



# **Getting to the CORE of Conflict and Communications**

*We cannot teach people anything;  
We can only help them discover it within themselves.*  
-Galileo Galilei

**U.S. Department of the Interior**  
**Office of Collaborative Action and Dispute Resolution**  
**March 2024**





## AGENDA

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| <b>SECTION 1</b><br><b>Welcome and Overview</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agenda and Objectives</li><li>• Icebreaker Introductions</li><li>• Conflict Competence Defined</li><li>• The 4 R's Model</li></ul>    |
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| <b>SECTION 6</b><br><b>CORE PLUS OVERVIEW</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Core Plus Highlights</li><li>• Course Evaluations</li></ul>   |
| <b>ADJOURN</b>                                  |   |

# **Getting to the CORE of Conflict and Communications**

## **Course Description**

The Office of Collaborative Action and Dispute Resolution (CADR) provides, with bureau partners, specialized conflict management and communications skills training for all Department of the Interior employees. Getting to the Core of Conflict and Communications (GTC3) was designed for DOI and focuses on the key areas addressed in the OPM 360 leadership competency assessments. Participants will hone their skills in effectively managing conflict within the organization and with external parties in a way that is consistent with the Department's commitment to implementing CORE PLUS as well as increasing the use of collaborative problem-solving approaches. The overarching goal of GTC3 is to help DOI improve our organizational performance and help achieve our mission more effectively.

## **Course Learning Objectives**

DOI can improve organizational performance and meet its mission more effectively when employees can:

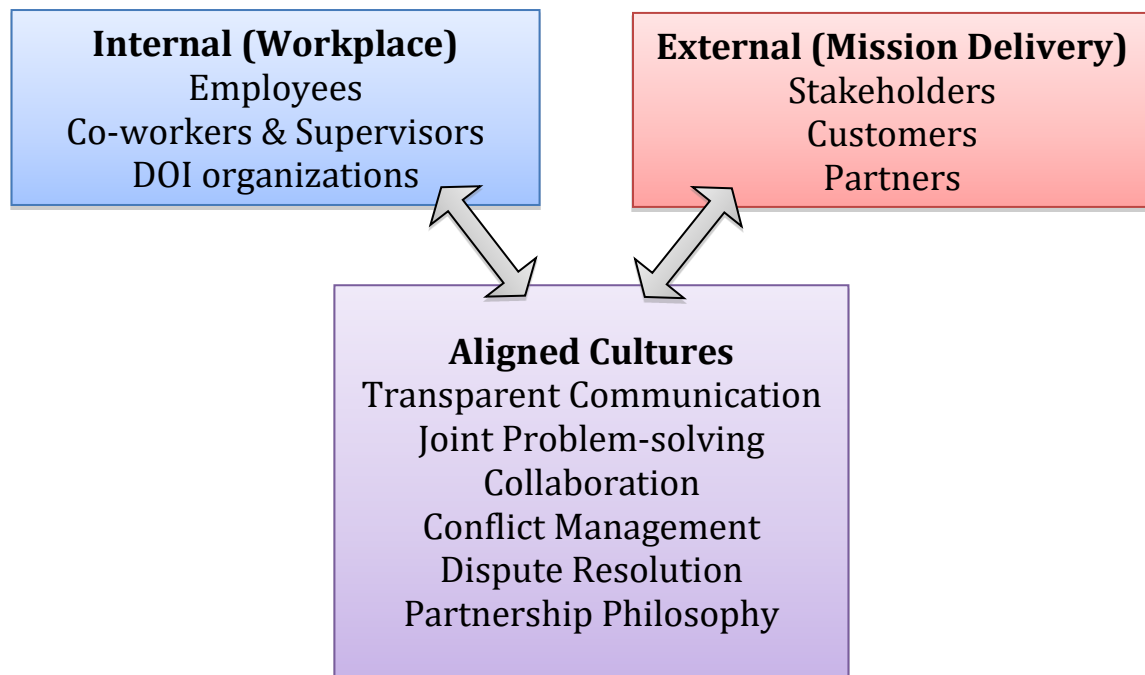
1. Identify conflict as an opportunity to create change and build relationships in a diverse workplace.
2. Recognize conflict and its causes, including behaviors that escalate or de-escalate the conflict.
3. Be intentional about an approach or strategy to addressing a conflict.
4. Increase your self-awareness and ability to surface dissent and have difficult and meaningful conversations before situations escalate.
5. Understand the difference between positions and interests and increase use of collaborative problem-solving approaches.

## **Drivers for Training**

1. **Nurture a healthier organization** by building institutional capacity for open communication and collaborative problem-solving both internally and externally in a way that is consistent with the Department's commitment to implementing an integrated workplace conflict management system (CORE PLUS).
2. **Develop our employees.** OPM developed collaboration competencies for SES now indicated in their position descriptions and EPAPs. Many other levels of management and even non-supervisory employees now have collaboration as part of their EPAPs.

3. **DOI's mission.** In order to better achieve our mission, we must work well together, so that we are better able to speak with one voice to the public, stakeholders, and our partners. We can do this by practicing collaborative problem-solving and open communication with one another and throughout the Department.

Departmental leaders recognize that there is a critical link between the internal culture of an organization and its success in achieving its overall mission. When an organization's internal culture is out of alignment with its mission and core values or with its external services, the need for an effective way to manage conflict becomes critically important. Problems arise when front line employees discern that the internal dispute resolution processes do not treat them, when in conflict, in the same way that they are expected to treat their external customers, clients, stakeholders, or business partners.



Successful conflict competency requires alignment of the Department's internal approach to managing workplace conflict with its external collaborative approach to dealing with the public, customers, and other third parties. Internal systems are then transferable to external conflict because they emphasize skills and accountability and support risk management.

# Conflict Competency

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What does it mean to be conflict competent?

- **Conflict Competence** is “the ability for individuals to develop and use cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills to enhance the outcomes of conflict.” (Tim Flanagan and Craig Runde)
- **Conflict Intelligence** is “having the self-awareness, knowledge and skills to be attuned to ourselves and the other person with whom we have a conflict. It is the ability to manage conflict proactively...” (Cinnie Noble)
- **Conflict Competent Organizations** “have a culture that fosters constructive communications as well as systems that to align mission, policies, training, performance standards, and rewards in support of that culture.” (Tim Flanagan and Craig Runde)

## Getting to the CORE of Conflict & The 4 Rs

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**Recognize – What do I see?**

**Respond – How do I feel?**

**Resolve – What do I do?**

**Reflect – How did that go?**

***Recognize*** is the ability to see the signs and signals of conflict from different perspectives and how conflict can easily escalate.

***Respond*** is the ability to first understand the key role that emotions play in how we react to conflict and then deliberately choosing a strategy for responding.

***Resolve*** is about using communication skills and effective strategies to dig deeper to understand and resolve the real problem and each person’s underlying needs

***Reflect*** is the desire to raise self-awareness and improve your conflict management competency.

# Recognize:

*What do I see?*



*Every fight is on some level a fight between differing  
'angles of vision' illuminating the same truth. – Gandhi*

# Perception and Selective Attention

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Perception is the process whereby we acquire information about our environment through our five senses: hearing, sight, touch, taste and smell. Perception is an active rather than passive process and is structured by emotion, language, and culture, which tell us what to notice and how to interpret it.

***“Assumptions create a template through which we view the world.”***

***Sue Annis Hammond***

***“We don't see things as they are, we see things as we are.”***

***Anais Nin***

When we observe behaviors, we make assumptions and draw conclusions, and ultimately adopt beliefs. The assumptions and conclusions we have about each other influence the actions we take and the behaviors we exhibit. Emotion, language, and culture provide a frame of reference for understanding people, events, and experiences and filter our perception of our environment.

What is Selective Attention?

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Therefore, how something appears is always a matter of perspective. How much time do you spend debating over who is wrong and who is right or more accurately, whose truth is the “right” truth?





How reliable is our ability to perceive the world around us?

We all use our 5 senses (taste, touch, feel, smell, and think) to gather information. We then filter, interpret and analyze the information through our individual and unique frame of reference.

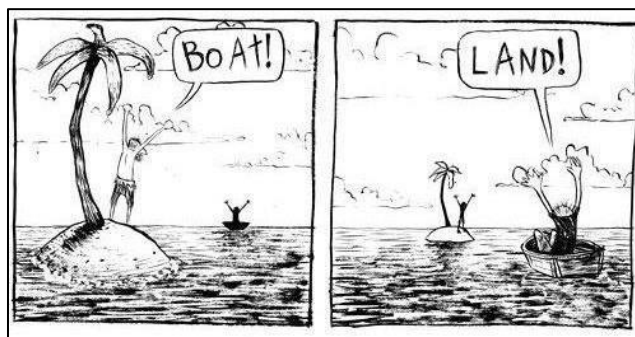
Our perception is structured by emotion, language, and culture, which tell us what to notice and how to interpret it.

Perception is our own reality and our version of the “truth” giving each of us a different experience. When this happens, it can lead to misunderstandings, disagreements, and escalated conflict.

We often fall into the trap of debating endlessly who is right or who is wrong when in fact both could be right or both could be wrong based on their perception of what they see. We cannot rely solely on what we see.

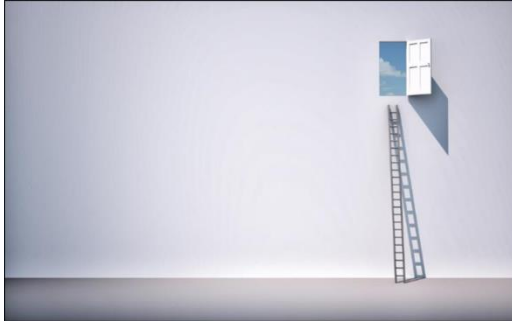
Our cognitive errors, such as how we see things such as optical illusions or selective attention, are parallel to errors in our thinking.

None of us can take in all of the information around us all of the time.



# Assumptions

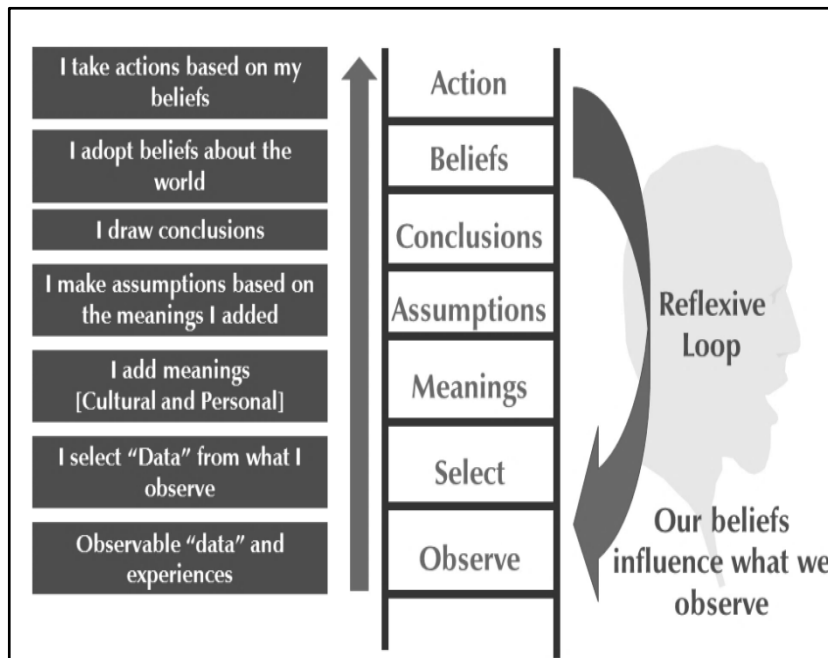
- Making assumptions is normal.
- Most assumptions are implicit.
- The longer our assumptions are in effect, the more likely we are to convert our assumptions into truths.



## Don't Forget to Look for the Hidden Doors!

There might be other possibilities that we don't see right away. Often our initial assumptions about the other person's behavior or motivation are exaggerated, overly negative, and often false.

## The Ladder of Inference as a Reflexive Loop<sup>1</sup>



In an attempt to rationalize our behavior as “right”, we subconsciously “select out” data from future observations that do just that—support our perceptions—a kind of *reflexive loop*. We must be aware of this all too human trait and constantly ask ourselves, “*am I seeing the whole picture?*” This meaning-making process is graphically depicted below.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *The Fifth Discipline* Fieldbook, Peter Senge, 1994, and *Process Consultation*, Edgar Schien, 1987.

The Ladder of Inference construct is an example of confirmation bias. **Confirmation Bias** is the psychological tendencies that cause the human brain to draw incorrect conclusions. These biases “drive us up the ladder.”

So, what do we need to do to check our assumptions?

- Be aware of your own assumptions, conclusions, and beliefs
- Without hostility, make your own assumptions, conclusions, and beliefs explicit
- Use friendly questions to explore everyone’s assumptions, conclusions, and beliefs

In other words, get into a curiosity mindset. Let’s say you are in a challenging conversation with your boss. Your assumption about him is “*He never liked my ideas. In fact, he doesn’t like ME at all.*” Challenge this assumption by asking open-ended questions.

- 1) When I hear you say “this is not a good idea” on several occasions, what I take away is that you don’t like me. What is it that I say or do that bothers you?
- 2) As your direct report, what do you see or value that I bring to the table?

Think about a challenging conversation you need to have or have already had with someone at work or in your personal life. Consider asking yourself the following questions and answering them honestly.

- 1) What is the first thing that popped into your head about the other person’s behaviors or motivation? -

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- 2) What events might have occurred between you and this other person prior to this conflict incident?

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- 3) What might be other possibilities or motivators for the other person’s reaction towards you now?

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## Disentangling Impact from Intent

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Our assumptions about intentions are often wrong. Why? Because they are based solely on the impact on us. Separating impact from intentions requires us to be aware of the automatic leap from *"I was hurt"* to *"you intended to hurt me"*. We attribute intentions to the other that they may not have.

We are \_\_\_\_\_ of **our intentions** - which we tend to sanitize, *"If I did something that hurt them, I didn't mean to, it was an unintended consequence"* or *"I didn't tell the whole truth because I didn't want to hurt her."* We are also **aware** of the other person's **impact** on us. *"I was hurt by what they said or did."*

We are \_\_\_\_\_ of the **other person's intentions** - although we tend to demonize those - *"If they did something that hurt me, it's because they intended to!"* or *they lied because they are not trustworthy* and **unaware of the impact of our action** on the other person.

Accusing others of bad intentions creates defensiveness. Good intentions don't sanitize bad impact, and yet our desire to sanitize impact is strong, especially between groups.

### Reflection Exercise

How do you know your intention is aligned with your behavior or actions?

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What do you need to do to align your behavior to your intention?

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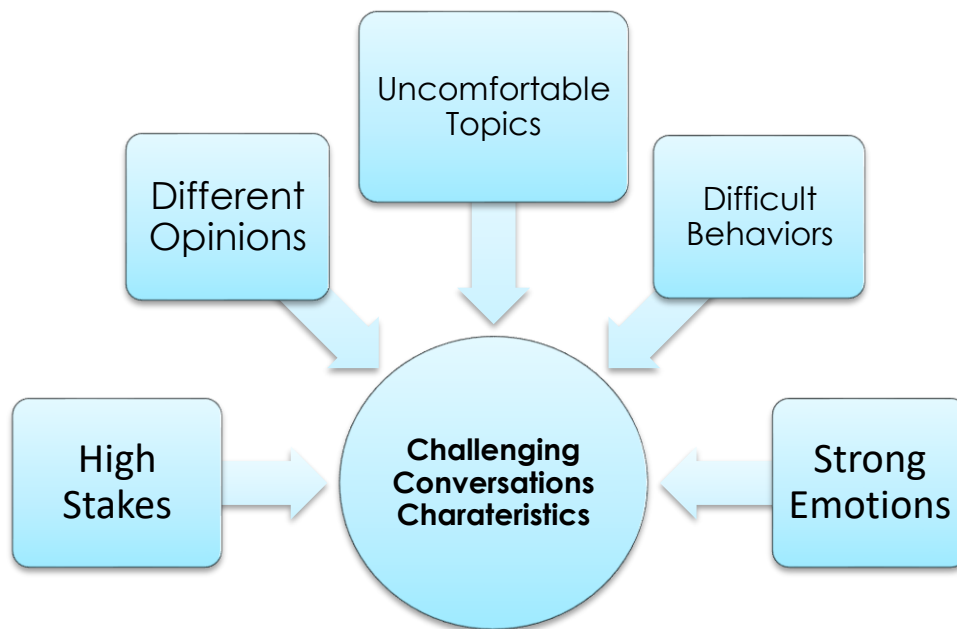
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## Understanding Challenging Conversations

What makes a conversation challenging for you?

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### Challenging Conversations Exercise

1. What makes the topic challenging?
2. Why do people act/behave in challenging ways?
3. How do you contribute to making conversations challenging?
4. What strategies could you use to approach and/or turn a challenging conversation into a productive one?

# Conflict Dynamics

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Dispute starts at disagreement and escalates from there.

Conflict is when there is still a problem to solve before it escalates.

## Definitions of Conflict

**Conflict** can be defined as differences about how expected needs will be met. It often manifests in emotional tension and relational separation. Conflict is inevitable. Conflict involves change.

*"Conflict is when you believe that your needs, values and identity are challenged or undermined." – Cinnie Noble, CINERGY*

*"Conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties, who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals." Kiely and Crary*

*"Conflict is a struggle between two or more persons over values, or competition for status, power and scarce resources." Chris Moore*

A **dispute** is when someone makes a claim or demand on another who rejects it<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Ury, W., Brett, J., & Goldberg, S. (1988). Getting Disputes Resolved. Jossey-Bass.

## **Reflection Exercise**

You are going to identify a challenging conversation you need to have with someone at your workplace. It could be a peer, co-worker, boss, or a client/stakeholder. Throughout the rest of the training day, you will return to this same difficult conversation to reflect on various conflict dynamics to help you prepare for how to engage in this conversation.

**Identify** a challenging conversation you need to have with someone. (e.g. Supervisor, direct report, peer, stakeholder, etc.)

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**What is the issue to be discussed?** (e.g. performance, behavior/conduct, communication)

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**What is the biggest challenge for YOU in having this difficult conversation?**

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**How far up the conflict escalation scale did this situation go?** \_\_\_\_\_

# Respond

*How do I feel?*



*"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."*

*Maya Angelou*



# The Emotional Brain

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## Stressors and Emotions

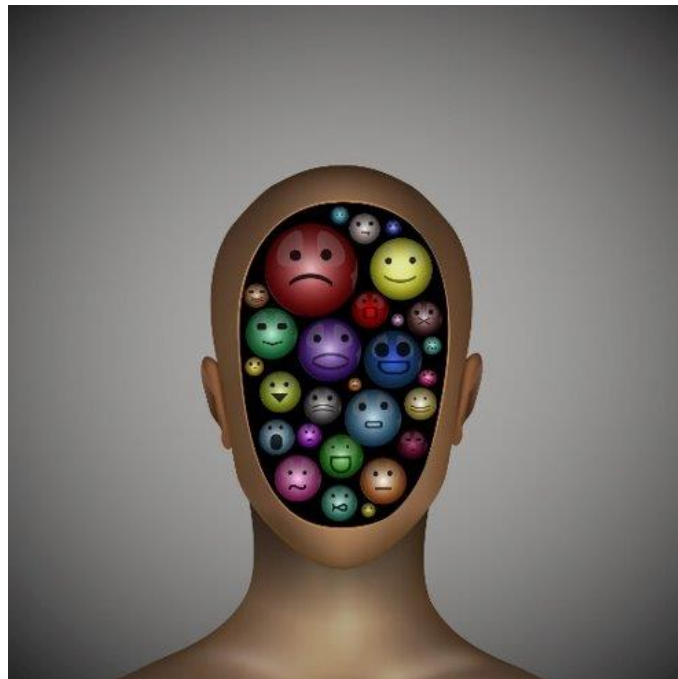
Stress and emotions play a role in conflict management.

A **stressor** can be an external stimuli or event perceived as a threat, challenge, or opportunity (positive event). For example:

- Threat – someone tells you, *“You won’t last long around here.”*
- Challenge – The park visitor or community member disagrees with a park policy and resists your direction.
- Opportunity – You have been granted a collateral duty job for a special project you will lead.

A stressor for one person might not be a stressor for another.

We “feel” stressed when real or imagined pressures exceed our perceived ability to cope.



## Emotional Management

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*“The behavior of others may be a stimulus for our feelings, but not the cause. We are never angry because of what someone else did. . . It’s not what the other person does, but the images and interpretations in my own head that produce my anger.” Marshall Rosenberg*

| Calming Yourself   | Calming Others   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Take a break</li><li>• Take a walk</li><li>• Count to 10</li><li>• Exercise</li><li>• Meditate</li><li>• Visualize</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Validate</li><li>• Vent with care</li><li>• Distract</li><li>• Acknowledge</li><li>• Apologize</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li></ul> |

## The Power of Apologies

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There are two types of apologies. The first type of apology is the act of taking responsibility and communicating regret for causing hurt emotions or harm to another person regardless of intention.

The second type of apology is one that conveys empathy to the speaker without taking responsibility. Some examples of this type of apology include:

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## **Reflection Exercise**

A trigger or hot button is a specific action (behavior, words or attitude) that someone does which sets off your brain's alarm system. It could also be an action you expected someone to do/say, but they didn't.

Return to the challenging workplace conversation you identified earlier that you would like to prepare for and consider two perspectives. **First**, you will reflect and answer from your perspective, and **secondly**, you will examine the other person's perspective as it relates specifically to this conflict situation.

### **YOUR PERSPECTIVE**

- 1) Identify the specific behaviors, words, or attitude/tone the other person might say or do or not do in this conversation that would get you emotionally hijacked. *(e.g. When they say 'nothing is wrong' and then roll their eyes, sigh and say something sarcastic, or get defensive and argumentative.)*

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- 2) When you are triggered by one of these behaviors, what is being undermined for you? (e.g. respect, authority, integrity, work ethic, recognition, trust)

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- 3) What might you first say to yourself about the reason why the other person says or does one of these behaviors? (This is your assumption.)

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- 4) What are other possibilities for their motivation to do what they do/say that you have not considered? (This is the hidden door.)

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## OTHER PERSON'S PERSPECTIVE

Thinking of the other person in this challenging conversation, reflect and jot down your responses.

- 5) What might YOU say or do that could trigger the other person? (e.g. when I lose my temper, I cut him/her off or I raise my voice and get sarcastic.)

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- 6) When the other person becomes triggered by one of your behaviors, what might be undermined for him/her? (e.g. respect, authority, integrity, work ethic, recognition, trust)

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- 7) What might the other person assume about you when you react this way?

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# Conflict Handling Strategies

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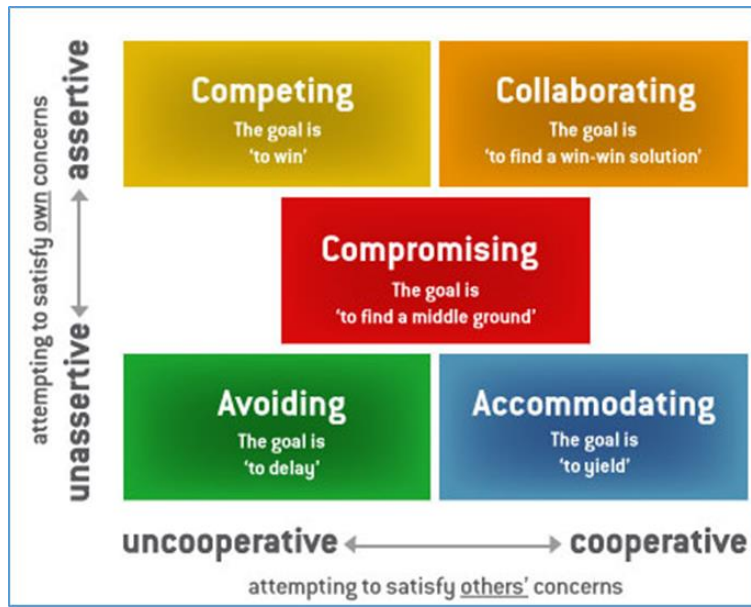
## Self-Assessment: Conflict Handling<sup>3</sup>

Think about an ongoing workplace situation that causes tension and conflict. Assess your approach to handling conflict. For this exercise, conflict is a situation where the concerns and needs of two people appear incompatible. Rate the following statements from **1** (most like you) to **5** (least like you). This is a ranking and you can only use each number once.

- \_\_\_ I tend to do what I can to get the solution or decision I think is best.
- \_\_\_ I tend to “get around” or delay engaging in issues of controversy.
- \_\_\_ I tend to work with others to find a solution satisfactory to everyone.
- \_\_\_ I tend to go with what other people want.
- \_\_\_ I tend to find a solution that gets me and the other person partially what we both want.

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument



The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI)<sup>4</sup> is designed to measure a person's behavior in conflict situations. The strategy you pick is based on:

1. Assertiveness: Attempting to satisfy your own concerns vs.
2. Cooperation: Attempting to satisfy others' concerns

**Consider the following these questions:**

What is the typical way you would respond to a conflict?

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How often do you choose a strategic response versus an impulsive reaction?

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<sup>4</sup> © Kilmann Diagnostics – [www.kilmanndiagnostics.com](http://www.kilmanndiagnostics.com)

# RESOLVE

*What do I do?*



*"We cannot solve our problems with the same  
thinking we used when we created them."*

*Albert Einstein*

## PREPARATION

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*"Failing to prepare, is preparing to fail"*  
**Benjamin Franklin**

*"In preparing for battle I have  
found that plans are useless,  
but planning is indispensable."*  
**Dwight D. Eisenhower**

It's important to prepare for challenging conversations where you will need to negotiate for what is important, not only for yourself, but for each party involved in the discussion.

Here are questions to consider during your planning:

- What support do you need, if any, to handle this challenging situation?
- What is the most effective time to hold this difficult discussion?
- What location might best contribute to a collaborative, quiet and safe environment?

### **Stakeholder Involvement: Who is Affected? Who Should Be Included?**

Who are the stakeholders or people you need to consider when having a challenging conversation?

In preparing for the challenging conversations, it is important to consider those individuals who make the decisions and the people who are impacted by the conflict and the decisions made as a result of the problem resolution. Many of you have been involved in public participation processes, and often we realize through this process how many people are stakeholders.

In order to develop consensus, all interested parties should have an opportunity to participate in a collaborative problem-solving process. If an interested party is excluded from the process, they may feel they have no stake in the final result and consequently, will not only refuse to support it but may even resort to the courts to fight it. It is therefore usually in everyone's interest to include anyone in the process who could later challenge the resolution and thus prevent its implementation. Furthermore, when all affected parties are at the table, there is a better chance that all the relevant issues will be raised.



In the workplace, inclusion of affected parties often surfaces in decision making processes, where a collaborative problem-solving model offers a consensus-based process for all who may be affected to participate in the decision. Conversely, a hierarchical or command and control process may lead to “announcements” from management that others are expected to follow without regard for their input or buy-in.

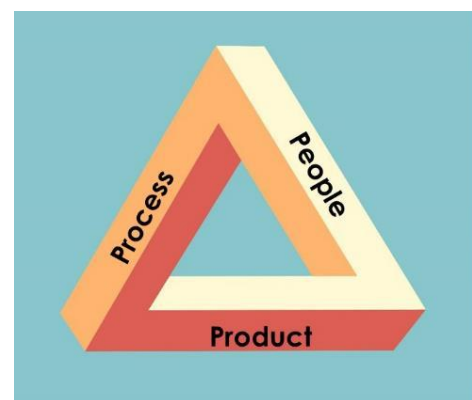
Another group of affected parties often ignored are “bystanders” – someone who is affected by the ongoing dispute although not as directly involved as the disputants. An example of this would be a member of a work team who is concerned that an ongoing personality dispute between two team members is impeding the performance of the entire team, yet that bystander feels powerless to speak up or raise their concern for fear of an antagonistic response.

Consider these questions when exploring all possible stakeholders in a collaborative problem-solving process whether it is a public participant format, EEO mediation, group or team facilitation.

- *Who has the authority to resolve this dispute?*
- *Who has an interest or stake in the outcome?*
- *Who might be surprised?*
- *Who could sabotage the decisions made?*
- *Who are the affected bystanders?*
- *Who are the technical support staff?*

## Triangle of Satisfaction

Chris Moore developed a triangular concept to help people examine more closely the similar and competing interests. He called this the Triangle of Satisfaction. When we’re preparing for a challenging conversation or meeting, at the individual, group or organizational level, we need to consider these 3 primary areas of interests before we make **powerful and sustainable decisions** on how to solve the problem.



- The **first main interest** is the need for a **Result** or a final **Product**. Does the outcome meet the needs of the internal and external customers?

- The **second main interest** is **Process**. Is the process fair, inclusive and transparent?
- The **final pillar** is **People's** emotional and psychological needs. Are they feeling heard and treated respectfully?

Good preparation will lead to sustainable decisions with involvement of the right people, the right product and a process that allows for high satisfaction and perceived fairness.

## Make the Conversation Safe

Making people feel safe to engage in risky conversations is key to encouraging people to continue the discussion even when things get tough.

What are people most fearful of when engaging in a challenging conversation?

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What do you experience or see happen when people feel unsafe in a challenging conversation?

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What would make a conversation safe for you and others in the room?

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How does each person in the challenging conversation know of the other person's intentions?

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## How to Make the Conversation Safe<sup>5</sup>

1. Step Out of the Content
2. Stop and rebuild safety before continuing on. People need to know two things to feel safe:
  - a. You care about their best interests and goals
    - You have to persuade people that you have common objectives (or complementary objectives) and want a win/win outcome
    - When others think that our purpose is to blame, win, or hide the truth, they are likely to engage in fight or flight (e.g., not dialogue openly/honestly, withdraw, lie/cover up, attack, etc.)
  - b. You care about them
    - You don't necessarily have to be friends. But you have to see the humanity in other side - they're human beings and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect
    - Consider giving an apology, if appropriate, to acknowledge your regret and responsibility in hurting them.
3. Step back into conversation and continue with a renewed sense of trust and purpose.

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<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Patterson, Kerry, Grenny, Joseph, McMillan, Ron and Switzler, Al. *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High*. McGraw-Hill: New York, NY, 2002.

## **Reflection Exercise**

Return to the challenging workplace conversation you identified earlier that you would like to prepare for and consider your intention and possible impact on the other person.

1. What is your purpose/intention for having this conversation? (Having a supportive purpose will help the conversation go well.)

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2. What tone/attitude or manner do you want to convey in this difficult conversation?

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## Interest-Based Negotiation

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Interest Based Negotiation (IBN) is a process using a number of techniques to support a collaborative problem-solving approach to conflict.



### Definitions: Positions and Interests

**Positions:** When someone takes a position, they are making a demand, stating an absolute claim, or providing an inflexible solution that is often self-serving. Often when someone takes a position, it is seen or heard by their actions and words. These action and words are what we experience as the “tip of the iceberg.”

**Interests:** The factors that drive or motivate someone to take a strong position. The underlying factors can be someone’s hopes, needs, fears, and desires. They make a great part of what is underneath most conflict or disputes.

Take a look at the graph below to compare how one approach to solving conflict stops conversations while the other approach deepens conversation and understanding.

| Positions                    | Interests                              |
|------------------------------|--|
| Solutions to problems        | Why a particular solution is preferred |
| Specific & defined result(s) | Based in needs                         |
| Basis for an argument        | Reasons underlying positions           |
| Fixed                        | Require explanation not justification  |
| Conversation enders          | Conversation Starters                  |

When using interest-based problem-solving, determine what is most important regarding the outcome—what you really *need* to have happen, not what you *want* to happen—and communicate and negotiate in a way that is most likely to achieve that outcome. However, never lose sight of the interests of others—the more you attempt to satisfy their interests, the greater the likelihood they will work to satisfy yours.

#### **Techniques that help promote an interest-based approach:**

- Make every effort to understand the *why* behind your position and the other person's position. What are the concerns? What are the needs?
- Ask questions to uncover the other person's interests, such as: *"In what ways is this important to you?" "What concerns do you have about this proposal?"*
- Discuss your interests and reasoning before offering your conclusions or proposals.
- Acknowledge the other person's interests and concerns as legitimate.
- Rank your interests by relative importance; see that the other side does the same.

# Communication Skills

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## Two Parts to Effective Communication

- Listen to understand
- Speak to be understood

Empathizing and acknowledging the impact of someone's situation goes a long way in letting people know they are being heard.

## How do we recognize emotionality?

As good conflict managers, it is important to understand how to recognize emotions especially when someone is masking or hiding their emotions. When working with high or intense emotions, we need to also recognize that those emotions are communicated through our body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice more so than the words we speak.

According to social psychologist, Albert Mehrabian (pronounced mare-A-Bee-an), he conducted a study in the 1970s to determine how we recognize emotionality through listening. Let's take a short quiz.

If these 3 communication components totaled 100%, what percentage would you assign each component based on its importance to listening and recognizing emotion? What does your experience tell you?

- Body language accounts for \_\_\_\_\_%
- Tone of voice for \_\_\_\_\_%
- Words we speak for \_\_\_\_\_%

*"If we were supposed to talk more than we listen, we would have two mouths and one ear."*

*Mark Twain*

## Listen to Understand

- *How* we listen is especially important.
- Listening for the purposes of understanding is key.
- Listening to engage in dialogue, not debate.

## Invitation to Dialogue<sup>6</sup>

| DEBATE   | DIALOGUE   |
|--|--|
| Assuming there is a right answer and you have it         | Assuming that many people have pieces of the answer            |
| Participants attempt to prove The other side wrong       | Participants work together toward common understanding         |
| Focuses on WINNING                                       | Focuses on EXPLORING common ground                             |
| Listening to find flaws and Make counter-arguments       | Listening to understand, find meaning and agreement            |
| Defending own assumptions as truth                       | Revealing our assumptions for reevaluation                     |
| Seeing two sides of an issue                             | Seeing all sides of an issue                                   |
| Defending one's own views Against those of others        | Admitting that others' thinking can improve one's own thinking |
| Searching for flaws and weaknesses in others' positions  | Searching for strengths and value in others' positions         |
| Seeking a conclusion or vote that ratifies your position | Using a consensus-based decision making process                |

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<sup>6</sup> Adapted from Michael Roberto, Why Great Leaders Don't take Yes for an Answer



## **Listening Self-Assessment**

Instructions:

- 1) Read each statement and select one response on each row.
- 2) Reflect on your ratings and answer the questions on the next page:

|   | <b>Always</b> | <b>Often</b> | <b>Sometimes</b> | <b>Rarely</b> |
|---|---------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|
| I allow the speaker to express his or her complete thought without interrupting.  |               |              |                  |               |
| When someone is speaking to me, I eliminate distractions by turning off the radio or television, putting aside other work or other things that might interfere. |               |              |                  |               |
| I lean forward and make eye contact with the speaker.   |               |              |                  |               |
| I listen for the feeling behind the speaker's message.  |               |              |                  |               |
| I paraphrase the speaker's message to ensure I understand what they are saying.   |               |              |                  |               |
| I "turn off" the speaker because I don't personally know or like the person speaking.   |               |              |                  |               |
| I express genuine interest in the other individual's conversation with verbal and non-verbal cues.  |               |              |                  |               |
| I ask questions to clarify the speaker's message.   |               |              |                  |               |
| I avoid rehearsing what I want to say while others are talking.   |               |              |                  |               |
| I pay attention to the speaker's energy level, posture, gestures, facial expression, tone and pace of speech as well as their words.                            |               |              |                  |               |

## **Group Discussion**

What is challenging for you about listening to understand?

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What do you believe you need to practice more to be an effective listener?

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## Core Listening Skills

**Be Present.** Listening begins by giving your full physical attention to the speaker. Your body language communicates the careful attention you are paying to the person who is talking. This is how you show respect.

- ❑ Make eye contact (if culturally appropriate)
- ❑ Lean slightly forward
- ❑ Face the speaker squarely
- ❑ Open body posture
- ❑ Focus on the speaker

**Track.** Communication is like a dance - the speaker is the leader and the listener is the follower. Resist the temptation to take control. Ideally, the speaker should have 80% of the speaking time, and listener, 20%. Allow the speaker plenty of time to complete the message without jumping in to add your own opinions and experiences.

**Encourage.** Let the speaker know you are connected and interested:

- ❑ mm-hmm
- ❑ I see
- ❑ And?
- ❑ Yes
- ❑ Go on
- ❑ Tell me more
- ❑ And then?

**Acknowledge and Validate.** Create a neutral zone to acknowledge and validate the speaker's point of view. Validation affirms that a person has been heard and has a right to feel or believe whatever he or she feels or believes. Remain objective and do not judge. Keep an open mind. Say "**Yes, and . . .**" or "**Sure, how?**" rather than "**yes, but . . .**" Remember that the goal is to understand, not agree, advise or correct.

**Empathize.** Empathy calls upon us to empty our mind and listen to others with our whole being. When we empathize, we demonstrate with respect that we understand what the speaker is experiencing through words and non-verbal cues. Our goal is to reflect their emotions and their intensity accurately.

- ❑ Listen for feeling words.
- ❑ Observe body language for feeling cues.

- ❑ Ask, "What would I be feeling?"
- ❑ Don't say: "I know just how you feel."
- ❑ Don't say: "I understand."
- ❑ Reflect the degree of emotion.

**Ask Open-ended Questions.** Questions help us to open up, generate dialogue, build relationships, and provide information. Asking the right questions in the right way also helps us to uncover interests and explore win-win solutions.

**Summarize.** Summarizing can be used in any conversation and is a tool that attempts to capture in concise form what has been said, while providing an overview of what has been said. The goal of the summary is to make sure that the speaker feels heard.

**Paraphrase.** Paraphrasing is similar to summarizing. It is a key way we demonstrate that we have understood the speaker and helps the speaker feel heard. It does not require a restatement of every word, rather an overview or outline of what has been said. Importantly, it accurately condenses the **content (facts) and feelings** of what has been stated. It is an opportunity for the speaker to determine whether he or she has been heard and understood. For example, *"These seem to be the main points you have covered so far..." (facts) and: "I hear that you are very troubled about not knowing what to expect...." (feelings)*

**Paraphrase this:**

"I've been working in the cube next to Stephen for the past two months. He's a really nice guy, but he talks too much. He's always interrupting me with the latest joke he's heard or telling me about his latest date. I can't get any work done."

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**Reframe what others are saying.** Reframing what someone has said is a way to use language to validate what is said with the focus on capturing the speaker's underlying interests, needs and concerns and shifts the way "facts" and "feelings" are expressed away from a negative frame of reference to a forward-looking positive frame. For example, from "she never listens to me!" to "it's important to you to feel heard."

## Communication Skills - Speaking

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Speaking effectively means you're expressing yourself in ways that others will hear and understand what you have to say (facts, feelings, interests, etc.) as you intended. This includes everything from the words you use, tone of voice, body language, and more.

The goal is to state your concern, opinion, etc. without having the other person get defensive and to keep them engaged in dialogue.

### I-Statements

Negative conflict language is often about blaming, shaming and complaining. I-statements are like reframing your language to be understood. You want to deliver your message and filter out what might cause others to shut down and not listen to the importance of your message.



- Taking ownership for how you feel
- focuses on the situation and behavior and their impact on you, rather than pointing fingers at others (focus on the problem, not person)
- shifts discussion on hopes for the future (rather than getting stuck in the past)
- Can be used as "opening statements" to initiate a conversation and invite cooperation and joint problem solving

Example "I" Statement:

- **I feel** (state feeling)
- **When** (describe behavior in specific)
- **Because** (describe impact on your needs)
- **Make a positive behavior request** (describe what you need)

The goal is to communicate your interests and needs in a way that can be heard by the other person. The strategy of reframing to be understood is to shift the following language.

|           |   |                  |
|-----------|---|------------------|
| Negative  | ➔ | Positive/Neutral |
| Past      | ➔ | Future, Options  |
| Other     | ➔ | Speaker (YOU!)   |
| Positions | ➔ | Interests        |
| Blaming   | ➔ | Impact, Concerns |
| Complaint | ➔ | Request          |

### Reframing and I-Statement Examples:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>From negative</b><br><i>"you're not a team player"</i>   | <b>to positive</b><br><i>"I would appreciate help from you"</i>   |
| <b>From past</b><br><i>"you're always late..."</i>  | <b>to future</b><br><i>"I would like you to arrive on time..."</i>  |
| <b>From a focus on the other person</b><br><i>"you need to stop giving me bad information..."</i> | <b>to a focus on the speaker</b><br><i>"It's important to me that the information is accurate..."</i>   |
| <b>From a focus on positions</b><br><i>"I don't want to go to a staff meeting at 4pm..."</i>      | <b>to a focus on interests</b><br><i>"I am worried that the staff meeting won't end on time, because I have to pick up my children on time"</i>   |
| <b>From blaming</b><br><i>"you made me miss the deadline"</i>                                     | <b>to a focus on impact</b><br><i>"It made me feel really stressed when I didn't get your input for the report by the time we had agreed upon. As a result, I got behind and missed the deadline. It is important that we do a good job."</i> |
| <b>From a complaint</b><br><i>"you never listen to me"</i>  | <b>to a request</b><br><i>"I need some assurance that you're listening to me"</i>   |
| <b>From negative labels</b><br><i>e.g., "stubborn"</i>  | <b>to positive (or neutral) attributes</b><br><i>e.g. "tenacious"</i>   |

### **Reframing Practice Exercise**

Below are statements that reflect what you are thinking and would like to say. However, you know it would be better to reframe your thoughts and feelings to say something more constructive. What could you say instead that still conveys your thoughts, feelings and underlying interests? (These can be in the form of “I-statements” but do not need to be.)

1. You're nothing but a back-stabber. You better stop talking about me. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. You're always focused on what we can't do. You're the most negative person I've ever worked with. You're dragging us all down. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. If you weren't so disorganized, our team would've gotten our work done on time.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. I'm trying to do my best! But how can I get all this work done when three different people are telling me what to do!  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. I hate this kind of bickering. If you'd just act reasonably then we could solve this mess.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Just because I'm new doesn't mean I don't know anything! \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Can we just focus on the task? I don't have time for all this chit-chat.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Look, I've told you before, you can't wait until the last minute to ask me to do something and expect me to drop everything else and get it done on time for you.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Hey, I came up with that idea in our last meeting. No one ever listens to me!  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Communication Skills Checklist

### 1. Active Listening

- a. Be present – give your full attention to the speaker
- b. Demonstrate interest, verbally and non-verbally, through facial expressions, eye contact, gestures and voice – tone, speed, and volume
- c. Engage in *dialogue* rather than *debate*

### 2. Paraphrase: Acknowledge and Validate

- a. Listening for what people are saying **and** the emotions they are revealing
- b. Empathize – reflect their emotions and intensity accurately, check for understanding
- c. Yes/And – no buts – your goal is to understand, not agree or correct

### 3. Ask Open-ended Questions

- a. Generates dialogue and build relationships
- b. Ask, don't tell
- c. Avoid yes/no answers
- d. *How, when, what, and why* are good starters
- e. *"Tell me more"* and *"Help me to understand"* work well
- f. *"What questions do you have?"* rather than *"Do you have any questions?"*

### 4. Reframing

- a. Start with reframing your own language
- b. Restatement of words into neutral, non-judgmental or positive terms
- c. Focus on underlying interests or needs to move from
  - Negative to a Positive
  - Past to the Future
  - Other to the Speaker
  - Positions to Interests
  - Blaming to Impact/Concerns
  - Complaint to a Request



**5. “I” Statements**

- a. Avoids blaming
- b. I feel (describe feeling)
- c. When (describe your observation of the behavior in specific terms)
- d. Because (describe impact of behavior on your needs)
- e. Make a positive behavior request (describe what you need)

**6. Summarize to demonstrate understanding**

- a. Provides opportunity for speaker to determine whether he/she has been heard
- b. Similar to paraphrasing, more concise

**7. Feedback Sandwich**

- a. Start with a positive
- b. Insert constructive feedback/change you’re looking for
- c. End with a positive

**Reflection Exercise**

Return to the challenging workplace conversation you identified earlier that you would like to prepare for and consider WHAT you will say.

What is YOUR desired outcome or goal for this challenging workplace conversation?

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What is the key feedback or message you need to convey to the other person?

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## **Challenging Conversation Worksheet: Preparing for a Challenging Conversation**

Separate positions from interests

- What are the positions (i.e. the claim or demands) – yours and theirs?
- What the underlying interests and needs – yours and theirs?

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Disentangle intention from impact.

- What is your purpose/intention for having this conversation? (Having a supportive purpose will help the conversation go well.)

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What might be the impact of the other person on you? What might they do that will be challenging for you emotionally?

- What are your triggers? What buttons are being pushed?
- How will you deal with them? (Have a strategy developed in advance).
- What emotions/feelings will you be willing to share?
- What will you do if you or the other person starts getting stressed or upset?

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Check your assumptions. Try to keep from running up the ladder of inference. Walk back down the ladder and see if there is another interpretation of what happened or what was said. What might be another perspective that you haven't thought of?

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How have you contributed to the problem? (Apologize when appropriate)

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What are some options to resolve the issue that you could discuss with the other person?

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### During the Conversation

- Invite cooperation
  - *"I'd like to solve this in a way that we can both be satisfied"*
  - Talk about the problem, not the person
- Share your intention
- Share perspectives, underlying interests
- Use your communication tools: paraphrase, open-ended statements, reframe/I-statements
- Develop accountability. How will you move forward?

### After the Conversation: Reflect

What worked well? What could be done differently next time?

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# REFLECT

*How did that go?*



*“Why am I as I am? To understand that of any person, his whole life from birth must be reviewed. All of our experiences fuse into our personality. Everything that ever happened to us is an ingredient” – Malcolm X*

## Conflict Management Review

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This workshop illustrates why it is important to think about conflict management and not just dispute resolution. Here is a definition of conflict management that incorporates the Rs of recognize, respond and resolve and points out that conflict management is broader than just dispute resolution. The 4Rs proactively work to prevent potential situations that could result in unpleasant confrontations. Remember, conflict is neutral and becomes positive or negative depending on how we handle it.

- *Recognize* the signs and signals of conflict
- *Respond* in ways that alleviate emotional tensions, enhance relationships, and prevent disputes
- *Resolve* disputes in collaborative ways using effective communication skills
- *Reflect* not only on what you could do more effectively but how you might support the other person to be more effective in how they engage in conflict conversations.

All successful conflict managers take the time to reflect on their performance and competencies to not only look at what they did well, but what could be done differently and more effectively next time. It is also about aligning your intentions with your behavior. Ask yourself these questions the next time you have a challenging conversation.

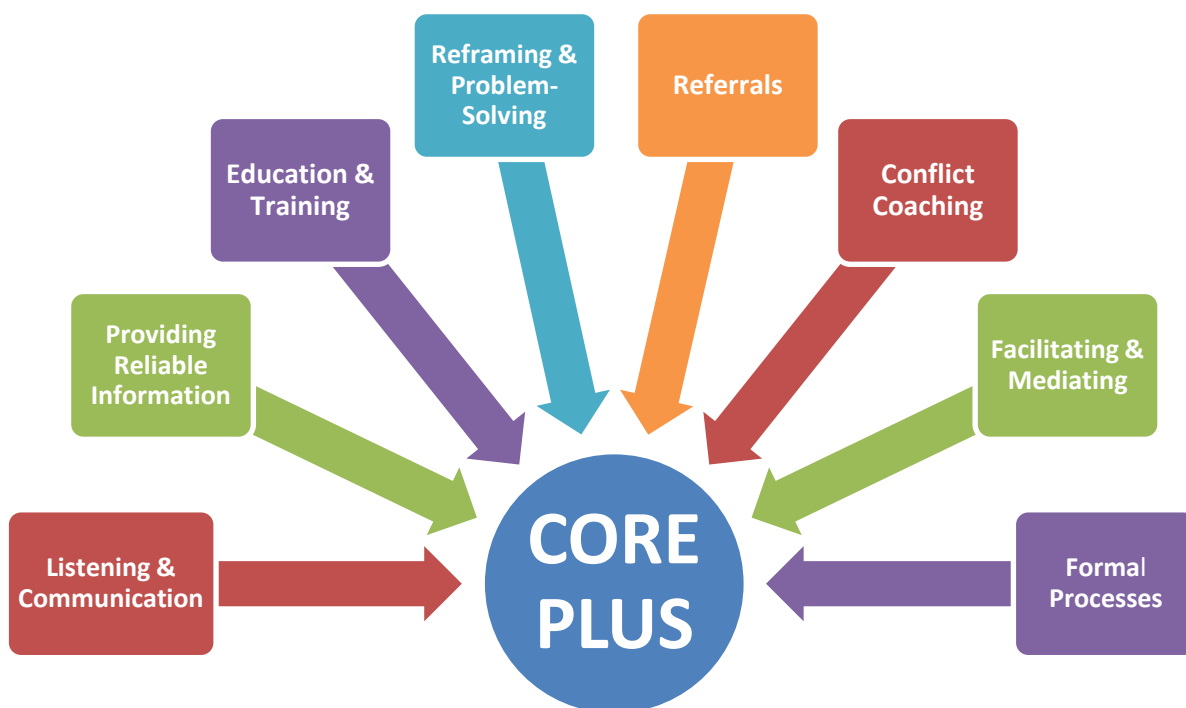
- Where did you get stuck?
  - What could you have done differently?
  - What surprised you that you did well?
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## Overview of CORE PLUS

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The Department of the Interior is fulfilling its commitment to institute CORE PLUS through:

- Creating an environment for raising various issues, listening and being heard respectfully, and solving problems effectively.
- Building a network of resources and assistance to all employees for any type of concern, problem or disagreement that occurs at work.

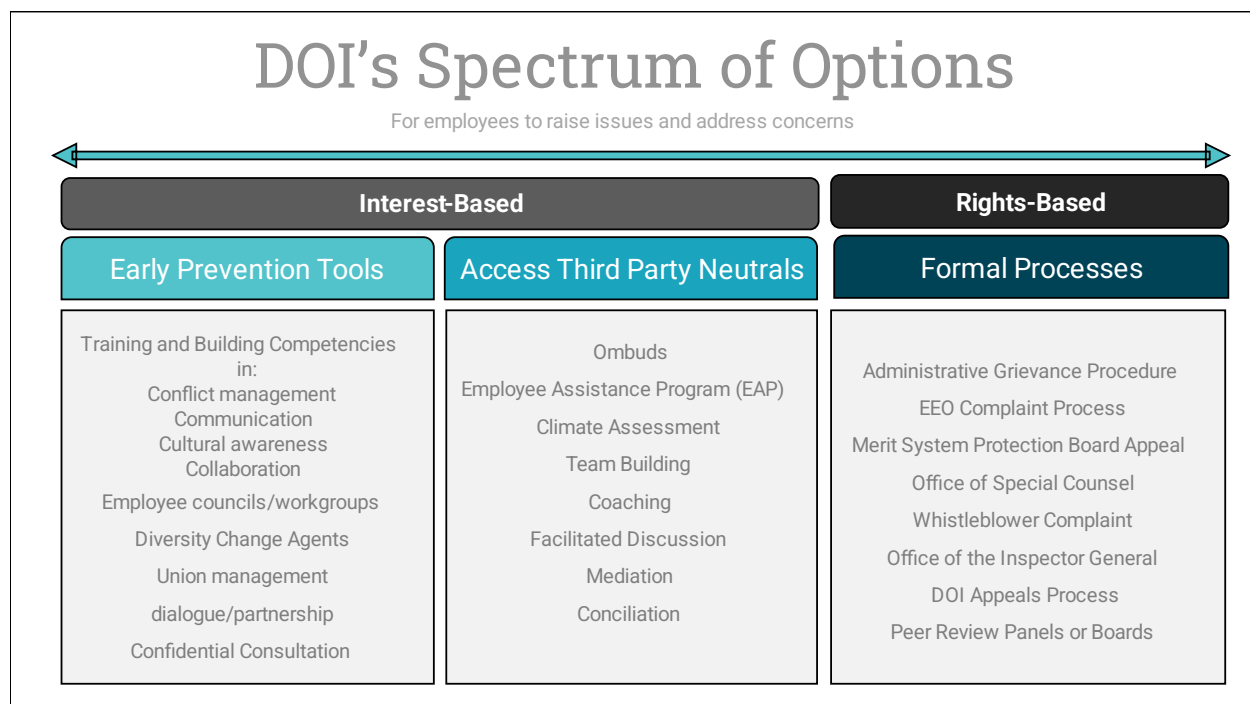


**CORE PLUS** strives for eliminating barriers and encouraging all employees to make an informed choice about how best to address and issue – either on their own or with assistance. act responsibly on their own or with assistance.

**CORE PLUS** uses the full spectrum of conflict resolution tools including effective communication and conflict management skills training, informal discussions with a conflict management specialist, process and conflict coaching, conciliation, facilitation, and mediation. The option for more formal litigation and adversarial conflict resolution (such as formal EEO or grievance filing) always remains available.

**CORE PLUS** is a shared responsibility of management, employees and the organization. It depends on everyone supporting the implementation and adoption of CORE PLUS throughout the DOI. It starts with you!

- All types of concerns covered
- Multiple entry points: CADR, EEO, HR, SOL, IG, EAP, Supervisor, Unions, Training, etc.
- Process options suited to the situation
- Resources available - DOI wide rosters of internal and external neutrals
- Voluntary participation
- Simplified administrative procedures





## Dictionary of Key Terms

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|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Closed-Ended Questions</b> | Questions that can be answered with “yes”, “no” or “maybe.”  |
| <b>Confirmation Bias</b>      | The psychological tendencies that cause the human brain to draw incorrect conclusions and “confirm” what we already believe to be true. We look for confirmation and ignore what would support a different conclusion. |
| <b>Conflict</b>               | Can be defined as differences about how expected needs will be met.  |
| <b>Dispute</b>                | When someone makes a claim or demand on another who rejects it.  |
| <b>Emotional Hijacking</b>    | When the part of the human brain that serves as the emotional processor—the amygdala—bypasses (or “hijacks”) the normal reasoning process.   |
| <b>Interests</b>              | The factors that drive or motivate someone to take a strong position. The underlying factors can be someone’s hopes, needs, fears, and desires.  |
| <b>Open-Ended Questions</b>   | Questions that cannot be answered by “yes”, “no” or “maybe”. Typically, open-ended questions have the words who, what, where, when, or why in them   |
| <b>Positions</b>              | When someone takes a position, they are making a demand, stating an absolute claim, or providing an inflexible solution that is often self-serving.  |
| <b>Selective Attention</b>    | The process of focusing on a particular visual object or sound in the environment while ignoring all other important (or unimportant) details in the environment.  |

## Course Designers: CHI

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**Carole Houk** is a conflict management consultant and attorney. Her firm, *chiResolutions, LLC*, (CHI) specializes in the design of integrated conflict management systems for businesses and government, with a particular focus on the healthcare industry. Carole developed the *Medical Ombudsman/Mediator Program (MEDIC+OM)* in 2001 to resolve patient-provider disputes at the point of care. She provides full consultancy services in early resolution programs for hospitals and medical centers, including disclosure training for providers, training and coaching for risk managers and other medical professionals in conflict engagement strategies, and effective communication to improve healthcare teams.

**chiResolutions, LLC** is the principal contractor to the U.S. Department of the Interior for the design and implementation of their organizational Integrated Conflict Management System, CORE PLUS, and served a similar function for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Transportation Security Administration from 2004-2009. She assisted the Canadian Human Rights Commission in developing an Integrated Human Rights Maturity Model for its regulated employers throughout Canada, and has consulted with the Canadian Department of National Defense, Department of Justice Canada, Public Works and Government Services Canada and the Australian Defense Organization in the design of their dispute resolution systems. Ms. Houk has been an Adjunct Professor at the Georgetown University Law Center, and has taught at Hamline University School of Law's Conflict Resolution Program and at Pepperdine University School of Law's Straus Institute of Dispute Resolution. Ms. Houk was the first Dispute Resolution Counsel for the U.S. Department of the Navy from 1997 through February 2001, and had all programmatic responsibility for designing and managing a comprehensive conflict management program covering the Navy's environmental, contractual, healthcare, and workplace disputes.

Carole holds an LLM (Labor) from the Georgetown University Law Center, a JD from Wayne State University Law School, and is a published author. In December 2016, *chiResolutions, LLC* published a comprehensive study of federal Ombuds programs, ***The Use of Ombuds in the Federal Government***, for the Administrative Conference of the U.S., which can be found at <https://www.acus.gov/research-projects/use-ombuds-federal-agencies>

**Pattie Porter, LCSW**, is an independent consultant and a team member of *chiResolutions* since 2006. She is the Founder of Conflict Connections, Inc. in San Antonio, Texas. Pattie has worked extensively in the dispute resolution field since 1994 providing mediation, team facilitation, negotiation training, and conflict

management and abrasive leader coaching services to senior leaders, businesses, government agencies and higher education institutions. She has worked closely with numerous federal agencies including the DOI, Department of Homeland Security, US Department of Agriculture, Department of Defense, Environmental Protection Agency, and NASA; corporations such as Coca-Cola, and multi-billion-dollar family-owned businesses both in the US and abroad.

Pattie trains and facilitates extensively throughout the U.S. on topics related to conflict management and collaborative problem-solving. She often serves as a senior trainer leading and mentoring training teams as they build internal capacity within an agency. She has designed and lead train-the-trainer courses educating thousands of agency employees and managers. She is also a formal mentor to conflict coaches, Navy mediators and government agency facilitators.

Pattie is an adjunct faculty member in the graduate dispute resolution program at Southern Methodist University in Plano, Texas. She is also the Founder and Host of a global online radio program, The Texas Conflict Coach® educating the public and consumers how to manage conflict constructively and problem-solve effectively. She is the author of two Minibooks™ Stop The Dreaded Drama, and Stop Avoiding Conflict.

**Jessica Williams, MBA** began practicing dispute resolution in 2002 and is a founding Partner and CEO of Collaborent LLC. Jessica supports people, organizations, and businesses in navigating important decision-making processes and related conflicts by facilitating mediations, strategic processes, and trainings, as well as providing leadership coaching and conflict coaching. She is also the Deputy Program Manager for chiResolutions, where she manages a robust national roster of over 300 conflict management practitioners across the U.S. in support of the DOI integrated conflict management system. Jessica provides mediation coaching for national mediation trainings, and lectures on mediation at the University of Denver Daniels College of Business.

Prior to her work with Collaborent and CHI, Jessica worked for 10 years as a management consultant for one of the top consultancies, where she focused on facilitation, business analysis, and project management, primarily for the DOI. She has two years of commercial mediation experience with a leading mediation firm, where she helped resolve complex multi-stakeholder legal disputes. She has also served as a mediator for the cities of Boulder, Colorado and San Francisco, California.

Jessica earned a B.A. from the University of California at Los Angeles with dual degrees in Economics and Psychology, and an MBA from the University of Denver with concentrations in Values-Based Leadership and Strategic Organizational

Change. She holds a certificate in Conflict Resolution from the Justice Institute of British Columbia, Canada and she is a member of the International Coaching Federation (ICF). Jessica lives in the Greater Denver Area of Colorado.

**Nike Carstarphen, Ph.D.**, is a consultant and co-founder of the Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT), a non-profit organization dedicated to expanding the knowledge and practice of conflict transformation and peace building through education, training, research, evaluation and practice worldwide. Dr. Carstarphen specializes in conflict assessment, organizational development, collaborative problem solving, conflict resolution systems design, and program monitoring and evaluation for public, private, community and nongovernmental organizations at the local, state, federal and international levels.

Nike has provided training and training-of-trainers for over 3,000 adults and youth from the U.S., and abroad. She has helped design conflict prevention programs for schools, communities and organizations, and facilitated several short- and long-term inter-group dialogues and problem-solving processes in organizations and communities. Her highly successful facilitated dialogue between police officers and gang-involved youth was featured in a special publication, *Bridging the Police-Gang Divide*, by the U.S. Department of Justice's Community Policing Consortium. Dr. Carstarphen has taught graduate and undergraduate courses in the U.S., Bolivia, Indonesia, and Spain, and has published book chapters and articles in *Negotiation Journal*, among others.

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## **Participant Notes, Reflections, Key Takeaways & Points to Remember**

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## **Participant Notes, Reflections, Key Takeaways & Points to Remember**

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