, it may escalate into personal tension and stress.

Relationship and Communication Conflict

Relationship conflict is rooted in **emotions, communication styles, and interpersonal dynamics** rather than the task itself. It often involves feelings of disrespect, misunderstanding, or lack of trust.

Examples include:

- Perceived rudeness or dismissive behavior
- Communication style clashes (direct vs. indirect)
- Personal dislike or unresolved past issues

Relationship conflict is particularly harmful to well-being because it affects emotional safety and trust. It is also the most difficult type of conflict to resolve once it escalates.

Role and Responsibility Conflicts

Role-related conflict occurs when expectations, responsibilities, or authority are unclear or overlapping.

Common situations include:

- Unclear job roles or changing responsibilities
- Conflicting instructions from different supervisors
- Disagreement over decision-making authority

These conflicts create frustration and insecurity, especially when individuals feel held responsible without sufficient control.

Value-Based and Expectation Conflicts

Value conflicts arise when people hold **different beliefs, priorities, or expectations** about work, collaboration, or behavior.

Examples include:

- Different views on work–life balance
- Conflicting attitudes toward hierarchy or autonomy
- Differences in ethical standards or professional values

Because values are deeply personal, these conflicts can quickly feel emotional and threatening, increasing stress if not handled respectfully.

Power, Hierarchy, and Authority Issues

Conflicts related to power and hierarchy are common but often difficult to address openly. Differences in status can influence who feels safe to speak up and whose perspective is heard.

Examples include:

- Fear of disagreeing with a superior
- Unequal influence in decision-making
- Assertiveness being interpreted differently depending on role

Such conflicts strongly affect well-being, as they may lead to silence, resentment, or disengagement.



Summary

Workplace conflict can stem from tasks, relationships, roles, values, or power dynamics. While some types of conflict can be productive, others pose significant risks to well-being if left unmanaged. Understanding the sources and types of conflict is a crucial step toward responding with clarity, assertiveness, and respect. The next section will explore the psychological processes behind conflict and why emotional reactions play such a powerful role.

4. Psychological Perspectives on Conflict

Workplace conflict is not only a communication or organizational issue; it is also a **psychological experience** that directly affects personal well-being. Conflicts trigger emotional, cognitive, and physiological responses that influence how people feel, think, and behave—often long after the conflict itself has occurred.

Understanding these psychological processes helps individuals recognize why conflict can feel so stressful and why managing it constructively is essential for mental health and resilience.

Conflict and the Stress Response

When people perceive conflict as a threat—whether to their status, relationships, or sense of fairness—the body activates a **stress response**. This response prepares the individual to deal with danger, but in workplace conflicts it is often **disproportionate and prolonged**.

Typical stress reactions include:

- Increased heart rate and muscle tension
- Heightened alertness or anxiety
- Reduced ability to think calmly and reflectively

If conflicts are frequent or unresolved, the stress response may remain activated, contributing to chronic stress and emotional exhaustion.

Fight–Flight–Freeze Reactions in Conflict

Psychologically, conflict often triggers one of three automatic reactions:

- **Fight:** arguing, blaming, or becoming aggressive
- **Flight:** avoiding the situation, withdrawing, or staying silent
- **Freeze:** feeling stuck, unable to respond or express oneself



These reactions are natural but can undermine well-being when they become habitual. For example, constant avoidance may reduce short-term discomfort but increases long-term stress and resentment.

Emotional Escalation and Conflict Cycles

Conflict rarely remains purely rational. Emotions such as anger, fear, shame, or frustration can escalate quickly, especially when people feel misunderstood or treated unfairly.

Psychological escalation occurs when:

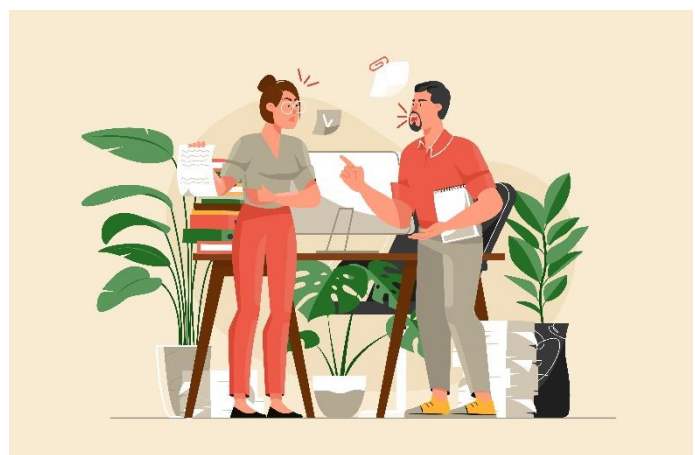
- Emotions override problem-solving
- Assumptions replace curiosity
- Past conflicts are reactivated

Such cycles intensify stress and can lead to emotional exhaustion, especially in environments where conflicts are frequent or unresolved.

Impact of Conflict on Personal Well-being

Unmanaged conflict can have serious consequences for personal well-being, including:

- Increased anxiety and irritability
- Reduced sense of psychological safety
- Lower self-esteem and confidence
- Difficulty concentrating and sleeping
- Emotional fatigue and disengagement



Over time, ongoing conflict can contribute to burnout, particularly when individuals feel powerless or unheard.

Psychological Safety and Conflict

Psychological safety plays a crucial role in how conflict affects well-being. In psychologically safe environments, individuals feel able to express concerns, disagree respectfully, and make mistakes without fear of punishment or ridicule.

When psychological safety is low:

- People suppress emotions and concerns
- Conflict becomes hidden or passive
- Stress and emotional strain increase

When psychological safety is high:

- Conflict is addressed earlier
- Emotional impact is reduced
- Well-being and trust are protected

Conflict as a Potential Resource for Well-being

While conflict can be stressful, it can also support well-being when handled constructively. Open, respectful conflict can:

- Clarify expectations and boundaries
- Strengthen self-respect through assertiveness
- Improve relationships through honest dialogue
- Increase sense of agency and control



From a psychological perspective, the key factor is not the presence of conflict, but **how safe, respectful, and balanced the process feels**.

Summary

Psychologically, conflict influences personal well-being through stress responses, emotional reactions, and perceptions of safety and fairness. When unmanaged, conflict increases stress and emotional exhaustion; when addressed constructively, it can enhance clarity, self-respect,

and resilience. Understanding these psychological dynamics is essential for developing assertiveness and healthier conflict management skills.

5. Conflict Styles and Personal Patterns

People differ significantly in how they respond to conflict. These differences are shaped by personality, past experiences, cultural norms, power dynamics, and emotional regulation skills. Understanding one's **personal conflict style** is a key step toward managing conflict in a way that protects well-being and supports healthy relationships.

No conflict style is inherently good or bad. Each has strengths and limitations, and each may be useful in certain situations. Problems arise when individuals rely on one style rigidly or unconsciously, especially under stress.

Common Conflict Styles

The following five conflict styles are commonly identified in workplace settings:

Avoidance

Avoidance involves withdrawing from conflict or delaying discussion.

- **Strengths:**
Reduces immediate tension; useful when emotions are high or issues are minor.
- **Risks for well-being:**
Unresolved issues, growing resentment, emotional strain, and feeling unheard.

Accommodation

Accommodation prioritizes the other person's needs over one's own.

- **Strengths:**
Preserves harmony; useful when relationships matter more than the issue.
- **Risks for well-being:**
Loss of boundaries, overload, reduced self-respect, and burnout risk.

Competition

Competition focuses on winning the conflict or asserting one's position.

- **Strengths:**
Can be effective in urgent situations or when clear decisions are needed.

- **Risks for well-being:**
Increased stress, damaged relationships, fear, and reduced psychological safety.

Compromise

Compromise involves each side giving up something to reach a middle ground.

- **Strengths:**
Practical and time-efficient; reduces prolonged tension.
- **Risks for well-being:**
Solutions may feel unsatisfying; underlying needs may remain unaddressed.



Collaboration

Collaboration seeks solutions that address the needs of all parties.

- **Strengths:**
Builds trust, learning, and sustainable relationships.
- **Risks for well-being:**
Requires time, emotional effort, and psychological safety.

Personal Conflict Patterns

Most people do not use only one conflict style. Instead, they develop **patterns**, especially under stress. For example:

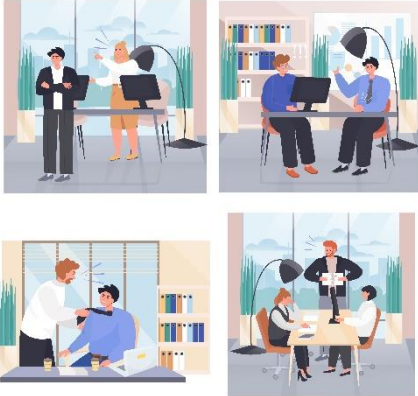
- Avoiding conflict with authority figures
- Accommodating to maintain harmony
- Becoming competitive when feeling threatened
- Freezing or shutting down under pressure

Recognizing these patterns increases self-awareness and emotional regulation.

Conflict Styles and Well-being

Conflict styles directly influence personal well-being:

- Chronic avoidance increases stress and emotional fatigue



- Constant accommodation undermines boundaries and self-esteem
- Aggressive styles increase tension and isolation
- Balanced assertiveness supports clarity and emotional safety

Well-being improves when individuals develop **flexibility**—choosing the most appropriate response rather than reacting automatically.

Developing Flexibility in Conflict

Healthy conflict management involves:

- Pausing before reacting
- Noticing emotional triggers
- Choosing responses intentionally
- Adapting style to context and relationship

This flexibility reduces stress and supports resilience.

Summary

Understanding conflict styles and personal patterns helps individuals recognize habitual reactions and their impact on well-being. By developing awareness and flexibility, people can respond to conflict more constructively, protect their boundaries, and maintain healthier working relationships. The next section will explore assertiveness as a key skill that supports balanced and respectful conflict management.

6. Assertiveness: Concept and Importance for Well-being

Assertiveness is a key skill for maintaining personal well-being and healthy working relationships. It enables individuals to **express their thoughts, feelings, needs, and boundaries clearly and respectfully**, without violating the rights of others or suppressing their own. In the context of workplace conflict, assertiveness provides a balanced alternative to both passivity and aggression.



From a well-being perspective, assertiveness is not merely a communication technique—it is a form of **self-respect and self-care**. When people are able to speak up, set limits, and express concerns constructively, they reduce emotional strain, prevent resentment, and protect their mental health.

What Assertiveness Is (and What It Is Not)

Assertiveness means:

- Expressing oneself honestly and clearly
- Respecting both personal and others' needs
- Taking responsibility for one's feelings and choices
- Communicating with calm confidence

Assertiveness is **not**:

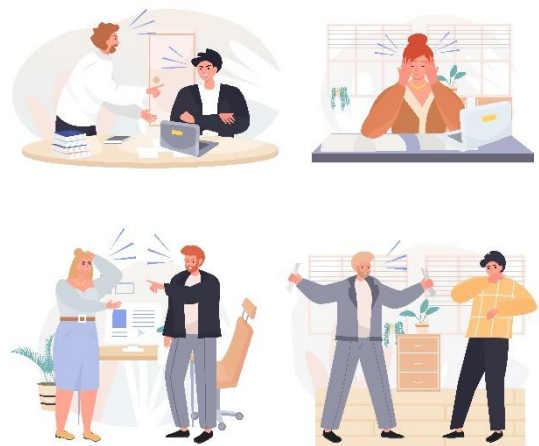
- Aggression, dominance, or hostility
- Manipulation or blame
- Passivity or self-silencing
- Forcing others to agree

Understanding this distinction is essential, as assertiveness is often misunderstood or confused with confrontation.

Assertiveness, Passivity, and Aggression

These three communication styles differ significantly in their impact on well-being:

- **Passive behavior** involves avoiding expression, saying yes when one means no, and prioritizing others' needs at the expense of one's own. Over time, this increases stress, frustration, and burnout risk.
- **Aggressive behavior** involves expressing needs in a way that disregards others, often through blame, pressure, or hostility. While it may reduce stress temporarily, it damages relationships and psychological safety.



- **Assertive behavior** balances self-expression with respect. It supports emotional regulation, trust, and sustainable collaboration.

Assertiveness and Personal Boundaries

Assertiveness is closely linked to **boundary-setting**. Boundaries define what is acceptable, manageable, and healthy for an individual. Without clear boundaries, people may experience overload, emotional exhaustion, or loss of control.

Assertive boundary-setting includes:

- Saying no without guilt
- Clarifying expectations and limits
- Requesting support or adjustments
- Protecting recovery time



Healthy boundaries are essential for preventing chronic stress and burnout.

Assertiveness as a Preventive Well-being Skill

Lack of assertiveness often contributes to:

- Taking on excessive workload
- Tolerating disrespectful behavior
- Suppressing emotions or concerns
- Prolonged unresolved conflict

Assertiveness helps prevent these patterns by enabling early communication and problem-solving. From a psychological perspective, assertive behavior increases a sense of **agency, control, and self-efficacy**, which are protective factors for mental health.

Cultural and Contextual Considerations

Assertiveness is expressed differently across cultures and organizational contexts. What is considered assertive in one environment may be perceived as direct or inappropriate in another. This makes **awareness and adaptability** important.

Being assertive does not mean using the same approach everywhere—it means communicating clearly while respecting context and relationships.

Summary

Assertiveness is a core well-being skill that supports healthy conflict management, boundary-setting, and emotional balance. By expressing needs respectfully and confidently, individuals reduce stress, prevent burnout, and contribute to psychologically safe workplaces. The next section will focus on practical assertive communication skills that learners can apply in everyday work situations.

7. Assertive Communication Skills in Practice

Assertiveness becomes meaningful only when it is **put into practice in everyday workplace situations**. Assertive communication skills help individuals express themselves clearly while maintaining respect, emotional balance, and constructive relationships. These skills are especially important in situations involving conflict, pressure, or unclear expectations.



From a well-being perspective, practicing assertive communication reduces emotional tension, prevents misunderstanding, and strengthens a sense of control and self-respect.

Using “I” Statements

“I” statements are a core assertive communication tool. They focus on **personal experience and needs**, rather than blaming or accusing others.

An effective “I” statement usually includes:

- How I experience the situation
- What I feel or need
- What I am asking for or suggesting

Example:

- Instead of: *“You always interrupt me.”*
- Say: *“I feel frustrated when I’m interrupted, and I need time to finish my point.”*

“I” statements reduce defensiveness and make dialogue safer and more constructive.

Expressing Needs and Limits Clearly

Assertive communication involves stating needs and limits **directly and calmly**, without apology or justification overload.

Examples:

- *“I need clearer priorities to manage my workload effectively.”*
- *“I can take this task, but not before next week.”*

Clear expression prevents assumptions, reduces stress, and supports mutual understanding.

Saying No Without Guilt

Many people struggle to say no, especially in hierarchical or team-oriented environments. Assertive refusal protects well-being while maintaining respect.

Effective assertive refusal includes:

- A clear and brief no
- Optional explanation (not excessive)
- Alternative if appropriate

Example:

“I can’t take this on right now, but I can help next month.”

Saying no assertively prevents overload and resentment and supports sustainable performance.

Giving Feedback Assertively

Assertive feedback focuses on **behavior and impact**, not personality or intent.

Helpful principles:

- Be specific and factual
- Focus on impact, not blame

- Express expectations clearly

Example:

“When deadlines change at the last minute, I feel stressed. It would help to have earlier notice.”

Assertive feedback strengthens trust and reduces ongoing tension.

Receiving Feedback Assertively

Receiving feedback assertively means staying open without becoming defensive or self-critical.

Helpful strategies:

- Listen fully before responding
- Ask clarifying questions
- Separate feedback from personal worth
- Respond thoughtfully rather than reactively

This approach protects emotional well-being and supports learning.

Managing Emotions During Difficult Conversations

Strong emotions are normal in conflict situations. Assertive communication requires **emotional regulation**, not emotional suppression.

Helpful techniques include:

- Pausing before responding
- Slowing breathing
- Naming emotions internally
- Focusing on goals rather than winning

Managing emotions helps keep communication constructive and reduces stress escalation.

Summary

Assertive communication skills enable individuals to express needs, set boundaries, and address conflict respectfully. By using “I” statements, saying no without guilt, giving and receiving feedback constructively, and managing emotions, people protect their well-being and strengthen workplace relationships. These skills reduce unnecessary stress and support healthier conflict resolution.

8. Practical Tools and Practices

Understanding conflict and assertiveness is only effective when learners can **translate insight into everyday behaviour**. The following practical tools and practices are designed to help learners recognize conflict early, communicate assertively, protect their well-being, and manage difficult situations constructively.

These tools emphasize **self-awareness, reflection, and small realistic actions**, rather than perfect communication or confrontation.

Tool 1: Personal Conflict Awareness Check

Purpose:

To help learners recognize how conflict affects them emotionally and physically.

Self-reflection questions:

- What situations at work most often create tension for me?
- How do I usually feel during conflict (anxious, angry, withdrawn)?
- How long do these feelings last after the situation ends?

Practice:

Write down one recent conflict and describe:

- What happened
- How you felt
- How it affected your energy or mood

→ *Outcome:* Increased awareness of conflict's impact on personal well-being.

Tool 2: Conflict Type Identifier

Purpose:

To help learners distinguish the type of conflict and respond appropriately.

Questions to ask:

- Is this mainly about the task or work content?
- Is it about communication or relationship tension?
- Is it about unclear roles or expectations?
- Is it about values, fairness, or boundaries?

Practice:

Label the conflict before responding.

→ *Outcome:* Less emotional reaction, more clarity and constructive response.

Tool 3: Personal Conflict Style Reflection

Purpose:

To increase awareness of habitual conflict patterns.

Reflection prompts:

- When conflict arises, I usually: ☐ avoid ☐ accommodate ☐ compete ☐ compromise ☐ collaborate
- Which style do I use under stress?
- How does this style affect my well-being?

Practice:

Identify one situation where a different style might reduce stress.

→ *Outcome:* Greater flexibility and emotional control.

Tool 4: Assertiveness Self-Check

Purpose:

To assess assertiveness and boundary-setting habits.

Statements (tick those that apply):

- ☐ I say yes even when I feel overloaded
- ☐ I avoid difficult conversations
- ☐ I feel guilty when I say no
- ☐ I suppress frustration until it builds up

Reflection:

- Which boundary do I most often struggle to protect?

→ *Outcome:* Awareness of assertiveness gaps linked to stress.

Tool 5: Assertive “I” Statement Builder

Purpose:

To practice assertive expression without blame.

Template:

I feel _____ when _____ because _____.

I need / request _____.

Example:

I feel stressed when deadlines change suddenly because it disrupts my planning. I need earlier notice.

Practice:

Write one “I” statement for a current situation.

→ *Outcome:* Clear, respectful communication that reduces conflict escalation.

Tool 6: Saying No – Respectfully and Clearly

Purpose:

To support assertive refusal without guilt.

Simple structure:

1. Clear response
2. Short explanation (optional)
3. Alternative (optional)

Example:

I can't take this task on right now, but I can help next week.

→ *Outcome:* Reduced overload and resentment.

Tool 7: Conflict Conversation Preparation Sheet

Purpose:

To prepare for a difficult conversation calmly.

Before the conversation, reflect:

- What is the real issue?
- What do I feel and need?
- What outcome do I want?
- What might the other person need?

Practice:

Use this preparation before addressing tension.

→ *Outcome:* Less emotional escalation, more constructive dialogue.

Tool 8: Emotional Regulation During Conflict

Purpose:

To manage stress reactions in the moment.

Techniques:

- Pause and breathe slowly
- Ground attention (feet on floor, posture)
- Name emotions internally
- Focus on solution, not winning

→ *Outcome:* Reduced fight–flight reactions and emotional exhaustion.

Tool 9: Personal Conflict and Assertiveness Action Plan

Purpose:

To turn learning into sustainable behaviour.

Learners define:

- One conflict situation they avoid
- One assertive skill to practice
- One boundary to protect
- One support they may need

Commitment sentence:

One action I will take to manage conflict more constructively is...

→ *Outcome:* Ownership and real-life application.

Practice Tips for Learners

- Conflict is normal; avoidance increases stress
- Assertiveness protects both well-being and relationships
- Early action prevents escalation and burnout
- Small communication changes have big impact
- Respectful conflict strengthens trust and collaboration

Summary

Practical tools enable learners to apply conflict management and assertiveness skills in everyday workplace situations. By recognizing conflict early, choosing appropriate responses, communicating assertively, and managing emotions, individuals reduce stress and protect their well-being. These practices support healthier relationships, psychological safety, and sustainable work environments.

9. Summary and Key Takeaways

Conflict is a natural and unavoidable part of workplace life. Differences in opinions, expectations, values, communication styles, and roles are inherent to collaboration. This unit has shown that conflict itself is not the problem—rather, **how conflict is understood, approached, and managed** determines its impact on personal well-being, relationships, and work performance.

From a well-being perspective, unresolved or poorly managed conflict is a major source of stress.

Avoidance, suppression, or aggressive responses can lead to emotional exhaustion, resentment, reduced psychological safety, and long-term strain. Over time, such patterns may contribute to disengagement and burnout. Recognizing conflict early and responding constructively is therefore an essential preventive strategy.

The unit explored different **types and sources of workplace conflict**, including task-related, relational, role-based, value-driven, and power-related conflicts. Understanding these distinctions helps reduce personalization and emotional escalation, allowing individuals to respond with greater clarity and balance.

Psychological perspectives highlighted how conflict activates stress responses and emotional reactions that directly affect mental and physical well-being. When individuals feel unheard, unsafe, or powerless, conflict becomes particularly damaging. Conversely, when psychological safety and respect are present, conflict can support learning, clarity, and resilience.

A central focus of the unit was **assertiveness** as a key well-being skill. Assertiveness enables individuals to express needs, boundaries, and concerns clearly and respectfully, without aggression or self-silencing. It protects self-respect, reduces overload, and supports healthier relationships. Practical assertive communication skills—such as using “I” statements, saying no without guilt, and managing emotions—help prevent conflict escalation and reduce stress.



Finally, the unit emphasized that conflict management and assertiveness are **shared responsibilities**. While individuals play an important role, supportive leadership, team norms, and organizational culture are essential for creating environments where conflict can be addressed safely and constructively.

In conclusion, healthy conflict management and assertiveness contribute directly to workplace well-being. When differences are addressed early, respectfully, and openly, conflict becomes a resource for growth rather than a source of harm. These skills support sustainable collaboration, psychological safety, and long-term personal and organizational resilience.

10. Further Resources

Mind Tools

Conflict Resolution and Assertiveness Skills

Website: <https://www.mindtools.com>

Practical tools and explanations for managing conflict and communicating assertively at work.

Harvard Business Review

How to Navigate Conflict at Work

Website: <https://hbr.org>

Articles exploring conflict, feedback, psychological safety, and effective communication in organizations.

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)

Psychosocial Risks and Workplace Well-being

Website: <https://osha.europa.eu>

Guidance on managing psychosocial risks, including conflict and communication-related stress.

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Silent Tension in the Team Meeting

Brief Description:

Eva works in a small project team responsible for coordinating internal processes. During team meetings, one colleague frequently dominates discussions and dismisses alternative ideas. Eva often has valuable input but rarely speaks up, fearing conflict and negative reactions. Over time, she begins to feel invisible and frustrated.



Instead of addressing the situation, Eva withdraws further. She avoids meetings when possible and limits her contributions. Although no open conflict occurs, tension grows beneath the surface. Eva feels increasingly stressed before meetings and emotionally drained afterward. Her motivation declines, and she starts questioning her role in the team.

Problem Description:

Conflict avoidance and lack of assertive communication led to unresolved tension and emotional strain.

Emotional / Physical Effects:

- Anxiety before meetings
- Emotional exhaustion and frustration
- Reduced confidence and motivation
- Feeling unheard and disengaged

Response / Intervention:

Eva prepared an assertive “I” statement” and spoke privately with the team leader. Meeting norms were clarified, and space for equal participation was introduced.



Reflection Questions:

1. What type of conflict is present?
2. How did avoidance affect well-being?
3. What assertive action could have been taken earlier?

Saying Yes Too Often

Brief Description:

Tom is known as a reliable and helpful colleague. When team members ask for assistance, he rarely refuses. Over time, Tom's workload increases significantly. He stays late, skips breaks, and feels pressure to be constantly available.

Although overwhelmed, Tom avoids discussing his workload. Gradually, frustration builds, leading to irritability and sleep problems.



Problem Description:

Lack of assertiveness and unclear boundaries led to overload and stress.

Emotional / Physical Effects:

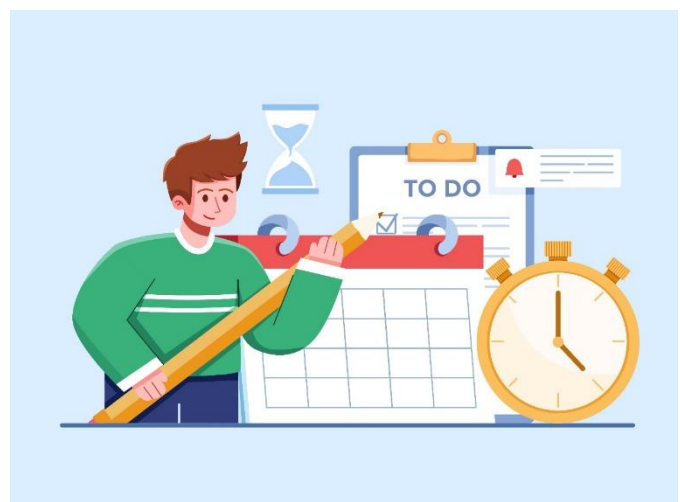
- Chronic fatigue
- Irritability
- Feeling trapped
- Reduced job satisfaction

Response / Intervention:

With managerial support, Tom practiced assertive refusal and clarified priorities.

Reflection Questions:

1. How did accommodation contribute to stress?
2. What beliefs prevented assertiveness?
3. How can assertiveness protect well-being?



Speaking Up Across Hierarchy

Brief Description:

Lucia works as a junior employee with a demanding manager who frequently changes priorities. Lucia feels stressed but hesitates to raise concerns, fearing consequences.

Instead, she works longer hours and suppresses frustration. Over time, her confidence and well-being decline.



Problem Description:

Power imbalance and fear prevented assertive communication.

Emotional / Physical Effects:

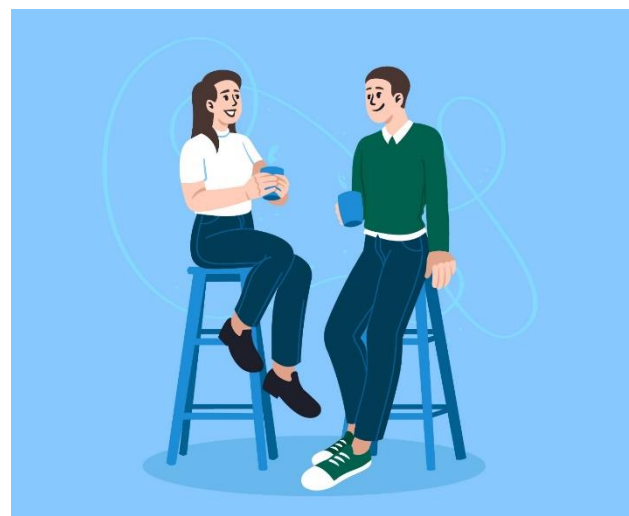
- Anxiety
- Emotional exhaustion
- Reduced confidence

Response / Intervention:

Lucia prepared a structured assertive conversation with HR support. Clearer communication routines followed.

Reflection Questions:

1. How does hierarchy influence conflict?
2. What increased Lucia's stress?
3. What support mechanisms helped?



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