OARC

SECTION 4: SUPPORTING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF YOUR RESIDENTS' COUNCIL

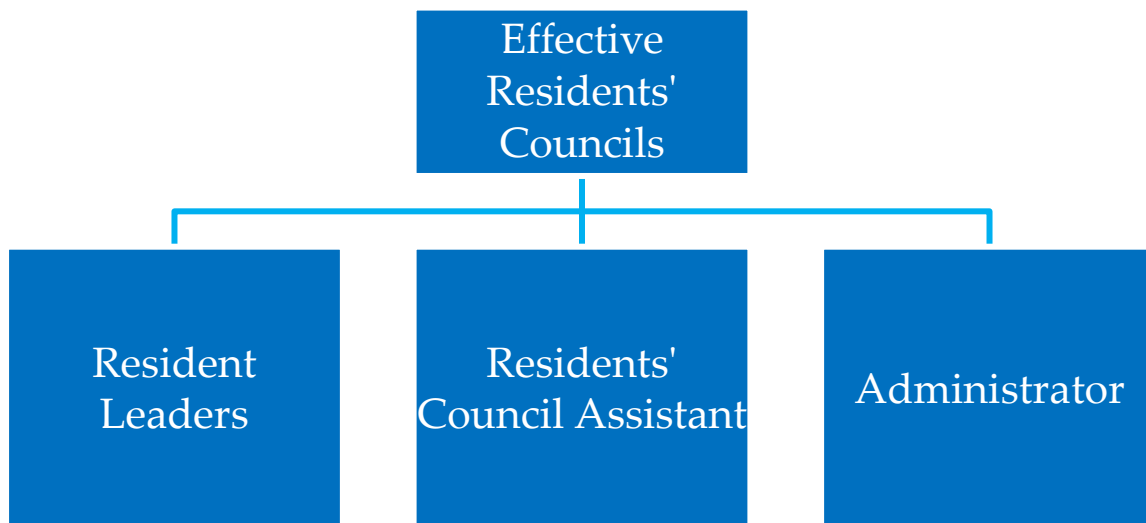For Residents, By Residents

SECTION 4

Inside you will find…

Introduction

Section 4 will help you understand a little more about human behaviour and how to manage conflict. It will also give you ideas on how to work together as a Residents' Council, as well as practical approaches for dealing with conflict. Not only can the following approaches support you in your peer-to-peer interactions with other residents, but they can also be applied in situations that you might encounter with team members, home management or other stakeholder groups.

4.1 The Three Pillars of an Effective Residents' Council

There are three components or "pillars" that support the foundation and contribute to the overall effectiveness of a Residents' Council in every home: resident leaders, the Residents' Council Assistant, and the home Administrator.

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                    │    Residents'   │
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  │   Resident    │  │   Residents'  │  │ Administrator │
  │    Leaders    │  │ Council Assistant │               │
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The first pillar represents the **resident leaders** in the home. An effective Council is made up of engaged and empowered residents who may or may not be formally part of a leadership team or executive team but remain committed to the function of the Residents' Council in their home. While every resident living in the home is automatically a member of the Residents' Council, there are usually a few people who naturally become part of the leadership of the Council through voicing their opinion, seeking solutions to challenges, attending meetings,

establishing relationships with other residents and team members, etc. These residents are deemed "resident leaders" and play a critical role in the success of their Residents' Council.

The second pillar is the **Residents' Council Assistant**, who is an ally and key support to the Residents' Council. Identifying an appropriate team member to serve as Residents' Council Assistant is determined through a negotiated process between the home's Administrator and the residents. It is very important that the person selected is the "right fit" and acceptable to the residents in order for a trusting relationship to develop. A strong Assistant is able to recognize the individual skills, strengths and interests of residents and help to leverage and direct them so that residents can be engaged as part of the Council in ways that are meaningful to them. The Residents' Council Assistant is not a member of the Council nor or they acting as a representative of the home/licensee; they take direction from the Council and act in an impartial, supportive capacity, often completing administrative tasks. Assistants should be knowledgeable of the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2010 (explored in Section 1) in order to help residents realize their full scope and powers as a Council. An Assistant is simultaneously a confidante, and enabler and an advocate for Residents' Council.

The third pillar in the foundation of a successful Residents' Council is the home **Administrator**. Administrators (sometimes referred to as Executive Directors or General Managers in some long-term care homes) help to set the tone in the home. Your home's management team, including the Administrator, plays a pivotal role in helping your Residents' Council be an effective and necessary part of the home's culture. It is important that Administrators view residents as "experts" because they have direct experience and intimate knowledge about what it is like to live in a long-term care home, and as such, they should be asked to be part of discussions and decision-making about things that may impact daily life in the home. In our earlier review of the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2010 in Section 1, we identified that there are number of accountabilities that must be carried out by your home's licensee, often by way of the home Administrator. In order to do this, every Administrator (like the Residents' Council Assistant) needs to be well-informed about the legislation, including the specific powers and scope of a Residents' Council. An Administrator contributes to the success of a Residents' Council by communicating with resident leaders on an ongoing basis, keeping them informed and engaging them in problem-solving and quality initiatives.

It is inevitable that from time to time, residents and their supportive partners may disagree or hold conflicting points of view. Disagreements might also occur between individual residents or with other groups. With the three foundational pillars in mind, we can begin to explore tools for conflict management that allow us to focus on strengthening relationships, establishing cohesiveness, and supporting the sustainability of an effective Council in your home. We will start by:

- exploring how to achieve a collaborative Council and how to recognize some of the roadblocks you may encounter;

- suggesting 20 different ways your Council can encourage a culture of positive mutual support;

- examining the dynamics among people in your Council and subcommittees as each pass through particular stages of development;

- exploring problem-solving strategies and helpful tools to consider trying;

- illustrating several valuable conflict resolution and negotiation approaches; and

- describing how to evaluate how well your Council is performing.

The OARC team has developed a number of helpful tools and resources, including Fact Sheets. sample documents and templates which can be accessed on the OARC website: www.ontarc.com.

Consider adding your home-specific documents that relate to the topics mentioned in the above list at the end of this section.

Let's get started!

4.2 How to Achieve a Collaborative Residents' Council

Have you ever experienced or witnessed a group of people all working well together towards a common purpose and wonder how they were able to achieve a culture of collaboration within their team? We can all learn from those high-functioning groups, which have weathered their share of challenges and gradually formed a team where members trust and support each other so as to achieve their purpose. You will find that the most effective teams are built on a foundation of trust and a shared commitment to carry out their plans, where each person feels jointly accountable for the team's successes. On these teams, you will notice that people tend to commit to the group's decisions by means of engaging discussions within the group.

Focus on
Collective results

Hold each other
Accountable

Commit to Plans & Decisions

Unfiltered Conflict Around Ideas

Build a Foundation of Trust

Figure 1: Characteristics of a High- Functioning Team. (Lencioni, 2002)

Identifying Roadblocks

There are five common roadblocks to collaborative teamwork frequently encountered by many groups. Each roadblock feeds another making it that much harder to be effective. Do the roadblocks summarized below seem familiar?

Think of a team where members do not seem to trust each other. You may notice that the absence of trust among the group tends to weaken their ability to engage in meaningful conversations and constructive conflict. If you have ever been in a team that has not established a foundation of trust, you may also notice that it is harder to get members to make solid commitments to any plans or decisions. This often leads to people not being quite sure of who is responsible for certain tasks, making it difficult to focus attention on shared results.

Teams who run into even one of these roadblocks are susceptible to the other four. Let's look at each roadblock in a bit more detail as well as some suggestions for addressing each one.

1. Roadblock #1 – Absence of Trust

If people do not trust one another, you may notice that they are hesitant to speak and be vulnerable within the team. You may find it very challenging to build a foundation of trust if people do not feel safe to share their thoughts and feelings.

Suggestions for Building a Foundation of Trust and Positive Mutual Support

The following ideas call for people to share their lived experiences and get to know each other as individuals with unique qualities.

    a. **Learning Circles** – Learning circles are small groups of people who come together intentionally for the purpose of developing common ground and expressing mutual respect as they learn from one another. Learning circle is a style of meeting where there are a series of discussions on topics of interest through which residents share their knowledge and experience, learn new information and make shared group decisions. The technique for a learning circle is unique. After a topic is introduced, everyone is given the opportunity to speak on that topic for a brief period of time. There is no dialogue, judgement or comment exchange among members of the group; each and every person shares. Some learning circle members choose to pass an object (e.g., stick, ball, stone) from one person to the next. Whoever holds the object speaks. After everyone in the group has had the opportunity to share, open discussion and exchange of viewpoints occurs. This technique is helpful in establishing common ground because it illustrates the notion that every member of the group has something to say about the topic if they choose to participate. If the topic at hand seems to be difficult (emotionally charged or perceived as negative) the group leader can set the stage for sharing by saying, "Please share one thing that worries you followed by one thing that excites you about ____."

    Learning circles, like Residents' Councils vary in membership and duration, yet are clear about their intention and purpose. Residents come together for a meeting of equals. The goal is to encourage everyone to develop a strong sense of ownership over the process and products of the group's efforts.

b. **Team Effectiveness Exercise** – One person at a time, members identify what they believe to be the single most important contribution that they have made to the Residents' Council, as well as the one area in which that person must either improve or eliminate for the good of the Council. Residents' Councils have found it helpful if members on the leadership team share first, as this can role model the attributes of vulnerability and self-reflection to the others.

c. **Who I Am Exercise** – Team members spend a few minutes getting to know other members and after a set time they must share a few things they have learned about the other person, such as number of siblings, number of children, hometown, favourite author, favorite hobbies, first job, last job, etc.

Members of trusting teams. . .

- Look forward to opportunities to work as a team.
- Appreciate and tap into one another's skills and experiences.
- Know their limitations and strengths and are not afraid to ask for help or support.
- Offer and accept apologies without hesitation.
- Accept questions and input about their areas of responsibility.
- Focus time and energy on important issues, not politics.
- Are inclusive of others.
- Give others the benefit of the doubt before arriving at a conclusion.
- Take risks in offering feedback and assistance.

2. *Roadblock #2 – Fear of Conflict*

A lack of trust sets the stage for the second roadblock. Teams without trust are unable to engage in passionate debate about ideas. Instead, they are guarded in their comments and resort to discussions that mask their true feelings.

Suggestions for Encouraging Unfiltered Conflict around Ideas

You will want to stress to the team the importance and approval of healthy, constructive conflict. When you spot a healthy debate during meetings, think about drawing attention to it so that other members can recognize what constructive conflict looks like and can realize that this is just what is needed to strengthen the team.

a. **Mining** – Getting members to engage in healthy, constructive conflict often requires effort and extracting buried disagreements within the team.

Members that engage in productive conflict. . .

- Have lively discussions and interesting meetings that engage members.
- Put critical topics on the table for discussion.
- Quickly resolve concerns and problems.
- Minimize politics.

3. Roadblock #3 – Lack of Commitment

When team members do not feel comfortable openly surfacing their true opinions or engaging in healthy debate, members will rarely commit to team decisions, though they may pretend to agree in order to avoid controversy or conflict.

Suggestions for Encouraging a Genuine Commitment to Plans and Decisions

a. **Cascading Messaging** – Following a meeting, you will want to encourage the team to review the key decisions made during the meeting and agree on what needs to be communicated to various audiences, such as other residents, the home's management team, or the external community.

b. **Set Clear Deadlines** – Reach consensus on deadlines to secure each member's commitment.

Members that commit to the team's plans of action and decisions. . .

- Align the entire team around common objectives.
- Learn from mistakes and look to the future.
- Create clarity around direction and priorities.
- Take advantage of opportunities.

4. Roadblock #4 – Avoidance of Accountability

When team members do not openly commit to a clear plan or team decisions, it can create an atmosphere where members hesitate to hold each another accountable on actions and behaviors that are not in the best interest of the team.

Suggestions for Holding Each Other Accountable

a. **Confirm and Share Team Goals** – Find creative ways to let residents and staff understand what the team wants to achieve during the current calendar year.

b. **Routine Progress Reviews** – Regularly update team members on Council activities or tasks and review progress to accomplishing any goals.

Members who hold each other accountable. . .

- Establish respect among their team members who are held to the same expectations and principles.
- Identify potential problems quickly by questioning the approaches the team is using.

5. *Roadblock #5 – Not Focusing on Results*

Any lack of accountability makes it possible for members to put their personal needs above the team's goals to the detriment of the team.

Suggestions for Focusing on Collective Results

a. **Share the Team's Results** – Make public proclamations about intended success, which will help to garner appreciation for what your Council has achieved, and the benefits or changes that came out of your hard work.

Members Who Focus On Collective Results

- Tend to curb their personal interests for the good of the team.

## *4.3 20 Ways to Build a Culture of Positive Mutual Support*

1. Express kindness at least once a day. Small gestures go a long way. Greet someone with a warm "hello," offer a hug, or check in at mealtimes and ask them how things are going.

2. Express sincere appreciation. When you think an appreciative thought – come on out and say it. We often think appreciative thoughts but do not voice them.

3. Listen to others. Do your best to listen to what other people are saying. Try to be present when others are speaking. Make a point of looking into their eyes and listening to their words… nod your head, it makes a world of difference.

4. Mentor someone who is struggling. Getting involved in someone's life… just one person… especially if they are struggling, lonely or isolated. Go visit them, take them out for a walk, for a cup of coffee or tea.

5. Volunteer in some way in your community or organization. Anything that interests you… when we help others, we help ourselves.

6. Find a way to donate to charity or to support a fundraising initiative within your home or within the broader community. Many Residents' Councils are engaged in meaningful work that allows residents, team members and other stakeholders to "give back" in some way. Look for opportunities to share your individual strengths to contribute to a project or cause that resonates with you.

7. Take the time to talk to strangers. Offer a handshake and introduce yourself. Something that is simply small talk to you can mean a lot to someone who is shy.

8. Be aware of body language. Your body language sends a strong message to others. Be aware, for example, if you have your arms folded across your chest while you talk, you may come across as shutting others out.

9. Be sincere. Your sincerity will help to make people feel appreciated.

10. Nurture talent in others. If you notice someone has a talent that they are not putting to use, let them know, you have noticed. Gently encourage them and offer suggestions of where they can share their talent or where they may go to learn more. Perhaps there is a way that these strengths can be used to enhance the Residents' Council.

11. Smile often. There is an anonymous quote that states, "A smile confuses an approaching frown."

12. Project positivity and eliminate negative thoughts. This positivity will then be returned by others.

13. Initiate physical contact. In this society in particular, there is a hesitance to touch one another. If it feels right, simply placing a hand on someone's shoulder can help someone to reconnect.

14. Tell those you care about how you feel about them. Do not wait until it is too late to let someone you care about know how you feel about him or her. Life is wonderful but short.

15. Help foster creativity. There are 1,001 ways to be creative. Creativity is not just for artists and musicians. Perhaps there is a talent show, program or club within your home that might allow someone to further explore or showcase their individual talents? Let them know about it.

16. Have meetings with an open, inclusive oriented atmosphere. Whether it is a fun group that meets or a Residents' Council meeting, let everyone know their opinion is valued. If you are not the leader or facilitator, you can still offer this to all.

17. Learn a quote or two that inspires you and offer it to others.

18. Lend a helping hand. Whether it is helping someone pick up something that spilled, or if they are lost and trying to find their way, reach out and offer help. It shows you care.

19. Give encouragement. If you catch yourself gossiping or listening to it, turn it around and promptly say two good things you know about them, e.g., "This is what I know about…" It can vanquish gossip. Every one of us has the power to empower others simply by generously giving praise and showing encouragement.

20. Take time for yourself. Find an affirmation book that has meaning for you and read a short part of it each day. By taking the time to sit and reflect in your own way, you will find you are happier and more available for others.
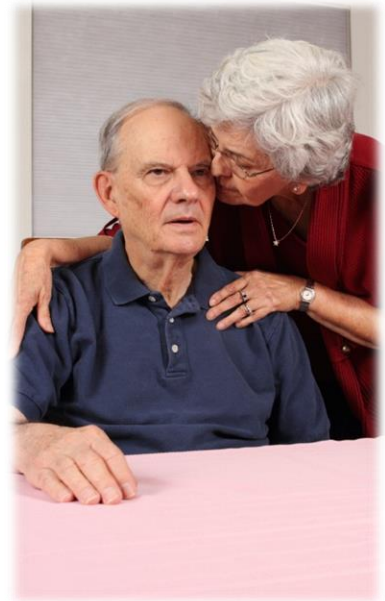
Adapted from "50 Little Things You Can Do to Empower People." *Posted by Donald Latumahina*
Note: This form is used with permission by the Ontario Association of Residents' Councils

4.4 Working Successfully as a Team

Every team, whether it is a Residents' Council or a subcommittee, moves through particular stages of group dynamics to increase their potential, and may even go through a stage more than once. Knowing what stage your team is in will help your Residents' Council to:

- recognize where the team is at in their development;

- know what is happening to the team and why; and

- know what to do next.

Teams seldom stay in one stage very long. As teams move through projects and transitions, they also move through team stages. Below are the characteristics you will notice at each stage. Can you identify what stage your Residents' Council is currently experiencing?

Forming	• Period of testing and orientation • Expectations learned including how members fit
Storming	• Members acquire roles and responsibilities • More conflict as members compete for roles
Norming	• Cohesion develops (unified) • Roles established, consensus forms around group goals • Members improve mutual understanding, acceptance
Performing	• Team becomes more task-oriented • Efficient work coordination, conflict resolution • Highly cooperative, high trust, committed to goals, plans, actions

1st Stage: Forming

- The *forming* of the team takes place.
- Council members tend to want to be accepted by others and to avoid controversy or conflict.
- Serious issues and feelings are often avoided, and residents focus on being busy with routines (such as organizing the Council, who does what, when to meet, etc.).
- Members are gathering information and impressions about each other as well as about the Council's work.
- This is a comfortable stage to be in, but the avoidance of conflict comes with a risk of not getting much done.
- Members get to know one another, strengthen relationships, and make new friendships.
- A good opportunity to see how each member of the Council works as an individual and as a team.

2nd Stage: Storming

- The *storming* stage is necessary for the Council to reach its potential.
- This stage is characterized by conflict where different ideas compete for consideration during meetings.
- Members address issues, such as what problems they are really supposed to solve, how they will function independently and as a team, and what leadership model they want for their Council.
- Council members open up to each other and respectfully challenge each other's ideas and perspectives.
- In some cases, *storming* can be resolved quickly. In others, the Council may never leave this stage. How members respect and appreciate each others' differences usually determines whether the Council will ever move out of this stage.
- It can be touchy or unpleasant for members who are uncomfortable with conflict.
- The leadership team may want to consider emphasizing and encouraging respecting different opinions.
- This phase can become destructive to the team and will lower motivation if allowed to get out of control.

3rd Stage: Norming

- The Council manages to identify specific things they want to work on and members come to a shared agreement to support teamwork.
- Some members may have to place their own ideas on hold and agree with others in order to help the whole team work effectively.
- Members tend to be more comfortable expressing their opinions and experiences.
- All Council members agree to work as a collaborative team with a shared purpose so that the Council can be successful.

4th Stage: Performing

- Not all Residents' Councils will reach the performing stage, and that is okay. What matters most is how the team works together. This stage is the outcome of members' efforts.
- Teams in this stage are able to function as a cohesive unit and find ways to perform their role and activities smoothly and effectively without destructive conflict.
- Team members are highly motivated and group energy is focused on the Council's activities.
- Disagreements are expected and okay as long as they are channeled through means acceptable to Council members.

4.5 Working Together to Creatively Resolve Problems

Some people argue that problem solving is the art of reasoning in its purest form. We all intuitively solve problems each day and seldom solve them in a conscious structured manner, particularly as a group, so it is no surprise that there is no single best way to resolve issues as they arise. Fortunately, this makes it possible for us to creatively generate many different approaches to collaboratively resolving issues through the gift of seeing things in non-traditional ways and envisioning fresh and unique possibilities.

As a group, we can be more insightful and effective at addressing issues than we can possibly be individually. Building problem solving skills within your Council will help achieve many important benefits, including the following:

- Supports and encourages a cooperative atmosphere which promotes positive mutual support among members.

- Encourages collaborative review of information and healthy discussions which help everyone involved to understand each other's underlying interests.

- Promotes sharing ideas and information freely.

- Encourages the group to generate many options.

- Addresses problems at the root rather than applying a temporary Band-Aid, only for them to reappear.

- People with a vested interest in a problem are engaged and can become involved in solving problems and implementing solutions.

- The collective wisdom of the Council is brought to bear on problems, resulting in more creative, permanent solutions to persistent problems.

Teamwork is a process that includes everyone and encourages shared decision-making. Consensus is one approach which allows collaborative problem solving to work effectively when more than two people need to reach an agreement. Consensus prevents domination by the majority, builds trust, promotes joint thinking by a diverse group, which leads to creative solutions and supports sharing of information, especially under conditions of conflict. Consensus does not mean that everyone will be equally happy with the decision or wholeheartedly agree with it, but all do accept that the decision is the best that can be made at the time with the people involved.

There are six steps commonly used which can help you understand and resolve problems:

1. State what you think the actual problem is and get acknowledgement from each person that the problem exists. Sometimes what we think is the issue is actually a symptom of the real underlying problem.

2. Try to figure out what is actually causing the problem. Before looking for potential solutions, it helps to identify all possible causes or contributors to the issue. It is easier to decide what the ideal solution would be when you feel you have a good understanding of the actual problem. How deep can you dig into the obstacles to learn more about what is driving this issue?

3. Clarify what would make an acceptable solution since what may be considered a resolution to one person might not be looked at the same way by another.

4. When possible, partner with others to suggest a range of possible ways to address the root cause of the problem. Consider making a long list of as many potential options you can collectively think of and then evaluate them. Workable solutions are developed by creatively combining and modifying ideas.

5. Select the solution(s) which is felt would be the most effective in solving the problem with the least risks. To help, compare the potential results of each alternative solution you listed. In some situations, you may need to gain acceptance of the solution by other people or get their thumbs up to carry it out.

6. Carry out the preferred solution after planning what needs to get done before implementing. You may wish to consider monitoring the situation afterwards to ensure that the solution is effectively addressing the problem.

Collectively resolving problems requires the Council to develop a respectful intimacy among members based on mutual understanding and an appreciation of the group's diversity. The group experiences success in working together, and in getting something accomplished that could not have been done better or through any other approach.

Groups that successfully engage in collective problem solving often share these desirable qualities:

- Members voluntarily participate.

- All members have an equal opportunity to help create the Council's approach to resolving problems.

- The group creates a safe and supportive atmosphere in which everyone feels free to state their views and to disagree.

- All members hear relevant information at the same time and have the opportunity to call a special meeting to present the issue and ask for suggestions.

- Disagreements are respected; members can illuminate unrecognized problems and serve as a spark for improving a decision.

- When someone disagrees, the group tries to discover what that person needs to accept the decision and strives to find a reasonable way to address any concerns. Consider asking the person, "What do you disagree with? What information do you need to be able to accept the decision?"

- Members are committed to working together and with the home's management team to prevent any issue from reoccurring.

4.6 Respectful Ways to Manage Conflict

There is no single best way to deal with conflict. How you respond will depend on the current situation. Managing conflict is a voluntary two-way process. It is meant to anticipate, limit and resolve disagreements so that the people involved can respectfully reach solutions which are acceptable to the participants with minimal harm to their existing relationship. Negotiation founded on the principles of humanity and partnership requires that you clearly express your interests and needs, empathise with the interests and needs of the other participant, and cooperatively problem-solve together to reach a mutually acceptable outcome.

Many people find it quite helpful to prepare in advance how they will manage their emotions and behaviour during any tense situations, including how they will interact with other participants in a constructive way. One useful approach to a difficult situation is to leave it to the end. The more mutual agreement there is between parties in the beginning, the more difficult it is to break the entire process over any given issue.

Effective communication skills are essential to successfully handle conflict. Try to ensure that the conflict is about the issue, *not* the person. Respect for the other participants is vital for success. The more information each person has about the interests and motivations of the other, the more likely a mutual resolution will be reached. Empathy coupled with a problem-solving, co-operative approach will likely result in a positive outcome.

"To me it seems that to give happiness is a far nobler goal that to attain it: and that what we exist for is much more a matter of relations to others than a matter of individual progress: much more a matter of helping others to heaven than of getting there ourselves."

-Lewis Carroll [Charles Lutwidge Dodgson] (1832-1898)
 Author, Mathematician, Clergyman

Constructive Outcomes of Negotiation

Conflicts and disagreements are a natural and inevitable part of human interaction. Even though it can feel quite uncomfortable at the time, some long-term outcomes of successful negotiation include:

- uncovering and clarifying important issues;

- strengthening relationships through respectful discussion of one's differences;

- generating improved and/or creative solutions; and

- experiencing a sense of achievement in reaching mutually acceptable understanding.

Risks of Avoiding Conflict

Conflict is stressful and disturbs us. However, when what upsets us is denied or avoided, the energy used to ignore it is not only diverted away from the important activities and issues, but also leads to damaged relationships, morale, trust and could make future collaboration difficult or even impossible.

When you are in the heat of trying to negotiate, it can be a challenge to focus on the problem and not take things personally or make them personal. At the end of the day, we are human beings trying to figure out a mutually beneficial solution. Try to think of yourselves as partners in a side-by-side search for a fair agreement advantageous to each. In consideration of that spirit, we encourage you to try to:

- separate the person from the problem;

- focus on each person's interests rather than their stance on the issue;

- generate as many options as possible together with the persons who are involved; and

- be as objective about the issue as possible.

Identify Your Negotiation Style

Try to understand your personal approach to managing conflict and then adjust that style in response to the circumstances under which you need to negotiate. There is no single correct approach for handling a conflict; each style is helpful in certain situations and can have negative consequences when overused or when used inappropriately.

Individual styles of negotiating conflict generally fall into one of the following five patterns:

- Collaborative

- Competitive

- Compromising

- Accommodating

- Avoiding

Approach #1: Collaborative Conflict Management

- Involves exploring an issue to identify each participant's underlying concerns and interests and finding solutions that truly satisfy these concerns.

- Requires an investment of time and energy.

- Tends to be mutually beneficial.

- Appropriate when the concerns of both sides are too important to be compromised.

- Not all problems and conflicts require such optimal solutions.

- Be careful not to overuse collaboration on less substantial matters, particularly just to minimize risk or responsibility.

- Your collaborative efforts will often elicit similar collaborative responses from the other participant; if they do not, this may be a signal that you need to rethink the relationship and develop another negotiation approach.

Approach #2: Competitive Conflict Management

- Primarily interest-driven, with the goal of having your side win and the other side lose.

- Participants tend to use whatever power and influence is available to protect and promote their interests.

- Appropriate when unpopular courses of action are needed.

- Initially, more collaborative approaches have shown that other participants are likely to take advantage of non-competitive behavior.

- Overuse may result in lost partnerships, reluctance from others to share information, and a competitive climate where more time may be spent on battling for influence than on constructive problem-solving.

Approach #3: Compromising Conflict Management

- An effort to find mutually acceptable solutions that partially satisfy your interests and those of the other participants without excessively straining your relationship.

- Requires participants to deal directly with the conflict and underlying interests at hand, but does not require exploring these interests in as much depth as the collaborative approach.

- Appropriate when participants have equal positions of power or influence and are strongly committed to mutually exclusive objectives.

Approach #4: Accommodating Conflict Management

- One participant tends to place emphasis on the concerns and interests of the other participant rather than their own.

- Although it will not move your agenda forward, accommodation can be a useful strategy, especially if the issue at hand is very important to the other participant and the outcome has no particular negative consequences for you or your interests.

- Can be used as a goodwill gesture to help maintain a cooperative relationship with the other participant.

- Be cautious because continual deference to the concerns of others may deprive you of the recognition and respect you need to influence future negotiations and outcomes.

Approach #5: Avoidance Conflict Management

- You address neither your interests nor the competing interests of the other participant.

- Not generally viewed as a useful strategy or a long-term solution.

- May be appropriate under the following circumstances:

    o an issue is trivial and does not merit your time; and/or

    o the potential damage of confronting the conflict far outweighs any possible benefits.

- You have little or no power or influence and perceive no chance of satisfying your interests.

    Postponing is a variation of avoidance and can be a useful strategy when you might need time to regroup and assess a situation, gather more information or resources, or engage partners who have the power and influence you need to address and negotiate the conflict more effectively.

Closing Remarks: The Residents' Council Journey

We at OARC hope you find this guide helpful at every stage of your Residents' Council journey. We trust that it helps to achieve and maintain optimum resident engagement in each and every long-term care home.

This guide was written to support and encourage all Residents' Councils to be the best they can be. We believe the intent of Residents' Council meetings is to provide a safe, comfortable environment for residents to come together on a regular basis. Regular meetings give residents the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences with each other and to work alongside their management teams, in an effort to improve the quality of living for all residents in the home. Incorporating "the resident experience" as an equal component in quality improvement strategies will – we believe – create a true feeling of "home" for everyone.

It is helpful to remember the important roles that each of the "three pillars" (outlined on pages 136-137) can play when it comes to developing a strong foundation for your Residents' Council operations. Continuing to invest in relationships and respectful communication between the pillars will contribute to the effectiveness and sustainability of the Residents' Council in your home. The work of your Council will be maximized if you take the time to collaborate and share with other partners and stakeholders, instead of operating in departmental/group silos.

Residents' Councils are an opportunity to remind all of us of the importance to continue growing in our compassion, our kindness and forgiveness to others and to ourselves and, above all, to celebrate life!