

HOW TO EMBRACE CONFLICT TO BUILD A STRONG TEAM

A STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO SET UP YOUR TEAM



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WHY CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IS IMPORTANT

As a coach, you have the ability—and responsibility—to bring out the best in your athletes. You can support your athletes and create a successful team by being proactive and putting preventative tools in place to be in the best possible position when conflict arises.

Conflict is a normal occurrence. You may have noticed that every year on every team it pops up. Common problem areas include managing playing time, deciding on a start-up line, addressing interpersonal issues between teammates and fellow coaches, mitigating gossip, and handling cliques.

Conflict is not good or bad, however, the way it is managed can create positive or negative outcomes for your team. The truth is, conflict is inevitable on any team. And the great thing about this is that, as a team moves through conflict and resolves issues together, they become *better* together. They perform better. They win more!

With a little guidance, you can take charge of the season and achieve the most for your team!

- ✓ Win more games
- ✓ Retain happy athletes, coaches and volunteers
- ✓ Enjoy more positive and fun experiences

CONFLICT TO COHESION ON YOUR TEAM

The **Conflict to Cohesion Framework (CtC)** will give you the guidance to start the season on the right foot and move your team from conflict to cohesion. If you apply what you learn here, you and your team can grow in ways you've never imagined.

The framework has **four key steps**—Introduction, Team Day, Role Review Meeting & Mandatory Bi-Weekly Team Meetings—which facilitate transparency and communication to prevent and manage conflict.

Your team will establish healthy relationships essential for team building and develop transferable life skills. The framework is simple to implement and can be adapted to any team.

Reach your team's full potential by applying the CtC framework!

- ✓ Build team trust
- ✓ Develop a united Team Goal
- ✓ Understand team members unique individual goals
- ✓ Discover individual and team values
- ✓ Exercise leadership opportunities
- ✓ Provide an environment to embrace diverse ideas
- ✓ Encourage positive communication practices
- ✓ Create a safe environment to share potentially conflictual information
- ✓ Provide an opportunity for creativity
- ✓ Create a place for mitigating and resolving conflict that arises from issues such as cliques, complaints about playing time and team roles

TIP: Print out the framework and hang it up or add it to your coaching binder!

CONFLICT TO COHESION FRAMEWORK

1

Step

INTRODUCTION TO TEAM

Goal: To provide a forum for your potential team members to develop an understanding of team expectations and philosophy.

Outcome: Your potential team members are able to make an informed decision (if selected) about whether or not participation on the team fits with their values and goals.

2

Step

TEAM DAY

Goal: To provide an opportunity for your team to get to know one another and align on your team's purpose.

Outcome: Your team understands each other's values and has confidence in the systems in place to manage conflict when it comes up.

3

Step

ROLE REVIEW MEETING

Goal: To provide your team with a clear understanding of team roles including an outline of the coach's plan for a starting line up and decision-making around playing time.

Outcome: Potential game day upset is minimized through a transparent process. Your athletes know exactly what to expect and have time to process the information. They have the opportunity to ask questions and receive feedback about how they can move between roles.

4

Step

MANDATORY BI-WEEKLY TEAM MEETINGS

Goal: To provide your team with the opportunity to share and mitigate team challenges and build on successes.

Outcome: These opportunities for communication and honesty normalize conflict on your team and leverage it into opportunities for creativity, trust-building and team growth.

For best results, attendance at all Conflict to Cohesion events should be mandatory. One or two team members missing could have significant negative consequences in trying to promote ongoing cohesion.

STEP 1

Introduction of Team

FORMAT

- Meeting held at first tryout event
- Have potential team members sit in a circle with the coach included in the circle

AGENDA

1. Outline tryout process and decision making for team selection
2. Outline expectations of commitment to the team. Include things like practice schedule & tentative game schedule, social media blackout periods, etc.
3. Outline philosophy for playing time
4. Outline expectations around decorum on social media, in public, etc.
5. Outline expectations around academic achievement (if applicable)
6. Provide document for players to bring home, review and sign. If athletes are in high school or younger, ask parents to co-sign

STEP 2

Team Day

FORMAT

- Team Day should be held once the team has been formed and before the first practice
- Hold in an open space where there is a white board or flip-chart paper
- Place chairs in a circle
- For each agenda point go around the circle giving team members the opportunity to take turns speaking. It's ok for individuals to pass but important to circle back to them after each team member has had a turn to speak

AGENDA

1. **Discuss hopes:** have each team member share a hope for *themselves* (eg. I hope to get better at defence or I hope to make new friends) and a hope for the team for the *year* (eg. I hope our team wins regionals or I hope we have fun at travel tournaments)
2. **Discuss personal values:** have each team member share *two core personal values* (eg. Humility, Fairness, Honesty, Hard Work, Fun, etc.) It is helpful for coach to print off a values list to bring. Ask team-members to document.
3. **Discuss team values and create slogan:** ask team to agree on 4 or 5 values (from the list) and create a team acronym or slogan based on 4 - 5 words. Can use voting system here.
4. **Discuss how conflict will be managed:** explain that conflict is a normal experience on any team and if caught early, it can be managed and leveraged into team cohesion by developing trust. Share examples of typical conflict that team members have experienced and how it was managed. What worked and what didn't?
5. **Discuss stages of a team lifecycle:** Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing.
[Watch Video: Lifecycle of a Team.](#)
6. **Discuss Team Guidelines:** develop Team Guidelines based on goals, values and conflict management (see next page for examples of team guidelines).

STEP 2

Team Day

Team Guidelines should include but not be limited to the following:

- a) Agreement on team communication style
- b) How cliques will be managed
- c) How conflict will be managed when it comes up
- d) How and when coaches will discuss tough decisions such as starting line-ups, playing time and consequences for unacceptable conduct

Some examples of guidelines:

- Phones away
- Listen to understand; don't interrupt
- Speak up if you disagree
- Be honest
- Take a break if you need one
- Use creativity to find solutions
- Focus on the future
- Attend all team meetings (attendance is mandatory)
- What's said in the room stays in the room

These guidelines should include things that will impact how you spend your time together and should provide ongoing guidance regarding conduct. It will create an atmosphere of predictability and provide a basis for trust. Each guideline should be framed in a positive way.

Avoid using general terms like 'to be respectful'. This may mean something different to everyone. Be as explicit as possible. Example: show respect by approaching team members directly when you are upset.

7. Develop team blueprint: create a poster that lists your team values, goals and guidelines. This can be laminated and hung up during team meetings.

STEP 3

Role Review Meeting

FORMAT

- Must be held prior to first game
- Team sits in horseshoe shape around white board
- Hang up team blueprint poster
- Coach writes down team roles and who will fill them to start the season (Example: captain, starting point guard, back-up point guard, etc.)
- Two part meeting
 - With entire team
 - With individual players

AGENDA PART 1

1. Coach explains each of the roles. Roles are not player specific they are simply roles that need to be filled. Depending on the team there may be fluidity through the season with who fills them based on the needs of the team
2. Coach explains that the most important thing is team cohesion. Team needs will come before individual needs
3. Coach explains how substitutions will be made
4. Coach explains playing time philosophy
5. Coach explains feedback process (during games, after games, at practices)
6. Coach explains when players will have opportunities to move between roles

STEP 3

Role Review Meeting

AGENDA PART 2

1. Coach meets with each player to share which role they will fill to start the season
2. Coach shares what they think players strengths are and where they see opportunities for growth. Once growth happens, what opportunities are there for movement into new role?
3. Coach asks the following:
 - What do you value?
 - What do you stand for?
 - What guides you in sports?
 - How do you behave (when you are upset do you need space, etc.)?
 - What do you want out of this experience?
4. Follow-up coach-player meetings to review above can be scheduled as needed

STEP 4

Mandatory Bi-weekly Team Meetings

FORMAT

- Prior to a practice
- Team blueprint poster hung
- Chairs in horseshoe around whiteboard/flip chart pages
- Rotation of facilitator (leadership opportunity)
- Rotation of notetaker. Meeting notes taken and distributed (leadership opportunity)
- Rotation of meeting time keeper (leadership opportunity)
- White board or flip-chart pages
- Maximum meeting length 45 minutes
- If additional time is needed, an additional meeting can be scheduled

AGENDA

1. What's working well
2. Worries
3. Options and ideas
4. Where are we now and where are we going? [Refer to Lifecycle of a Team Video.](#)
5. Plan for the future

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Over the last 18 months, I've interviewed countless athletes and coaches, and gained insights on how they've built strong teams and managed conflict successfully. Armed with their wisdom, I've applied, tried and tested social work principles, which has been fundamental to developing the Conflict to Cohesion Framework (CtC). I look forward to sharing more in my book (Available Fall 2019):

[This Is How We Roll: A Coach's Guide to Transforming Conflict into a High Performing Team](#)

My wish for your team is to utilize the framework within this document to set your team up for success this season! We've seen far too many teams struggle during game time because they haven't taken the steps to equip themselves for conflict – and they should because it's to be expected when the stakes are high!



NEED SUPPORT? WE CAN HELP!

You've got a million and one things to do to prep for the season and you've got every intention of taking all of the steps to proactively set-up your team... but you just don't have the time, energy or support to do so.

If this sounds like you, don't worry. We get it and we're also here to help! Contact us to chat about Meeting Facilitation, Conflict Workshops and Conflict Consultations.

CONTACT US

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