PRACTICAL TIPS

How to Identify and Approach Intergenerational Conflicts

This was created by participants of our *Melt the Ice* activity to help identify situations where intergenerational differences may cause tension, and to offer practical ways to respond.

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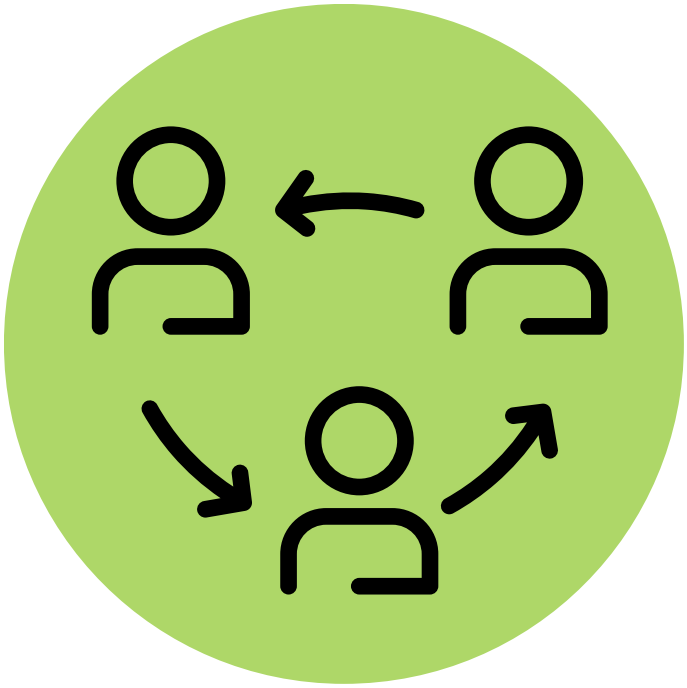
Why should different generations cooperate?

- Different perspectives and life experiences lead to broader thinking and a better understanding of how people across generations live and work.
- Sharing knowledge across generations supports growth; both for individuals and for the organisations and communities they are part of.

What does good intergenerational cooperation look like?



Example 1: Rotation of roles

In some teams or organisations, individuals swap roles, duties or positions for a certain period before switching again with someone else. This allows everyone, regardless of age, to get familiar with their colleagues' duties.

It works because it allows each generation to see the bigger picture, builds connections and understanding, and creates a shared responsibility that goes beyond generational differences.

Example 2: Separated roles with shared goals

In some organisations, the people responsible for driving and implementing decisions are younger (e.g. an Executive Board), while older/more experienced people take on an advisory role (e.g. an Advisory Board) providing feedback and guidance without having the final say.

This works because it draws on long-term experience while giving space to younger generations to make decisions.

How to identify an intergenerational conflict?

Ask yourself: Do any of these feel familiar?

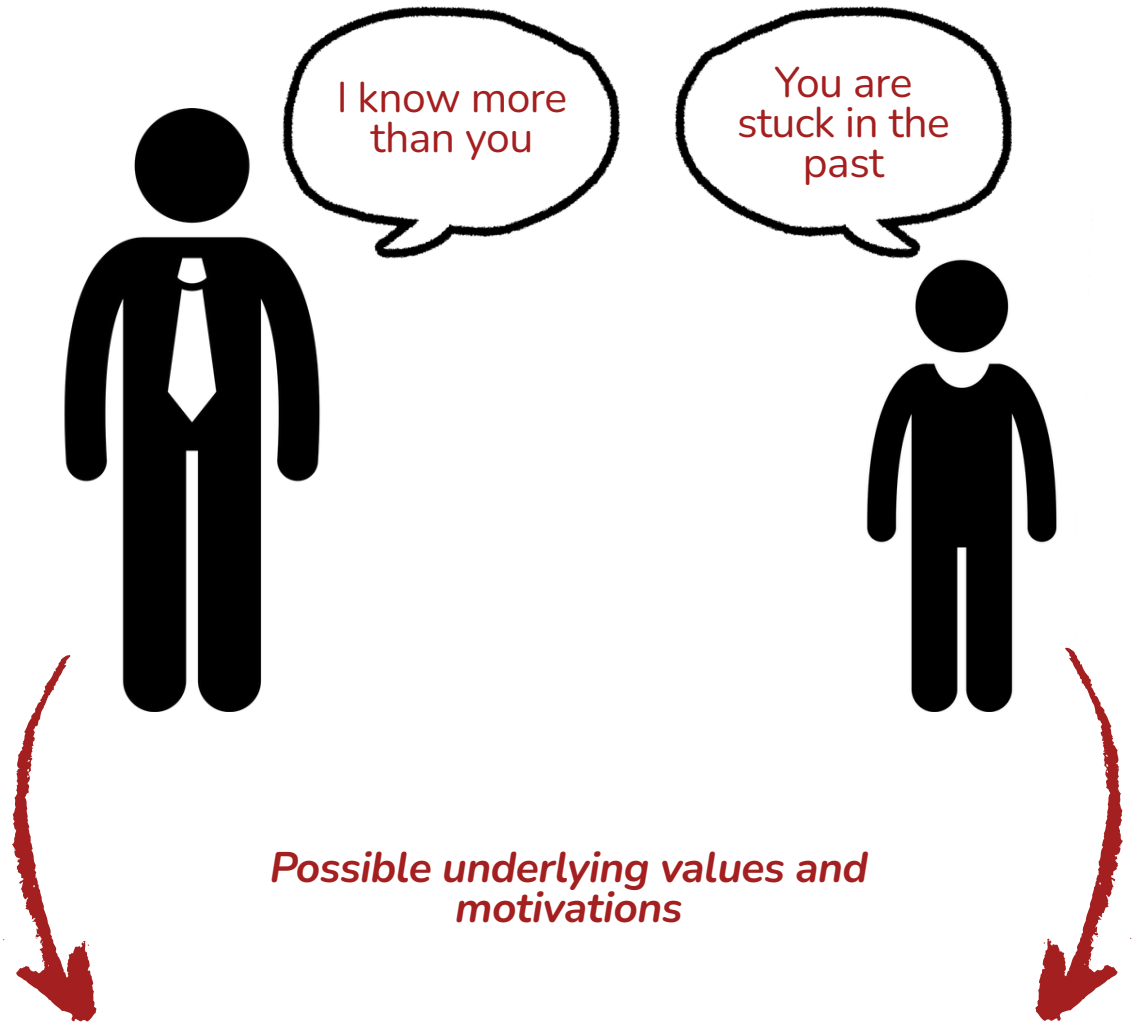
- Are we having an issue because we use different technologies, methods or platforms?
- Do we have a problem because we communicate differently?
- Do we have different senses of humour?
- Do we have problems relating to each other?
- Do we have a difference in pace?
- Do we have a different motivation?

If you answered **yes** to some of these, the conflict may be **intergenerational**. And that is a good starting point for addressing it.

Recognising and responding to intergenerational conflict

When tensions arise between generations, it helps to look beyond what is being said and ask: **where is this person coming from?**

Example 1: Parent and child

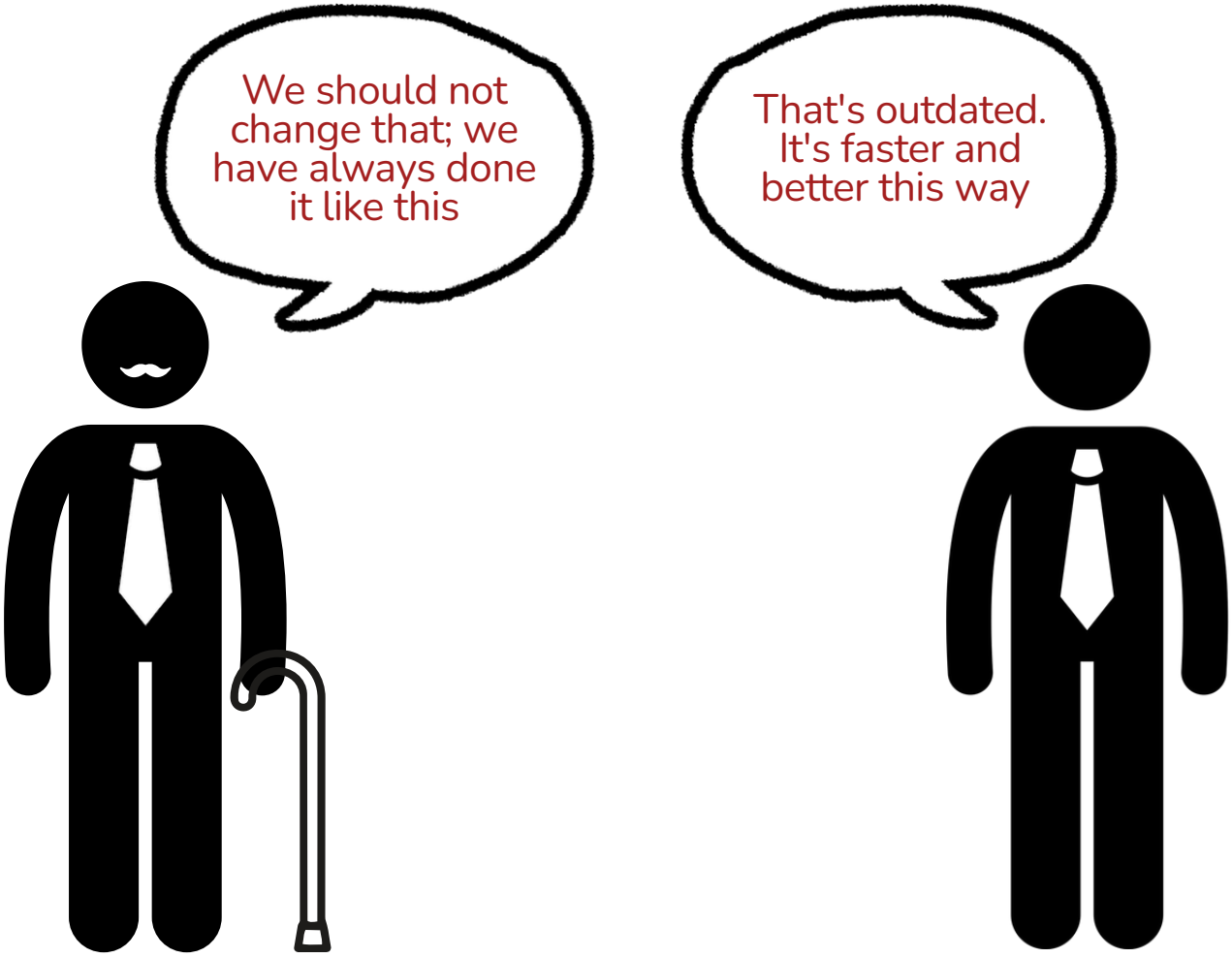


Possible underlying values and motivations

"I care for you, and I think I know what is best for you, because I already experienced it and don't want you to make my same mistakes."

"I want you to let me experiment and fail on my own, without restricting me on what or how to do things, just because you already experienced a similar situation."

Example 2: Older and younger colleagues



Possible underlying values and motivations

"I am scared of being replaced and perceived as outdated. It is more comfortable to not be challenged and keep things as they are."

"I do not feel listened to or appreciated enough. I am trying to bring positive change, but there is no room for me or my ideas to grow."

How to respond

Once you have identified that a conflict may be **intergenerat:ional**, here are some practical steps:

1

Ask yourself where the other person is coming from.

Before reacting, consider what they might be feeling underneath what they are saying. For example, this could be a fear of being replaced, or a desire to be heard.

2

Give the other person space to express themselves.

Listen without interrupting or dismissing their perspective. People are more open to change when they feel heard and appreciated.

3

Express your underlying need rather than your frustration.

Instead of reacting to what was said, try to communicate what you actually need.
For example, instead of "that's outdated", try "I would like the opportunity to try a new approach."

4

Look for common ground.

Despite different experiences and ways of working, both sides usually want similar things. The goal is not to decide who is right, but to find a way forward that gives both generations room to grow.