
POETS 2020 - 2021

Managing Club Challenges with District Support (District Facilitation Team)

Presenters : Derek Pead (DP) and Siham Boda (SB)

Cover Slide : Facilitation Support Initiative

I was approached by our incoming DG Carl-Heinz Duisberg to establish a resource to clubs and members in the District to assist with managing conflict/discord that emerges. I thought that this was a brave step as most of us feel terribly uncomfortable when we hear the word Conflict. This morning together with my colleague Derek Pead we will be sharing with you the details of this initiative that we hope you will make use of.

Slide 2 : Conflict is Positive?

When one hears this statement, it seems like an oxymoron. I will hand over to my colleague Derek to discuss further.

DP : It is to be expected that an organisation like Rotary will attract conflict. It is made-up of dynamic people who have enjoyed successful careers, have grit and determination. Also, these highly driven individuals are often more accustomed to issuing instructions that taking them or having to listen. Conflict is an inevitable by-product. However, this is not a negative thing- it means that an organisation is diverse and that not everyone thinks the same way and that is desirable. Although we subscribe to similar values Rotary has from the outset encouraged diversity, initially with regards to occupations and latterly albeit with a nudge with regards to gender. However, when we in SA think of diversity we limit ourselves to thinking about it in terms of race but it is much broader and includes, gender, age, skills, orientation, religious affiliations etc. A clash of opinions is inevitable, but how we approach the conflict is key.

SB : Part of the challenge is that Conflict brings with it a sense of stigma. We are Rotarians, we don't experience conflict. If we don't admit to this, we cannot change it or how we engage with it. So conflict in any environment is inevitable. How to we engage with it positively and manage it? Derek do you have some suggestions?

Slide 3 : Conflict Management Skills

DP : The most important skill to assist in managing conflict is to properly listen to what is being said. Even if you think you know what is being communicated double check by asking a few questions., and listen carefully and without judgement to the answers It is surprising how often a misunderstanding can occur resulting in unintended consequences.

A good way to de-escalate a situation is to take a time out, have a cup of tea, walk outside for a while or even break for a while and revisit the discussion a few days later.

Perhaps the hardest thing is to stay calm even if those around you are losing their cool! Your task as a leader in your club is to keep all sides calm in the event of a conflict.

Slide 4 : What is the Facilitation Support Initiative?

SB : The initiative will be staffed, initially by a team of five trained mediators , who will be independent of District. How will it work? The process will be a confidential, voluntary referral process to seek assistance in order to resolve/address discord between members/clubs etc. An informal technique will be first used and if that is not successful a more formal mediation will be offered.