

Managing Conflict

- ◆ Be aware of the causes of conflict. Know what it looks like and work to prevent it.
- ◆ Make sure that your board and your PTA have a good base knowledge about PTA. Often conflict arises just because people don't understand how and why things happen within a PTA. Make sure that PTA's positions and policies are well articulated by explaining how and why actions are taken within your unit. It is critical that there is a frequent reference to your bylaws; a great deal of the functioning of a PTA is dependent on your bylaws.
- ◆ Make an effort to be informed on issues in your school and community as well as PTA. It is easier to try and resolve something familiar than a totally unknown situation
- ◆ Be proactive in running your PTA. Use parliamentary procedure from the beginning - it is too late to start when things get rough! Set ground rules and stick with them. Don't forget how important a good relationship is with the principal and staff at your school
- ◆ Delegate so everyone has some responsibility. When everyone has some ownership, they are less likely to raise problems.
- ◆ Prevent conflict by honoring the rights of the members and upholding the responsibility of being a membership organization.
- ◆ Goal setting makes a difference. If decisions can be measured against a consistent goal or expectation, everyone understands and again feels included - keeping unproductive conflict at bay.
- ◆ Open communication takes work, but it's important to people to have a chance to say what they are thinking and feeling. Sometimes that



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- is all they need to do to resolve their issues.
- ◆ Use active listening:
- ◆ Be patient
- ◆ Do not interrupt
- ◆ Put aside your own opinions
- ◆ Clear up any misunderstandings before you begin to talk
- ◆ Some barriers to effective communication are:
- ◆ Poor listening skills
- ◆ Lack of trust
- ◆ Different knowledge levels
- ◆ Cultural differences
- ◆ Giving advice and suggestions
- ◆ Body language
- ◆ Differing values
- ◆ Lack of commitment
- ◆ Trigger words, such as won't, always, never and but.
- ◆ Parliamentary procedure is a useful tool, not a hammer to pound people with. Ensure that your membership is familiar with the proper use so that they recognize business is hampered when people speak out of turn or are disruptive. Board members with good knowledge of parliamentary procedure can help out with helpful motions at opportune times. Remember your standing rules!
- ◆ Make sure to revisit your ground rules regularly if you feel that your meetings are getting too unruly.
- ◆ If you have an indication or an idea that something might be brewing, ask your council or district for support. They can help you with practical tips and attend your meeting if you need them.
- ◆ Remember you can always meet another time to discuss the situation informally.