

## Conflict Resolution Skills

### Hunter Sully, MA

When you hear the word conflict, what are the first thoughts that come to your mind? If you're like most, you probably came up with something negative. That's because when we think about conflict we think about struggles and disagreements that lead to arguments. While conflict *can* be negative, it can be positive as well! How is that, you might ask? From a mental health perspective, conflict comes from internal and external struggles when people have needs, desires, wishes, and demands that are incompatible or even opposite. So by working through conflict people can find common ground on a topic they initially disagreed on. They can talk through difficult subjects and gain empathy for each other's perspectives. In this way conflict can actually strengthen relationships!

Many people know how to engage in negative conflict, full of screaming and yelling. But, if we want to experience the positive benefits of



conflict, we have to learn how to engage in adaptive conflict resolution. There are 5 important pillars of conflict resolution. By learning them all, you will learn how to have healthier and more productive discussions that result in problems being solved and a better understanding of one another.



**1. Active Listening.** Listening and active listening are two completely different things. Active listening means you are listening to understand the other person's perspective. You are NOT waiting for an opportunity to respond with your point of view. In order to let your partner know you're actively listening, you can respond by validating the person's point of view, paraphrasing what was said to make sure you understood, and even asking clarifying questions.

**2. Empathy.** Empathy means you are working to understand what the other person is going through. You can do this by "putting yourself in their shoes" or trying to remember a time here you may have gone through something similar. By intentionally working on feeling

empathy, it may be easier for you to understand the other person's point of view.

**3. Expressing Interests.** Your interests are all about your point of view and why you feel the way you do. An example of expressing your interests is using "I statements," which is comprised of a simple formula: I feel \_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_. For example, "I feel tired because you play your music late at night and so I don't get enough sleep." This is much more helpful than simply yelling: "Shut up! Turn down your music!" By using "I statements" and explaining your point of view, you are much more likely to help the other person understand where you're coming from.

**4. Respect.** I'm sure we've all heard Aretha Franklin sing about R-E-S-P-E-C-T, but what does it truly mean? An easy way to think about respect is to think about the Golden Rule: treat others how we want to be treated. Think about how you want to be treated when in conflict with someone else, and then use that (along with the above pillars) during conflict resolution.

**5. Common Ground.** Finally, you have to reach common ground. At this point, it's all about reaching a resolution that works for *both* sides. This may involve a bit of compromise with both people, but the important part is that the conflict has been resolved and at least part of both people's needs were met. It may not be easy at first, but, with time, you can become a pro at resolving conflict!

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## Monthly Guidance

Dear MG,  
I've lived my entire life feeling as though I was born the wrong gender. I have never felt like I

belonged in my body. I was born a male but feel like a woman. I have felt this way since I was little. I was confused by my feelings, and felt trapped. Now that I'm an adult, I feel like I have more control and want to come out as a woman, change my name, and make my appearance match my internal experience, but am scared. Am I crazy? Who should I tell? What should I do?

Sincerely,  
Trapped and Ready to be Me

Dear Trapped,  
It sounds like you have been experiencing a lot of inner turmoil with regard to your gender identity development, and you are wondering how to share your identity with your

social groups. First of all NO, you are not crazy. What you're describing sounds like gender dysphoria, or a mismatch between how *you* experience and want to express gender and your assigned sex at birth. You're not alone in wanting to be seen and treated as the other gender. It's not uncommon to struggle with fear of sharing this information with others.

Here are a few things to consider before deciding who to tell and what to do:

- Weigh the pros and cons of telling the various people you're considering sharing this information with. Make sure they'll be safe and supportive. It sounds like it took a long time for you to realize and accept your identity, and it might take others some time to do the same. If you are worried about others' reactions, make sure to have the coming out conversation in a safe place.
- Consider *how* you want to express your gender. Are you interested in buying new clothes, taking hormones, having top or bottom surgery-or both, or changing your name? You also

might not know these answers and you may want to explore these options with a counselor. Remember, whatever you decide is okay!

- Since there aren't many role models who are transgender, it might be helpful to have a few to look up to, like Laverne Cox or Chaz Bono.
- You can find additional resources and information through the following:
  - The World Professional Association for Transgender Health
  - The Community of LGBT Centers
  - The Human Rights Campaign
  - Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
  - Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation

*Monthly Guidance [MG] is here to answer questions about relationships and personal issues. If you would like to ask MG a question, you may call the Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic and leave an anonymous message for MG. Or, you may send your question in writing to the address on the back page of this newsletter. If you choose to ask MG a question, the identity of the person submitting the question will remain completely anonymous. Please keep in mind when writing your questions that space is limited. Due to time constraints, MG cannot answer all questions, but will try to choose questions that are representative of a broad range of issues. If your question does not get answered and you would like to discuss it, please call Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047. Please be advised that MG is neither a crisis/emergency service nor a correspondence therapy service. If you need either immediate attention or ongoing therapy, call Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047.*

## Featured Youth Issue: How to resolve conflicts? Youth and Social Media

By: Byron Long, M.A

Increasingly young people are being exposed to media images and messages that often are beyond their cognitive and emotional developmental stage. Teens and pre-teens especially struggle with appropriate use of social media. It's hard to ignore the increasing role social media plays in the lives of teenagers. The Pew Research Center shows 81% of teens are active on some type of social media. Much of the communication among adolescents now takes place in the digital world. With increasing rates of cyberbullying, stalking, and harassment, the Internet can be a scary place. So how can parents and other caring adults play an active role in helping their children form healthy and respectful social media habits?

**1. Modeling.** One of the best ways to do this is simply being a good example for your child. Whether we like it or not, children learn how to act by watching how adults and their caregivers behave. Many adults use

social media and you're likely linked to your children's accounts. You need to show your child how to make posts that preserve healthy boundaries and reflect respect for others. Holding yourself to the same standards you ask of your children is the best way to help them learn positive social media practices.

**2. Privacy Settings.** The next thing to monitor is your child's privacy settings on their social media profiles. The major services like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have built in security features to limit the visibility of what your child is posting. Ensuring only their friends can see statuses and pictures is a great way to protect their information. See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=sAoIJ4Oz47M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sAoIJ4Oz47M) for some helpful hints on privacy.

**3. Encouraging Kindness.** On top of modeling what kindness looks like, you need to actively discourage gossiping and spreading rumors. We've all said things we wish we could take back. When this happens on social media, it creates a digital footprint. Someone can even take a screenshot of SnapChat! The public and

permanent nature of posts makes it easy for an adolescent's indiscrete post to be used to bully or harass. It's important to remind children and teens what they post is more permanent than they think.

**4. Honesty.** Finally, it is extremely important to both monitor your child's involvement with social media and to have honest, candid conversations about social media habits. While social media provides great opportunities for people to connect and communicate with friends, there are risks involved. Children can perpetrate or be exposed to cyberbullying, can be lured into dangerous relationships, and can be tricked into sharing more personal information than is safe. While these conversations can be challenging, showing you are open and understanding will help foster trust and make it easier for your child to come to you with difficult social media situations.

For more information, please visit <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/teens-fact-sheet/>



## Featured Mental Health Issue:

### Mental Health Disparities

By: Chad Sims, M.S.Ed

Mental health counseling can improve both your mental and physical sense of well-being. Counseling can help you set and accomplish life goals as well as cope with challenging life situations. Community mental health providers have become overwhelmed in recent years due to decreased governmental support and increased social need. The current challenges with access to adequate mental health care being experienced by the general population have existed for a much longer time in minority populations in the United States. The African American community in particular has struggled with access to adequate mental health care for decades. While there are a host of factors influencing access to mental health care in minority populations, one thing is clear – lack of access results in negative mental and physical outcomes.

Access to interventions for alcohol use, drug abuse, and mental health care occurs at lower rates in African American communities. These lower rates of involvement in care occur for many reasons. It is fair to say there is a relative mistrust of mental health services among African Americans. There is a complicated and

unfortunate history between the African American and the health communities. In the past, there have been both overt and covert acts of racism and discrimination in both healthcare delivery and healthcare research. Further, the limited number of African American mental health and health providers provides an additional barrier to access help. The limited number of black mental health professionals intensifies the perception that health and mental health care is only for whites. Further, it is often more difficult for a minority client to trust that a counselor from the majority culture will be able to understand and relate to his/her concerns and struggles. Mistrust of groups who are different from one another is a broad cultural issue right now and the mental health system is not immune to this phenomenon.

Restricted access to health and mental health services for African Americans presents a moral and ethical dilemma for health professionals. Research indicates that African Americans do not have access to mental health care or access to the same quality of mental health care, than that of whites (Wells, 2001). Research also indicates blacks receive

less mental health interventions for depression, anxiety, alcohol use, and substance abuse. These factors contribute to increased levels of uncertainty and stress experienced in the African American community, especially those of low socioeconomic status.



Mental health professionals must be intentional and active in their efforts to ensure *all* individuals are welcome to receive services. Mental health counselors have a professional obligation to affirm and support those at risk for experiencing discrimination. At the Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic we actively strive to support diversity and inclusion as stated in our Diversity and Inclusion Mission Statement at <http://cms.bsu.edu/about/diversity-and-inclusion>

Kenneth Wells, M. M. (2001, 12). Ethnic Disparities in Unmet Need for Alcoholism, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Care. *American Journal of Psychology*, 2027-2032.

## Kids Corner: Winter Holidays are coming!



U F C  
W A A M B K K V R  
A V U A G X O W N O G A T  
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C B X V U H M T X D N V Q G X B R W E B R  
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G Y F U I O R C G X W D A L L Q Z M N  
R Z B S P L R B F X E D K J N L Y  
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Hint:

Kwanzaa

Christmas

Hanukkah

Diwali

Thanksgiving

Mawlid al-nabi



## Featured Profile

### Yamini Bellare, M.A.

*This column is a way for the community to learn about the diverse talents, both master's and doctoral students, employed at Ball State's New Combined Clinic.*

Yamini is currently a fourth-year doctoral student in the Department of Counseling Psychology. The following is a discussion with Yamini, one of our many talented individuals employed at the Ball State University Combined Clinic.



Yamini Bellare, current doctoral student in the Department of Counseling

#### **How did you decide to pursue your PhD in Counseling Psychology?**

While pursuing my undergraduate degree, I got an opportunity to volunteer as an educator at a non-profit organization for adolescent girls living in Mumbai's red light district. During this period, I worked closely with my students in collaboration with social workers and counselors. I was deeply

impacted by how counselors could impact the lives of these girls and help them capitalize on their strengths, cope with oppression and discrimination. I thus decided to pursue a master's degree in clinical psychology. However, I felt that the field of counseling psychology was a better fit for my interest in working with issues related with diversity and social justice. Hence, I decided to pursue doctoral training in counseling psychology.

#### **Are you conducting any research?**

As an international student, I have a strong desire to contribute to research in my home and host countries. Therefore, I predominantly conduct international, cross-cultural research. I am currently working on my dissertation and working on several cross-cultural research projects with faculty. My dissertation research focuses on Everyday Stranger Harassment (ESH) of college going women in the U.S. and India. ESH is the sexual harassment of women in public places, by men who are strangers. It occurs at an alarming frequency around the world and adversely impacts the quality of life of women who experience it. Yet, it is rarely researched and there are hardly any programs to prevent it because it is considered to be "normal" or "harmless." I hope to contribute research and increase awareness in this area.

#### **Are there any populations that you especially enjoy working with in counseling?**

I really enjoy working with adolescents, emerging adults, and individuals from diverse backgrounds. In addition to working at the Practicum Clinic, I have been working at Ball State University Counseling Center for the past two years. I have enjoyed conducting outreach on Ball State's campus, leading brief psychoeducational groups



and individual psychotherapy. I am also pursuing specialized training in the areas of suicide prevention, trauma and crisis counseling.

#### **What has been your most influential/exciting/enjoyable work experience at BSU?**

My favorite experience has been helping run the Share the Care Campaign on Ball State's campus. It is a program that aims to raise awareness on issues related to mental illness and suicide. The simple act of reaching out to someone who you know is struggling and showing that you care can make a world of a difference. During this program, we asked students to write messages of hope and encouragement to fellow Ball State students. These messages were handed out at the end of the week. It was amazing how a few kind words of support can make a lasting impact.

#### **What do you hope to do after you graduate?**

I hope to become a professor of counseling psychology in a graduate training program. I look forward to teaching courses that focus on diversity considerations in counseling and supervising counselors in training. I also aim to pursue a line of research focusing on international psychology and collaborate with researchers from around the world.

## Featured Wellness Issue

### Bystander Intervention Tips

By: Miranda Dean, MA

Stop and think - Have you ever been in a situation where you saw someone being harassed or hurt, and you didn't know how to help? Most people have this feeling when they see someone doing something abusive in public and they don't know how to help or what to do. People are afraid of "getting in the middle" and maybe even becoming a target themselves.



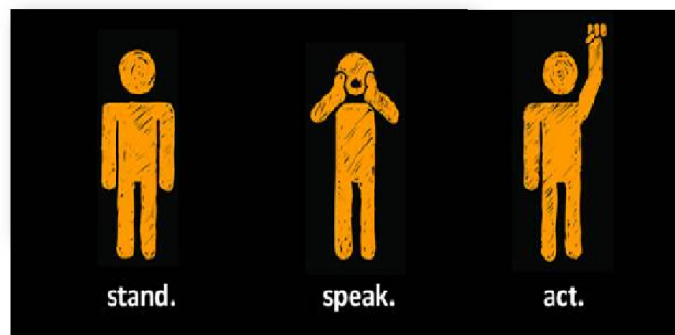
Being in these situations can be scary, but there are direct and indirect ways that you can step in and help the person who is having trouble, while maintaining your own safety. Here are some practical strategies you can use.

**Direct Strategies.** One option is to directly step in. To do this, walk up to the person who is in trouble and ask if he or she needs help or ask how you can help. Again, it's important you only do this if you think the situation is safe. Other

times, you could say something to the person who appears to be being abusive, for example, "I feel uncomfortable when you say things like that." This statement lets the person know what he or she is doing or saying is probably not okay. You could also ask the aggressor how they would feel if other people treated them the way they were treating others in that moment. This action may help the perpetrator reflect on and change the negative behavior.

**Distract.** An indirect way to step in if the situation is safe is to distract the person causing harm. This may give the victim time to leave the area. For example, if you see a person being harassed, you could ask the person causing harm what time it is or if he or she can give you directions to a certain place.

**Delegate.** If stepping in feels like it would be unsafe or is too scary, you can delegate responsibility. You can call out for help, call 911, or ask another person to help you. Sometimes, other people are seeing the same thing you are and want to step in but are hesitant to do so. If you ask for help, it acknowledges the situation as dangerous and might empower others to take action with you. Delegating responsibility can be helpful especially if the person you enlist to help you has social or physical power - like a bouncer, a police officer, or someone stronger than you.



**Delay.** Try to intervene as early as possible before things escalate. But if it is not safe for you to intervene in the moment, talk to the victim after the fact. Ask the victim if he/she is okay or needs assistance. Provide a listening ear. Get them medical attention if needed. Ask them if there's some way you can help them recover. These actions let the person know you recognized the abuse and you are willing to help. The message you give is that someone cares even if the person says he or she doesn't need help. You can tell the person "I'm sad this happened to you" which validates them and the experience.

These are some different ways you can "Step In and Step Up" when you see someone being hurt or who needs help. But remember - Step up in a way that preserves your own safety too!





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## **Mind Matters**

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**Ball State University**  
**Counseling Practicum Clinic**  
**Teacher's College**  
**Intersection of Riverside and**  
**McKinley Ave**  
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**Clinic Coordinator: Amber Spaw**

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#### **Services Offered**

- Individual Counseling
- Couple Counseling
- Family Counseling
- Child/Adolescent Counseling

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## **Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic: Serving the Community Since 1969**

#### **Mission**

- The clinic is a training and research facility for the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services.
- The clinic provides high-quality, low-cost psychological services to the Delaware County community and beyond.

#### **Service Providers**

- Over 50 graduate student counselors under the supervision of faculty.
- Faculty supervisors are licensed psychologists and counselors.

#### **We're on the Web!**

- [www.bsu.edu/academics/collegesanddepartments/counselingpsych/practicum](http://www.bsu.edu/academics/collegesanddepartments/counselingpsych/practicum)



- [www.facebook.com/BallStateCounselingPracticumClinic/](https://www.facebook.com/BallStateCounselingPracticumClinic/)



#### **Hours of Operation**

- August-May (Spring & Fall)  
9 AM to 9 PM M-Th  
9 AM to 12 PM Fri
- May-August (Summer)  
9 AM to 8 PM M-Th  
Closed on Friday
- The clinic is closed during university vacations and holidays.

*All clients have the right to receive timely, competent counseling services consistent with the ethical principles and guidelines established by professional organizations. All counseling services provided at the Counseling Practicum Clinic are guided by the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the American Counseling Association, the American School Counseling Association, the American Rehab Counseling Association, the General Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services, and the Specialty Guidelines for the Delivery of Services by Counseling Psychologists.*