

Communication and conflict unit 4



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Why does Describe how power imbalances impact conflict. What suggestions can you offer for avoiding abuse of power? When there is an imbalance in power between two conflicting parties, part of the conflict emanates from the decisions that will be made in order to change the power imbalance between them. Both parties have sources of power that may make them more powerful than the other in some aspects, and less powerful in others. Their perception of their relative power as against the other affects the course of the conflict, with each party striving to maintain a higher level of power over the other. A person who perceived himself to have high power may have a distorted perception of himself, and at times gives way to the corruption of his moral principles. When people take advantage of what they perceive to be their superiority in power over the other, he abandons the just and fair solution to the conflict, and in the course of abusing the other, the relationship is destroyed. The reason is that the person with the higher power should also be the example of one with a higher moral calling. The book cites the example of a teacher abusing his power against a student. The abuse of the higher power he has destroys the higher regard which the other person (who has the lower power) had for him. In order to avoid the abuse of power, the person with the higher power should be aware that his higher power comes with a higher responsibility. However, the person with the lower power should also have some recourse to relief within the official system governing the organization. In some organizations, there are grievance mechanisms that would favor those with lower power to bring recourse against those with higher power who abuse this power. The grievance mechanism is a form of rebalancing of power. Other methods would be collaboration and constructive realignment of power within the

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organization, as a preventive measure to curb or pre-empt abuses on the part of those who are designated with higher power. “ Finding Your Voice”

Explain the how the relational view of power is used in this conflict. The relational view of power refers to the idea that maturity and competence rely upon growth-in-connection and mutuality (Wilmot & Hocker, 2005: 108). In the case study, the relational view of power came into play when Amanda took stock of her situation, resolved to overcome her fear of Roland, and to speak with him in formal and rationale terms to discuss how their working relationship could be improved. This is a mature approach to a problem that calls for mutual respect and compromise, through discussion rather than innuendos and actuation. Explain how power imbalances impact conflict in this case. Power imbalances were at work at the beginning, because the higher-powered party (Roland) used intimidating tactics (i. e., shouting) to intimidate the lower powered individual (Amanda). This caused fear and resentment in Amanda, and she resolved to even up the imbalance by not acceding to overtime requests from Roland. Amanda perceives that in the matter of the job execution, she has knowledge and skills Roland does not have, and in that sense she may consider herself higher-powered, being able to do what Roland could not. By initially thinking to deny him of these skills when he asked she felt she could assert her power over him. Analyze how attitudes and orientations toward power affect this conflict situation..

Amanda, Karen, and Roland each have different attitudes and orientations concerning power. Karen uses her power beneficially in collaborating with the lower-powered personnel to get the job done. Roland’s attitude towards power is overbearing and intimidating, and has a tendency to abuse his power. Amanda, on the other hand, is at first intimidated by Roland, mindful

that she has the lower power, but later on takes control of her fear and rationalizes her situation. She has a mature attitude towards power, which she uses to improve her working situation. (Wilmot & Hocker, 2005: 105).

Reference: Wilmot, W & Hocker, J 2005 Interpersonal Conflict. McGraw Hill.