

Conflict Role Play Toolkit

Conflict isn't theory—it's practice. These scenarios give you a safe space to try new approaches, test language, and build confidence. Play out the scripts, then reflect on what worked and what you'd do differently.

MANAGING UP: PUSHING BACK ON AN UNREALISTIC DEADLINE

Context: Your VP assigns a project with a 2-week deadline, but based on resources, you know it will take at least 4 weeks.

Script Example:

Leader: "I really appreciate the urgency here. I want to make sure we deliver the quality you're expecting. Based on our current capacity, I see two options: either we extend the timeline to 4 weeks or we narrow the scope to focus on the most critical deliverables. Which would you prefer we prioritize?"

Practice Focus: Staying collaborative instead of combative while still asserting realistic boundaries.

Reflection Prompt: How did you balance being respectful with being honest?

PEER TENSION: TEAM MEMBER NOT PULLING WEIGHT

Context: A peer has repeatedly missed deliverables on a shared project, which impacts your work.

Script Example:

You: "I've noticed the last two deadlines slipped, and that's put pressure on the rest of the team. Can we talk about what's getting in the way and how I can support you so we stay on track?"

Practice Focus: Using curiosity and facts instead of blame.

Reflection Prompt: Did you feel defensive or empathetic in your delivery? What shifted the tone?

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CROSS-FUNCTIONAL DISAGREEMENT: COMPETING PRIORITIES

Context: You're leading a project that requires input from another department, but they keep pushing back that their priorities come first.

Script Example:

You: "I know your team has competing priorities. This project impacts both of us, and I want us to succeed together. Could we explore what adjustments we can make so your team's workload is manageable while still keeping momentum on this project?"

Practice Focus: Collaborating instead of competing for resources.

Reflection Prompt: How did you frame the problem as shared instead of "us vs. them"?

DIRECT REPORT CONFLICT: ADDRESSING DISENGAGEMENT

Context: A team member is quiet in meetings, doesn't share input, and has been late with a few assignments.

Script Example:

Manager: "I've noticed you've been quieter in meetings and missed a couple of deadlines. I value your input and want to understand what's going on. Is there something getting in the way of your engagement right now?"

Practice Focus: Spotting "quiet conflict" and opening the door safely.

Reflection Prompt: How did your word choice signal support instead of criticism?