

How conflict builds, and where you can stop it

Adaptive module

~20 min

A manager may spend between 18 and 26% of their time on tensions in their team, and each employee nearly three hours a week. This module looks at what happens before conflict breaks out. It shows when a disagreement becomes a conflict, the only two levers people still control, and how to distinguish sources that can be addressed from those that can be worked around.

— LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 01 Distinguish disagreement (normal, often useful) from conflict, which arises when divergence, interdependence, and negative emotions combine.
- 02 Act on the only two levers available: clarify the divergence and calm the emotions, since interdependence cannot be removed.
- 03 Break down the inner mechanics (assumption, trigger, reaction) to regain control of the two links that depend on you.
- 04 Identify the source of the conflict to decide whether to address it (clarify, negotiate, specify) or work around it.

— WHO IT'S FOR

Colleagues who must work together despite a disagreement, and managers who want to address tensions before they take hold.

- **Prerequisite:** none

— HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

- 1 **Self-assessment:** on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.
- 2 **Expert video:** 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.
- 3 **Practice scenarios:** the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.
- 4 **Dated commitment:** one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.
- 5 **Memo to download:** key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

— A SAMPLE PRACTICE SCENARIO

You're exchanging messages with Martine about the delivery slots you have to propose together on Thursday. She writes: "I don't see why my team should have to adapt again." Your irritation rises and you start a point-by-point reply. How do you continue this exchange?

— ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- Three-stage process (assumption -> trigger -> reaction) – Afthonios method, inspired by Albert Ellis's ABC model
- The conflict equation: divergence + interdependence + negative emotions (Jean Poitras, HEC Montréal)
- Separating the facts from the story you tell yourself, inspired by Crucial Conversations (Patterson, Grenny, McMillan & Switzler)
- Two levers for action (clarifying the divergence, calming the emotions) – Afthonios method

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Observatoire du coût des conflits au travail (OpinionWay for All Leaders Initiative and Topics): 3.1 hours per week per employee, about 152 billion euros a year in salary costs in France
- Jean Poitras (HEC Montréal), with F. Moisan and S. Pronovost, Gestion des conflits au travail : mythes et meilleures pratiques, 2018
- Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan & Al Switzler, Crucial Conversations
- Acas (2014) – preparing for and holding difficult conversations at work