

# PROBLEM SOLVING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION



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# PURPOSE & KEY TERMS

- The purpose of this section is to assist the learner in acquiring basic skills in problem solving and conflict resolution.
- Conflict
- Mediator
- S.T.O.P

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# OBJECTIVES

- The learner will be able to:
  - ❑ Identify types of problems or conflicts that may arise while caring for a resident.
  - ❑ Describe techniques to reduce tension when conflict arises.
  - ❑ Describe the importance of documenting a problematic situation or conflict and what to document.
  - ❑ Define S.T.O.P.
  - ❑ Complete a S.T.O.P. form.

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# INTRODUCTION

- Many problems or conflicts can arise as you care for residents and manage the day-to-day operation of your AFH.
- Problems you encounter may include:
  - ❑ A resident who expects you to be their “personal maid”;
  - ❑ A family member who regularly visits at mealtime and expects to be included in the meal;
  - ❑ A relief caregiver who is always late for work.

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# INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

- How do you deal with such situations?
  - ❑ Do you wait and hope things will get better?
  - ❑ Do you assume you must put up with such problems and try to ignore them?
  - ❑ Do you get angry and resentful?
- The most effective way to deal with these types of issues is to be direct and bring them up as soon as possible.
  - ❑ Immediate action may help prevent the situations from becoming conflicts.

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# INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

- You will encounter an aggressive resident, family member or helping professional. The most common mistakes people make when others are aggressive are to become:
  - Defensive: “You did such and so!” “I did not!” “Oh, yes, you did!” This type of exchange is usually dissatisfying to both parties.
  - Aggressive: “How dare you scream at me like that. Just get out of my house!” This type of exchange can become violent or lead to hasty words, actions and decisions that are regretted later.

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# INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

- Use nonverbal communication to reduce tension:
  - ❑ Consciously talk in a softened voice.
  - ❑ Avoid crowding the other person.
  - ❑ Make eye contact, but do not stare.
  - ❑ Try to indicate that you are open to listening by keeping your arms by your side and your hands relaxed.

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# INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

- Focus on what the person has to say:
  - Listen carefully to their message;
  - Respond to the person's feelings and words;
  - Make comments indicating you hear what they are saying;
  - Acknowledging the message does not mean you agree;
  - Your opportunity to express your feelings and thoughts will come later:
    - For example, "I can understand your being upset because I did not prevent your mother from wandering away yesterday."

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# INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

- Use “I” messages:
  - ❑ Describe the behavior that is bothering you;
  - ❑ State how you feel; and
  - ❑ Describe the effect the situation is having on you. “When you yell, I feel threatened and I have a hard time hearing what you have to say.”
  - ❑ It may be helpful to add what you would like to see changed or different. “I would like for us to try to discuss the situation calmly.”

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# INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

- ❑ Stick to your main point:
  - If the person tries to draw you into a side issue, stick to the central issue. “I will be glad to discuss your concerns about your mother’s care.”
- ❑ Turn the person’s negatives into positives:
  - Turn negative remarks around to your own advantage;
  - Agree; and
  - Restate your position. “I agree that your mother seems more confused. I have been concerned too. However, I’d like you to lower your voice.”

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# INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

- ❑ Set limits or take time out. Setting limits protects you from harm or exploitation by stating clearly what you will or will not accept, or next steps:
  - “Since you are continuing to swear at me, I must ask you to leave.”
  - “I will be glad to discuss your concerns when you are calmer.”
- ❑ When you suggest a time-out, you give both yourself and the other person an opportunity to sort out thoughts and feelings and approach the situation more constructively at a later time.

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# INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

- It is best to first practice conflict resolution skills in minor situations. Do not hesitate to draw in other members of the care team to assist you in resolving a problem.
  - “I’m not sure we can solve this problem by ourselves. If you would like, I could ask the visiting nurse or case manager to meet with us to help us come up with solutions.”

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# GENERAL GUIDELINES

- The best way to handle difficult situations is directly and in a timely manner. Immediate action prevents situations becoming problems:
  - Document the situation. If the situation involved a resident, note the problem in the narrative or incident report.
  - Be specific. Describe what happened, where it occurred, who was involved, and the date and time.
  - If you took immediate action, record what you did.

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# GENERAL GUIDELINES CONTINUED

- ❑ You can reduce stress by developing and using effective problem-solving skills;
- ❑ Discuss the problem with those involved:
  - Review the problem and discuss options for resolving it. For example, if a family member gets prescriptions refilled for a resident, but is often late, you might suggest setting up an account for the resident at a pharmacy that delivers. The pharmacy would bill the resident or family. This kind of suggestion allows the family member to choose.

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# GENERAL GUIDELINES CONTINUED

- Select an option to try and set a time limit.
  - Try a certain course of action for three months; review results at the end of that period.
  - Be ready with a back-up plan in case the first one does not seem to be working.

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# GENERAL GUIDELINES CONTINUED

- ❑ Bring in a mediator. If those involved in the problem are not communicating, the problem will not get resolved.
  - An “outside” person may be able to help everyone work together toward resolving the problem.
  - The person could be the resident’s case manager, a counselor or social worker, health care professional or other person with whom everyone agrees to cooperate.

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# S.T.O.P.

- The S.T.O.P. method is a problem-solving process that involves identifying a method and evaluating options. The steps are:
  - Describe the situation. Be specific. Your description should address the who, what, where and when in regard to the problem. If your description is general or vague, you may not have a clear understanding of what needs to be accomplished.

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## S.T.O.P. CONTINUED

- Identify your target:
  - ❑ Describe how you want things to be;
  - ❑ Identify what you want to accomplish;
  - ❑ You may find in the process that your expectations are unrealistic;
  - ❑ Some situations or events are uncontrollable. You may need to accept this fact and work on strategies for coping with the problem and reducing stress, rather than on problem solutions.

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## S.T.O.P. CONTINUED

- Identify options:
  - In what ways might you get the results you want?
  - Write down all the options you can think of even if some of them seem silly. This is called “brainstorming.” Who knows?

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## S.T.O.P. CONTINUED

- Develop a PLAN and act upon it:
  - ❑ Evaluate your options. List the advantages and limitations.
  - ❑ Select an option. The option you choose may be the one with the most advantages and fewest limitations.
  - ❑ Implement the option. List steps to be taken. Set a time limit for trying the plan.
  - ❑ Evaluate results. Did you reach your target? If so, your problem is solved! If not, select another option, develop a new plan and carry it through.

# DISCUSSION/QUESTIONS

