

## **Welcome to the** **QMR Training Scenes Library**

Volume 4 - *The Respectful Workplace* - Conflict Resolution Training Scenes

### *Introduction:*

This volume of the **QMR Training Scenes Library** consists of 6 training dramatizations addressing the challenges associated with diffusing hostile workplace situations and productively resolving conflicts. Each scenario is followed by a brief discussion by legal, human resource and conflict resolution experts who review key learning points.

### *Training Methodology:*

The **QMR Training Scenes Library** is a flexible resource with a variety of uses:

- it can be plugged into comprehensive training programs which you have designed or are presenting
- it can be used as part of a refresher course for employees who are already familiar with the training issues being addressed
- it can be presented by team leaders or supervisors to help focus a group's discussion of specific behavioral challenges
- it can form the basis for regular discussions on a wide range of team issues

The application that best meets your needs will determine how you will use this learning resource.

This guide offers the facilitator a series of questions which can be used to stimulate and focus discussion following the screening of a particular training scene. We recommend that you use the following methodology in most settings:

1. Welcome participants, *introduce* the topic to be addressed and explain why this learning session is taking place.
2. Screen the *video training scene*. Stop before the expert discussion which follows.
3. Distribute the appropriate *handout* and ask participants to respond to the questions, noting down their initial thoughts.
4. Lead a *discussion* by addressing the questions one at a time and asking for feedback from participants. Your Facilitator's Guide has suggested answers for these questions to assist you.
5. Screen the expert discussion to *reinforce the key points* brought out in your discussion.

With your purchase of the **QMR Training Scenes Library**, Quality Media Resources grants you license to make as many copies as your organization needs of this guide and the accompanying handouts.

***QMR Training Scenes Library - Volume IV***

**Conflict Resolution Training Scenes**

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2	The Parking Space	Triggering hot buttons that can escalate conflicts; victimization entitlement syndrome; fear and insecurity in the workplace as a factor in conflicts
3	Crossing the Line	Racism and harassment as a weapon in workplace conflicts; when conflicts escalate into violence; bringing personal problems to work
4	Do the Right Thing	Impact on managers of firing or laying off employees; conflicts based on differences in personal values; communication as a conflict resolution tool
5	The Review	Conflicts over performance review or feedback; younger manager, older employee
6	The Schedule	Sexual harassment as a form of workplace conflict; conflicts with a discrepancy of power

The scenarios are followed by a series of handouts which present the discussion questions for each of the training scenes.

## SCENARIO ONE: *The Truth Is ...*

### **What work values is Alicia demonstrating? What work values is Phil demonstrating?**

(Alicia values efficiency, timeliness and teamwork. Phil values experience, hard work and respect.)

### **What skills do Phil and Alicia need to work on?**

(They both need to work on their communication skills. Their conflict is based in part on clinging to staked out *positions* rather than looking at what is in both of their *interests*.)

### **What were the stereotype images each used in their assessment of the other and how did these contribute to the conflict?**

(Phil saw Alicia as controlling and manipulative - treating him like a dog. Alicia saw Phil as dangerous and out of control - a gangster. In both cases the stereotype interfered with their ability or willingness to communicate their feelings and resolve their conflict. They were stuck in a work relationship dominated by fear and misunderstanding.)

### **What could Alicia have done differently to improve the situation?**

(Alicia could have found out more information about why Phil was not providing her with the information she needed. She could have tried to present a less condescending attitude and focused on how the situation was making her feel. She could have used "I" statements to communicate this to Phil. "I feel like you don't trust me Phil. Is this how you feel?" In this way she could have opened up a dialogue with Phil.)

### **What could Phil have done differently to improve the situation?**

(Phil could have communicated frankly but without appearing to threaten Alicia. He could have told Alicia of his fears of being out of place with the team, and sought her cooperation in finding where he could best fit in. He could have looked at the situation as an opportunity for growth and learning rather than trying to obstruct the team's work.)

### **What positive strengths do each of them bring to their team?**

(Phil brings years of experience, knowledge of the organization, pride in his work... Alicia brings energy, focus, a desire to play a leadership role..)

## SCENARIO TWO: *The Parking Space*

**Is this really an argument over a parking space? What do you think they are disagreeing about?**

(This is an argument over who gets to keep her job. It is a disagreement over who adds value to the organization - who should stay and who should go.)

**What hot buttons are each of these women pressing that escalate the conflict?**

(June's "hot button" is when her right to work is challenged because she is perceived as not financially *needing* to work. Sarah is very sensitive to accusations that she drinks and that this may affect her work performance.)

**What could Sarah and June be doing differently to move this conflict to resolution?**

(One of the women needs to step back from the immediate parking space conflict and bring some perspective to the issues they're really afraid of. They need to speak in non-threatening, first person language and set up some rules by which they will work through their differences. Given the level of fear, this will be very difficult. This might be a good situation into which to introduce a mediator or non-involved third party who can facilitate their process by helping them identify what's in their common interests.)

**The victimization-entitlement syndrome happens when one person feels victimized by another. The victim then feels entitled to retaliate by any means at his/her disposal. Do you see this syndrome at work here? What impact does it have on the conflict.**

(Both Sarah and June see themselves as victims of the other's attack. The more personal and nasty the verbal abuse gets, the more entitled they each feel to escalate the conflict. The result is a battle that just keeps getting worse.)

**If you were called in to mediate this dispute, how would you do it?**

*(This question will open a discussion of the role of a mediator in disputes.)*

### SCENARIO THREE: *Crossing the Line*

#### **Is this situation a powder keg? If so, why?**

(Doug is clearly bringing a great deal of anger into his working relationship with Linda. He has physically struck her and made some comments that could be construed as racist. The organization could face significant legal liability in this case and Doug could face severe disciplinary action. Unless there is a strong intervention by the supervisor or some other party, this conflict is almost certain to escalate.)

#### **Can Doug's remarks be construed as being harassment or even racist?**

(Doug's inference that Linda can't speak English takes on a racist hue given that she is of Asian ancestry. If Linda's complaint that Doug is harshly critical of everything she does and that he calls her "stupid" is true and if his behavior is prompted by Linda's gender or race, she may be the victim of racial or gender harassment. Doug's comment that his ex-wife was "sneaky like that" also raises the question of whether his anger is being brought to work from his home life and misdirected at Linda.)

#### **Did Doug cross a line of acceptable workplace behavior? Where is the line?**

(Doug crossed several lines. First, there is a line that says we should treat our coworkers with respect. Second, he used language that could be seen as racist. Finally, when he threw the report at Linda, he clearly stepped way over the line of acceptable behavior and into the realm where the organization must take disciplinary action.)

#### **How would you handle this situation if you were the supervisor in this scene?**

## SCENARIO FOUR: *Do the Right Thing*

**What is the reason for this conflict between Rick and Christy? What do you feel about the position that each has taken on the issue of layoffs?**

(Both Rick and Christy are trying to be “good” managers. They have conflicting views of what this means probably because of their different personal values. The organization may not be clear on what its values are on the subject of how you handle a reduction in force leaving organizational leaders without clear guidelines. In this case both Rick and Christy have staked out positions which are leading them into conflict. They need to look beyond their positions and find where their interests are in common. *The second part of this question has no right or wrong answers. It's an exchange of ideas.*)

**What could Rick and Christy be doing differently to better resolve their conflict?**

(They need to hear each other's positions, restate or reflect back each other's words to be sure they have heard them correctly and to let each other know what they have heard, and then they need to move past their positions into a discussion of their common interests and what is in the interest of the organization and the employees being let go.)

**What skills do they each need to work on to help them through this difficult time for their organization?**

(They need to develop stronger communication and negotiation skills. They need to begin hearing each other instead of listening only to themselves. They need to look for areas of agreement which can be a basis for finding a resolution to their conflict.)

**If you were Rick or Christy and you wanted to resolve this conflict, what would you say or do?**

## SCENARIO FIVE: *The Review*

### **Who was responsible for this conflict?**

(As the supervisor, Joan was responsible for the way this review went. However, the organization must also take some responsibility for the processes which are in place and which may lend themselves to performance evaluations that make the employee and the supervisor uncomfortable and put them at odds with each other.)

### **What did Denny feel he had to offer this organization? Was this recognized or valued by Joan?**

(It is clear from the scene that Denny had years of experience and knowledge of the organization to offer. Joan neither acknowledged this nor assigned any value to this in her confrontation with Denny.)

### **What do you suppose this organization's values are in regard to experience? In regard to the way teams or departments should function?**

(The organization probably assigns little value to experience or the accumulation of knowledge by older workers. Joan appears to have been given little or no guidance or training in how to work with older employees who have been with the organization for a long time. The organization also seems to have set up a confrontational system for evaluating employee performance. A review "event" where an employee is surprised by the supervisor's criticisms should never happen. A system of on-going mutual feedback and support would have been more effective and less stressful to both Denny and Joan.)

### **What are the likely impacts of this encounter on Denny? On Joan?**

(Denny is very angry. He may leave this workplace after years of contributing. He may seek some kind of revenge by sabotaging Joan or the organization, spreading rumors, slowing down his work, or even by resorting to violence. He may take his knowledge and skills to a competitor where he will feel valued. Joan may become afraid of Denny and find she is not able to effectively work with him, she may try to get rid of him, she may repeat this kind of ineffective supervision with other employees.)

## SCENARIO SIX: *The Schedule*

### **Is Sue a victim of sexual harassment?**

(Yes, this would be considered illegal, quid pro quo harassment. Even if this behavior wasn't illegal, it would be an inappropriate abuse of power.)

### **Is sexual harassment an act of violence? Why or why not?**

(Sexual harassment of the kind demonstrated in this scene can be considered an act of violence in that it violates a person, creating an atmosphere of intimidation and fear. This kind of behavior can be very damaging to the victim.)

### **Did Sue do the right thing by going to Mike? Did Mike do the right thing by transferring Howard and starting an investigation?**

(Sue definitely did the right thing by reporting Howard's behavior. If she had ignored his actions, she could have been subjecting herself and her coworkers to a demoralizing pattern of abuse and harassment. The organization and the employees would have suffered if this behavior was allowed to continue. For this reason and because of possible legal liability, Mike also did the right thing by transferring Howard and beginning an investigation. It would have been inappropriate to transfer Sue since she is not the one who is being investigated and should therefore not be inconvenienced or punished.)

### **Is this scene about a form of workplace conflict?**

(The scene is clearly about an abuse of power. This makes it a serious moral and legal issue. In addition, it's about conflict between an employee who needs a schedule changed and a supervisor who wants sexual favors from the employee. This conflict can escalate, becoming the focus of widespread dissension and divisions between employees and the organization. People at work may take sides and workplace relationships can become strained. The organization that wants to avoid this kind of conflict must have a clear policy on sexual harassment which is enforced and must provide training to all employees on the organization's values and policies.)

### **How can you avoid having a situation like this occur at your workplace?**

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**What skills do Phil and Alicia need to work on?**

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**What could Phil have done differently to improve the situation?**

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