

should have the will to enlarge the scope of their practice and take on the opportunities encountered to expand their role. Without the right "attitude", no change in the practice can be achieved.

Although none of these ideas is new, they are in practice the exception, rather than the rule. The trend should be reversed and the timing could not be better for these developments. For the sake of necessity, many hospitals are re-engineering for greater efficiency or are in the process of merging. They are, as Lewin would describe, in an unfreezing mode. Hospitals are open to propositions and ideas in getting more value for their dollar. More than ever, the time has come to revise the perioperative nursing role and "sell" it to administrators. The same administrator wanting to "cut" the perioperative nurse's role could become an ally if, and only if, the right justification is given. That *raison d'être* can only come from a revised and expanded role.

Perioperative nursing is at a crossroad. It is unlikely it will remain as it is. To avoid repeating history and lose more "ground", we have to "fight" with all the resources available. As with the midwives and nurse practitioners before us, we have to expand our role to offer an added value. Our future is on the "front line".

Really, war is a terrible thing.

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## RNFA Update

During the past year, the Canadian RNFAs have established themselves in Québec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. The RNFA/RNFA student numbers have grown to just under a hundred in Canada.

### Québec

Québec had 36 graduates last year, and are currently waiting for the final reading of an amendment to the Medical Act to allow registered nurses to assist at surgery in their province.

### Ontario

Ontario has 14 RNFAs and 10 RNFA students who have formed a RNFA committee with their provincial group ORNAO for promotion of the role. Two RNFA positions have been filled at the Trillium Health Centre, Mississauga.

### Manitoba

A RNFA pilot project in Winnipeg, Manitoba has been establishing the benefit to having the Registered Nurse assisting role. An amendment to the Medical Act in 1999 will allow RNFAs to assist at surgery. There are five (5) RNFA students who will be available for positions in the future.

### Saskatchewan

Due to the lobbying of two RNFAs and one RNFA student in Saskatchewan, the Hospital Standard Act, 56 (1) has been deleted making it possible for Registered Nurses to assist and Pilot Projects are now being discussed.

### Alberta

Alberta is addressing support for the RNFA by distributing a survey to the stakeholders within the Calgary Health Region. There two RNFAs and one RNFA student in the province.

### British Columbia

B.C. has 12 RNFA students who have had an interesting year in the political arena. They have finally been allowed to complete their internships and are now being asked to prepare for possible RNFA employment.

On the National Front our association with ORNAC continues. A draft of the RNFA competencies was presented to the ORNAC Board in May, 1999. Please visit the RNFA web page on the ORNAC web site [www.ornac.ca](http://www.ornac.ca) for more information about the RNFA Progress in Canada.

**RNFA Update** was submitted by **Susan Carver**, RNFA, Brantford General Hospital, Brantford, ON.

# Managing Conflict To Gets Your Needs Met

By Margaret M. Carey, RN

When at work, we are all too often met with roadblocks, usually due to some type of disagreement. Whether it is peers with whom our opinions differ, or our inability to express our point, conflict occurs. When handling problems, they can become like clouds over the sun, blocking the reality or the sunshine behind the truth. Realistically, we are working towards the same objective - getting the job done.

When trying to reach our goals, we can have problems with communication. When it comes to communicating, some people are exceptional at it, while others, because of various limitations, lack the skills to communicate effectively. Due to one person's shyness, or another's aggression, communication can slow to a standstill, or explode into conflict. So, what do we do when faced with conflict? Do we cower away, do we forge ahead until we win, or do we adopt any of these practices?

## Conflict can solve problems

What people in conflict tend not to appreciate is that their management of conflict, not the conflict itself, gets in the way. People who discuss conflict disclose information, challenge assumptions, dig into the issues and as a consequence, understand the problem thoroughly and make successful decisions.

"Conflict is the medium by which problems are recognized and solved. Conflict is not the problem, it is part of the solution. Conflict, though it can cause distress and prevent you from getting your way, is not an inevitably destructive and imposing barrier you could be better off without. Wishing we could live without conflict and avoiding discussing conflict are the real barriers. Managing conflict is an essential life skill that is too often neglected," (Tjosvold, 1993).

The following techniques are now presented for better conflict management which will help overcome the obstacles we face while working towards our goal - getting the job done efficiently and cooperatively.

One of the most common problems with conflict is not looking beyond the problem.

For example, take the proverbial sisters who quarrelled over an orange. After they finally agreed to divide the orange in half, the first sister took her half, ate the fruit, and threw away the peel, while the other sister threw away the fruit and used the peel in baking her cake. All too often the negotiators "leave money on the table" - they fail to reach agreement when they might have, or the agreement they do reach could have been better for each side. Too many negotiations end up with half an orange for each side instead of the whole fruit for one and the whole peel for the other. Why? "People get angry, depressed, fearful, hostile, frustrated, and offended. They have egos that are easily threatened. They see the world from their own personal vantage point, and they frequently confuse their perceptions with reality. Routinely, they fail to interpret what you say in the way you intend and do not mean what you understand them to say. Misunderstanding can reinforce prejudice and lead to reactions that produce counter reactions in a vicious circle: rational explanation of possible solutions becomes impossible and a negotiation fails. The purpose of the game becomes scoring points, confirming negative impressions, and apportioning blame at the expense of both parties," (Fisher et al, 1981).

Another point to emphasize is that during conflicts, during the arguments, there is the assumption "that because the other side's positions are opposed to ours, their interests must also be opposed. In many negotiations, however, a close examination of the underlying interests will reveal the existence of many more interests that are shared or compatible than ones that are opposed," (Fisher et al, 1981).

Another basic fact of negotiation is that you are not dealing with abstract representatives of the 'other sides', but with human beings. They have emotions, deeply held values, and different backgrounds and viewpoints and they are unpredictable, and so are you.

## Author

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"People's desire to feel good about themselves, and their concern for what others will think of them, can often make them more sensitive to the other negotiator's interests", (Fisher et al, 1981).

### Arguing Leads to Lose-Lose Outcomes

Another poor habit during conflict entails "people spending an inordinate amount of time defending or supporting their positions and points of view. One's position contains all of their prior experiences and expectations, as well as their current needs. Continual arguing only teaches people newer ways to argue and leads to lose-lose outcomes. When arguing, stop for a minute and decide, do you really want to get your needs met, or would you rather go on arguing?"

During a conflict people can fail to realize that the conflict is harmful because they are expending more energy on avoiding and smoothing over their differences than talking about them directly.

I can not say enough about the problem of avoidance, because I believe it is paramount in our working environment. "The habit of avoiding conflict, interrupted with outbursts of shouting and fighting, exacerbates our dilemmas and reinforces the cycle of destructive conflict," (Tjosvold, 1981).

Another way that conflict is started and or heated up is by complaining about people, to the manager, their peers and/or to co-workers, behind their backs, or "tattling" without first discussing the issue with the party involved. "Have the managers in our institutions become the indirect means for dealing with problems employees refuse to face directly?", (Solomon, 1990).

Why is it so difficult for people to say what they need directly to the people who are involved? They're simply avoiding the consequences of speaking directly. Usually the immediate consequences are negative, even if in the long-run effects turn out to be positive. It is safer to talk to colleagues who will tell you what you want to hear, with no fear of reprisals, when you should be telling your manager. This kind of indirect communication has an added but mixed blessing. Other people tend to talk about what they hear, and eventually your message, in whatever distorted form its journey along the grapevine has transformed it, will reach the person who needed to hear it. Unfortunately, the message usually comes with the information about who originally said it.

Being talked about behind one's back drives everyone crazy. We need to tell the person the criticism directly, but must not blame them as a person.

"Even if blaming is justified, it is usually counter-productive. Under attack the other side will become defensive and will resist what you have to say. They will cease to listen, or they will strike back with an attack of their own. When you talk about a problem,

separate the symptoms from the person with whom you are talking," (Fisher et al, 1981)

So what do we do? We do as Dean Tjosvold says in *Learning to Manage Conflict*... "Be hard on the problem, but soft on the person."

In an effort to be soft on the person, our foremost goal is greater communication. People generally assume that differences between two parties create the problem. Yet differences can also lead to a solution. You may want to know what is preferable, not necessarily what is acceptable. Some people are just upset and need to vent their emotions. It is often preferable to prevent conflict by using a few key techniques.

Cooper in *Conflict Management* advises ... "Look past the words in a conflict because frequently what is being addressed isn't the real issue at all. Also, when people come up to you in an angry state, don't tell them to calm down, this is the last thing they want to hear. Instead "egg them on" and agree with their comments. For instance, say I don't blame you for being mad, you have a right to be angry. This technique deflates the anger and helps calm the person down thinking they have your support. This won't solve the problem, but it will calm them down. You cannot stay mad at someone who won't get mad back."

Next, in order to get someone to listen in a disagreement ... "you will satisfy your interests better if you talk about where you would like to go, rather than about where you have been. To handle emerging conflicts before they become serious problems adopt the rule that only one person can get angry at a time. The further advantage to this rule, is to help control emotions. Breaking the rules implies that you have lost control, so you lose some face. Instead of arguing about the past (yesterday's performance was less than expected), talk about what you want to happen in the future, (Fisher et al, 1981).

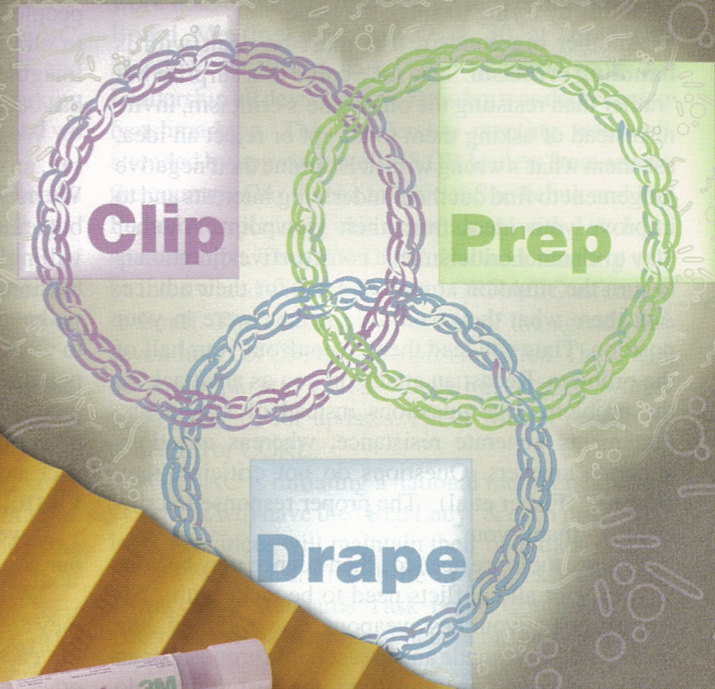
In order to get people to listen to your argument, you have to make your "interests come alive". It is your job to have the other side understand exactly how important and legitimate your interests are.

Another hint from Fisher's writings involves how you state your needs. "Your "opponent" has heard your position and is no doubt busy preparing arguments against it. He was probably disturbed by your tone or by the suggestion itself. As a result, your justification will slip by him altogether. If you want someone to listen and understand your reasoning, give your interests first and your proposals later."

Lastly and foremost, active listening is essential. The need for listening is obvious, yet it is difficult to listen well, especially under the stress of an ongoing negotiation. Listening enables you to understand other's perceptions, feel their emotions and hear what

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they are trying to say. Active listening improves not only what you hear, but also what they say. The other party will feel the satisfaction of being heard and understood. Request ideas be repeated if there is ambiguity or uncertainty. Understanding is not agreeing, but unless you can convince them that you do grasp how they see it, you may be unable to explain your viewpoint. Speak to be understood and accomplish this by trying to solve the issue.

Another big concern that must be dealt with is **handling criticism**. This may come as a surprise but "rather than resisting the other side's criticism, invite it. Instead of asking them to accept or reject an idea, ask them what's wrong with it. Examine their negative judgement to find out their underlying interests and to improve your ideas from their viewpoint. Another way to channel criticism in a constructive direction is to turn the situation around and ask for their advice. Ask them what they would do if they were in your position. Thus you lead them to confront your half of the problem. Recast an attack on you as an attack on the problem. Use questions instead of statements. Statements generate resistance, whereas questions generate answers. Questions do not criticize, they educate," (Fisher et al). The proper response to criticism is - thank-you."

If more tools are needed, then silence may be your answer. Not all conflicts need to be dealt with. "Silence is one of your best weapons. Use it. If they, 'the opponents' have made an unreasonable proposal or an attack you regard as unjustified, the best thing to do may be to sit there and not say a word. If you have asked an honest question to which they have provided an insufficient answer, just wait. People tend to feel uncomfortable with silence, particularly if they have doubts about the merits of something they have said. Silence often creates the impression of a stalemate which the other side will feel compelled to break by answering your question or coming up with a new suggestion," (Fisher et al, 1981).

Let's also deal with preventative medicine. One of the most successful ways to attack an adversary is to 'kill them with kindness'. We recognize each other by acknowledging each other's contributions to the group. This can even be met by simply saying "Hello", or How are you?," and can be expanded to "Great work in there today," or, "I liked working with you today because..." or, "keep up the good work." If you have a good relationship with someone it is very difficult to get into a big conflict with that person.

Another way to eliminate some conflict is to avoid being so negative. We tend to be negative, we tend to look at what is not being done, or what is not done right. Negativity adds to the possibility of conflict in the environment. People tend to pick up on positive

comments, if you use them they become contagious.

"To see if you have contributed to the positive energy of the day, ask yourself these questions. "What have I done today to make someone want to see me tomorrow? Next, ask yourself, what have I seen done today that I want seen done tomorrow? That is, recognize exceptional service you have seen given. If you can establish this kind of positive relationship with people you deal with, you will have gone a long way to eliminating almost any kind of conflict you can imagine. The reason being that a positive relationship has been established," (Cooper).

We must all actively work against conflict, as they say, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. We may be prone to conflict in our work environment, but remember conflict only occurs when you have two willing participants. "The price of conflict is stress, tension, and repressed emotions. A lot of the tension we have to deal with has to do with the people we have to work with, nasty people, unhappy people, negative people," (Cooper). Anger is a test of conflict. If managed well, anger contributes to the productive power of conflict. Unmanaged anger intensifies conflict and feeds more anger and disruption," (Tjosvold).

### Conclusion

If we work hard to manage conflict we strengthen our confidence in each other and ourselves.

"When people believe their goals are cooperative, they are committed to promoting each other and helping each other to be effective. As people help each other discuss their conflicts they have concrete evidence that others are not as arrogant and as vulnerable as previously assumed. They recognize their ability to work together. Ironically conflicts binds us all together," (Tjosvold).

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## ORNAC in a Nutshell

By Margaret Farley, ORNAC Secretary

The ORNAC Executive and Board met in Toronto at the Sheraton Gateway on May 26, 27, & 28, 2000. Once again a large amount of work was done in a short period of time.

We bid farewell to Sandra Grimwood of BC, Kendall O'Brien of AB, Rosemarie Atwill of ON, and Jean-Yves Latreille of Quebec. These hard working folks have completed their terms on the Board and we will miss them.

We welcome new Board member Theresa Thomas of PEI.

Our Historian/Photographer Marge Ensminger of AB has retired from Perioperative Nursing after approximately 44 years at the Medicine Hat Regional Hospital. Congratulations!

President Marlene Hill has had a very busy spring attending AORN in April, BCORNG Conference in early May, Ontario Provincial Conference mid May and our ORNAC meetings the end of May, and lastly the Canadian Nurses Association conference in June.

CNA believes there will be a federal election in the fall and is asking all registered nurses to contact their Member of Parliament candidates asking what their platform is on healthcare issues, and state RNs will be active, and will speak out against a further deterioration of Medicare along with the formation of a two-tier medical system. You may access the suggestions from ACTION 301 on our website, [www.ornac.ca](http://www.ornac.ca) or via the CNA.

President-elect Mary Knight attended AORN, and met with IFPN. Mary is an Executive Board member of IFPN which has been working hard to advance in the international venue. Standards on basic perioperative issues are being developed. Mary also attended CNA in June.

ORNAC Research Grant information and applications are available on our website, [www.ornac.ca](http://www.ornac.ca) or from Chair Mary Knight e-mail: [mk2@pangea.ca](mailto:mk2@pangea.ca). The deadline for applications is **February 28, 2001**. The Scope of Perioperative Practice Committee, (formerly Advanced Practice) has been very active regarding RNFAs. Draft competencies have been drawn up and are under review. The ORNAC website, [www.ornac.ca](http://www.ornac.ca) has a new portion dedicated to RNFAs. This committee will also have RNFA Terms of Reference ready for our fall meeting. The Standards Committee is busy as well. They will have the OR Approval Process for OR Post Graduate Programs & the Core

Curriculum ready for review at the Nov/00 Board meeting.

Canadian Operating Room Leaders (CORL) Network held a workshop following the spring ORNAC Board Meeting on May 29 & 30 at the Delta Meadowvale Resort. Tim Porter-O'Grady spoke on Leadership all day Monday. Tuesday was dedicated to benchmarking. This Leadership meeting was well attended by approximately 75 OR leaders from across the country. Our thanks to Muriel Shewchuk and Pat Pocock for planning this event along with J & J for sponsoring it. The 2001 CORL Network meeting will be intertwined with the National ORNAC Conference in Banff. The educational portion of the agenda has seven hours of Leadership topics included. There will be no separate CORL meeting. Again watch [www.ornac.ca](http://www.ornac.ca) for updates. Pat & Muriel remain as contacts for CORL.

ORNAC is initiating a national membership card system. It will have the "Red Lady" & each provincial logo. Provinces will maintain their own database.

IFPN has a draft website in progress. They are setting up a Standards Task Force Committee and ORNAC will have a representative on the committee. IFPN has been granted affiliate status with ICN.

Plans for the 2001 National Conference in Banff, April 22-27, 2001 are well under way. The agenda for *A Surgical Odyssey* is in the final stages. Watch the Journal and, of course [www.ornac.ca](http://www.ornac.ca).

Plans for the June, 2003 Manitoba National Conference are underway. Conference Chairs are Karen Steindl & Jerry Boughden. Both have many years in Perioperative Nursing and MORNA. The theme and logo have been chosen but disclosure will come at the 2001 National in Banff. For now these are well-guarded secrets. Winnipeg will be our host city. Marla Ewen and Leanne Moyer were J & J/ORNAC bursary recipients. Congratulations to both.

Mary Knight resumes the Chair of the Research Committee and Marla Ewen resumes the Chair of Scope of Perioperative Practice.

The Public Awareness Committee & Political Action Committee have amalgamated. Public Awareness will assume a more active role in political issues and will lobby for Perioperative Registered Nursing issues. Together these two committee have just completed a national mailout to Perioperative Managers. Because we share so many duties, so chose to blend our volunteers.