Title: Constrcutive or destructive conflicts

Exercise Code: SLECC002

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| Modules: | Group size: | Duration: |
| 5. Conflict Solving Strategies  7. Mediation | Small group  Large group | 45 min |

# Purpose:

This exercise is to determine how some conflict can be constructive, rather than destructive.

# Description:

Pair up participants and ask them to discuss and write down the aspects of conflict that they see as destructive. Examples: “it destroys a relationship” or “it increases stress level,” etc.

Have the pairs reconvene, ask for their comments, and list them on the flipchart under the heading of *Destructive Conflicts*.

Then allow about 5–10 minutes for the paired participants to repeat the above process, this time discussing and writing down the aspects of conflict that they see as constructive. Repeat as above, listing on the flipchart the results of their work under the heading of *Constructive Conflict*.

In the plenum, the group and discusses the destructive and constructive elements of conflict, asking questions such as:

* Which was easier to discuss and why?
* What surprises did you find when the entire group reported out?
* How do you think most people at work feel about conflict?
* What are the lessons you learned from this activity?

# Material:

Flipchart, pen and paper

# Methods:

Experiental learning, discussion

# Advice for Trainer:

If the participants have difficulty thinking of specific destructive and/or constructive aspects, here are some examples:

A conflict is destructive when:

• one person has to give in too much (win-lose)

• the dispute hurts a relationship

• there is no agreement reached

• there are uncontrolled emotions, anger, and raised voices

• the conflict prevents or stops people from working

A conflict is constructive when it:

• leads to resolution

• builds a strong relationship with improved communication

• opens people up to new ideas

• leads to a win-win resolution

• develops common goals

• clarifies a problem situation and leads to positive change

# Source/Literature:

Adapted from: *50 Activities for Conflict Resolution*, by Jonamay Lambert and Selma Myers. Amherst, Massachusetts: HRD Press, 1999.