# Conflict COMMUNICATION REFLECTION

**Instructions:** Fill out the form below to help pinpoint and reflect on the behaviours you exhibit when communicating during conflicts with colleagues. Then, explore alternative strategies and phrases to handle conflicts more effectively.

**Definitions of behaviours:**

**Criticism:**

* Criticism involves attacking someone's character or personality rather than addressing a specific behavior or action.
* Work Environment Context: In the workplace, criticism may manifest as blaming a coworker for a mistake without offering constructive feedback. For example, saying "You're always careless with your work" instead of addressing a specific instance where an error occurred.

**Defensiveness:**

* Defensiveness occurs when individuals feel attacked or criticized and respond by denying responsibility or shifting blame.
* Work Environment Context: In a work setting, defensiveness might involve immediately making excuses or justifying one's actions when receiving feedback. For instance, saying "It's not my fault because..." instead of acknowledging the feedback and taking responsibility for any mistakes made.

**Stonewalling:**

* Stonewalling is when someone withdraws from a conversation or interaction as a way to avoid conflict or confrontation.
* Work Environment Context: In the workplace, stonewalling may involve shutting down communication during discussions or meetings. This could include avoiding eye contact, giving short responses, or physically leaving the conversation without addressing the issue at hand.

**Contempt:**

* Contempt involves displaying feelings of superiority or disdain towards others, often through disrespectful or mocking behaviour.
* Work Environment Context: Contempt in a work environment can manifest as sarcasm, eye-rolling, or belittling comments towards coworkers or team members. For example, making derogatory remarks about someone's ideas during a brainstorming session or speaking condescendingly to a colleague in front of others.

Understanding and addressing these Four Horsemen behaviors can help foster healthier communication and relationships in the workplace, leading to a more positive and productive work environment.

Below is an example of how to fill out the form:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **My communication behaviours in conflict** | **Description of behaviour utilized** | **Alternative Conflict Resolution Strategies or Phrases** |
| ***Example:***  **Defensiveness** | ***Example:***   * *I feel like my colleague seems to focus solely on all my faults and mistakes. I then quickly jump to defending myself to explain that these errors were not my fault.* | **Antidote**: Take responsibility for your actions and offer apologies when needed.   1. ***Take responsibility for my part in the problem or mistake.*** 2. ***Apologize for my part of the conflict I’m responsible for.*** 3. ***Acknowledge the concerns raised by your colleague without immediately offering explanations.*** 4. ***Seek to understand your colleague's perspective before responding.*** 5. ***Take a moment to pause and reflect before reacting defensively.*** 6. ***Focus on finding a solution rather than dwelling on assigning blame.*** 7. ***Practice empathy by putting myself in my colleague's shoes to better understand their viewpoint.*** 8. ***Ask clarifying questions to ensure a clear understanding of the situation before responding.*** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **My communication behaviours in conflict** | **Description of behaviour utilized** | **Alternative Conflict Resolution Strategies or Phrases** |
| **Criticism** |  | **Antidote**: Raise issues gently and focus on problems (not people) in a calm and collaborative way. |
| **Defensiveness** |  | **Antidote**: Take responsibility for your actions and offer apologies when needed. |
| **My communication behaviours in conflict** | **Description of behaviour utilized** | **Alternative Conflict Resolution Strategies or Phrases** |
| **Stonewalling** |  | **Antidote**: Practice self-soothing to stay present with your colleagues and remain calm. |
| **Contempt** |  | **Antidote**: Describe your own feelings and needs, and practice showing appreciation. |

*Template Modified from* [*Gottman Method Worksheet*](https://www.carepatron.com/templates/gottman-method-worksheets)