

AAA Method: Assess Analyze Act

Step 1: Assess the situation. When dealing with conflict at work or in your personal life, it's important to assess the situation. This involves not only being aware of your emotions and how you are feeling, but how the other person is feeling. Reflect on a specific situation you have experienced to identify these emotions. What does your behavior or body language signal to the other person? What behavior or body language does that person signal to you? Sometimes when we are stressed or dealing with a difficult situation, we can exhibit at least one or more of the following reactions: our heart may beat faster, we can get shortness of breath, we may clench up or experience sweaty palms. How do *you* respond when stressed at work?

Not only should you be aware of your body gestures and others' body gestures, you should also be aware of the current situation or the circumstance. For example:

- Do you have a tight deadline you have to meet?
- Are you working on an important project?

Step 2: Analyze the situation. Once you have assessed the situation and are aware of what your emotions and behaviors are signaling to others, the next step is to analyze your emotions and behaviors. Determine *why* you are feeling stressed. What situation has occurred that has caused you to feel stressed? Additionally, seek to understand and reflect on the thoughts and feelings of the other person involved. For example:

- Why is the other person acting rude or abrasive toward you?
- What situation has occurred that has caused you both to be stressed?

Step 3: Act. Once you have a full understanding of the situation (meaning you are aware of what has caused you or the other person to be stressed and you understand what may be contributing to these feelings), you can respond and act most appropriately. This is one of the most important steps because it prevents you from allowing your emotions to get the best of you and keeps you from making an impulsive decision you will most likely regret.

Remember, in conflict, ***we cannot always be right***. When you take the time to assess and analyze the situation, you may determine you are in the wrong, which may require you to apologize or adjust your response.

Practice Makes Perfect

The AAA Method must be practiced repeatedly if you want to work better with jerks. Many times, when we are caught up in the heat of the moment, we skip directly to step 3 and act based on how we are feeling at that moment. This causes more problems, including jeopardizing our careers and worsening relationships. Following this Assess/Analyze/Act process in order will

help you communicate more effectively with all generations in the workforce, mitigate conflict before it comes to a head, and prevent you from making a rash decision that you may regret.

We do not always get to choose the people who we work with. We *do*, however, get to choose *how* we handle the relationships with the people we work with -- especially jerks. Avoiding jerks, telling them off, or committing violent acts are not good solutions in the short term or the long term. When you deal with jerks by becoming a jerk, you make the situation worse.