Managing Conflict for Seniors

Conflict is a natural part of life brought on by our different beliefs, experiences, and values. A conflict is more than just a disagreement. It's a situation in which one or both parties perceive a threat (whether or not the threat is real).

Conflict resolution is a process for resolving disagreements between two or more people. The ultimate goal of conflict resolution is to preserve the relationship of the people who are disagreeing and create a solution that both parties can feel good about.

Below are some conflict resolution steps that you can suggest to seniors in your care:

- Remain calm. Adults can avoid escalating a conflict by counting to 10, doing breathing exercises, or finding other ways to reduce stress.

- Control your emotions and behavior. When you're in control of your emotions, you can communicate your needs without threatening or intimidating others.

- Learn to identify feelings. Sometimes negative feelings, such as grief, fear, and anxiety are expressed through anger or sadness. By recognizing your own feelings, you are more likely to understand your needs during the conflict resolution process.

- Watch out for body language and tone of voice. When a person is upset, it is common for them to express nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions, posture, and gestures, that are off-putting to the other party.

- Be aware of and respect differences. By avoiding disrespectful words and actions, you can almost always resolve a problem faster.

- Know when to let something go. If you can't come to an agreement, agree to disagree. It takes two people to keep an argument going. If a conflict is going nowhere, you can choose to disengage and move on.

Additionally, care should be taken to focus on the current issue rather than bringing up old grudges.

By focusing on the golden rule and treating others as we would like to be treated, many conflicts can be resolved in less time with happier, healthier results.