

## Building Your Credibility and Team Skills: Strategies for Conflict Resolution in Healthcare

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**Guest**

**Kathy A. Scott, PhD, MPA, RN, FACHE**

- Partner and Co-founder of L3 Fusion LLC
- Holds a PhD in Healthcare Administration and Organizational Systems
- Holds a master's degree in Public Health Administration
- Multiple Chief Executive roles in healthcare systems
- Her doctoral research served as the science behind the Amazon best-selling book she co-authored, "Stupid Gone Viral – When Science and Reality Collide."



## Guest

### **Bridget Sarikas**

- Partner and co-founder of L3 Fusion LLC
- Co-author of the Amazon best-selling book, "Stupid Gone Viral – When Science and Reality Collide"
- Focused on transformational leadership that helps individuals and organizations maneuver through the chaos and complexity of today's organizations, and move to a healthier way of living, leading, and learning.



## Host

### **Leana Delle McGuire, BS, RN**

- Extensive expertise with leadership development and executive coaching
- Best-selling author
- TEDx speaker
- Expertise in content development, visual performance, speaking, and podcast hosting.

## Transcript

### Episode 1 – Individual Sources of Conflict

FRONT BUMPTER INTRO

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

KATHY SCOTT (GUEST)

Well, they certainly set the stage, you bet. Leaders have a lot of power within a team and people want to emulate the behaviors they see in their leader. That's it's called mirror, mirror neurons. And we actually mimic other behaviors we see as human beings, which is quite amazing. So, yes, you're on stage, people are watching. But I want to say other members of the team can really influence that. And so you may not be the leader, but you can speak up in ways that perhaps get the attention of the leader and change the dynamic.

LEANA MCGUIRE (HOST)

Hello and welcome to this podcast. Our podcast today is on overcoming common obstacles that teams encounter. I'm Leana McGuire, your host for this elite learning experience, and we have two subject matter experts with us today, Bridget Sarikas and Kathy Scott. Welcome, ladies.

BRIDGET SARIKAS (GUEST)

Good to be here.

MCGUIRE

Welcome back, I should say. Let's talk about today's topic. Any worthwhile project is going to encounter obstacles along the way, and these can often create conflict. So, managing and or resolving conflicts effectively includes a variety of skills and strategies that build on what we've learned to date from the two of you. And this includes listening and empathizing with another's viewpoint, bringing disagreements into the open and de-escalating the situation, orchestrating win-win solutions by finding resolutions that each side can embrace and staying engaged with the process of managing your own performance in the midst of conflict while holding each other accountable to the rules of engagement.

So today we're going to explore the multiple sources of conflict. It's, there's three parts to this discussion, and the first part in which we're going to discuss individual, individual obstacles. So, let's talk about individual obstacles, and we're talking about conflict, right? Is conflict always negative?

SCOTT

No, actually. There's, conflict is a fact of life. And if you get through life without having any, then I would really wonder about how much backbone you have. But that said, any any group comes together, there's always going to be differences and conflicts that occur and they can be healthy conflicts are constructive and they can also be very unhealthy and destructive. So we'll talk a little bit about that today, starting with how do we create our own conflict?

SARIKAS

Yeah, I think it's I think it's something great to remember, too, because think about it, If we all agreed about everything and there was no conflict, it would just be quite boring. I mean, what are we learning? And it's great to be able to debate and have a different perspective and sometimes that does lead to conflict. But how you resolve it can be pretty energizing as well, especially when you're both committed to resolving that conflict together. So can be worthwhile.

MCGUIRE

I mean, it sounds ideal not to have conflict, but I completely understand where you're going with that. So cooperation can exist with conflict, is what you're saying?

SCOTT

Absolutely. They can easily coexist and it may take a little skill, but. Yes. And we strongly encourage to really understand the sources of conflict so you can manage them better, especially when you're the person creating the conflict. So, so often we get our ego hurt and that creates all sorts of dynamics in a group situation or a team situation. And it's really getting yourself under control and management and realizing this is my ego. And what is it that's bothering me so much about this and what am I going to do about it?

SARIKAS

And sometimes it's just good to check that ego at the door before you sit down and you're with that team. Because with any kind of team dynamics, that ego can get in the way. So if you can just put it aside, you know, for that period of time, it'll be much healthier and the conversations will be much healthier.

MCGUIRE

Excellent. We'll talk a little bit more about ego in a couple of minutes. So, tell me what do we need in order to differentiate between healthy conflict and not so healthy conflict?

SCOTT

Well, I would say unhealthy conflict is going to sabotage the team. You know, you're you're you're creating a dynamic where people cannot move forward. And often, again, we're making it rather than focusing on the goal, we're focused on some hurt or harm that is getting in the way of the conversation. So even just think about being a professional.

We're all trained in certain ways as professionals. We've had the same sort of schooling. So let's take nurses. Two of us are nurses and we have a common bond there. So our profession can when when we are threatened, can set up an unhealthy conflict in dealing with the team situation with another profession. So it's just good to be aware of that.

SARIKAS

Yeah, I think it's that's an excellent point. And I also think when you're in the midst of that conflict, if you can if you can find a way to really start focusing on the issue at hand rather than then me personally, and if you can take that me component out of it, I know that's easier said than done, but if you can get right to the core of the issue, that's usually much more healthy as well.

MCGUIRE

Do you think that I know we call it ego, which it is, but is there some pride mixed in with that or is they are they the same thing?

SCOTT

They are. I think they're pretty much the same thing. And, you know, we we want to think of ourselves in a certain way that becomes our identity. Like I'll just say I'm a very intelligent person, meaning maybe that's your thing. And then when someone threatens that or makes a statement that makes you feel small or inadequate, it's very easy to to get your dander up. And that's a wounded ego or pride. And and we have to work on our own selves to to move past that. And start focusing on what's really important in the conversation.

SARIKAS

Yeah, I think focusing on ourselves, though, sometimes that can be really hard, right? Because you have to you have to be very emotionally and self-aware and that is not always easy. So, taking a deep dive, really looking at, you know, who you are, what are your triggers, you know, what is causing some of that to occur or to you to react to something like that, that that can be tough. So sometimes it's good to ask a friend to help you a little bit with that. But even that, you know, you have to extend yourself a bit and that can be really difficult for some.

MCGUIRE

Sure.

SCOTT

Yeah, I would. I would ask, do you know what your triggers are? Because the other people on the team know what they are. You know, it would be really good to invest in yourself and and know yourself, be be self-aware. You can save yourself a lot of conflict that way.

MCGUIRE

Right. And that identity or those triggers evolved from what with each of us.

SCOTT

That really comes from our our childhood, our experiences through life, how we're raised, the culture, the the variety of experiences that we have had throughout our life. And they really determine the way we view a situation. And they create these filters. And sometimes we see truth as one way and another person sees that another way because we're looking through those filters from those experiences.

MCGUIRE

Interesting.

SARIKAS

I think it's good to we always talk about leading with eyes wide open. I think that's when it's really important, you know, going into any situation, if you can, if you can be open minded a bit. But again, when you have those triggers, I mean, we all have them, right? There's no one who doesn't have a trigger somewhere in their life or have had them. If it's Kathy, God bless you. But I know I don't I. I've had fun.

SCOTT

Yes.

MCGUIRE

Yes. Interesting. So our personal experiences, does the culture that we're working in or the culture that we're I mean, our social culture, certainly, but the culture we're working in, does that contribute in some way too.

SCOTT

Oh, most definitely. And and it's not like we have one culture that we work in. So just think health system. Night shift culture is very different than day shift culture. Critical care culture is very different than perhaps a kinder, gentler unit or department. So yes, those those norms, culture is the behavioral norms that are acceptable in in that situation, in that organization.

SCOTT

They definitely impact the way we think and the way we behave. And we need to be really aware of that. It's not that you have to give in to that, but it's very easy to do so if it's an unhealthy culture, you have to be you have to be on your game, you have to pay attention.

SARIKAS

Yeah, I think that's great. I think as Kathy mentioned, especially speaking more on the clinical side, but also when you have like when I go into a health care system, I've always been part of the administrative part. So part of facilities, part of financial compliance, part of the real estate component. And quite often in those conversations, it's so different and we forget the side of the clinical piece that is really so important, that drives so many of our decisions.

SARIKAS

And so that reality check. Exactly, that reality check is so important, but those cultural differences can be huge. So, you need to bring people together that are aware of that, that can have those really good conversations and bring everyone to the table.

MCGUIRE

Obviously, a well-functioning team has the openness for innovation and good decision making. So, talk to me about how conflicts, good or bad, affects those things. Good decision making, innovation, self-expression.

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SCOTT

Well, a strong team that is able to work their way through those successfully has a high degree of psychological safety. So people are comfortable saying what they think and expressing themselves because the other team members hopefully are listening and paying attention, even if they don't agree, they're willing to hear what you have to say. So that psychological safety component is really an important part of creating a team that can work their way through conflict. And if you're comfortable speaking up, other people are going to disagree and you will have conflicts, which is totally okay. It's about working your way through them in a constructive way.

SARIKAS

And then psychological safety extends beyond that team meeting. That room, right? So when you leave that room, if one member of the team really lashes out and says something highly negative and it gets back to the other individual, that psychological safety is blown. And that's that's what can bring a whole team down.

MCGUIRE

Right. So it sounds.

SCOTT

As.

MCGUIRE

Go ahead.

SCOTT

Well, as we often say, you need to be consistent on stage and off stage. Oh, so in the room, out of the room. If you want to create that sort of safety with your team.

MCGUIRE

It's an excellent point. Excellent point. It sounds like a bit of a snowball effect. So if a leader say it's a leader of a team walks into a room and their sense of identity or their pride is threatened, that they will react in a negative way, which then affects the psychological safety of everyone else in the room. And they're not they don't feel like they're in a position where they can express themselves. So it sounds like sounds like the leaders carrying the ball here. Am I right to a degree?

SCOTT

Well, they certainly set the stage, you bet. Leaders have a lot of power within a team and people want to emulate the behaviors they see in their leader. That's it's called mirror, mirror neurons. And we actually mimic other behaviors we see as human beings, which is quite amazing. So, yes, you're on stage, people are watching. But I want to say other members of the team can really influence that. And so you may not be the leader, but you can speak up in ways that perhaps get the attention of the leader and change the dynamic.

SARIKAS

Yeah, I think that's so important. And I think even even as others, when you leave that room, if you were uncomfortable, having a private conversation is always okay. But having that private conversation and saying, you know, I've got your back, I'm going to go have a talk with so-and-so, that can be just as effective by people knowing that you have their back, that team knowing that you have your back, can also help defuse a lot of conflicts.

MCGUIRE

Excellent. And basically you don't have to be at the head of the team to be a leader. The definition of leading is basically having some kind of influence on others positive. We hope. So, that's an important thing to remember as well. So that's a good point.

MCGUIRE

And if we do make the mistake of letting our egos get in the way and we do make comments that can potentially create some conflict, is it okay to admit that in front of the team?

SCOTT

I think it's a pretty good idea because they all know it happened. And you know, you are human being and it's it's always helpful to say, wow, I shouldn't have said that. I was out of line I'm not proud of myself right now and I'm going to work on that. That that that is a huge, authentic statement to make that gets people's attention and it gives them permission to be honest about their own personal behaviors as well.

SARIKAS

Yeah, I think that that shows people your own vulnerability, which then people can really relate to You become you become very relatable, you become very real. And at the end of the day, that's what we all want to see. We all want to be able to relate to our leaders in some component. We don't have to be their best friends, but to be able to relate to them is really important and that, those moments allow for that.

MCGUIRE

Yeah, I think there's some misconception that you have more strength if you don't admit your your mistakes, but really the strength is being able to admit your mistakes. Is that correct in your opinion?

SCOTT

Absolutely. And again, people people know people see it. They they and none of us have arrived at perfection. And when you make mistakes, it also gives your team or if you have an area of weakness, it gives your team permission to step in and also assist. So always good to keep it real to to create trust in the team. So your authenticity should really be directed at creating that trust with your team.

SARIKAS

Yeah. And those kinds of moments really can diffuse the conflict. I mean, that can, you know, the whole team can be in there tense. The leader comes in and says, Gosh, you know, I really, really messed up here. It really wasn't appropriate. I mean, the temperature just immediately comes way down and that conflict seems to start getting, starts the ball rolling to be able to resolve.

MCGUIRE

Yes. So sounds like it's important to make vulnerability and especially authenticity our friends. When it comes to team conflict. So that's excellent and good to know that there are some good sources of conflicts disagreeing and talking through that is definitely at that top of that list. Anything else you'd like to add before we complete today's topic?

SCOTT

Well, you know, some people are much more comfortable with conflict based on the way they're raised, their personality, etc., and others are very conflict averse. So, it's something need to be aware of about yourself and may need to practice how you respond to different sorts of conflicts to be, you know, get better at it. It can be very uncomfortable for some. So just keep that in mind. And as a leader, when you see a conflict to call on person to help them express themselves or work their way through the scenario that they're conflicted about.

MCGUIRE

Good advice.

SARIKAS

Yeah, I think that's great. And I think when you avoid conflict, eventually that comes back to really be very harmful to you. In the end, it's not healthy personally, and it's most likely not helpful for the team either or healthy. So, the practice piece is really a huge component, but try not to avoid it.

MCGUIRE

Excellent. Okay. Well, thank you so much, Bridget and Kathy, for talking to us today about individual sources of conflict. This was part one of overcoming common obstacles that teams encounter. We will come back and talk about interpersonal sources of conflict in the second part of this series. This is Leana McGuire for Elite Learning by Colibri Health Care.

## Episode 2 – Interpersonal Conflict

FRONT BUMPTER INTRO

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

KATHY SCOTT (GUEST)

Questions are so powerful just to say, tell me why you're feeling that way. And boy, that's a that's a strong word there. Tell me. Tell me why you think that. Go there, ask for more. And. And listen. But when usually when you do that and people have the opportunity to talk and express themselves, it that in itself starts to de-escalate the the energy in the room.

LEANA MCGUIRE (HOST)

Welcome back to part two of overcoming common obstacles that teams encounter. Returning are subject matter experts. Bridget Sarikas and Kathy Scott. Welcome back.

SCOTT

Thank you.

BRIDGET SARIKAS (GUEST)

Good to be here.

MCGUIRE

And I am Leana McGuire, your host for this Elite Learning podcast. Now, in part one of this series, we talked about individual sources of conflict and ego came up in that conversation quite a bit. We're going to move on today to interpersonal sources of conflict. So how to respond to and manage a situation where you feel a team colleague is minimizing your contributions to the team. So, this should be an interesting discussion for all of us. So interpersonal sources of conflict. What does that include exactly? Can you be specific on this?

SCOTT

Oh, there's so many. We could actually talk all day about that. I mean, it's everything from communication differences or breakdown. Lack of timely feedback or adequate feedback. It could be unclear expectations, power differentials that you feel, but you don't necessarily talk about. Stereotyping, stigmatizing. I mean, the list goes on and on. Want more?

MCGUIRE

Well.

SARIKAS

On and on and on.

MCGUIRE

That's a good start, I would say. Let's talk about I just want to narrow down on a couple of these. So, absence of timely or specific feedback, can you elaborate a little bit on that?

SCOTT

Yeah, I think that one's really common. So something happens and you you hear about it at your annual review. That that's a good one. And you're thinking, if it's important enough to bring up now, why didn't you give me that feedback nine months ago. Or, or was it even accurate? So someone heard it from someone else, and now suddenly they're there sharing that information with you.

SCOTT

So feedback is, you know, there's a real art to feedback, which I think we've talked about in the earlier series. But it's important that it be timely and accurate and thoughtfully delivered. So that there's a big source right there.

SARIKAS

And I think what's really important there too, is to always think about how you want to receive feedback so that when you are giving feedback, you're thinking about that. You know, is it because it's so important to receive that timely feedback. I'm sure we've all been you know, we've all received very delayed feedback and you can't fix it.

You know, quite often, you know, that really left the gate a long time ago. But you're being held accountable for something that most likely was insignificant in the long run. But, you know, you're being held out as that was such a negative for you when it was resolved a long time ago, you moved on. But no one really understands the facts.

MCGUIRE

When we're talking about this feedback. Is this developmental feedback or is would positive feedback be included in this as well?

SCOTT

We love positive feedback. So yeah. It doesn't, positive feedback doesn't usually cause a lot of conflict though. But but it's really an important skill as well. And when we give positive feedback and then say do more of that; I mean that can really energize someone to, to move in a positive direction.

SARIKAS

Although I think where it can create a rub is if in a group or in a team setting, one individual is always being given the positive feedback and no one else gets that and people pick up on that, It's like, why? Why is this

person always told that they're phenomenal or doing a great job, but it's never conveyed to the rest of us and we're a team.

SARIKAS

Right. So, or as an individual, I never hear that. I'm always hearing that about my colleagues. So that I think that is one of those those few times where it can cause a bit of a rub.

SCOTT

Yeah, that's actually about fairness, you know, which is another interpersonal conflict. If you feel like you're, you know, not being treated fairly and there's the the the favorites and the not favorites. Huge source of interpersonal conflict in a team.

MCGUIRE

Excellent. Can you give us an example of a power differential?

SCOTT

Sure. Yes. There's so many in in healthcare because of there's of all the different professions. But one example would be if you have a team working on a specific project and there's someone who is considered in a higher power role than the rest of the team, and they speak up and everyone just shuts down and doesn't share their opinion. And I've seen this over and over and some of the teams have been on you have to really work through that that dynamic to get the rest of the team to start contributing. So, if you're if powerful person or leader and you speak it, it can often just shut down the rest of the team, which is not good. So, you have to find ways to counter that.

SARIKAS

And I'm specifically seeing that. So for instance, in health systems, you have something, it's called value analysis teams. And quite often it's very important to have a physician and nurse, clinical staff at those. But if the physician has a loud voice and really wants to have something and shuts down the conversation, no one will speak up as to why there might be an alternative.

You know, is there a take away that can happen, you know, in other you know, in other areas so that that cost or that that piece of equipment or supply can be purchased. So it's really important to be able to have people on there who can talk about things in a very measured way, but challenge in a very respectful way so as not to let that occur. But that occurs quite often.

MCGUIRE

Yes, that's true.

SCOTT

Yes, it does. And there often unaware of it. Besides. So I've had to take a physician aside after the meeting and say, here's the dynamic I'm seeing, and I'd love for you to ask more questions and then listen to what the team

has to say. Because that conflict is all below the surface now and people are not happy. So it's important to address that.

MCGUIRE

It sounds like all of these examples fall into a trust bucket.

SCOTT

I think that could be true. Or they lead to a trust bucket. Maybe, it maybe it doesn't start there, but it starts eating away at the trust in the group and becomes the biggest thing in the room. And yeah, I think those interpersonal conflicts can go there when they're not when they're not dealt with.

SARIKAS

Yeah. And the sad thing is, is sometimes they are so small and insignificant, but because you haven't dealt with them and that trust component is impacted, it becomes huge. And it could have all been resolved very early on with some facts and a good discussion.

SCOTT

Yeah. So often you, you know, you experience something and it's a big deal to you and you're really annoyed. And then if you do take the time and effort to go talk to that person, how many times do you find out that they were completely unaware of it? That wasn't their intention. That's not even what they were thinking.

SCOTT

And all of that anger and conflict was for naught. So it really is important to find ways to deal with it and talk to each other, like Bridget said, in respectful ways.

SARIKAS

Yeah, I know. Kathy and I do that quite often after we've been with a client or something. And and I'll say, Did you, did you pick up on that? And, and she'll say, No, I didn't. So it's a good calibration. Can say, okay, I probably am being a little bit sensitive to that. So I'm going to deal with that.

SARIKAS

I'm going to pay attention for it the next time, but I'm also not going to be as sensitive.

MCGUIRE

I thought you were going to say you have interpersonal conflict a lot.

[LAUGHTER]

SCOTT

We worked through.

MCGUIRE

Well, let's on that topic, let's talk about dealing with it. Effective ways of resolving interpersonal conflict. Let's start there. Kathy, do you want to take the ball on this or Bridget?

SCOTT

Well, one way is to get clear about expectations. So, to to ask questions. You know, this surprised me, or this made me really uncomfortable, or has made me really angry. So, I want to get clear on what are your expectations here? Let's let's talk about that. So, asking questions and getting clear is really important.

SARIKAS

Yeah. And again, some of those things you just have to practice. I mean, it doesn't come easy for everyone. And, you know, especially if you're new in a role as well. We kind of all have come into roles. We've talked about this before, going from that expert to novice phase. And when you do that, you can really have some massive inner conflict going on, right. Because the rest of the group is has gotten ahead of you and you're now coming in and learning. So really ask questions. I mean, practice that, but that is an art.

MCGUIRE

Yes, I would say. And you have to have some level of willingness, right? I mean, we talk about skill and will a lot, but the willingness to want to take that step and put that ego at the door that we talked about in our first episode of this.

SCOTT

Yeah, it's hard. I mean, you know, nobody wants to hear bad news or be be criticized. I mean, I picture me, I'm like, take a deep breath. All right, give it to me. That's kind of how we approach these conversations. And like Bridget said, we can get better at this and learn to use more neutral language. Language that's not going to inflame someone. And and talk about how you're feeling in this situation. You don't need to talk about their character or, you know, attack them as a person. Talk about what you're seeing and how it is impacting you or the other members of the team. But learn neutral language and that can go a long way as well.

SARIKAS

Yeah, that's that's huge. I mean, neutral language is so important and especially today, everyone, you know, in many organizations and healthcare, especially some people are on full tilt. So you really have to choose your words wisely. You know, think a bit. Count to ten before you get going. Whatever it is. But that can be very helpful. And again, that can bring the temperature down in a conversation.

MCGUIRE

So, for example, if you told me about something that was going to happen or a decision that had been made and I said to you, I don't think this I don't want to do this, I think this is stupid. Give me an example of a neutral response.

SCOTT

Well, I would take the words stupid out. That's really stupid.

MCGUIRE

Right. I'm the conflict here. So how do you de-escalate me?

SCOTT

I would ask questions. Questions are so powerful just to say, tell me why you're feeling that way. And boy, that's a that's a strong word there. Tell me. Tell me why you think that. Go there, ask for more. And. And listen. But when usually when you do that and people have the opportunity to talk and express themselves, it that in itself starts to de-escalate the the energy in the room. So, which is good.

SARIKAS

Yeah and I think as Kathy mentioned that whole active listening is really important because even though you're asking the question, you know, tune in and make sure you're hearing their answer. Don't be, you know, looking at your phone after you've asked that important question, really make sure that you understand maybe it's paraphrase it back to them so you can say, let me make sure I understood what you're saying or what your concerns are, but make sure that you do keep that listening component, you know, well-tuned.

MCGUIRE

Excellent advice. I like that much better response than just get over it.

SCOTT

Yeah. Don't say that.

MCGUIRE

Don't ever say that. Okay. Now, something that I think when people get inflamed or they have a negative response, is that coming from a place of, you know, personal bias as well as identity?

SCOTT

Oh it can. It could be coming from a lot of different places. But but often our personal biases do get in the way and we don't even know it's necessarily going on. And here's an example I've seen over and over and over again in a team. You have the important people and you have the little people. And this is how people are looking at this team.

SCOTT

The little people get all the assignments that are tough to do and tedious or take the minutes or and the important people, they just get to express themselves and walk out of the room. That is a bias in that you are letting happen in a team and it's going to lead to people feeling like they're devalued. This is not a fair process. I'm not important. So it's important to to watch what you're doing and look at your own personal patterns because your biases will raise their head and we all have them. But that was just one example that I see way too much.

SARIKAS

Yeah, it happens all the time. And but it's that self-awareness again, you know, that emotional intelligence, right? You have to have that or be willing to be very vulnerable and, you know, do that deep dive again to say, you know, do I do this? You know, am I causing some of this? Could I be the, you know, the real reason why some of these things are happening? That is, you know, that's a very healthy leader that can do that. And we don't always see that, unfortunately.

SCOTT

Yeah, it's hard.

MCGUIRE

It's a common, common dominator. Yeah, that's that's a really, really good point. And, you know, just some quick examples of personal bias. What would be a couple of examples of that.

SCOTT

So when you think everyone in the room thinks like you. Like, like I'm a white older female and I have a diverse group, why would I think they think like me? Their experiences are totally different and they they experience the workplace in a very different way. So, when I think they think like me, I'm going to make a lot of assumptions that are completely inaccurate and that will probably annoy them as it should.

SCOTT

So that's that's just one. But we do it way too often. And and it's it does not move the group forward, for sure.

MCGUIRE

No, great example.

SARIKAS

That generational thing happens just all the time. But the beauty of it is, is that when we ask questions, you know, we can learn so much and, you know, through conflict, whatever it may be. And because their perspectives are so unique, they're coming from such a different place. And, you know, again, a bell can go off and say, gosh, I didn't even think of it that way.

SARIKAS

And the talents that they bring are so different and so it can knock your bias out, which is which is great. It can knock it on its tail. Right? It can really be the wakeup call that is needed.

MCGUIRE

Well, some great takeaways from this discussion for sure. And, you know, I think that neutral language is a really important piece in in not making team colleagues feel, you know, minimizing their contribution to the team. So I think that's a really, really important topic. So, thank you again, ladies, for joining us for part two of Overcoming Common Obstacles That Teams Encounter.

MCGUIRE

And we look forward to seeing you on the final episode of this series. That will be coming up shortly. And thank you all for listening and we will be back with the last piece, which is organizational sources of conflict in the next and final in the next and final episode of this series. This is Leana McGuire for Elite Learning by Colibri Healthcare.

## Episode 3 – Organizational Conflict

FRONT BUMPTER INTRO

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

BRIDGET SARIKAS (GUEST)

Yeah. Rounding I, I think rounding is such an exceptional way and thank goodness it is done. But quite often we see leaders who skip out of rounding. And I always think that's so unfortunate, especially on the ops or the administrative side when they step out, because that's a way to really bridge a gap and to break down barriers, to remove those preconceived notions, to ask those questions that you've always wanted to ask.

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SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC

LEANA MCGUIRE (HOST)

Welcome back to the third and final episode in our series on Overcoming Common Obstacles That Teams Encounter. Returning are Bridget Sarikas and Kathy Scott as our subject matter experts. Welcome back, ladies.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS

Thank you.

MCGUIRE

And I am Leana McGuire, your host for this Elite Learning podcast. In the first episode, we talked about individual sources of conflict and then transitioned in episode two to interpersonal sources of conflict. In this final episode today, we will talk about organizational sources of conflict. So, this will be another interesting discussion with the two of you. So, organizing organizational sources of conflict include what? Give us some examples.

KATHY SCOTT (GUEST)

Oh boy, this is another long list, which we won't go through. But it's things, things like I'll just throw out short staffing. That could be an organizational source of conflict, or job stress, or pace. The pace that the organization is going, or a lousy workflow that just drives you nuts, or even things like tight controls and loose controls. Tight controls are I can't do anything without getting another person's signature and their signature, and their signature, and you feel like you're always in a bureaucratic maze.

So those are just a few. And I'll throw in one more because this one is so important, and that is competing goals. Organizations always have competing goals and it can become very, very frustrating when you're trying to achieve both goals. So those are a few of the sources that come to mind.

SARIKAS

Yeah, those are great. And I would also say sometimes along the goal line is when you have 15 different priorities and they want them all prioritized at the exact same time. Right? Talk about conflict. I mean, organizational conflict. And no one's willing to give on a priority, they all want. And you say, well, can you help me prioritize? They all need to be done. Okay. That was helpful. Thank you. So.

MCGUIRE

Yeah, that is a good example. You often hear that. I don't think they realize what's on my plate. You know, you often hear that from people. Okay. Those competing goals, you said would productivity, there's productivity and then there's quality. Would that be an example?

SCOTT

Boy, that's a famous one. It and it is it is just rampant in health care. So, we say we are very quality and safety oriented. And then we throw out these productivity measures that seem to be in direct competition, often, particularly when you start ratcheting expenses down and you haven't redone the workflows. So, you're just piling on top of a dysfunctional system. So yeah, that is a huge one.

SARIKAS

Yeah, one I love, especially around that whole topic when you're having that and it's a productivity killer is you have meeting-itis, I mean meeting after meeting after meeting. So you know, in your essence to achieve productivity, you're highly unproductive.

MCGUIRE

Yeah, there's no time to be productive.

SCOTT

And, those meetings don't have a clear agenda as they do not have. The people aren't even sure what they're supposed to accomplish. They don't really have goals. And I mean that is a huge organizational nightmare that creates all kinds of productivity issues. And it disenfranchises the members. Just coming together to come together.

SARIKAS

Yeah, we often call that roaming around in the wilderness. I mean, and you can feel it. You can sense it when you're all at that table or in those sessions. It is just randomness everywhere.

MCGUIRE

And the short staffing, just to go back to that temporarily, that seems to be a huge issue, certainly. Right now. There have been cases where, you know, nurses are getting completely burned out at the bedside and feel like they need a good vacation, but they're denying the vacation because they don't have the staff, which then leads them to say, you know, forget this. That seems to be happening pretty regularly. So that's a huge organizational conflict, correct?

SCOTT

Wow. It is. It is major. And not just in one profession, but in in health care, in multiple professions. And it creates all sorts of sorts of conflict, especially when the people who are impacted by that are not involved in making decisions about that and are not involved in problem solving when it comes from the top down, the conflict begins.

MCGUIRE

Great point.

SCOTT

Yeah.

SARIKAS

Yes, and that happens so often. But that's where, you know, really reevaluating the value equation is so important because the value that you bring in, how it's evaluated, you know, that can also cause a source of conflict which is happening in the staffing world right now.

SCOTT

Oh, don't get me started on that. Well, nurses, and nurses are counted in as part of the room cost. One, that's extremely insulting and the value that a nurse brings to health care and to the bedside needs to be recognized. And and the incentives need to change to to understand that value and what it brings. So just the whole financial model of healthcare is another organizational conflict producer in healthcare.

SARIKAS

Yeah. And I would I would say that that is an area, too, where we've got to stop ignoring that, you know, don't ignore that conflict, meet that head on, have those really good conversations, bring those individuals to the table. But that's when you often see people just ignoring it. Oh, they were too busy for that. We'll discuss that another day. No, I mean, it is a source of conflict. Let's deal with.

MCGUIRE

It. Yes. Using neutral language that I think that's right. Yeah, you're absolutely right. I 100% agree with that. Okay. Two essential. Let's talk about some essential or two essential attributes for promoting successful win-win interactions. Can we have win-win interactions in this organizational source of conflict?

SCOTT

You can. I think one way is some transparency to really be talking about the real issues versus the hidden agendas or the the politically correct. You've got to get to really talking about the real issues together, as Bridget was just talking about. And that and having a sense of curiosity. I mean, just be interested in what the other person has to say.

SCOTT

They might know something you don't. They think differently than you. They might spark a new idea in you and those two go together beautifully and can lead to much more productive conversations.

SARIKAS

Yeah, and curiosity. I mean, no one no one has a problem with you being curious. I've never heard anyone say, Gosh, I wish you would not be so curious. I just never heard that. Again, it's how you question. You know that that spark of energy, when you're curious, it can be quite contagious. So think about think about that when you're doing that.

MCGUIRE

I would think that too statements like, for example, we've always done it that way or it's just the way it is would not be examples of curiosity.

SCOTT

That's kind of like fingernails on a chalkboard right now. And you know what? When Bridget and I are consulting, we often hear that. So tell us why you're doing this. Oh, well, we've always done it that way. I, I do want to use not neutral language at that point, but I have trained myself to say *tell me more about that*.

SCOTT

I mean, because they can see it's not working, but continue to do it over and over again and it's time to look at it in another way.

SARIKAS

Yeah. Which is where the curiosity comes right back to it. Right? Which is so great because someone who is curious and has that curious mindset can say, Hey, can we think about it different? I'm I'm a little curious about it. What if we did something this way? And when you approach it that way, people are a little bit more open minded because they don't their guard doesn't go up, right?

SARIKAS

They're saying, Oh yeah, maybe, maybe you're right. I'm curious about that too.

MCGUIRE

Right. So, investigating each other's needs in a neutral environment, Right? Is that what you basically said?

SARIKAS

Yeah. Exactly.

SCOTT

That's helpful. Yeah.

SARIKAS

Very helpful.

MCGUIRE

So would you recommend to someone who's not in a management or leadership position to actively investigate the needs of their leader?

SCOTT

I think it's pretty smart when your leader has their goals, you have your goals and how can you bring the two together? And it will often help you understand why the leader is behaving the way they are or delegating, the way they are prioritizing. So yeah, always important to understand each other's needs and to ask, tell me what it is you need from this or to tell. I want to understand why this is so important. And that goes a long way. And in, you know, promoting a win-win interaction.

SARIKAS

Yeah. And sometimes depending upon how high up that leader is, they may have this persona of they are, you know, they they're not going to meet. They're really unapproachable. But if you if, if and if you have that attitude of, oh, no one's ever met with them about that, why would we. Well, how about why not. Have you ever asked? And if you ask and that leader says, oh, I would love to talk about that.

And you actually probably wouldn't get surprised because sometimes those personas are just, you know, the preconceived perception becomes nine tenths of the law instead of just trying to buck that perception and go ahead and ask the question again. Curiosity comes back into that.

MCGUIRE

Right, instead of as adults, we love rationale, but you shouldn't be waiting for someone to share that with you because it may not come. And that may be simply because they just aren't thinking about that in those terms. They should.

SCOTT

But that's a beautiful thing about rounds. People are when when the leader's actually rounding, people are much more comfortable talking to them in their space. And that's a great time to ask your leader questions about things that you know are confusing to you or just to understand where where that individual's coming from. But it's also important for you to express what your needs are so this is a two-way street, so to say, well, I need to understand this.

SCOTT

Well, this is why I am asking, because this is really important to us and it's getting in the way of that. People need to speak up. And and when you can do that, whether you're the leader or the entry level worker, it's a really powerful conversation. And you're not demanding. You're just saying we have needs that aren't being met and and we've got to find a way through to be to meet both of our needs here.

SARIKAS

Yeah. Rounding I, I think rounding is such an exceptional way and thank goodness it is done. But quite often we see leaders who skip out of rounding. And I always think that's so unfortunate, especially on the ops or the administrative side when they step out, because that's a way to really bridge a gap and to break down barriers, to remove those preconceived notions, to ask those questions that you've always wanted to ask.

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SCOTT

And you can also round virtually. So, let's not forget that. Yes. And to set up with your team, you know, it's just a check in, no agenda just to check in and have conversations that are more spontaneous and transparent, hopefully.

MCGUIRE

So prioritizing rounds, it does generally be one of those things that can easily be pushed aside if something else comes up. So that's that's really important. Also, it's you know, I think that people and I'm pretty sure you'll agree with this if they don't have a rationale for something, they make it up. You know, the only reason they're doing that is because of fill in the blank.

MCGUIRE

And that just creates more conflict over and over.

SCOTT

Yeah, we do. We do make up a lot of stuff in a vacuum of information. So that is important to know. And and that is another reason those conversations are so important.

SARIKAS

Yeah. And I think it's also important to sorry, I think just one more point. I think it's really important to make sure that when when you are in those conversations or you're going around with rounds that you you actually follow up. So if you say you're going to do something, don't just walk away and then not do it, right. I mean, that again, impacts trust. Conflicts begins because they heard you say, I'm going to follow up with you and I'll get back on that. And then they don't. And so that causes such again, that distress and conflict comes right back. Right back storming right into, you know, to greet you. So make sure you follow up on those things.

MCGUIRE

Puts a hole in the trust bucket if we don't do that.

SCOTT

Yeah.

MCGUIRE

Now, reading the signs, it's important to read the signs when trouble is brewing. Brewing or Brewing avarice, what are some red flags to pay attention to?

SCOTT

Oh, wow. One is certainty when people's I'm sure of this, or when you use words like everybody, all of us, you know, so those those words that are exaggerated and that that's one, and the other one to really watch out for is arrogance. When you have someone in the room who really believes they know everything and they are the

answer, that is a huge red flag. And in both of those need to be dealt with, maybe not in the room. The first time or the second, but maybe the third. If they're if they're not getting it to pull them aside and have a conversation about about that.

SARIKAS

Yeah. And I think those individuals that just love to take over a meeting and talk all the time or answer every question, they just have to talk to hear themselves talk again that can sure, that can just motivate a whole team and eventually people just stop wanting to go to those meetings.

MCGUIRE

And can anyone within the team draw this to someone's attention or say something, or should that be punted to the leader or what do you see? How do you see that scenario playing?

SCOTT

Well, a high performing team manages itself. They don't wait for the leader to do that. But if you're not a high performing team or you're a novice, you're probably going to be a little more careful about that. And if the team isn't taking that on, the leader certainly should. Needs to. But so it depends on the maturity, I would say, of a team, but someone needs to take it on. Ideally it'd be peer to peer.

MCGUIRE

Excellent.

SCOTT

Excellent. Yeah.

MCGUIRE

All right. Organizational conflict is certainly something that sounds familiar to most people listening, I think. And I would think that there are some familiar tones to all three of our episodes. So during this podcast series on overcoming common obstacles that teams encounter, we have talked about individual sources of conflict, interpersonal sources of conflict, and now organizational sources of conflict.

MCGUIRE

Any final thoughts or comments on the series before we close out?

SCOTT

I guess my final comment is, with all that conflict going on, it's probably important to get 1) more comfortable with conflict and 2) some skills around identifying it, de-escalating it, working through it, managing it is a very important part of working in the workplace and working with teams. So, we would encourage you to practice those skills.

SARIKAS

Yeah. And the final thing I would say is we talked a lot about this during this episode is really get your curiosity on, you know, bring it with you every day. It'll serve you well.

MCGUIRE

Excellent, Fantastic. And in your process of practicing conflict, don't create it for the purposes of practice. You'll find it. It'll. Thank you. Thank you so much to to you, Bridget and Kathy, for being our subject matter experts for this very informative series. We appreciate your time and your expertise. Thank you.

SCOTT

Thank you.

MCGUIRE

And again, thank you for listening this. Hopefully this has been helpful to you and your team development. And please check out all of the other wonderful courses on [EliteLearning.com](https://www.elitelearning.com). There are other podcasts and certainly a long list of courses that can help you in developing your career. And this is Leana McGuire for Elite Learning by Colibri Healthcare.