



NAVIGATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

In Your Veterinary Practice



ADDRESSING CONFLICT THROUGH CONVERSATIONS

How comfortable are you at handling difficult or emotional conversations with your clients or team members? Conversations are a big part of veterinary medicine and sometimes they can be a challenge. But with practice you can tackle challenging conversations in ways that will make your day better, your clients happier, and your practice more successful.

Difficult conversations may come in the form of:

- Clients who are upset, stressed, or worried
- Delivering feedback to team members
- Coaching your team
- Making schedule changes you think will upset people
- Firing an employee

Taking time to prepare for conversations before engaging is critical for success. Before any client interaction, think about the situation, try to visualize the other's perspective, and consider how you can best help them through their challenges.

As you prepare, ask yourself questions that will help you to see the situation from their point of view. Then, reflect on and change any assumptions you may have made.

Difficult conversations are often necessary when conflict arises. It is important to ask yourself if the trepidation you feel is real or imagined.

WHY RESOLVING CONFLICT MATTERS

Unresolved conflict:

● Disengages employees

Conflict between two people affects the engagement of everyone on the team. Even if team members are not directly involved, it will ultimately cause you and the practice as a whole to become uncomfortable.

● Adds stress

The level at which teams get along is a significant contributing factor in workplace stress levels. When there is conflict, stress rises for everyone. Often, people describe conflict on the team as the MOST stressful part of the day.

● Reduces communication and efficiency

In a veterinary practice, communication is crucial. Information must flow throughout the practice; when it doesn't, the level of care provided will ultimately suffer.

● Steals focus from what's important

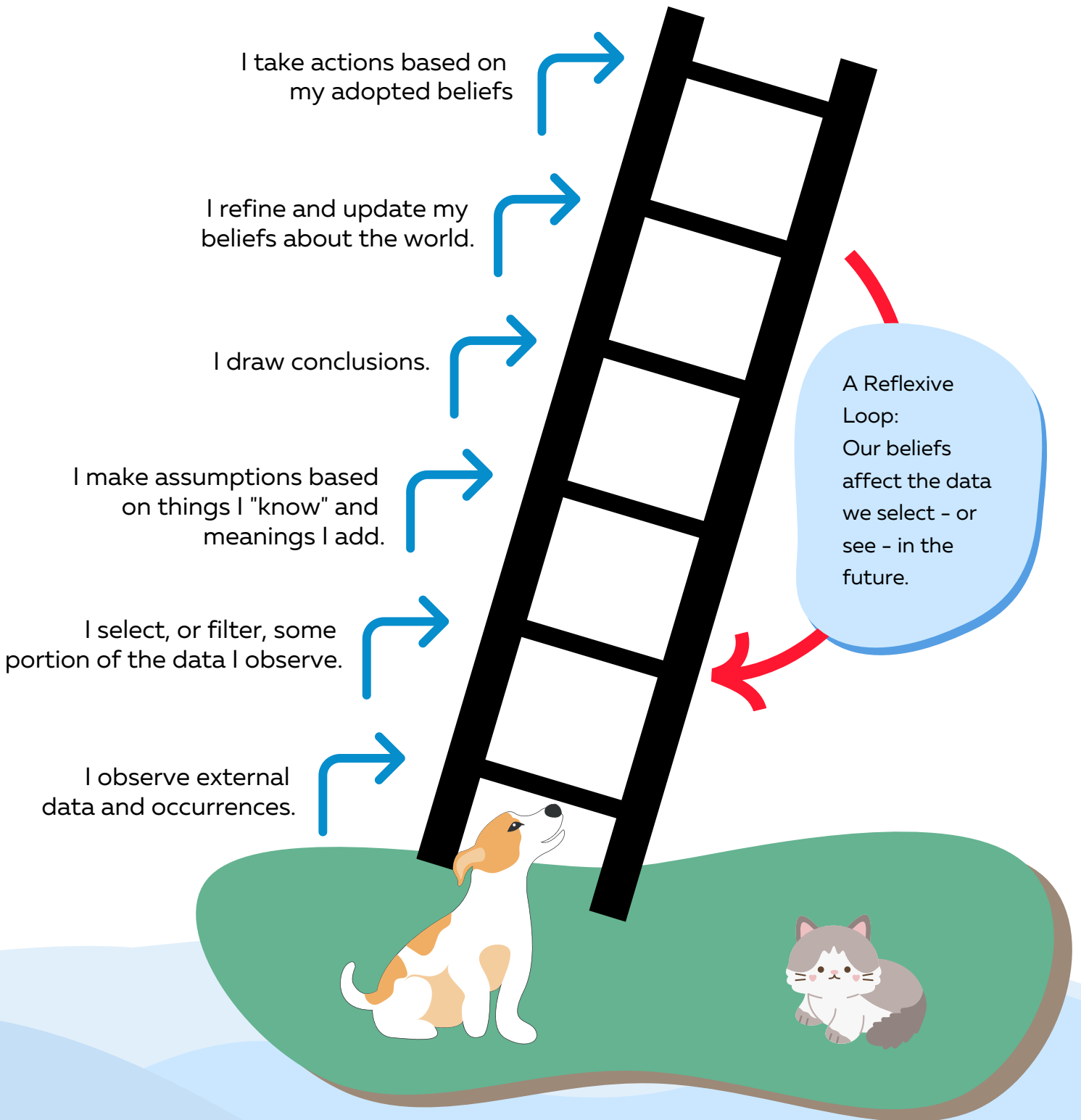
It's impossible to be thinking about conflict or worrying about a difficult conversation and also thinking about the next procedure, the next exam, the next client or preparing to have an amazing, productive shift as a pet care team.

● Destroys culture

When team members are in conflict and you are not able to address it through positive conversation, it will linger and begin to grow. This adds even more stress and diminishes the positive culture you've built.

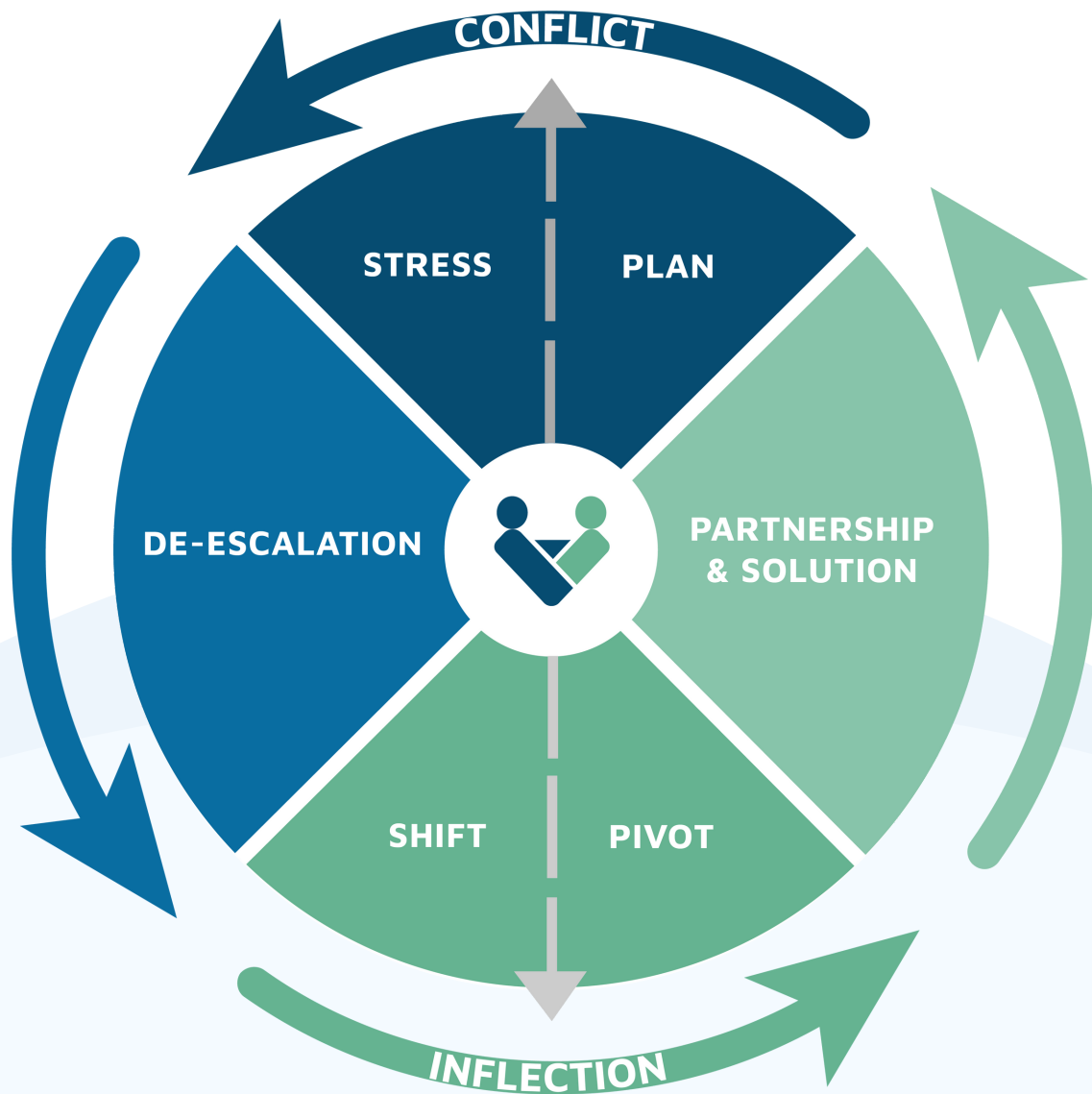
It's best to have the conversation early, even though it feels uncomfortable.

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CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict can be resolved in positive ways through thoughtful conversations with team members and clients.



CONVERSATION DRIVEN BY QUESTIONS

De-escalation questions

- Help me understand what happened
- Tell me more about this?
- How did you feel while this was happening?
- What else is important for me to know?
- How does this make you feel about us right now?
- What other thoughts would you like to share about this situation or our team?

Partnership questions

- Are you okay if we work on this together and try to get it solved?
- I think there are some things we can do here, is it okay if I try to help with this?
- I'd like to work with you to make this better, can we try that?
- I'd like for us to get this resolved and for you to feel good about the situation and our team here, can we work on that with you?



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