



# A Christmas Conflict Story

Let's start this message with a story...

During the holiday season last year, Olive, a member of a team, came to my office.

Olive was concerned about working with Rudy, a new member to the team. She said that he seemed to be the type that liked to be noticed. He was quite flashy and he jumped into the group wanting to be involved in everything.

At first he got a lot of attention - so much so, that others felt ignored and ultimately resentful.

Olive started to not include Rudy in team activities because she felt that he didn't deserve to be involved - he hadn't earned the right yet.

She said that soon things quieted down, but they almost seemed too quiet. Rudy wouldn't participate in any meetings, lunches or team building games. In fact he didn't interact at all.

Olive was recently asked by her team leader to work with Rudy, but she didn't know if she could at this point.

## **Rudy's story**

Coincidentally enough, Rudy came to my office the same week. He was upset over how he was being treated by his coworkers. To him, it seemed that they would not include him in any of the team activities - meetings, lunches, or team building games.

As well, he felt that others were laughing at him. And quite often, he heard them call him names. He was deeply hurt. He began to spend less and less time with the group, which seemed to make matters worse.

I asked him to tell me a little more about how this situation developed.

He told me about how he has always been motivated to be part of a group and that sometimes, maybe he tries a little too hard. But, it seems that no matter what he does, others are annoyed by his enthusiasm.

### **The Turning Point**

A couple weeks passed, and Rudy wanted to meet with me to talk about some recent events.

It turns out that shortly after our initial meeting, Rudy was approached by his manager, Mr. Claws, and was asked to lead the team through a project. The manager saw the leadership potential in Rudy and gave him an opportunity to prove himself.

The project worked beyond everyone's expectations - even the team was amazed at how well Rudy did.

In fact, Rudy's leadership was so effective that they are using it as a model for future projects. You might even say that Rudy will 'go down in history' for his contribution.

Rudy added that the team is now including him in activities and he feels valued.

I spoke with Olive later that week and she said that there had definitely been an improvement in working with Rudy. She realized that Rudy did contribute to the group even though it was in a way that was different from her method.

And they lived happily ever after.

## **Back to Reality**

Of course our day-to-day interactions are not part of a fairy tale or a Christmas song.

However, by looking at the lessons from the tales we tell or the holiday songs we sing, we can improve our working relationships.

Let's take a look at one of the lessons from the Rudy/Olive story - seeing a challenging behaviour as a strength.

Appreciating co-workers/supervisors can sometimes be difficult. The first step is to look at how you view their behaviour.

You need to ask yourself...

- Am I more like Olive or am I more like Mr. Claws?
- Can I be like Mr. Claws? Can I see past the challenges of a behaviour and focus on that person's strengths?
- What does that other person contribute to the team?
- What do I contribute?
- If we each contribute differently, how can we work together to get things done?
- How can I show that I value what the other person has to contribute?

Answering these questions can help increase your tolerance for everyday work behaviours that you may find difficult.

So the next time you find yourself in a challenging situation, think of Rudy and of how everyone has a valuable contribution to make.

Rudy (sung to the tune of "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer")

*Rudy, the new team member,  
Had a very flashy style,  
And if you ever met him,  
You might be shocked for a while.*

*Olive, a co-team member,  
Used to laugh and call him names.  
She never let poor Rudy  
Join in any team building games.*

*Then one stressful working eve,  
The manager came to say,  
"Rudy, with your ideas so bright,  
Won't you lead the team tonight?"*

*Then how the whole team valued him,  
And they looked at Rudy differently,  
"Rudy, the idea person,  
You'll go down in history!"*

Happy holidays to you all!!

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