STAR Series

For Congregational Leaders

MANAGING CONFLICT

TASK: Managing Conflict strategies are important for young adults who value collaboration and authentic connection. These main points focus on foundational relationship habits, understanding conflict styles, adapting communication preferences, using structured conversation frameworks, and avoiding premature conclusions.

Conflict Management Strategies for Engaging Young Adults

1 FOUR HABITS OF HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Before addressing conflict, establish a foundation of healthy relationship patterns: Be curious, not critical—focus on others' strengths rather than faults. Be careful, not crushing—manage conflicts from a place of care rather than winning. Ask, don't assume—practice open communication instead of making assumptions about others' thoughts or actions. Connect before you correct—build genuine connection with team members before giving constructive feedback, as people stay where they feel valued.

2 UNDERSTAND YOUR CONFLICT STYLE

The Thomas-Kilmann model identifies five conflict styles: Competing (assertive, direct, black-and-white thinkers), Avoiding (need processing time and agendas in advance), Collaborating (collect ideas from groups before deciding), Accommodating (prioritize relationships over being right), and Compromising (adaptable chameleons who adjust based on the situation). Learn to flex your natural style to meet young adults where they are—this doesn't mean abandoning your tendencies but adapting to their collaborative nature and sensitivity to tone.



3 ADAPT YOUR COMMUNICATION

Twentysomethings don't love voicemails or long texts and don't appreciate rigid hierarchies and can be sensitive to tone or tune out if they feel unheard or undervalued. Check your tech—they might prefer short texts over coffee chats or vice versa. Remember that "clear is kind"—be transparent with your words, instructions, and intentions to prevent silent resentment. Ask more than you assume by polling their preferences rather than guessing what they want.

4 PIECES MODEL FOR DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Start conflicts constructively with Permission ("Is this a good time to talk?") and Preference (asking how and when they'd like to discuss). Then address Content (the specific behavior or issue), Context (the specific incident and why it matters), Clarification (asking "What did I miss?" to get their perspective), Create alternatives (collaboratively developing solutions), and Closure (asking "What can I do to be on your team?").

5 BE AWARE OF LADDER OF INFERENCE

Don't jump to conclusions during conflicts. The ladder of inference moves from observing data to selecting data, interpreting meanings, making assumptions, concluding ideas, adopting beliefs, and taking action. Challenge yourself to consider alternative interpretations and give others the benefit of the doubt you'd want for yourself.

s.t.a.r. FOR YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

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ROADMAP

Curriculum Domain, Competency and Task Constellations

STAR Domain:	Listening
Associated Competency:	Relationship building and Compassion
Associated Task:	Equanimity

STAR Domain:	Young Adult Leadership
Associated Competency:	Resourcefulness and Communication
Associated Task:	Recruiting

STAR Domain:	Faith Journey
Associated Competency:	Creating Trust
Associated Task:	Spiritual formation

STAR Domain:	Culture
Associated Competency:	Adaptability
Associated Task:	Embracing failure

STAR Domain:	Intergenerational Connections
Associated Competency:	Mentorship
Associated Task:	Generational literacy and Digital literacy

STAR Domain:	Community
Associated Competency:	Authenticity and Inclusivity
Associated Task:	**Managing conflict**

STAR Domain:	Church Leadership
Associated Competency:	Influence and Purpose
Associated Task:	Creating buy-in

STAR Domain:	Frameworks, Programs, & Events
Associated Competency:	Learning
Associated Task:	Sticky programs and Measure and assess