

I'm So Upset! Now What?

George Little, TBA President Elect



If you are anything like me, you don't wake up thinking, "Yay, I get to have a conference with that upset parent today!" or "I am so excited to go visit with my administrator about that scheduling conflict!" However, one of the most important parts of being a band director is dealing with conflict resolution. So how can we improve in this area?

First things first, find your mentors. Those that have "been there and done that" are an irreplaceable resource in our professional lives. Most of us will wind up having one or two primary mentors, but we shouldn't limit ourselves when it comes to asking for advice. I call certain people when it comes to best pedagogical practices, but I call others when it comes to deciding how to deal with unexcused absences. Success in this field has a lot to do with figuring out who to ask for help.

During my own personal journey in learning to deal with conflict resolution, one crucial thing I have had to learn is how I come across to people. For those of you that don't know me personally, my last name is Little, and I am 6'8". I am very useful in teaching the concept of oxymoron and I am also living proof that God has a sense of humor. One of my long-time mentors has told me numerous times, "Don't forget that you are big and scary to kids even if you aren't trying to be." I have learned that standing further away from someone or sitting down during heated moments helps others to feel less intimidated (except with the drummers... I just choose to tower over them). I also tend to get louder and more forceful with my words as I get frustrated, so I have to work hard to keep my voice calm. Each time we come through a tense situation; we should try to assess the adjustments that we can make to our approach in the future. Tone of voice, word choice, facial expressions, body language, and timing really make a difference.

Feeling mistreated comes easily but learning

how to respond to that feeling is a bit more of a process. Feelings of maltreatment that go undealt with will surface eventually, so we

need to learn how to process our thoughts and move forward rather than suppressing our frustrations. When feeling mistreated, consider the following suggestions before talking to those that you are frustrated with.

- Wait to react. Taking time to calm down will help us see things more clearly. Sleep is God's reset button, and you will almost never regret waiting until the next day.
- Try to think to yourself, "They didn't do this **at** me." Most of the time when someone has upset us, they don't even know, and it is rarely intentional.
- Decide whether or not resolution is actually possible. Sometimes there is enough gray area in a situation that we would be better off just swallowing our pride and letting it go.
- Once you decide to move forward with talking to someone that has frustrated you, pinpoint why you are actually upset. Finding the root cause for your frustration and addressing it specifically while leaving out the extraneous details is more efficient and less frustrating for everyone.

Once you have clearly defined in your own mind why you are upset, it is time to act professionally. Points of action will obviously depend on the circumstances of the situation at hand, but there is never an excuse to act unprofessionally. Keep the following things in mind when taking action.

I'M SO UPSET! NOW WHAT? - George Little, TBA President Elect

- It is better to have difficult conversations in person or on the phone rather than using email or text. Remember that we can't control how others interpret our written words.
- Write out your thoughts before you have a conversation to help you stay organized.
- Have a solution in mind but be ready to compromise. Complaining without a proposed solution is not helpful. Taking a "my way or the highway" approach is also not helpful.
- Request an appointment to discuss things rather than imposing yourself on someone unannounced.
- Express your thoughts clearly and succinctly.

So, what happens when we've taken time to calm down before responding, we've addressed others as professionally and positively as we can, and then the outcome still isn't what we hoped it would be? That can play out in different ways depending on who we are dealing with. When dealing with a supervisor who doesn't change their mind, thank them for their time and move on with your day. When dealing with a parent who still isn't happy with you, respectfully agree to disagree, understand that sometimes people will just not be happy with your decisions, and move on with your day. When dealing with an unreasonable student, stay consistent while remembering that you work with hormonal teenagers for a living and move on with your day. Dwelling on things that don't go our way, especially once we've done everything that we can do, won't give us a different outcome.

Conflict is part of life, and the way that we handle conflict will largely shape other people's opinions of us. In the words of Ronald Reagan, "Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to cope with conflict by peaceful means."

TBA Board of Directors 2022-23

Daniel Allen President

1204 Wind Ridge Dr.
El Paso, TX 79912
915-487-4227
dallene@aol.com

George Little President Elect

Lufkin High School
309 South Medford Drive
Lufkin, TX 75901
936-630-4134
glittle@lufkinisd.org

Reagan Brumley Vice President

Lake Highlands High School
Director of Bands/Fine Arts Coord.
9449 Church Rd.
Dallas, TX 75238
469-593-1057
rabrumley@gmail.com

Christopher Yee Treasurer

Cedar Park High School
2150 Cypress Creek Road
Cedar Park, TX 78613
512-570-1200
christopher.yee@leanderisd.org

Jennifer Dillard Secretary

Knox Junior High
12104 Sawmill Rd
The Woodlands, TX 77380
832-592-8412

Amanda Drinkwater Sergeant-at-Arms

Lewisville ISD
Director of Fine Arts
1565 W. Main St. Entrance A
Lewisville, TX 75067
(214) 762-7722
akdrinkh20@me.com

Roland Sandoval Past President

San Antonio ISD Fine Arts
Coordinator of Instrumental Music
514 W. Quincy St.
San Antonio, Texas 78212
210-554-2565
roljack@satx.rr.com

Michael Brashear Executive Director

Texas Bandmasters Association
1002 Central Parkway South
San Antonio, TX 78232
210-492-8878
mbrashear@texasbandmasters.org