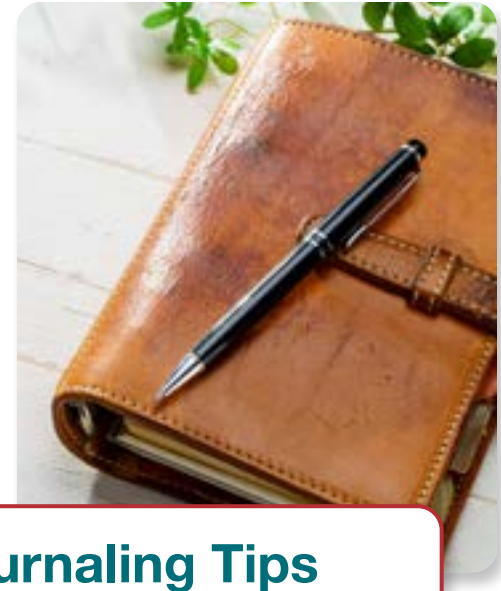


Individual Activity: Journaling

Conflict resolution is the process of addressing and resolving disagreements or disputes between parties through communication and negotiation.

Stepping back from a conflict or stressful situation can allow someone time to reflect on the most appropriate way to handle a situation. Journaling can allow expression of thoughts or frustrations without offending someone else while giving space to explore the right way to address a conflict.



Journaling Prompts

Recent Conflicts

Identify a conflict from the past week and describe:

- The conversations or events that led up to a conflict or stressful outcome.
- What could each party have said or done differently?
- Do you feel comfortable approaching certain individuals in the party to reflect on the discussion or events to learn from the scenario? If so, who? If not, why?

Journaling Tips

- Consider setting specific dates or times to write in the journal. This can help maintain the practice and keep it from feeling like an overwhelming task.
- Using a set of prompts can help guide your reflection, so you can work through an issue from start to finish.

Hypothetical Conflicts

You might be lucky and not have any conflicts you can think of from the last week. If so, explore one of these options:

- **Too Eager to Help:** Your lab area has a team member on extended leave causing your section to be short staffed. To help complete essential needs, one of your co-workers begins other employees' assignments without discussing the need for help. This leaves co-workers confused and frustrated on the status of work that needs to be completed. How would you address this situation, either as a colleague or supervisor? How should it not be addressed?
- **Workaholicism:** A supervisor frequently sends an after-hours request that impacts your work-life balance. How would you approach the subject? How do you set realistic expectations?
- If you need more prompts for writing about conflict, perform an internet search of "workplace conflict writing prompts."

Use this in conjunction with the other Conflict Resolution resources in the [Effective Communication for Aspiring Laboratory Leaders Toolkit](#), designed by Cohort 17 of the [APHL Emerging Leader Program](#) to empower public health laboratory professionals to be better leaders by improving communication skills.

The toolkit has three sections:
Relationship Building, Empowering Colleagues and Conflict Resolution.

Team Journaling

Some teams may find it helpful to maintain a group journal, where participants can share their experiences or frustrations (without divulging specific names) at their own pace and with time to collect their thoughts on a topic.

Team journals can take many forms—from a physical book to an electronic document or collaboration platform—and the best option will vary by group.

Benefits of Team Journaling

This activity can be a helpful mechanism to share experiences or work through an ongoing situation:

- Team members can write in the journal when they are excited that they resolved a conflict, which provides lessons learned to others.
- If team members are stuck in a situation, they can solicit ideas from each other on how to navigate the situation.

It can also help build a stronger sense of community and levity within the team:

- Name and decorate the journal.
- Share inspirational thoughts or positive ideas related to conflict resolution and leadership.

Set Ground Rules

It's important for all participants of a team journal to be on the same page, so a set of ground rules should be established before beginning this activity. Areas where ground rules may be particularly helpful include:

- **Access:** Decide who has access to the journal and be inclusive within the defined context. For example: only supervisors, everyone in a specific section, etc.
- **How to use the journal:** Example rules:
 - Unless the journal is shared one-on-one, keep everything anonymous and generalized.
 - Express positives from the situation along with the conflict/frustration.
 - Respond to others' posts in addition to adding your own situations.
- **Logistics:** For example, if the journal is a physical book:
 - Where will it live when "checked in"?
 - How long can team members keep it "checked out"?
 - Will you track who currently has the journal?

Reflection

- What surprised you about responding to the journal prompt you selected?
- If there were conflicts where journaling wasn't helpful to you, what would be another resource to help you resolve the conflict?

