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Cultural differences: The causes of and solutions to conflict

By Larry Dunn, Ph.D., SIA Conflict Resolution Specialist

The final article in our five-part conflict resolution series discusses the significance of culture and metaphors in helping to avoid and resolve conflict while offering pathways to reconciliation, peace and social harmony.

"That sure was a minefield!" "You're talking apples and I'm talking oranges." "Well, that spiraled out of control." "Getting a final agreement was no picnic."

What metaphors come to mind for you when you think about conflict? A storm, perhaps? A calculated game of chess? Or maybe a tug-o-war or a carefully choreographed dance? Almost without thought we rely on metaphors to describe the conflicts of our life. These metaphors allow us to compare the difficult experience of conflict to something we readily understand and reveal the way we think about and deal with conflict.

Metaphors also provide a window into our cultural context. Culture is a multifaceted construct, encompassing beliefs, customs, language, and social behaviors that shape human interactions and perceptions. In the realm of conflict, understanding culture is critical, as it provides insight into the underlying causes of our disputes and can provide effective resolution strategies. Metaphors play a crucial role in conveying cultural nuances and navigating the complexities of conflict.

Understanding Culture and Metaphors

Culture serves as the lens through which individuals interpret their experiences and construct meaning. It influences perceptions of identity, values and norms, shaping interpersonal dynamics and preferred approaches for dealing with conflict. Cultural diversity manifests in a myriad of forms, encompassing ethnic, religious, linguistic and socio-economic differences. Each culture harbors distinct world views, communication styles and conflict management strategies, which can either facilitate or impede resolution efforts. These differences can complicate and even become the basis for our conflicts.

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Six Dimensions of the Wellness Challenge Series

By Lyn Poll, M.S., SIA Prevention Services

As the school year begins to wind down, so does the Wellness Challenge Series. I hope you have had the opportunity to try a couple, if not all, of the challenges, and have noticed how small changes can lead to big rewards. The final challenge will spotlight financial *W.E.L.L.-being with the *HomeBrew* challenge.**

The HomeBrew Challenge

Achieving financial well-being ultimately helps us meet current and ongoing fiscal obligations, feel secure in our financial future, and make choices that allow us to enjoy life. By understanding spending habits and limiting discretionary expenses, we can keep our cash flow in check and build our savings over time.

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• Culture influences both conflict and harmony in daily life

Cultural differences

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Metaphors are potent tools for articulating abstract concepts and encapsulating cultural insights. They transcend literal meanings, drawing on shared symbols and cultural references to convey values and deeper layers of meaning. Metaphors evoke imagery and emotions, enabling individuals to express complex ideas in succinct and relatable ways. In the context of conflict resolution, metaphors can serve as bridges between disparate cultural perspectives, fostering empathy and mutual understanding.

Cultural Metaphors in Conflict

Cultural metaphors encapsulate deeply ingrained assumptions, beliefs and values, shedding light on the root causes of conflict. For instance, in collectivist cultures, conflict may be understood as a disruption of harmony within the community, akin to a broken bond or a frayed fabric. In contrast, more individualistic cultures may view conflict as a clash of personal rights or a struggle for autonomy, resembling a competitive game or a battle for supremacy. These metaphors not only reflect cultural orientations but also influence conflict perception and response patterns. Even the same metaphor can have different meanings. For example, going "round and round" might mean getting nowhere to one person and going deeper and deeper to another!

Cross-cultural Conflict Resolution

Metaphors can also facilitate cross-cultural communication and conflict resolution. By employing culturally resonant metaphors, mediators and negotiators can bridge cultural divides and forge connections with conflicting parties. Metaphorical language can speak to perceptions without directly discussing the people involved in a personal way, fostering empathy and rapport, and enabling participants to see the conflict from a different point of view while allowing others to save face.

Cultural awareness is essential in conflict resolution endeavors, as cultural misunderstandings can exacerbate tensions and impede progress. Cultural competence entails recognizing and respecting diverse belief systems, communication styles and conflict resolution norms. Awareness of cultural nuances can allow disputants and third parties to effectively adapt their approaches accordingly. Recognizing and incorporating culturally relevant metaphors into dialogue and conflict resolution processes can foster trust, facilitate communication, and navigate cultural differences with sensitivity and respect.

Metaphors also offer insights into transformative pathways for conflict resolution. For instance, the metaphor of conflict as a journey emphasizes the dynamic nature of conflicts, highlighting opportunities for growth, learning and reconciliation along the way. Such a metaphor might convey the importance of seeing forgiveness, for example, as an ongoing process rather than a one-time event, enabling parties to be more patient with one another in recognizing the importance of allowing time for "head" and "heart" to align.

Similarly, the metaphor of conflict as a dance underscores the interplay of opposing forces, suggesting the possibility of collaboration, rhythm and harmony amidst discord. By reframing conflicts through transformative metaphors, conflicting parties can envision shared goals and collective solutions, transcending adversarial mindsets and fostering constructive, mutual engagement.

Culture permeates every facet of our lives in known and unknown ways, profoundly influencing how conflicts arise, unfold and are resolved. By recognizing cultural dynamics and leveraging metaphors as communicative tools, we can better navigate cultural complexities, foster empathy and promote constructive dialogue in conflict resolution processes with greater respect for differences. Culturally sensitive approaches that incorporate metaphorical language facilitate mutual understanding, bridge cultural divides and pave the way for transformative outcomes. As we navigate an increasingly interconnected and diverse world, the potential for misunderstanding increases. The significance of culture and metaphors in helping to avoid and resolve conflict cannot be overstated, offering pathways to reconciliation, peace and social harmony.

And that would be like stitching together a beautiful quilt!

Atwater Elementary's lunch heroes in action

SIA recently had the opportunity to participate in Atwater's Nutrition Services staff development day. Food Service Supervisor Lisa Mendoza organized a day full of educational topics ranging from customer service tips to injury-prevention techniques, while keeping it all entertaining with pajama- and pizza-themed activities.

Staff development days provide opportunities to learn how to better meet the needs of our students, collaborate, review policies/procedures and build relationships with other staff. In-service days are also a great way to recognize and show appreciation to staff for their hard work and dedication to their jobs.

Kudos to Lisa and her "lunch hero" crew for ensuring that our students receive nutritious meals that keep them fueled for success. Thank you for inviting SIA to participate in your event.

Does your district have an in-service, health or safety event that you'd like SIA to attend? It's a free benefit to our member districts. Contact us at: https://www.sia-jpa.org/trainings.

May 3 is School Lunch Hero Day

Not all heroes wear capes — some wear aprons

Stop by any cafeteria and you'll see nutrition professionals busily preparing healthy meals for students, all while adhering to strict nutrition standards, navigating student food allergies and offering service with a smile—and you'll see they are true heroes!

School Lunch Hero Day (SLHD), launched in 2013, was a joint effort between the School Nutrition Association (SNA) and Jarret J. Krossoczka, author of the Lunch Ladies series, to recognize the hard work and dedication school nutrition professionals show every day as they provide healthy meals to students. Celebrated on the first Friday in May, SLHD provides the opportunity for school staff, supervisors and students to acknowledge the difference the food service staff makes in the lives of every student that comes through the cafeteria.

This year, SLHD is on May 3 and you're encouraged to take the opportunity to praise, celebrate and spotlight your food service team and their one-of-a-kind superpowers. Not sure how to celebrate? Click here for ideas: https://schoolnutrition.org/about-school-meals/school-lunch-hero-day/#resources and show your nutritional staff how much you appreciate their hard work.

SIA for Kids — Schools in Partnership

- Wellness Challenge
- Safer playgrounds for kids

Six Dimensions of the Wellness Challenge Series

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One of the most common sources of excess spending happens when we make spur-of-the-moment trips to cafes and chain coffeehouses that sell overpriced drinks. They may not cost too much on one trip, but stopping multiple times a week over the course of a month can really put a dent in your wallet.

According to Statisa, 74 percent of Americans drink coffee every day and spend on average $6 to $11 per visit at coffee shops or cafes multiple times a week. To put that in perspective, let's say you treat yourself to coffee three times a week, spending an average of $8 per stop. That averages to $24 a week, $96 a month and $1,150 a year.

The **HomeBrew Challenge** encourages you to skip the coffee shop for 30 days and brew coffee at home or at the office. Not only does home-brewed coffee save money, it also cuts down on high-calorie additions, artificial ingredients, and the use of cups and straws, which is better for the environment.

While you don't have to stop drinking your favorite beverage, it may be eye-opening to see how much money you can save by cutting back. Brewing at home or buying the most affordable coffee you can find are both ways to keep the money in your wallet.

Take it to the next level. Create a "morning coffee talk" with co-workers, friends or family and share recipes for lattes, cappuccinos and more.

We want to hear from you about this challenge series; please email us at PreventionServices@sia-jpa.org.

**Whole Person, Environment, Lifestyle and Learning*

TK playgrounds help keep students safe

Lisa Konarski, CPSI, SIA Prevention Services Director

Playground equipment is a fun way for children to develop strength, engage with friends and enhance their intellect. Play at recess gives children time to expend energy so they can return to the classroom with renewed focus. Age-appropriate equipment is necessary to ensure children can play safely, and with the increase in TK students, it's important to understand what's suitable.

Children at different ages and stages of development require playground equipment that provides challenges, but that's also appropriate for their sizes and abilities. Through anthropometric studies, playground manufacturers design equipment to accommodate users 2 to 5 years old or 5 to 12 years old. Since 1999, California has required all public playground equipment to meet the ASTM F1487 Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Playground Equipment for Public Use and the guidelines of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's Public Playground Safety Handbook. These documents state the age-appropriate measurements and equipment applicable for school playgrounds.

As kindergarten students are usually 5 years old, playground equipment in the kindergarten areas is often designated for 5- to 12-year-old users. However, TK students are usually under the age of 5, meaning the equipment on kindergarten playgrounds may not be safe for their sizes and cognitive abilities. The equipment manufacturer always provides documentation and labeling for the ages of the intended users and district staff should not post signage regarding the ages of the intended users without first reviewing this documentation.

School site staff can help guide TK students to the appropriate equipment. Although not a complete list, below are guidelines for common equipment:

Equipment not appropriate for children in the 2- to 5-year-old range:

- Freestanding arch climbers
- Log rolls
- Sliding poles
- Track rides
- Seesaws (unless equipped with a spring centering device)
- Rung ladders, climbing nets, arch climbers or tire climbers used as the sole access to equipment

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TK playgrounds

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Maximum height allowable from the protective surfacing for children in the 2- to 5-year-old range:

- Horizontal ladders – 60 inches
- Balance beams – 12 inches
- Merry-Go-Rounds – 14 inches
- Stepping Pods – 20 inches (without hand support)

*Equipment not appropriate for **any** school playground:*

- Unsecured stand-alone play equipment such as plastic playhouses, slides, dome climbers and other equipment not designed for commercial use.

When planning to purchase new school playground equipment, work closely with the playground manufacturer representative to ensure a complete understanding of the users' ages. Also, request documentation about the age-appropriateness of the equipment. SIA staff can assist in reviewing playground equipment design plans for age-appropriateness, accessibility and potential safety concerns. For SIA assistance, email PreventionServices@sia-jpa.org.

SIA staff can assist in reviewing playground equipment design plans for age-appropriateness, accessibility and potential safety concerns.

The 5 S's for being sun smart

Did you know that one in five Americans will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetimes? Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States; approximately 9,500 people in the U.S are diagnosed with skin cancer every day (https://www.aad.org/).

The good news is that skin cancer is almost entirely preventable and there are specific sun smart steps that can help reduce risk at any age:

Slip on sun-protective clothing.

Select clothing that covers as much skin as possible (think shirts with long sleeves). Look for clothing that has an ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) listed on the label, which is a guarantee of how much UV protection a fabric provides.

Slop on SPF 30 (or higher) broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen.

Apply sunscreen to clean dry skin at least 20 minutes before going outside. Use about seven teaspoons of sunscreen for the whole body – one teaspoon for the head and neck, one for each limb, one for the front side and one for the back side.

Always make sure to re-apply sunscreen every two hours, especially after swimming, towel drying or if working (or working out) outdoors and likely to be sweating. Sunscreen is the skin's last line of defense and should always be used in combination with other measures.

Slap on a wide-brimmed hat.

Choose wide-brimmed, legionnaire or bucket-style hats to shade face, nose, neck and ears, which are common sites for skin cancers. Caps and visors don't provide enough protection.

Seek shade.

Trees, shade structures and umbrellas with high UPF values help provide sun protection. However, while shade reduces UV radiation, the sun's more intense and reflective rays can still penetrate common protective barriers – especially around water – so use shade in combination with other sun-blocking measures.

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Free interesting and useful virtual trainings

SIA provides the staff of our member districts with virtual trainings on a variety of topics that apply to both personal and professional life. To learn more, or to register for any of the training courses listed below, contact tfranco@sia-jpa.org. You also can join our email list to learn of future events at SIA – Schools Insurance Authority (sia-jpa.org).

5/2/2024	Building Awareness and Practical Strategies for Supporting Neurodivergent Family and Friends	5:30-6:30 p.m.
5/7/2024	How to Manage Customer Expectations	5:30-7:30 p.m.
5/8/2024	How to Navigate Workplace Uncertainty	5:30-6:30 p.m.
5/10/2024	How to Create Passion and Motivation in the Workplace	12-1 p.m.
5/13/2024	How to Navigate Workplace Uncertainty	12-1 p.m.
5/15/2024	How to Create Passion and Motivation in the Workplace	12-1 p.m.
5/20/2024	Mindfulness	5:30-6:30 p.m.
5/22/2024	Managing Family and Relationships	5:30-6:30 p.m.
5/29/2024	Parenting in an Ever-changing World	5:30-6:30 p.m.
5/30/2024	Preventing Sexual Harassment (employees)	5:30-6:30 p.m.
6/3/2024	How to Manage Change (employees)	5:30-6:30 p.m.
6/4/2024	How to Understand and Develop Emotional Intelligence	5:30-6:30 p.m.
6/5/2024	Improving Workplace Relationships	12-1 p.m.
6/6/2024	Quitting Smoking	5:30-6:30 p.m.
6/7/2024	Resiliency: Beyond the Basics	12-1 p.m.
6/10/2024	Improving Workplace Relationships	5:30-6:30 p.m.
6/12/2024	Resiliency: Beyond the Basics	5:30-6:30 p.m.
6/17/2024	Planning Your Retirement	5:30-6:30 p.m.
6/20/2024	Suicide Prevention	5:30-6:30 p.m.
6/25/2024	Money and Mental Health	5:30-6:30 p.m.

Slip, slop, slap, seek, slide

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Slide on some sunglasses.

Sunglasses and a broad-brimmed hat worn together can reduce UV radiation exposure to the eyes by up to 98 percent. Choose close-fitting wraparound-style sunglasses that meet UV protection standards.

Sunscreen isn't a suit of armor and should be used with the other four protection measures to provide the best defense against the sun's harmful rays. So, whether headed to work, out for a run, at the beach or barbecueing with friends, remember to slip, slop, slap, seek and slide into creative ways of making sun protection a priority.

Source: https://www.cancer.org.au/save-your-skin/five-sunsmart-steps

QUOTE TO NOTE

A cloudy day is no match for a sunny disposition.

- William Arthur Ward

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