HOCKEY CANADA

**Managing Conflict:
Coach Workbook**

Version 1.0, 2020

PARTNERS IN COACH EDUCATION

The National Coaching Certification Program is a collaborative program of the Government of Canada, provincial/territorial governments, national/provincial/territorial sport organizations, and the Coaching Association of Canada.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

STARTING POINT – IDENTIFYING SOURCES OF CONFLICT IN SPORT

Potential Sources of Conflict in Sport

Select a conflict you have had in sport that stands out in your mind. With that conflict in mind, read *Sources of Conflict in Sport,* below, and then complete the task on page 5.

Sources of Conflict in Sport	■ Balancing education/career and sport
	■ Coaching team (head coach and assistants)
	■ Discipline
	■ Family responsibilities
	■ Game or competition strategy
	■ Injury and recovery
	■ Interpretation of rules
	■ Limited resources: facilities, funding, practice time
	■ Officials: assignment, application of rules or penalties
	■ Parents
	■ Peer pressure
	■ Performance review
	■ Personal relationships within teams
	■ Playing time
	■ Programs that address equity issues
	■ Religion
	■ Rewards and recognition
	■ Roles of team members
	■ Safety
	■ Selection
	■ Social life
	■ Sponsors
	■ Support teams (medical, paramedical, and sport science professionals)
	■ Team philosophy
	■ Training methods
	■ Volunteer boards of directors/league officials
	■ Work obligations, including part-time jobs

Record in the space below the most important sources of this conflict, and briefly explain why each was a source of conflict.

Source of Conflict	This was a source of conflict because…
E.g., Roles of team members	E.g., Team members were not clear about the roles they were expected to play. This led to confusion and conflict when expectations weren't met.
	Coaches, athletes, parents, administrators, etc., had different perceptions about the roles that team members should play.
	Individual athletes or their family had personal reasons for playing/not playing a particular role.

LEVELS OF CONFLICT

Read *Levels of Conflict* and *NCCP Code of Ethics*, below, and then complete the task on page 9.

Levels of Conflict	Not all conflicts are created equal. Some conflicts you face as a coach will be more difficult to resolve than others. One reason is that the roots of conflict vary. People have differences about many things. Consider some of these coaching scenarios. All of these situations contain the seeds of conflict, but they have different root causes.

Facts

Conflicts occur about the facts in a situation because people misunderstand, are misinformed, or lack information. Your athletes misunderstood what time you wanted them to arrive, and so the whole team had to wait.

> Conflict is
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> ⬇
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> increasingly
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> ⬇
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> complicated
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> ⬇
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> and therefore hard to resolve

- Two of the team's best athletes didn't understand what you said at the end of practice about travel for the weekend and arrive half an hour late.

Goals — WHAT

People disagree about what is to be achieved or done. What goals should the club set for the upcoming year? There might be two or more competing schools of thought.

- You and the club board disagree about what constitutes a successful season.

Methods — HOW

Conflicts occur because there is disagreement about how to do something. What is the best way to taper? How much rest and when?

- An athlete disagrees with the amount of rest he's getting in your approach to taper before a championship.

Values — WHY

There can be disagreement about why things are done or what it's *right* to do in a situation. At the root of such conflict are the values you hold. If you believe athletes should be held accountable for behaviour that is outside the expected code of conduct and your assistant believes that athletes should not be forced to lose their season because of immature behaviour, conflict will likely emerge.

- Despite the fact three athletes broke curfew, a project coach decided to allow them to compete.

NCCP Code of Ethics

NCCP Code of Ethics

Purpose of the NCCP Code of Ethics

The National Coaching Certification Program™ (NCCP) Code of Ethics provides ethical standards that reflect the core values of the coaching profession in Canada, and guides sport coaches to make balanced decisions to achieve personal, participant and team goals. The NCCP Code of Ethics applies to every coach in Canada—from the first-time coach to the head coach of a national team. The NCCP Code of Ethics is used to guide the conduct in sport that stipulate acceptable and non-acceptable behaviours and associated repercussions.

Core principles and ethical standards of behaviour

Coaches value Leadership and Professionalism, Health and Safety, and Respect and Integrity. For each of these core principles, there are associated ethical standards of in-person and on-line behaviour expected of every NCCP coach and NCCP Coach Developer in Canada, whether on or off the field.

1

Leadership and professionalism

This principle considers the inherent power and authority that a Coach holds.

2

Health and safety

This principle considers the mental, emotional, physical health and safety of all participants.[1]

3

Respect and integrity

This principle considers respect and integrity, which are the rights of all participants.

[1] "Participants" include but are not limited to athletes, opponents, parents, other coaches, volunteers, administrators, officials and medical/IST irrespective of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, religion, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, or physical or mental ability (Source of inclusivity statement: Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES).

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NCCP Code of Ethics

1. Leadership and professionalism
This principle considers the inherent power and authority that a coach holds.

Ethical standards of behaviour
▶ Understand the authority that comes with your position and make decisions that are in the best interest of all participants
▶ Share your knowledge and experience openly
▶ Maintain the athlete-centered approach to coaching so that every participant's well being is a priority
▶ Be a positive role model
▶ Maintain confidentiality and privacy of participants' personal information

2. Health and safety
This principle considers the mental, emotional, physical health and safety of all participants.

Ethical standards of behaviour
▶ Recognize and minimize vulnerable situations to ensure the safety of participants
▶ Prioritize a holistic approach when planning and delivering training and competition
▶ Advocate for, and ensure appropriate supervision of participants, including the Rule of Two
▶ Participate in education and training to stay current on practices to ensure the continued safety of your participants
▶ Understand the scope of your role and skills and call upon others with specialized skills when needed to support your participants

3. Respect and integrity
This principle considers respect and integrity, which are the rights of all participants.

Ethical standards of behaviour
▶ Provide equitable opportunity and access for all
▶ Establish a respectful and inclusive sport environment where all participants can raise questions or concerns
▶ Obey the rules and participate honestly and respectfully
▶ Be open, transparent and accountable for your actions
▶ Maintain objectivity when interacting with all participants

Rule of two
The goal of the Rule of Two is to ensure all interactions and communications are open, observable and justifiable. The purpose is to protect participants (especially minors) and coaches in potentially vulnerable situations by ensuring more than one adult is present. There may be exceptions for emergency situations.

Contact
Questions related to the NCCP Code of Ethics design may be directed to the Chief Operating Officer at the Coaching Association of Canada. Send an email to coach@coach.ca or call 613-235-5000 ext. 1.

For complaints related to Registered Coaches or Chartered Professional Coaches, refer to the Coaching Association of Canada's Code of Conduct.

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Recall your conflict from the previous exercise, and complete the table below.

Was the conflict about…	Agree	Disagree
Facts? ■ Identify facts about which the parties agreed. ■ Identify facts about which they disagreed.		
Goals (*what* is to be achieved)? ■ Identify goals about which the parties agreed. ■ Identify goals in the situation about which the parties disagreed.		
Methods (*how* things should be done)? ■ Are there areas where the parties agreed? ■ Identify where the parties disagreed about how things should be done.		
Values (*why* things are done)? ■ Identify the values the parties agreed about. ■ Identify the values the parties disagreed about. ■ Circle the values in this conflict that are related to the five coaching values in the *NCCP Code of Ethic*s.		
Multipliers of Conflict E.g., personality conflict, competing interests		

MULTIPLIERS OF CONFLICT

Read *Multipliers of Conflict* below. What multipliers did you experience in the conflict whose levels you identified above? **Record them in the bottom row of the table on page 9.**

Multipliers of Conflict	Emotional Multipliers that Increase the Difficulty of Resolving Conflicts
	Incompatible personal styles (personality conflicts)
	Struggles for power or control
	Threats to self-esteem
	Jealousy
	Resentment
	Stress, burnout, and anger

Organizational Multipliers that Increase the Difficulty of Resolving Conflict	
Multiplier	**How It May Complicate Conflict**
Ambiguous roles and responsibilities	■ Roles, responsibilities, authority, and relationships are unclear ■ Decision-making processes change with the situation or people involved ■ Boundaries of acceptable behaviour are weak or missing ■ Everyone can make decisions, or no one can make decisions
Concentration of power	■ Leaders are directive ■ There is little delegation of authority ■ One group or person makes all decisions ■ Some individuals or groups have a veto ■ There is no due process ■ Arbitrary decision-making is widespread ■ There is heavy reliance on one person for information, assistance, and resources
Competing interests	■ Real and perceived competition for scare resources (money, time, human) or rewards is ongoing ■ There is a real and perceived incompatibility between different organization goals, e.g., representative teams and league teams

Communication barriers	■ There are few opportunities for face-to-face communication ■ Communication skills are poor ■ Different groups produce different communication materials
Organization is complex	■ Tasks are divided into several steps ■ Finishing tasks involves many individuals and groups ■ There are several levels and types of authority
Consensus is necessary	■ All parties must agree on the outcomes to be achieved before action can be taken ■ A sense of urgency interferes with developing real consensus
Regulations governing behaviour	■ There are many rules, regulations, and formal policies
Prior conflicts are unresolved	■ Disagreements are not addressed ■ Unresolved prior conflicts influence the day-to-day environment ■ Stereotyping and attribution are prevalent ■ Conflicting values are unresolved
Organizational politics	■ Individuals make a habit of blaming others when mistakes are made or expectations are not met ■ Information is selectively shared ■ Meeting agendas reflect personal interests ■ Informal coalitions form to increase the visibility of an issue
Individual personalities influence outcomes	■ Hidden agendas are common ■ People feel threatened at some level ■ People think only of their own opinions and belief systems ■ People believe that deceit is a natural and acceptable way to influence others

APPROACHES TO MANAGING CONFLICT

My Preferred Approach to Managing Conflict

Presented below is a short survey that will help you determine your preferred approach to managing conflict. Follow the instructions presented, and then use the scoring sheet on page 9 to find out what approach you prefer. You will learn more about your preferred approach if your choices reflect how you actually behave, not how you would like to behave.

INSTRUCTIONS: In each of the thirty paired statements, you have a choice of two statements. Circle the letter of the statement that best describes your behaviour as a coach in most situations.				
1.	A	There are times when I let others take responsibility for solving problems.	B	Rather than negotiate the things on which we disagree, I try to stress those things upon which we both agree.
2.	A	I try to find a compromise solution.	B	I attempt to deal with all of others' and my concerns.
3.	A	I am usually firm in pursing my goals.	B	I might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve our relationship.
4.	A	I try to find a compromise solution.	B	I sometimes sacrifice my own wishes for the wishes of the other person.
5.	A	I consistently seek the other person's help in working out a solution.	B	I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.
6.	A	I try to avoid creating unpleasantness for myself.	B	I try to win my position.
7.	A	I try to postpone the issue until I have had some time to think it over.	B	I give up some points in exchange for others.
8.	A	I am usually firm in pursing my goals.	B	I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.
9.	A	I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.	B	I make some effort to get my way.
10.	A	I am firm in pursing my goals.	B	I try to find a compromise solution.
11.	A	I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately.	B	I might try to soothe the other person's feelings and preserve our relationship.

INSTRUCTIONS: In each of the thirty paired statements, you have a choice of two statements. Circle the letter of the statement that best describes your behaviour as a coach in most situations.

12.	A	I sometimes avoid taking positions which could create controversy.	B	I will let the other person have some of their positions if he or she lets me have some of mine.
13.	A	I propose a middle ground.	B	I press to get my points made.
14.	A	I tell the other person my ideas and ask for theirs.	B	I try to show the other person the logic and benefits of my position.
15.	A	I might try to soothe the other person's feelings and preserve our relationship.	B	I try to do what is necessary to avoid tension.
16.	A	I try not to hurt the other person's feelings.	B	I try to convince the other person of the merits of my position.
17.	A	I am usually firm in pursing my goals.	B	I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.
18.	A	If it makes the other person happy, I might let them maintain their views.	B	I will let the other person have some of their positions if they let me have some of mine.
19.	A	I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.	B	I try to postpone the issue until I have had some time to think it over.
20.	A	I attempt to immediately work through our differences.	B	I try to find a fair combination of gains and losses for both of us.
21.	A	In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person's wishes.	B	I try to find a fair combination of gains and losses for both of us.
22.	A	I try to find a position that is intermediate between theirs and mine.	B	I assert my wishes.
23.	A	I am very often concerned with satisfying all our wishes.	B	There are times when I let others take responsibility for solving the problem.
24.	A	If the other person's position seems very important to them, I would try to meet their wishes.	B	I try to get them to settle for a compromise.
25.	A	I try to show the other person the logic and benefits of my position.	B	In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person's wishes.

INSTRUCTIONS: In each of the thirty paired statements, you have a choice of two statements. Circle the letter of the statement that best describes your behaviour as a coach in most situations.

26.	A	I propose middle ground.	B	I am nearly always concerned with satisfying all parties' wishes.
27.	A	I sometimes avoid taking positions that would create controversy.	B	If it makes the other person happy, I might let them maintain their views.
28.	A	I am usually firm in pursing my goals.	B	I usually seek the other person's help in working out a solution.
29.	A	I propose a middle ground.	B	I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.
30.	A	I try not to hurt the other person's feelings.	B	I always share the problem with the other person so that we can work it out.

Scoring and Interpretation

When you have completed the survey, transfer your choices to this scoring sheet by circling, for each statement, the letter you chose for that statement in the survey. For example, if you circled the letter B in statement 1 of the survey, circle B in the first row below.

Count the number of circled responses in each column. Record the total in the box under the column.

	Competing	Collaborating	Compromising	Avoiding	Accommodating
1.				A	B
2.		B	A		
3.	A				B
4.			A		B
5.		A		B	
6.	B			A	
7.			B	A	
8.	A	B			
9.	B			A	
10.	A		B		
11.		A			B
12.			B	A	
13.	B		A		
14.	B	A			
15.				B	A
16.	B				A
17.	A			B	
18.			B		A
19.		A		B	
20.		A	B		
21.		B			A
22.	B		A		
23.		A		B	
24.			B		A
25.	A				B
26.		B	A		
27.				A	B
28.	A	B			
29.			A	B	
30.		B			A
TOTAL					

Consult *Interpreting Your Score on the Survey on Approaches to Managing Conflict* below for information on how to interpret your score.

Interpreting Your Score on the Survey on Approaches to Managing Conflict

Your scores will help you understand the strength of your preference for particular approaches to conflict when you are coaching. Ideally, you would score 6 in all five approaches, meaning you're very balanced at using each approach to dealing with conflict. Your scores will change from one context to another; your preferred approaches to conflict as a coach may be different than in another professional role or as a family member. What's most important to remember is that the most effect manager of conflict is the coach who can use every approach at the appropriate time and place.

If you score 0 – 3 in an approach

This is not an approach you use frequently. Even if you score 0, it doesn't mean you never use that approach; it's just that it's very low on your priority list of the approaches you can choose. A score in the 0 - 3 range likely means this is an approach you are not very comfortable using, don't practise very much, or don't have the skills to use. This represents an area for growth.

If you score 4 – 8 in an approach

This is an approach you're good at using. This score means you can easily move in an out of using this approach: you neither underuse nor overuse this approach to conflict. There are times when we need to focus more on ourselves and times when we need to focus on the other person. This score means you can discern when and how often to use this approach in a coaching context.

If you score 9 – 12 in an approach

This indicates a tendency to overuse a particular approach. You use this approach automatically. When all else fails, this is the approach you choose. You may not even consider other options. It's good to have an approach you're comfortable with, but you may be so comfortable you overuse it. It's important to take the time to explore alternatives and develop underused skills.

The Big Picture

The individual scores tell you about your preferred approaches. They provide insight into areas of overuse and underuse and areas where you are more in balance. There is also a bigger picture.

Look at your three highest scores. If they all reflect the assertive range (Competing, Avoiding, and Compromising), it's a pretty good indication you are focused on taking care of your needs and interests. This would be a very different profile than if you score 12 in Accommodating, 12 in Compromising, 6 in Collaborating, and 0 in the other two approaches.

Are your scores more concentrated on one side than the other? More top or bottom? Where are the areas of balance, and do they compensate for your high or low scores?

Remember this is a survey and there is no right or wrong approach — there's only your approach. It's important to reflect on your scores and learn how you might become a more effective manager of conflict.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Read *Dealing with Difficult People*, below, and then complete the tasks on page 18.

Dealing with Difficult People	Even skilled communicators are challenged by particularly aggressive behaviour like bullying, intimidation, temper tantrums, or sabotage. Following are some suggestions that may help you communicate more effectively in situations where this occurs.[1] All the suggestions follow from the skills you have learned in this module.
	Bullying relies on the use of fear, cruelty, and threats to control others, particularly those who appear weak or vulnerable. Bullying is often used as a cover for low self-esteem, although the hope is to fool others into believing the opposite is true.
	Someone who resorts to tantrums causes others to walk on eggshells because he or she argues about anything and everything. Temper tantrums are often used in tandem with abusive and abrasive behaviour in an attempt to show power. Other aggressive behaviours that may be used to gain power over you in conflict are interruptions and the use of personal attacks rather than dealing with issues.
	Intimidation involves trying to threaten, coerce, hurt, or embarrass others to get what one wants. Sabotage is another aggressive behaviour that can be difficult to deal with.
	Here are some tips for communicating in difficult situations:
	■ Prepare yourself psychologically for your next encounter.
	■ Rehearse how you will respond the next time you encounter the difficult behaviours.
	■ Let aggressive people vent their anger before speaking.
	■ Let them know you understand their point of view by restating what they say.
	■ If a person interrupts, say "I wasn't finished speaking."
	■ Press for specific details, examples, and solutions.
	■ Let others know when their behaviour is unacceptable.
	■ Explain your expectations early and frequently.
	■ If someone bullies you or attacks you in public, deal with him or her immediately. Don't wait for a private moment as you would with less aggressive behaviour. Use facts to defend your point of view.
	■ Obtain proof of sabotage, and confront it directly.
	■ Put things in writing for your mutual reference.
	■ If appropriate, encourage the other person to find ways to manage his or her anger differently.
	■ Walk away and explain that the tactics won't work on you anymore.

[1] Roberta Cava, in *Dealing with Difficult People*. Key Porter Books. 1999.

Think of a conflict in your coaching situation where you had to deal with a difficult person. Briefly describe what made their behaviour difficult for you.

Use the worksheet below to prepare a plan for the next time you deal with that person.

What conflict-management approach is it appropriate to use?
What listening techniques would you emphasize?
What will you say, and when will you say it?
What else might you do?

Read *Inventing Options for Managing Conflict* and then answer the two questions on page 20.

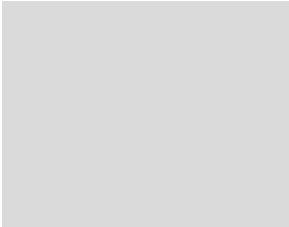| Inventing Options for Managing Conflict	In conflict, we often think we have to choose between the various positions that are being taken by the different parties involved. However the most powerful solutions are most often something entirely different than any of the interested parties is advocating. Inventing options for consideration does not come naturally, but creative problem-solving is necessary if we hope to resolve our most difficult conflicts. The following interfere with creative problem-solving: ■ Jumping to conclusions about any new idea that is suggested. ■ Looking for the one perfect answer. ■ Zero-sum thinking: if you have more, I have less. Sometimes the best solutions come from expanding the pie to include more possibilities. ■ Focusing only on immediate needs. ■ Sticking with the status quo or tried-and-true strategies. If you want to invent creative options: ■ Think of as many options as possible — the more ideas you generate, the more likely it is you'll find something that truly satisfies everyone's needs. Two or three options are not enough. ■ Think of the ideas first — then evaluate them; don't evaluate as you go. ■ Gather as much information as possible about the conflict situation — the more you know, the easier it is to find solutions. ■ Look at the problem from different perspectives. How would someone else solve this conflict? ■ Search for mutual gain. ■ Look for ways to make decisions easy to accept. If you want the horse to jump the fence, don't raise the fence. ■ Test each idea against reality. What are its strengths and weaknesses? Who wins and who loses? ■ Find ways to expand the pie or look at a longer time period. ■ Look for package deals — can you include several related issues in the solution? ■ Can you deal with a smaller part of the issue in a different context? ■ Are there low-priority issues that you can give up? Creative options are possible when you stop focusing on the position that others have taken and focus instead on the interests and needs that lie behind their position. There are usually multiple interests behind a position. Here are two simple techniques for understanding what others' interests are:

- Ask other people directly why they prefer their position, or ask yourself why they prefer their position. Make sure the other person understands you are not asking them to justify their position.

- Ask yourself what interests prevent others from accepting a position or solution you are proposing.

How could this information have helped in the past?

How will you implement these options in the future?

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