Development Plan Part 1

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## My evaluation of my past experiences with difficult people

I have had three difficult interpersonal conflict situations at the workplace, and every situation needed skills to solve. The first situation is when I was an accountant, and I needed numbers to complete the assignment. Some of the employees responsible for giving the numbers never understood and instead felt that the result could be arrived at without their input. This was very frustrating since I felt they have to understand their part and how they should contribute to publishing the final result. The result was that it made accountability and meeting deadlines difficult. The second conflict was a leadership conflict, and I had difficulty adapting to management's new leadership style.

I had been accustomed to the hands-off leadership style, where a person is left to do their duty in the best way possible and make reports. In this situation, if there is a mistake, the person was held entirely responsible. The new leadership style was authoritarian and followed every minute of employee engagement. I found this very stressful, and I even contemplated resigning as an auditor. The third and the last difficult situation is dealing with different people with different personalities. In this case, I was taking my baby cousin to the hospital, and I was in a hurry; in my car, I had to cut someone off the lane, and he was not pleased, he used all manner of words to describe my behavior and did not even give me the chance to explain my actions. This situation was the most irritating, and I have had many thoughts on handling it differently.

## What has worked well for me when handling difficult situations

In all the situations, there are common elements of personality that worked well for me; the first thing I did was calm down and let the conflict subside. Then I talked to another person who could have a different perspective on the problem. This was very useful in the first two cases and helped me in having a different perspective of the problem. I did not wait for the problem to become more passive or aggressive. I tackled the problems before they got further. For example, in the first case, I told everyone responsible for giving me data to keep time and informed them nicely that the information was important. Being cool helped me understand that when I argue with people, it is not necessarily true that my point of view is the same as theirs; I tried to understand their point and look at my point from a third person's perspective. I had to accept future conflict that my perspective is always right and become more open to other people's perspectives.

Another element that I have employed apart from calming down and reflecting on a different perspective is active listening while communicating. It is not important to get together and talk, and it is also important to get the time and listen to people. When I crossed the line for the other driver in the driveway, I felt that I could have taken time to talk to him, just let him talk, and wait for my turn to talk. I have learned to be attentive when other people talk and think that they are not feeling the same way. I have also tried to understand what people mean when they speak rather than concentrating on what is spoken. Finally, self-reflection is the best way of resolving conflict; when I consider things from other people's points of view, it means that I will understand them better. Self-reflection was important in the driveway incident since, I had to agree that I was wrong, and it was also difficult for the driver to guess my problem without giving me time to talk about it. Given that it was also rush hour, I might have wasted his time on the highway.

## 2. My strengths and weakness in navigating difficult interpersonal situations

I interviewed three people, my mother, younger sister, and elder sister. Each had their view on my strengths while handling conflicts. My mother identified several weaknesses, such as my inability to listen; she says I always rush to decide when making judgments. She also clarified that I always assume that a conflict will resolve itself and always postpone a conflict. When I reflected on her comments, I realized she had a point.

On the other hand, my elder sister was less critical; she noted more critical weaknesses in my interpersonal relationships. She claimed that I solve problems but not completely, and sometimes I take time alone to solve the problems, but when I truly reflect, I never find a complete solution. She suggested that I should be using a more collaborative approach in problem-solving; this means that I should involve more people like coworkers in problem-solving, as proposed by Hutchby (2005) and McNaughton et al. (2019) in his writing on problem-solving at workplace. However, the third correspondents were more positive, and although she said that I should be more careful when solving the problems, especially on the belief that I can handle almost all the situations at the workplace, she also noted that I should learn the problem-solving theories by Huerta-Wong & Schoech (2010), this will greatly be advantageous to my personal development. Instead, I should involve my elders in the process and put more effort into the present and not the past. Among the three, they all agree that I have a poor conflict resolution approach and should work hard to improve it. In addition, they also agree that I quickly summarize conflicts. This should take more time to analyze perspectives and also finding out the best solution.

I agree with their assessment; I have not been good at finalizing conflict: some still ring in my head unresolved while others are pending. I have taken no step towards their solutions. From the interview, I can only identify the weaknesses I have in navigating difficult situations.

## 3. My action plan to practice my Active Listening Skills.

The skill I would like to develop this semester is active listening skills. Since active listening was listed as one of my mother's weaknesses during the interview, I decided that this is the point I will develop first. Since I am planning to be a successful leader in the future, I have to make an effort to listen to employees and my surroundings in the workplace. This is important in inviting employee input, but it is also helpful in creating a culture where employee input is valued. The following are the action plans that will help me develop my listening skills;

### Approach every dialog to listen

At this stage, I will engage an individual who can teach me how to listen and an individual with reputable oratory skills. To do this, I would engage two family friends, my mother and a close friend. I would also use a close colleague to gauge how I approach a dialogue.

### Stop Talking too much and listen more.

When talking to the individual chosen above, it is important to stop talking and listen more. This means suppressing the urge to talk and instead concentrate on what I am going to say next. This can also be practiced, for example, a week of listening, where I go to an argumentative environment and I do not make any talk, I just listen. I could also go to church once a week, to learn how to listen, and also would go to church and listen more.

### Let the individual give me open-ended questions.

These are open-ended questions that would allow me to think and structure my answer before actually doing it. This case I would inform my mother to ask me open ended question and learn or study how to answer the questions. Then give me a feedback on how I performed. I would also tell my brother to ask me direct questions, open ended ones, that would be useful in practicing the answering the open ended questions. While doing all these I will be gauging myself against the previous performance.

### Focus on positive feedback

When I realize a speaker has problems expressing a point, I will urge them to smile and try to node positively to increase the possibility of finishing the presentation. This will ensure that I learn to focus on the positives and not the negatives. This is harder to practice, but I would carry on my daily activities as if I have no aim, meanwhile, have I face criticism with an open mind, then I record how many successfully handled criticism.

### I am paying attention to my responses.

The way I respond to questions is also an important part of the dialog, and therefore, when answering questions, there is a need to keep an open mind towards the other person’s point-of-view even if I disagree with their point. I would also check twice daily if I am listening to the responses. I would repeat this three times a day, and also report my imporvements.

# References

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