



The Emotional Connection Process Helps to Restore Relationships, Improving Team Dynamics and Culture



For 45 years, DePaul Community Resources has opened doors to hope and belonging for families and individuals across Central and Southwest Virginia.

Industry: Nonprofit

THE CONTEXT

DePaul is not only a nonprofit human services organization—but it is also a social impact organization. Everyday DePaul’s employees work to change the world by improving the lives of children, families, and individuals with developmental disabilities. They bring hope and belonging and make the vision a reality for countless Virginians who could imagine it would be possible. With more than 150 staff, a network of over 400 care providers, foster and adoptive parents, and a host of volunteers, advocates, and partners, the DePaul team recognizes they cannot accomplish this work alone.

THE CHALLENGE

Conflict runs rampant in the workplace. The nonprofit industry is no exception. According to the CPP Global Human Capital Report, conflict is defined as any workplace disagreement that disrupts the flow of work.¹

This study of 5,000 full-time employees from nine countries found that an overwhelming majority (85%) of employees at all levels experience some degree of conflict. The U.S. employees alone report spending 2.8 hours per week dealing with conflict, equating it to approximately \$359 billion in paid hours in 2008.^{*1}

Research among workers finds that widespread conflict negatively impacts productivity and operational effectiveness, with morale also taking a major hit:



The destructive emotions experienced by those involved in conflicts do not simply vanish. Over half of the

^{*1}Based on average hourly earnings of \$17.95, seasonally adjusted, non-farm workers. Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2008.



employees (57%) experience long-term negative feelings, most commonly feeling de-motivated, angry, and frustrated.

Amanda Stanley, President and CEO, and David Brahmstadt, VP of Human Resources at DePaul Community Resources in Roanoke, Virginia, set out to uncover ways to reverse this divisive trend of conflict and communication breakdown. They collaborated with EmC Leaders to create an educational intervention tailored to resolve workplace conflict and repair team relationships for improved culture and organizational stability.

THE SOLUTION

While many conflict management systems focus on resolving conflict, EmC Leaders emphasize a validated approach to treat relationship distress using the emotional connection (EmC) process. EmC Leaders recognize that using ineffective strategies to deal with stressful situations can lead to interactions that create relationship distress. Their approach and attachment framework resonated with DePaul.

During the training, as participants identified triggers and were able to express their emotional experiences, they started to learn new patterns of interaction to create more safety and understanding. These newly developed skills have restructured their interactional pattern and changed participants' responses, leading to better job performance, engagement, and collaboration.

The EmC process uses an experiential, systemic, and attachment-based approach to improve team dynamics. Studies show that when implemented correctly, this approach can lead to participants experiencing a 70-73% recovery from relationship distress in 8-12 sessions.³ Follow-up studies have demonstrated that 60-70% of participants either maintained or increased their relationship satisfaction gains 3 months to 2 years after.⁴

THE RESULTS

The EmC change process targets one of the most common interaction cycles displayed by distressed team members. Specifically, when one person, usually the manager, makes demands which come across as criticism, the employee withdraws from communicating in response to this perceived negativity. This eventually leads to low productivity, poor performance, and low morale.

In EmC, a systemic and attachment framework is used to understand this pattern. Specifically, this approach empowers the manager with effective strategies to reengage employees to create a safe space for the employee to express feelings of rejection and disapproval openly and honestly.

To facilitate change, the EmC process guides participants through three stages: de-escalation, restructure, and integration. Becoming aware of the emotional impact the strategies have on their behavior, participants start to clarify their triggers and emotions. They learn how to stop their negative patterns of interaction and become more open and responsive to each other's needs and fears. Through empathy and validation, they begin to express themselves with vulnerability, creating a change and growth in their relationships.

By comparing the pre-and post-assessments, DePaul observed a significant improvement in participants' confidence and ability to address stressful situations both immediately and weeks after the training. Relationships have become stronger, and participants have had open dialogues to address challenges together more effectively and with ease. At the end of the experiential training, participants reported feeling more connected, safe, relieved, optimistic, and grateful.

The results indicate the EmC Leader's approach to conflict management and improved team dynamics equips participants with tools to address conflicts effectively, offering a roadmap to cultivating bonding conversations that nurture and strengthen work relationships.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

- Significant and immediate improvement in communication and engagement.
- Acquisition of effective skills to deal with stressful situations.
- Empowerment throughout the process to share openly and honestly.
- Ability to reconnect and repair relationships, creating a more positive team culture.



– ABOUT –

EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

Emotional Connection is centered around the systematic and systemic exploration of emotions present during moments of great stress, uncertainty, and volatility through a proven process that is at once experiential and holistic. The EmC courses give people the skills to transform negative interactions into dialogue for bonding relationships and improved results. With EmC, people can share emotions in an open, honest, and respectful way; individuals start to collaborate better, create safer work environments, and foster cultures of trust and respect. The EmC courses are available in virtual and in-person learning formats.



Taking care of the teams you care about



– ABOUT EMC LEADERS –

We help companies master the art of relationships so they can spend less time managing “people problems” and more time accomplishing their most important work. With hundreds of cases under our belt, we create a pathway for people to thrive. Our impactful courses include The Fundamentals of Emotional Connection®, Negative Interactions and Preserving Connections®, Bonding Conversations to Strengthen Relationships®, Master the Art of Relationships: EmC Intro®, The EmC Master Class for Mastering Emotional Connection®, and EmC Trainer Certification®.

Employee Engagement • Team Dynamics • Conflict Resolution

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