

Maintaining Effective Relations with your Supervisor

Part 3 - Green Zone Tools (application)

Scenario #1

At Tania's very first team meeting in her new position, she had trouble finding the room and arrived late. Since then, her supervisor, Dr. Adams, has called her "Tardy Tania". Every time she hears this nickname it upsets her. Worse yet, he uses this nickname in front of others which is embarrassing and humiliating. She is not sure how to bring it up or if she should at all.

If you were in Tania's situation, where would you place this on the Continuum of Conflict Management Processes?

Would it be in the green zone? If you answered "no", who could you reach out to for advice and assistance?

If it would be in the green zone, then consider how you would respond? would you seek understanding? Communicate impact? Both? Or neither?

Consider:

Communicating impact could sound like this:

"Dr. Adams, I am sorry that I arrived late to the team meeting. I will make sure that it does not happen again. I wanted to let you know that I find it quite embarrassing to be referred to as "Tardy Tania" in front of my colleagues. Could you please just call me Tania from now on?"

Scenario #2

Jo is a graduate student in the lab of Dr. Anna Bartholemew. So far, Jo's time working for Dr. Bartholemew has gone well. Yesterday, while they were discussing plans to attend and present at an upcoming conference, Jo was concerned when Dr. Bartholemew seemed put off by a comment they made. Jo was not sure what to say at the time, so they said nothing. All day today, Dr. Bartholemew has seemed a bit distant, and Jo is concerned that she may have been offended by the comment or may have misinterpreted it. Jo is worried that if they say something, it might seem like they are making a big deal about nothing at all, so they are not sure what to do.

If you were in Jo's situation, where would you place this on the Continuum of Conflict Management processes? Would it be in the green zone?

If you answered "no" who could you reach out to for advice and assistance?

If you answered "yes" how might you respond? Would you seek understanding? Communicate impact? Both? Or neither? Would you do something else completely?

Consider:

Jo could assess impact and then follow up by seeking understanding. That could sound like this:

- "Dr. Bartholemew, I'm concerned that the comment I made yesterday may have offended or upset you. Is that the case?"
- "I would appreciate hearing more about how the comment offended you. It's important to me to understand so that it doesn't happen again."

By addressing this early Jo has an opportunity to prevent future further misunderstandings.

Scenario #3:

Pat is a graduate student who works with Dr. Matthias Pinaris. Pat and Dr. Pinaris have been working together for months on a research project that Pat is very excited about. Today, at a virtual departmental meeting, when Dr. Pinaris was discussing the work, he presented it as if it were all his work and did not acknowledge the role that Pat had played. Pat is concerned and wants to ensure their contribution will be acknowledged moving forward. Pat did not want to put Dr. Pinaris on the spot during the meeting but is not sure how to bring this up now.

If you were in Pat's situation, where would you place this on the Continuum of Conflict Management Processes? Would it be in the green zone? The blue zone or the red zone?

If it would be in the green zone, then consider how you would respond.

Consider:

In a situation like this, it would be easy for Pat to make assumptions about Dr. Pinaris' motives. Those assumptions could lead Pat to then begin to view all of Dr. Pinaris' future words and action through a lens of mistrust and suspicion.

Pat could take steps to resolve the situation early by communicating impact. That could sound like this:

"Dr. Pinaris, I was a little disappointed that I did not get to share in today's meeting about the role I played in this project. I wonder if there might be an opportunity in the future for me to do so."