



# **STRONGER TOGETHER**

*How to deal with stressful communication  
and conflict on board*

Stand: 23.02.2022

## **INTRODUCTION**

---

The seafaring world is a world full of intercultural contacts. Due to the different cultures and socialization of the seafarers from different country's conflicts can appear. With these card's we would like to give you some information and methods to deal with conflictful communication on board of your ship. Literally you are all in one boat and everybody is needed to travel safely together to the next port. You all need to rely on each other. Work based relationships do not need to grow to friendships but: you can have a good working atmosphere or a bad one in which problems and accidents can happen more easy.



It is not allowed to modify these cards without agreement of Deutsche Seemannsmission Hamburg-Harburg e.V. All rights are at Deutsche Seemannsmission Hamburg-Harburg e.V.. We assume no responsibility for the use of the cards.

© Deutsche Seemannsmission Hamburg-Harburg e.V. 02.03.2022, Hamburg, Germany



# **STRONGER TOGETHER**

*How to deal with stressful communication  
and conflict on board*

Stand: 23.02.2022

## **LEARNING ABOUT CONFLICT**

---



Conflicts mostly seem to be negative. They are related to stress and painful experiences for both sides of the conflicting parties. For having a conflict which is involving somebody personally there need to be an emotional bounding. Otherwise, we could just ignore the conflict and we wouldn't be involved not emotionally nor physically.

In communicational education we try not to see conflict as something bad. We try to see the innovative character of conflicts for the partaking parties. We distinguish conflicts in two types of groups:

- Social/ constructive conflict
  - Is stabilizing the social group, is (re-) arranging the group structure
  - Helps for innovation and communication within the group, helps to accept different people and opinions in the group as they are, helps to set the order of the group
- Dissocial/ destructive conflict
  - Is setting the group apart, is putting barriers between group members
  - Produces miscommunication, hate and in the hardest cases violence

In general, all conflict behavior - even violence - is a form of communication! Especially if someone is not able to communicate via words anymore or is not having the feeling of being understood (this means not that all have to agree).



# STRONGER TOGETHER

*How to deal with stressful communication  
and conflict on board*

Stand: 23.02.2022

## CONFLICT AS COMMUNICATION

---



You need to find ways which enable's you and your fellow crew members to openly communicate and taking into account the variability of all people, their culture and their opinion and *belief in a plural society*.

Communication is spoken words, behavior, gestures and facial expressions etc.

Communication always is about sending and receiving messages on different bases:

- Informational base
  - What one person says
  - What the other person understands
- Relationship base
  - What one person means and wants to express
  - What one person think someone means and guess what he or her wants to express

There can be a big difference between how you see yourself and how someone else sees him- or herself. We are not always acting congruent/ understandable even if we think we do. Conflict can also be a stress relieve for other or deeper sitting conflicts from an person named a proxy conflict.

**The rules of communication: These are the main rules to do polite communication.**

- Within a conflict it is good to see common ground within the differences the parties have.
- And: A conflict should be named as a conflict. Be open, precisely, sincere and polite/ respectful!

*Separate the levels between informational base and relationship base! It is about calming down the tension of being close and being distanced, of mixing up something informational and something emotional.*

Try to avoid new emotional injuries otherwise a conflict can not be cleared.



# STRONGER TOGETHER

*How to deal with stressful communication  
and conflict on board*

Stand: 23.02.2022

## METHODS OF CONFLICT SOLVING I

---



There are three main method of dealing with a conflict:

- Implementing a fair and respectful conflict situation (this is only possible by introducing this method to all crew and implementing spaces on board for conflict solving)
- Shifting conflicts – this means to clear a conflict with a different type of setting e.g.: doing a Basketball match (with this method there is stress release due to sports and the conflict losses are not that serious)
- *Direct* methods for regulating and working on conflicts

Which method fits must be individually accessed in the situation. For this there is an “escalation ladder”:

1. Waiting, if conflict parties can communicate and solve it by themselves
2. Teaching both parties about rules of communication implementing empathy on both sides for each other
3. Being present and showing that the whole crew is watching without participating in the conflict
4. Going in the conflict and regulating it by moderation (functioning as a mediator)
5. Moderating and reflecting the conflict
6. Being the middle man I (this only works if both parties like to solve the conflict)
7. Being the middle man II (listen to both sides and offer them a compromise)
8. Letting the crew decide what is the best solution (here all seafarers have a right to decide)
9. Being the referee (listen to both sides, after that you decide what to do)
10. Force (in case of a violent conflict you have to separate both parties until the situation calms down)
11. Letting the authorities decide (in case of criminal behavior alert the police/owner in the next port.)



# STRONGER TOGETHER

*How to deal with stressful communication  
and conflict on board*

Stand: 23.02.2022

## METHODS OF CONFLICT SOLVING II

---



After you have chosen where the conflict is on the “escalation ladder” you have to choose your methods of dealing with the conflict.

All these methods are based on the *rules of communication*:

- Preventive learning of “violence free” communication – This briefly means: don’t interrupt the other person while he’s talking; let the person speak until he or she is finished. In the role of middleman, this means giving both parties the opportunity to speak. And: stop the discussion when people start arguing in an emotional or violent way.
- De-escalation – This means calming down the situation. Be calm in your talking and your body language. Try to separate the parties until they have calmed down, and then start working again on solving the conflict in a more productive situation.
- Mediation – This means arbitrating between the parties in a communal and supportive way to calm any conflict. Reflect on any (emotional) injuries that have been made to both sides, so that they understand that they’re not the only one who feels misunderstood. Clearing up misunderstandings is a good way to start finding the similarities shared with each other.
- Confrontation – This is a technique which only should be taken if you can guess how the other person will react or in the case of emergency/ danger. Confrontation means giving a direct comment on someone’s behavior or his opinion on how to solve the problem (this means you also need to let the other person reply to your comments), or to simply stop a person in what he or she is doing.
- Decision from a third party – This means letting the conflicting parties explain their point of view on the conflict, and a third party then decides how the situation can be cleared up. The third person has to be a person who is neither emotionally nor otherwise connected to one of the conflicting parties.



# **STRONGER TOGETHER**

*How to deal with stressful communication  
and conflict on board*

Stand: 23.02.2022

**BUILDING UP RESILIENCE**

---



Resilience is **your strength and ability to withstand** a conflict or stressful situation. How resilient you are is different everyday and depending on your living situation and you as an individual. The following list of activities and things may only partly be fitting for you, but there should be something on it that is **good for you!** Do that as often/ regularly as possible!

- Sleep enough (min. 6 h in one go),
- eat well and healthy,
- do sports,
- communicate with your loved ones,
- entertain yourself (read, listen to music, watch tv, play computer games),
- spend time with fellow crew that you like,
- meditate and pray (speaking with God),
- make music or sing (karaoke),
- express yourself creatively ( paint, wright, dance...),
- a moment in the sun and fresh air,
- shore leave,
- a day off,
- valuing yourself by minding your body (fingernails, haircut, ...) and cabin ( in order and clean),
- and many other things that do you well.

Improving your Resilience is an ongoing process. There are factors that can influence you in a negative way and weaken you, make yourself aware of them and if possible avoid them. Like a big work load, stress, illness, drugs and alcohol.

**Whenever you can: find people who support you in your efforts to solve a conflict.**



- chat with a chaplain      - worldwide support  
- online counselling      - qualified professionals

<https://dsm.care>