LGNSW – HR Group Meeting

Workplace conflict - what does good look like?

4 March 2020
Google’s “Project Aristotle”*

• Research Project
• Asked - “What makes a team effective at Google?”
• Finding – the most important factor: “psychological safety”

*re:work.withgoogle.com

Can we create the conditions for the healthiest conflict possible?
Conflict...

Is good! But feels bad.
So what does good conflict look like...?
1. Trust
Trust builds the foundations for good conflict...
2. Intention
Conflict ‘resolution’ – what is the point?

• Change or stop behaviours?
• Reach an outcome both parties can live with?
• Develop or rebuild a constructive and positive working relationship?
• Collaboratively problem solve in a way that prioritises team health and resilience and meets organisational objectives?
3. Reflection
Good conflict provides people with *opportunities* to pause, reflect and proceed with *intention*
4. Perspective
Good conflict needs for at least one party to shift to second position...

First
Focus on self, internal dialogue, emotional, unaware of (or doesn’t care about) others and their concerns

Second
Start to be able to acknowledge the other’s perspective (and see our own as ‘our perspective’). May be empathic and acknowledge needs of others

Third
The helicopter view – broad lens, viewed from afar with less emotion, more impartial, less blaming. Able to see and ‘value’ multiple perspectives

Can we aim for third position? Is there a fourth position?
5. Feeling discomfort
Good conflict involves sitting with discomfort...

- Uncomfortable conversations
- Uncertainty
- Feeling unsure, worried, frustrated, angry, hurt, afraid, vulnerable

And still being able to:
- Listen
- Empathise
- And remember what’s important...
So,

good conflict…

still feels bad.
But not as bad as bad conflict...

...one of the leading causes of chronic stress in the workplace....can lead to decreased cognitive capacity

[Workplace bullying] is estimated to cost Australian organisations between $6 billion and $36 billion a year.
From bad conflict to collaboration...

...doing more of what works and less of what doesn’t work.
QUESTIONS?