Co-operantics
Co-operative skills for everyone

Retrospective technique

Just don't call it conflict resolution

Retrospective means looking to achieve continuous improvement via periodic meetings. How can we do things better in terms of process? How can we improve what we do as a team?

The retrospective technique is based on:

- nonviolent communication

https://positivepsychology.com/non-violent-communication/

- sociocratic approach (rounds* - everyone has a voice; consent decision making*)

https://www.sociocracyforall.org/

A series of meetings might look like this:

Meeting #1

Get the whole team together and do some creative exercises aiming to generate ideas: what's going well, what's not going so well or could be improved. Then prioritize, and ask:

- What's the cause of these symptoms that we're seeing
- What are the next three steps that we need to take?

Meeting #2

Review: Have we made progress in those areas? Have the problems been resolved, got better or got worse? Whatever the outcome it's important to agree a date for a third meeting.

Meeting #3

- Start by looking at how you define a good team. Split into groups and write up on post it notes the characteristics of a good team. Put them on the wall and cluster them.

- What are the behaviours that underpin those characteristics?

- In the same groups share examples of the actual tangible behaviour that would demonstrate those characteristics. How should you behave to achieve good teamwork? (e.g. transparency, respect, good listening skills, open communication). Share the outcomes of the groups and make a list.

- Do a round*: does everyone think that looks complete? Is it good enough for now?

- Compare where you are now with your understanding of what is a good team, and where you were in the first meeting when you identified the causes of the symptoms you were seeing.

Co-operantics
Co-operative skills for everyone

- In pairs, look at the differences, where you were, where you are now, and where you want to get to.

- Together draft a set of guidelines that you want to be held accountable to. Then all feedback to each other.

- Discuss and agree a working agreement everyone can support (You may need to delegate an individual or small team to make a final draft)

- A last round (now or at a future meeting): Can everyone consent* to be held accountable to these?

*Rounds are simply a way of ensuring that everyone gets the chance to speak: so everyone takes a turn, one by one. The easiest way is to do rounds is to sit in a circle and follow a natural order by where people sit. When I see that the person next to me is speaking, I know I will have my turn next. That also helps people to mentally prepare for their turn.

(Online the facilitator might identify the next two speakers, so the second person has time to prepare their thoughts)

*Consent decision-making; a decision is made when there is no objection from the group members having the authority to make this decision. No one can be ignored.

With thanks to @simoncopsey for describing this technique to me