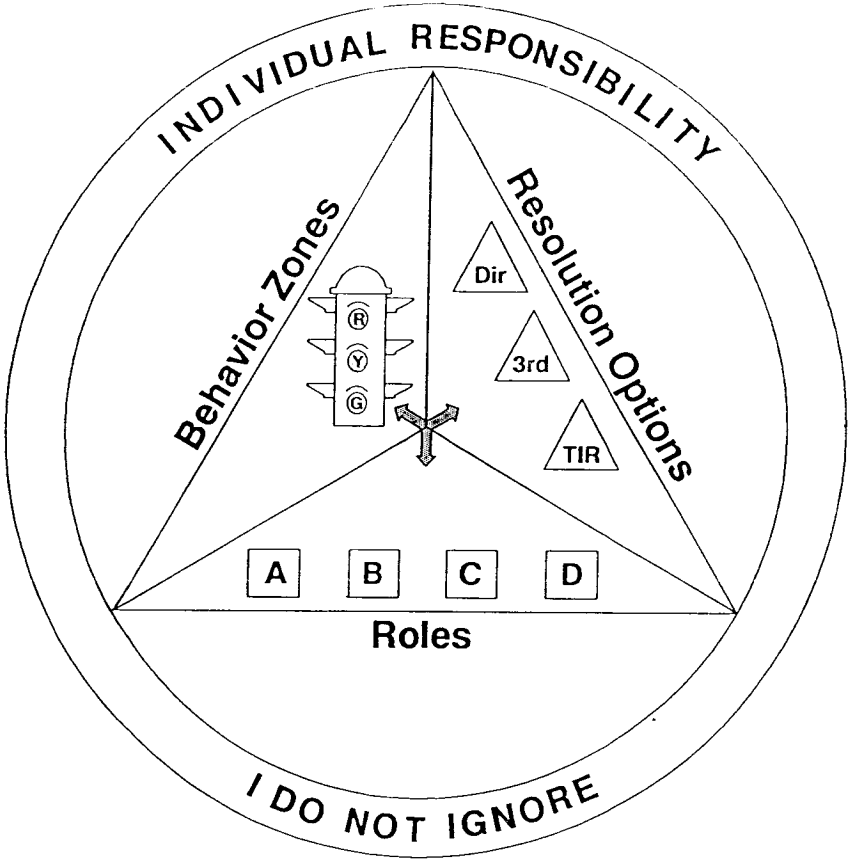
INFORMAL RESOLUTION SYSTEM (IRS)



For additional copies of this booklet contact your local TIR coordinator:

0500LP5430900

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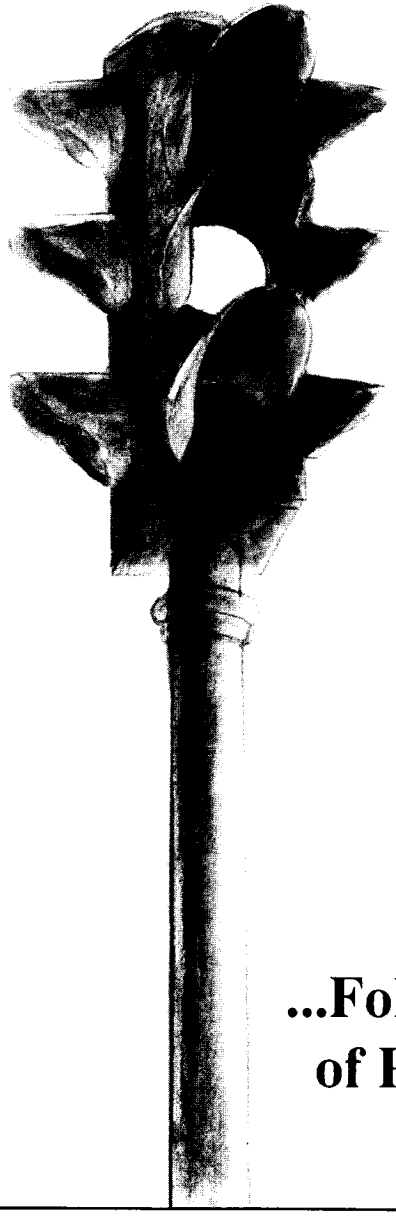
RESOLVING CONFLICT



...Following the Light of Personal Behavior

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D continued...

If behavior is YELLOW:

Stop behavior.

Take corrective action.

Provide remedial training using TIR material.

Follow-up to ensure resolution.

If behavior is GREEN:

No action required.

INTRODUCTION

It happened again today. One of your co-workers made a comment that just wasn't right. Maybe the co-worker didn't mean anything by it but the impact of those types of comments is beginning to disrupt your work. You've been thinking about it and wonder what you could do to resolve the situation without making a big incident of it. Or, maybe you are a co-worker or supervisor and someone has come to you for assistance in resolving a conflict in the workplace. Or, perhaps, someone has approached you regarding your behavior.

Conflict can be defined as a disagreement between two or more people that raises serious concerns and needs to be resolved. Many things can cause conflict such as opposing or differing views, perspectives from different backgrounds, differences in personality, lack of understanding, or miscommunication. When any of these happen, they may result in discrimination or harassment. Prejudice, stereotypes, bias, and other inappropriate behavior may also result in conflict. When conflict is not resolved, it can escalate rapidly into serious problems. Each of us has a responsibility to resolve conflicts. One of the simplest and most effective methods is to use the ***Informal Resolution System*** outlined in this booklet.

The ***Informal Resolution System*** enables you to resolve conflicts in the workplace at the lowest possible level. This booklet will introduce you to the Informal Resolution System and provide you with the skills you'll need to use it. You will learn to determine if behavior falls in a red, yellow, or green zone. The booklet also emphasizes your individual responsibilities, identifies your role in the Informal Resolution System and provides you with options for reaching resolution.

Read the entire booklet and put the ***Informal Resolution System*** to work for you.

D continued from previous page . . . . . .

If behavior is YELLOW:

Advise offending person to stop behavior and encourage to apologize.

Take corrective action.

Refer both parties to support services.

Offer to intervene or accompany the offending person to the recipient.

Ask for a Training Information Resource (TIR) for the workplace.

If behavior is GREEN:

Advise offending person behavior was acceptable and explain why.

C to D

When approached by a person who feels he or she may have observed harassing or offending behavior...

Instruct the observer on the need for confidentiality and discretion.

Take Action

If behavior is RED:

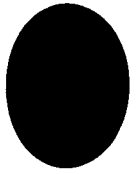
Take corrective action.

Notify chain of command, if appropriate.

Discuss Informal Resolution System and formal complaint process to determine the best course of action for the recipient.

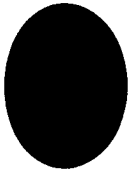
BEHAVIOR ZONES

To help you determine whether behavior is unacceptable, think of a traffic light. Behavior can fall into three different zones, just like the red, yellow, and green of the traffic light. Determining whether a specific behavior is red, yellow, or green will help you decide what action, if any, you should take to reach resolution.



Red means "Stop, don't do it!" Red zone behavior is **ALWAYS UNACCEPTABLE** and includes asking for sexual favors in return for a good performance evaluation; making supervisory decisions because of a person's race or gender; and sending "hate" mail. The most severe forms of red zone behavior are clearly criminal, like rape and sexual assault.

Yellow means "Use caution, prepare for red!" Yellow zone behavior is **REGARDED AS INAPPROPRIATE BY MOST PEOPLE** and includes making racial, ethnic, or sexual comments or jokes; violating personal "space"; and touching someone in a sexually suggestive way. How yellow behavior is perceived depends on the situation and the individuals involved, as well as others who can see or hear them. Just as a traffic light changes from yellow to red, if this behavior is repeated, especially after being told it is not appropriate, it becomes red zone behavior and is definitely unacceptable.



Green means "Go, it's all right!" Green zone behavior is **ACCEPTABLE** and includes counseling on performance or military appearance; normal social interaction; polite compliment; touching which could not reasonably be perceived in a sexual or threatening way; and friendly conversation.

D IF I AM A SUPERVISOR WHO OBSERVED OR IS APPROACHED ABOUT HARASSMENT

Evaluate

- **What exactly happened?**
- **What was the impact of the behavior?**
- **Did it disrupt the work environment?**
- **Would it have offended a reasonable person?**
- **Was behavior RED, YELLOW or GREEN?**
- **What are my responsibilities and options?**

A to D **When approached by a person who feels harassed or offended ...**

Take Action

If behavior is RED:

Take corrective action.

Inform chain of command, if appropriate.

Encourage recipient to use the formal complaint process or determine whether the Informal Resolution System can resolve the problem.

Refer all parties to support services.

If behavior is YELLOW:

Take corrective action.

TRAINING INFORMATION RESOURCES (TIR)

• ***Request training or resource materials*** for presentation to the workplace in the areas of discrimination, harassment or inappropriate behavior. Using these materials is a good method of communicating to the offending person and other individuals in the workplace, in a non-threatening way, that the behavior is inappropriate.

Training Information Resources include videos, books, lesson plans, posters and other materials. Request a TIR from your unit TIR Coordinator (usually the EO/DEEOO) in writing or in person. You need not identify yourself. The CO or the unit commander decides if using the TIR is appropriate.

Training Information Resource (TIR) Sample Request

Date: _____

Nature of Problem *(e.g., racial jokes, offensive sexual comments, pressure for dates):* _____

_____

TIR Requested (circle choices): Poster, Video, Lesson Plan, Book, Other: _____

Organizational Unit: _____

Submit to your TIR Coordinator.

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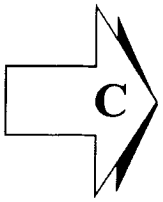
If behavior is GREEN:

Advise the offending person the behavior is acceptable and explain why.

Encourage offending person to talk with the recipient and discuss the situation.



When I observe harassing or offending behavior...

Take Action

If behavior is RED:

Stop behavior if possible.

Inform chain of command, if appropriate.

Encourage recipient to use the formal complaint process if the Informal Resolution System cannot resolve the problem.

Refer all parties to appropriate support services.

If behavior is YELLOW:

Stop offending behavior if possible.

Encourage the recipient to approach offending person directly or in writing.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Informal Resolution System identifies four roles. You may find yourself identifying with a different role depending on the circumstances.

A I am the **RECIPIENT** who feels offended or harassed by someone's behavior.

B I am the **OFFENDING PERSON** who may have offended or harassed another.

C I am the **OTHER PERSON** who has been approached by the recipient, the offending person, or who has observed discrimination, harassment or other inappropriate behavior.

D I am the **SUPERVISOR** who has been approached by the recipient, offending person, other person or who has personally observed discrimination, harassment or other inappropriate behavior.

Regardless of your role in a conflict, keep in mind the following individual responsibilities:

- ***I do not ignore conflict***
- ***I review resolution options***
- ***I take action to reach resolution***

C IF I OBSERVE OR AM APPROACHED ABOUT HARASSMENT

Evaluate

- **What exactly happened?**
- **What was the impact of the behavior?**
- **Did it disrupt the work environment?**
- **Would it have offended a reasonable person?**
- **Was behavior RED, YELLOW or GREEN?**
- **What are my responsibilities and options?**

If unsure how to proceed, seek advice.

A to C **When approached by a person who feels harassed or offended ...**

Take Action

If behavior is RED:

Encourage recipient to use the formal complaint process or determine whether the Informal Resolution System can resolve the problem.

Inform chain of command, if appropriate.

Refer all parties to support services.

If behavior is YELLOW:

Encourage directly approaching the offending person.

Suggest the recipient send a letter to the offending person.

- I do not ignore it.
- I review my resolution options.
- I take action to reach a resolution.

Ask another person or supervisor to advise me, accompany me to the offending person, or intervene on my behalf.

Ask for a Training Information Resource (TIR) for the workplace.

If behavior is GREEN:

No action is required.

Sample Format for Letter

Date:

From: *(Name of recipient)*
To: *(Name of offending person)*

1. *State the facts.* *Be specific.*
   Example: *On (date), at (place)*
   When you...
   You did...
   You said...
   Your actions (specify behaviors)....

2. *State your feelings about the behavior.* *Be specific.*
   Example: *Your behavior affected my ....*
   I was offended/embarrassed...
   I felt...
   I am angry because ....

3. *List what you want or expect the offending person to do.*
   Example: *I want you to stop (list behavior)...*
   I expect you to ...

Remember: If informal options are not successful, you may take formal action through the chain of command.

Developed by men and women of the Navy and Marine Corps, officers, enlisted and civilians.

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For sale by the U.S. Government Printing Office
Superintendent of Documents, Mail Stop: SSOP, Washington, DC 20402-9328
ISBN 0-16-041846-1

IN CONCLUSION...

The ***Informal Resolution System*** depends on you and your commitment to resolve conflict early and at the lowest possible level. You can resolve conflict without making a big incident out of it by using the ***Informal Resolution System*** in your workplace.

Make the system work for you. Treat others with dignity and respect, ask questions that get to the heart of concerns, listen to what is really being said, and try to understand the other person's point of view.

If you have been offended by someone, remember - how you communicate can be as important as what you communicate. Focus on describing the behavior that caused the offense rather than characterizing the individual's personality. Be clear about the impact of the behavior on you.

If you have offended another, make a sincere apology. It may not be easy to apologize. Remember, an apology is not an admission of guilt or wrong doing, you simply accept that the recipient was offended and take action to resolve that conflict. If you are the recipient, accept the apology in the spirit in which it was intended.

If you are a third party, the nature and severity of the conflict will influence your decision of the best approach to help resolve conflict. If you decide to intervene on another's behalf, listen to both parties and keep an open mind. Your role is very important to informal resolution at the lowest level.

This booklet provides you with the skills and information you'll need to resolve conflict. But only ***you***, regardless of your role, can make it work. Do not ignore conflict, review your resolution options, and take action to reach resolution.

STANDARD QUESTIONS

When you become involved in a conflict it is helpful to ask yourself a set of standard questions. The answers to these questions should lead you to classify the behavior as RED (unacceptable), YELLOW (may be considered inappropriate) or GREEN (acceptable), and help you decide the course of action you can follow.

Ask Yourself:

- **What exactly happened?**
- **What was the impact of the behavior?**
- **Did it disrupt the work environment?**
- **Would it have offended a reasonable person of a similar background?**
- **Was the behavior RED, YELLOW or GREEN?**
- **What are my responsibilities and options?**

WHERE YOU CAN GET ADVICE

- **Shipmate/fellow Marine or co-worker**
- **Chaplain**
- **Supervisor**
- **Legal Officer**
- **Human Resource Director**
- **Equal Opportunity Officer**
- **Equal Employment Opportunity Office**
- **DON Counseling and Advice Line (1)800-253-0931**

(From overseas call collect 703-614-2735)

If behavior is YELLOW:

Take corrective action .

Provide remedial training using TIR material.

Follow-up to ensure resolution.

If behavior is GREEN:

No action required.

D **When I observe offensive or harassing behavior...**

Take Action

If behavior is RED:

Stop behavior.

Take corrective action.

Notify the chain of command, if appropriate.

Advise the recipient of Informal Resolution System and formal complaint options.

RESOLUTION OPTIONS . . . . . .

When a conflict occurs, there are three options in the Informal Resolution System that you can use to reach satisfactory resolution. Use as many options as you feel necessary.

DIRECT APPROACH

• ***In person***, by approaching the individual(s) involved. First, give yourself time to collect your thoughts or cool down. Stay focused on the behavior and its impact. Use common courtesy and ensure your approach is not disrespectful. You may consider writing down your thoughts before approaching the individual(s) involved. *(The comments do not have to be given to the offending person but can be used as documentation if you have to resort to formal action.)*

• ***In writing***, by sending a letter to the offending person stating the facts, your feelings about the behavior, and expected resolution.
Writing:

Will help collect thoughts and evidence
Will help emotionally
Will help choose and prepare for any option
May be used to make the offending person stop the harassment
May be used as documentation to prove the behavior was unwelcome

INFORMAL THIRD PARTY

• ***Request assistance from another person.*** Ask another person to talk with the individuals involved, accompany you or intervene on your behalf to help resolve the conflict. This will normally be a friend or co-worker.

- I set the example.
- I do not ignore it.
- I listen, and do not filter complaints.
- I intervene, when necessary.
- I take or support action to reach resolution.
- I take appropriate action.

Refer all parties to support services.

Offer to intervene or accompany the recipient to the offending person.

Ask for a Training Information Resource (TIR) for the workplace.

Follow-up to ensure resolution.

If behavior is GREEN:

Advise recipient behavior is acceptable and explain why.

B to D

When approached by a person who feels he or she may have harassed or offended...

Take Action

If behavior is RED:

Advise offending person to stop the behavior.

Advise that corrective action may result and to seek legal counsel or assistance.

Inform the chain of command, if appropriate.

Determine whether the Informal Resolution System can resolve the problem.

Refer all parties to support services.

FORMAL SYSTEM

Both military and civilians within the Department of the Navy have formal systems to report and resolve discrimination, harassment or other forms of inappropriate behavior. These systems are available to you if you feel it is the best way to resolve the conflict or you are unable to resolve the conflict using the Informal Resolution System. Information on the formal systems is available from EO/DEEO officials or your chain of command. Using the Informal Resolution System does not interfere with your right to use the formal complaint process. Civilians have 45 days from the date of an alleged discriminatory action to contact an EEO Counselor.

SUPPORT SERVICES

- **Legal Officers/Navy Legal Service Office**
- **Civilian Employee Assistance Program (CEAP)**
- **Family Service Center (FSC) Counselors**
- **Medical Treatment Facility**
- **Chaplains**
- **Equal Opportunity/EEO Program Specialists**

Offer to intervene or accompany the recipient to the offending person or supervisor.

Approach the offending person, indicate what I observed, recommend that the person apologize and correct behavior.

Ask for a Training Information Resource (TIR) for the workplace.

If behavior is GREEN:

No action required.

A IF I HAVE BEEN HARASSED OR OFFENDED

A When I feel I am the recipient of harassing or offending behavior ...

Evaluate

- What exactly happened?
- What was the impact of the behavior?
- Did it disrupt the work environment?
- Would it have offended a reasonable person?
- Was behavior RED, YELLOW or GREEN?
- What are my responsibilities and options?

Take Action

If behavior is RED:

Inform chain of command of actions taken or needed.

Determine whether taking formal action is appropriate or whether the Informal Resolution System can resolve the problem.

If behavior is YELLOW:

Approach the offending person directly to discuss the situation.
(approach in a non-accusatory manner, in case behavior may have been misunderstood)

Send a letter to the offending person stating the facts and my feelings about the matter .

- I do not ignore it.
- I listen to understand.
- I offer to intervene and support if appropriate.
- I maintain confidentiality when possible.
- I take action to reach a resolution.

Offer to intervene or accompany recipient to the offending person or supervisor.

Ask for a Training Information Resource (TIR) for the workplace.

If behavior is GREEN:

Advise recipient behavior is not inappropriate and explain why.

B to C When approached by a person who feels he or she may have harassed or offended ...

Take Action

If behavior is RED:

Advise offending person to stop behavior and to seek legal counsel or assistance.

Inform chain of command, if appropriate.

Refer all parties to support services.

If behavior is YELLOW:

Encourage offending person to stop behavior and apologize.

Offer to intervene or accompany the offending person to the recipient or supervisor.

Ask for a Training Information Resource (TIR) for the workplace.

B IF I LEARN I HAVE HARASSED OR OFFENDED

- I do not ignore it.
- I listen to understand.
- I review my resolution options.
- I take action to reach a resolution.

B When I feel I may have harassed or offended ...

Evaluate

- What exactly happened?
- What was the impact of the behavior?
- Did it disrupt the work environment?
- Would it have offended a reasonable person?
- Was behavior RED, YELLOW or GREEN?
- What are my responsibilities and options?

Take Action

If behavior is RED:

Stop behavior immediately.

Seek legal counsel or assistance to know and understand my rights.

If behavior is YELLOW:

Change behavior.

Apologize.

Ask another person or supervisor to advise me, accompany me to the recipient, or intervene on my behalf.

Ask for a Training Information Resource (TIR) for the workplace.

If behavior is GREEN:

Clarify with another person or a supervisor that behavior is acceptable.

Ask another person or supervisor to advise me, accompany me or intervene on my behalf.

Talk with the recipient to discuss how the two of us can communicate more effectively.