



December 2019

The Louisville Chapter hosted a holiday luncheon on December 20<sup>th</sup>. Members and guests brought unwrapped Christmas presents that went to the Children's Hospital. ASSP Louisville would like to thank our members for a wonderful 2019 and we are looking forward to a safe 2020!



### Training Opportunity: Fall Protection Competent Person

Louisville Chapter ASSP W.I.S.E. Members!



**WISE**

Women in Safety Excellence

The Louisville Chapter has partnered with SafTtek to bring a Competent Person Fall Protection PDC designed specifically for female colleagues only. This one-time only course will be limited to the first 18 applicants and has been approved by ASSP for 3.2 CEU's. To be eligible for the approved CEU's the participant must attend each of the four 8-hour days on February 1, 8, 15, & 22. Each module will be taught through lecture and discussion, and will include printed material, discussion, and hands-on use and application, written testing and practical skills evaluation.

For registration and information regarding opportunity for scholarships for participants that are unable to obtain funding from employers, reply to [president@louisville.assp.org](mailto:president@louisville.assp.org) with your Name, Company and Job Title.



## 10 Ways Safety Professionals Can Better Manage Conflict

“Safety professionals enter situations with the potential for conflict all the time because we are often working to convince people that safety is an issue,” says

Eldeen Pozniak, CRSP, CMIOSH, an international management consultant specializing in occupational safety and health. “Sometimes we disagree about whether something is safe or unsafe, sometimes we work with senior leaders who don’t understand what we’re doing and sometimes we need to mediate someone else’s conflict because it’s putting people at risk.”

### 1. Evaluate Whether Your Conflict Is Healthy

If it’s a challenge that comes from anger or you believe someone’s intention is to prevent you from doing your job, the conversation could actually have unfavorable results.

### 2. Consider Each Person’s Safety Experiences

Everyone has had different experiences with safety during their careers – some positive and some negative. By taking the time to understand the origins of workers’ feelings about safety, you will be better prepared to address their concerns, she says.

### 3. Start by Communicating the Facts

Communicating the truth of a situation without feelings can be difficult. Even safety professionals, who are used to conducting incident investigations and assessing risks with objectivity, can wind up making emotional assumptions. But if you are involved in a conflict, it is critical to start by setting aside your biases and focusing on the truth.

### 4. Build Authentic Relationships

Conflict can be more productive when everyone involved feels a sense of psychological safety. When people feel psychologically safe, they trust each other enough to own their mistakes, communicate their real emotions and approach their relationships with authenticity.

### 5. Find a Way to Connect

Pozniak says that when the going gets tough, the tough tell jokes. “The other day, I was conducting an audit on a job site where no one knew me and no one wanted to talk to me about safety. I noticed that one worker had a tattoo of a bear on his arm, and so I asked him if I could tell him a joke about bears since I taught bear safety all the time when I lived in Canada.” She did, and she says the punchline landed on the small group that was gathered there. By using humor, she endeared herself to workers who were suspicious of her presence.



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## **6. Ensure Everyone Feels Heard**

Active listening is an important component of every healthy conflict. But Pozniak recommends going a step further by taking quick breaks during your conversation to repeat what you've heard. There are two benefits to this, she says. First, it communicates that you have understood what someone has told you. Second, it lets them know that you care enough about what they are saying to ensure you're getting it right.

## **7. Look for Ways to Collaborate**

When you are engaged in a conflict, it's easy to start taking sides. However, it's rare to find ideal solutions at the far ends of any spectrum. If a heated debate feels like it's going in circles, driven by the same tired arguments, Pozniak says it may be time to position yourself somewhere entirely new. By introducing possible alternatives, you open yourself up to one of the best possible outcomes of conflict — collaboration.

## **8. Provide Context for Each Safety Decision**

When you were young, did a parent ever tell you to do something “because they said so?” How did that make you feel? Pozniak says safety professionals should avoid this dynamic with their teams. Instead, she advocates providing enough information to give others the context they need to understand your recommendations.

## **9. Avoid Getting Defensive**

You feel misunderstood. You hear a remark dismissing the importance of worker safety and health. You hear someone question your ability to do your job. Your heart starts to race and before you know it, you've said something you regret. When people get defensive, no one feels good. Even worse, impulsive behavior fueled by anger can undermine the hard work you've invested in protecting others.

## **10. Let Conflict Teach You About Human Behavior**

Safety professionals know that many factors contribute to incidents in the workplace, including human behavior. While conflict may be uncomfortable, it can also present a unique opportunity to learn more about worker and leadership perceptions of safety and health. For instance, some team members may be in what Pozniak calls the “zero-intent-to-change” stage, where they don't yet accept that they need to adjust their behavior. Once you understand that, you can adjust your messaging to make a stronger case.

For the full article, go to: <https://safetyfocus.assp.org/blog/>