

Vet Team Global Stream Conference
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CATALYST Veterinary Professional Coaches
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Thank you, Hill's Pet Nutrition, for your gracious support.

*Courageous Conversations:
Responding, not reacting, to team discord*

We know veterinary team members are hungry for tools that will help them bring tough questions and concerns to their managers and veterinarians. Avoiding difficult conversations (because of conflict aversion) does not work. Team members learning productive ways to initiate potentially difficult conversations with co-workers and management may experience higher job satisfaction. Be bold, be bright and BE courageous!

Learning Objectives

- Differentiate between empathy and sympathy
- Outline 6 tips to manage conflict
- Define the dos and don'ts of an apology

Avoidance Doesn't Work

You may believe "tiptoeing around," avoiding conflict, will make it go away. **Think again!**

Avoiding conflict makes the conflict worse. Conflict is an inevitable part of life. Workplaces that accept differences, understand attitudes, and encourage open dialogue offer safe environments to bring conflict to light. Self-managed teams may be held more accountable, have more empathy toward management decisions and are empowered to make a difference.

As managers and leaders within your veterinary practice, leading through example in conflict resolution is both a science and an art.

What conversations are you not having?
Why? What excuses can you offer?

Empathy Vs Sympathy

Empathy Statements

"Many people are terrified of empathy. Maybe we fear it's on the edge of counseling. Or maybe because it doesn't feel like it fits in the clinical realm. Don't fool yourself. Empathy statements are the strongest ingredient in building relationships with people. There's no formula for when to use them. Look for

opportunities to communicate your understanding of some situation, dilemma or conflict. We don't use this technique nearly enough and that's a shame. Practicing empathy makes for a more efficient visit and helps clients feel more connected," coaches Cindy Adams, MSW, PhD.

Brene' Brown on Empathy Video <https://brenebrown.com/videos/rsa-short-empathy/>

"Well, at least....." Catch yourself and redirect.

What is empathy? What is sympathy?

Empathy can be defined as having the same experience as another person and feeling the same pain, anguish, joy, exuberance as they did.

For example: If you lost a beloved pet and there was a family in the exam room who recently euthanized their beloved pet, then you could empathize with them.

The confusion lies with sympathy. For example: If you have never had a spouse come home from the war then you could not empathize with the spouse of a soldier that just returned from deployment. You could sympathize; however, you could not empathize under those circumstances.

Creating strong relationships with co-workers and clients occurs when you can have heartfelt conversations, enriching bonds of trust and understanding. Sincere, lasting connections are made when candid, casual conversations transcend to higher levels of **acceptance without judgment**. When you practice empathetic statements and reach a point of consciously engaging in deeper conversations, you will naturally become more confident in your own skin.

Every day, challenge yourself to be empathetic with a client, a team member or family member. It's good for your soul. Listen to their story, reflect upon the experience, and add your empathetic statement (not your entire story), then listen, again.

Download Infographics to share with your team members during upcoming team meetings or other opportunities. Display in the lounge. <https://catalystvetpc.com/tools/team-meetings/>


TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL
Conflict Resolution
FIRST, ASK YOURSELF
"What role am I playing in this drama?"
AVOIDING CONFLICT WILL NOT MAKE IT GO AWAY.

ACCEPT DIFFERENCES.
Everyone has different views, beliefs, and values. Identify and accept that these differences exist.

UNDERSTAND ATTITUDES.
Identify the temperament and emotions each party is experiencing. Jealousy, being misunderstood and the desire to be an active member of conflict.

ENCOURAGE OPEN DIALOGUE.
The goal is for all parties to be understood and heard. Approach these situations with an open mind.

CREATE A LIGHT ENVIRONMENT.
Seek an area where people can sit comfortably in neutral space. Be conscious of your body language. Remain relaxed, engaged and actively listen to what is being said.

SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND, THEN TO BE UNDERSTOOD.

A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes. -Mark Twain

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EMPATHY


VERSUS

SYMPATHY

RARELY, CAN A RESPONSE MAKE SOMETHING BETTER.
WHAT MAKES SOMETHING BETTER IS CONNECTION.

BRENÉ BROWN- POWER OF EMPATHY

EMPATHY	SYMPATHY
<p>Fuels connection.</p> <p>I'm feeling with you. Drawing from own past experiences to connect.</p> <p>Requires taking on the perspective of the other person, staying out of judgement, recognizing emotion, and communicating.</p> <p>Allows us to become vulnerable.</p>	<p>Drives disconnection.</p> <p>I'm feeling for you. Unavailable, uninterested in connection.</p> <p>Offers silver linings. Often the phrase "at least" is used. Ex. If someone's dog passes away, "At least you still have your cat."</p> <p>Closes off our own vulnerability.</p>

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6 TIPS TO MANAGE TEAM CONFLICT

PRO TIP: AVOIDANCE DOESN'T WORK

- 1 PICK YOUR BATTLES**
Ask yourself, "Is this really worth the time and energy?"
- 2 ANTICIPATE CONFLICT**
Spot the symptoms & redirect.
- 3 NEUTRAL LANGUAGE**
Be sincere and respectful. Use "I" statements. Ex. "I feel..."
- 4 PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE**
Offer opportunities to discuss topics of concern before they become a conflict.
- 5 ACTIVE LISTENING**
Listen to understand, not only to respond.
- 6 TAKE ACTION**
Hold yourself accountable for your actions and being a part of the solution.

 Created by CATALYST VetPC
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FOR MORE RESOURCES ON TEAM COMMUNICATIONS, GO TO
www.CATALYSTVetPC.com

Six Tips to Managing Team Conflict (listen to the recording and fill in the details for an interactive exercise)

1. Pick your battles
2. Anticipate conflict
3. Use neutral language
4. Practice preventive maintenance
5. Practice active listening
6. Leverage yourself

Another resource: 6 Steps to Managing Conflict, <https://www.accordence.com/resources/articles-tips/articles/6-steps-to-managing-conflict/>

A framework for calm conversations

Imagine yourself caught up in an emotionally charged interaction. How can you maintain composure and move forward? You can learn and practice a brief formula for responding to any situation. This will help you think on your feet and respond appropriately in the middle of a heated discussion.

Conflict resolution expert Bill Eddy coined the term “BIFF,” which is an acronym for Brief, Informative, Firm, and Friendly. <https://www.amazon.com/s?k=biff+by+bill+eddy&hvadid=77653014065806>

1. Most important, make your response **brief**. That means one or two sentences! The more you talk; the worse things can get.
2. Limit your response to **information**. Leave out any assumptions, defensiveness, opinions, or intentions. Information is neutral! While you may briefly explain something that happened, focus on the future and what *will* happen.
3. Create a **friendly** tone. Some ideas of friendly and brief phrases that work in any situation:
“I want to resolve this.”
“I know we both want what’s best for your pet.”
“I hope we can work together on this.”
4. Finally, be **firm**. That means being clear about boundaries, limits, and rules. Do so without letting yourself creep into scolding! Just state the facts, and possible outcomes (not threats, but facts about what might happen).

“Dos and Don’ts”

Don’t say things that make you feel better if they won’t bring the other person closer to the goal. “Go to H***” and other venting remarks are momentarily cleansing, but you have more power over the outcome if you avoid such statements.

- Don’t tell someone they are wrong. **Do** remember your goal is not to be “right.”
- Don’t defend yourself. **Do** state facts about what was done or what happened.
- Don’t say anything about intention. **Do** talk about impact.
- Don’t criticize. **Do** give information.
- Don’t focus on the past. **Do** focus on the future.

If you apologize, do it right

Most of the time, apologies make things better. The use of an apology is often misunderstood.

<https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-apologize-more-sincerely-3144467>

Apologizing is not about you! It is about making the situation better by helping the other person move from past resentments into working with you in the future. Also, apology does not make you weak. Rather, it gives you more power.

A true apology will make an impact. You may not feel comfortable making a complete apology every time, but the more that you can do so, the better the recipient will feel. The apologizer’s expression must be sincere, including their body language and eye contact. Although it is not always possible, the

best apology is public, not private. A successful apology has occurred when the wounded person “relinquishes” the moral advantage that has been the source of their power. Don’t pursue forgiveness; it comes if or when the person is ready.

The four parts of a true apology

1. **Confession:** I did it, and I’m taking responsibility.
2. **I feel bad:** Express sorrow or regret. Allow the victim to respond. Allow the person to tell their story and its impact, to a sympathetic audience.
3. **Repentance:** I won’t do it again; I’ll change. (Or, our practice will change.)
4. **Justice:** Making amends. How can I make this right?

Always follow the apology with a pause. **A LONG pause!** Let the apology rest between you and let the other person hear it. Too often, an apology is not heard because it is quickly followed by a bunch of other words.

Don’t pursue forgiveness; it comes if or when the person is ready.

Items that are *not* included in a true apology:

But...

Explanations (heard as excuses).

It isn’t my fault.

I didn’t do it.

I did it, but it’s not so bad.

I did it, and it was bad, but I have an explanation.

Practice a true apology. Example:

I’m so sorry I did that!

I feel badly.

I won’t do that again. I am evaluating how it happened so I can prevent it in the future.

What can I do to make it right?

YOU’VE GOT THIS!

Teams feeling comfortable in engaging in difficult conversations will be stronger. Communication, to include conflict and resolution skills, is a life-long learning pursuit. Practice does make fierce conversations easier. Role playing (even though team members will roll their eyes and WHINE!) is in their best interest. I encourage you to incorporate role playing into your team meetings on a quarterly basis. During the three months, keep track of difficult conversations the team has had to step into. Make those the new role-playing scenarios.

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