

**Instructor Notes:**

Participant exercise: role play.



Give them 3-5 minutes to read their roles before beginning



Present to participants:

“Mediator, you are the manager for Chris and Sam and the roles printed here are the stories they have each brought to you, so you have scheduled a meeting with the 3 of you together to try to resolve the conflict.”

## Module 2 Activity

### Conflict Mediation

This role-playing activity is designed for four participants:

- Chris
  - Sam
  - Mediator
  - Observer
1. Break into groups of four and assign roles (assign multiple observers, if needed).
  2. The position statements of Chris and Sam are below, along with guiding questions for the Observer. The role of the Mediator is to use what you have learned about active listening, feedback, and the steps of conflict resolution.
  3. The Mediator has already heard Sam’s and Chris’ stories and has called a meeting for the three of them to work it out. Role play for 5 minutes.
  4. Afterwards, the instructor will help debrief the activity.

#### Chris

I never want to work with Sam again! He won’t do his work and I can’t finish my part of the project until he does his. My deadline is looming! I left several phone messages, which he never returned. I followed up with multiple e-mails, but I only got a response to one of them. He said he’ll get to my project next week—that’s too late! And going to the Project Manager obviously didn’t help. Sam still hasn’t done anything according to the project timeline. How am I supposed to get my work done? The client is already complaining because I’m behind schedule and I have to keep rebooking our conference calls. I won’t even mention the other four projects I need to be working on!

#### Sam

I can’t believe how annoying Chris is: six e-mails and two phone calls in just three days! It makes me not want to do anything for her—but I would if I could. I already sent Chris an e-mail telling her when I’ll be working on her project, but she just keeps sending more e-mails. And then the Project Manager bugged me about it, too. I’ll tell you the same thing I told him: I’ve got four other projects I’m working on and two of them have due dates *before* Chris’ project, so I have to do them first. And those clients keep submitting changes so I can’t get ahead. Those projects will be done Friday, so I can move on to Chris’ project next week. Of course, that’s assuming there aren’t any snafus with those projects over the weekend.

**Instructor Notes:****Observer**

Use the checklist<sup>1</sup> below to make notes about the conflict and how the mediator handles it.

1. From your perspective, what was the crux of this conflict?
  
2. Did Chris and Sam seem more eager to talk or to listen?
  
3. What types of active-listening behaviors did you notice?
  
4. Did you see any attempt at goal setting and planning for the future?
  
5. Most conflicts are accompanied by negative behaviors and emotions (such as accusations, betrayal, domination, hostility, anger, frustration, and sarcasm). What are some examples that you observed in the conversation between Chris and Sam?
  
6. Some conflict-management conversations are accompanied by positive behavior and emotions (such as understanding, apologizing, empathy, support, and hope). What are some examples you observed in the conversation between Chris and Sam?

<sup>1</sup>Used with permission of Workshops by Thiagi, Inc. <http://www.thiagi.com/games.html>

**Instructor Notes:**

Instructor-only  
information

## Debrief the Role Play

Have the Observers share their observations from the checklist.

Ask these additional questions:

- If you were playing the role of Chris, did you believe Sam's story? Why or why not?
- If you were playing Sam, did you believe Chris?
- As a role player, how did you feel before the role play? During? After?
- What two adjectives would you use to describe the other person's behavior? Your own behavior?
- What would have happened if you had more time for the role play?
- If you were the Observer or Mediator, what did you think was the crux of the confrontation between Chris and Sam?
- Many people believe that this conflict was due to a difference in perceptions rather than a fundamental difference in values or beliefs. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

## Extra Discussion

- Discuss instances where conflict avoidance has created problems for you or your staff.
- Think of a time when you ran into problems because of poorly resolved conflict.
  - Was the project derailed?
  - Was the client inconvenienced or angered?
- Find the worst-case scenario (from first-hand experience in the group) by having the class vote.
  - What rules were violated?
  - What could have been done to prevent or resolve the problem?



Q & A: If class runs short, here are more questions to spark discussion amongst the participants.

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