



CONFLICT RESOLUTION CENTER of MONTGOMERY COUNTY, inc.

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United Way #9386, CFC #80049, Maryland Charity Campaign

## **Introduction to Conflict Management Training Agenda**

*for*

2013 Catholic Volunteer Network Annual Conference

Saturday, November 9, 2013

2:30pm – 4:00pm

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### **Introduction**

#### **Gathering**

✦ Your name and *“one thing I do well in conflict is...”*

#### **Brainstorm Conflict**

✦ How We Perceive Conflict Exercise

✦ Battle Lines Exercise

✦ *Approaches to Conflict*

#### **Intro to Communication Skills**

✦ *Open Ended Questions*

✦ *Strategic Listening*

✦ *Conflict Management*

#### **Q/A Session**

#### **Closing**

# Conflict Management

Non-violent collaborative conflict management is about standing up for yourself and getting your needs met, and being respectful of others and making sure they get their needs met too. It's not about avoiding real problems and pretending they're not there. It's not about being a doormat and letting people walk on you. It's a challenging process and it's one that develops long term solutions to conflicts while maintaining relationships. Below are a few strategies to help:

## Check anger levels:

- Are you too angry to have a rational conversation
- Are other people involved too angry to have a rational conversation
- Is this a good time to deal with the issue?
- Would another time be better?

## Check yourself:

- Why am I angry/upset?
- What do I really want out of this situation?
- Who would be able to help me get that?
- What can I do to get that?

## Check out the participants:

- Who needs to be here to resolve this?
- Is everyone here?
- How can those people be contacted?

## Create a Safe Space:

- What guidelines do you and others need to be honest with each other?  
(e.g. confidentiality – what goes on here stays here)
- What guidelines do you and others need to be able to listen to each other?  
(e.g. one person speaks at a time)

## Check out what other people want:

- Listen. Listen. Listen.
- Often if you listen first, other people will let you speak.
- Say back what you heard. Give other people a chance to clarify.
- What do other people really want out of the situation?

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## Say what's going on for you:

- Be clear about what you need from the situation
- Explain how you feel.
- Say what you need in a way that is respectful to others. Remember, the goal is for you to be heard, not to slam other people, and not to minimize your own needs.  
(e.g. "I need my privacy. I'm annoyed cause I've said this a lot. I need you to knock before you come in." Instead of, "What the f... is your problem? Ever heard of knocking?")

**Make sure you understand what the conflict is really about:**

- Make sure you know what issues you are discussing (e.g. communication, chores, expectations, music)
- Figure out what everyone wants out of the solutions (e.g. help around the house, privacy, respect, quiet)

**Look for solutions together:**

- Work on one issue at a time
- Make a list of all possible solutions
- Pick the ones that work for everyone

**Check in later:**

- Come back later and see how it's going.

# Reflections Using Strategic Listening

It is important to reflect whenever you hear a vent and you identify feelings, values or topics that can be reflected.

## ❖ LET THE SPEAKER FINISH

### ❖ Distancing Phrase:

- Goal**
- to distance self from issues
  - to leave room for clarification
  - to set the tone for working towards understanding

### Examples:

- "What I think I'm hearing you say is..."
- "It sounds like..."
- "So is it...?"

## ❖ SAY BACK WHAT YOU HEARD USING FEELINGS, VALUES & TOPICS

**Feelings** are emotion words reflecting the degree of intensity participants express.

- ★ Reflecting feelings makes people feel heard and validated.
- ★ People repeat themselves when they don't feel heard. If people are repeating themselves, try saying back a feeling.

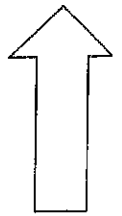
**How to do it:** The feeling reflection would be "It sounds like you were embarrassed when she did that." **Warning:** "It sounds like you feel that..." is usually an indication that you are about to repeat the position rather than give a feeling. For example, "It sounds like you feel that she should have known better than to do that to you in front of your parents," is a re-statement of the position. **Warning 2:** "I understand how you feel" is NOT the same as using feeling words. It often makes people more angry as they try to explain to you that you could not possibly understand. It also expresses your opinion. Also, "how does that make you feel?" can feel patronizing.

**Topics** are generally one word tangible items. Topics should be phrased using non-judgmental language which does not blame anyone and doesn't take either person's side.

- ★ Reflecting topic language focuses on the problem rather than blaming people.
- ★ When participants hear the problem broken down into concrete topics, it can help to clarify the situation. Once the situation is clarified, people can focus on what to do about it.

**How to do it:** "It sounds like one of the topics to work on here is housekeeping." is a topic reflection. Also, language like, "it sounds like \_\_\_\_\_ is a topic to work on"; or, "it sounds like \_\_\_\_\_ is something you'd like to make a plan about today" focuses on the future and the possibility for change. **Warning:** Be careful that when you reflect topics that you

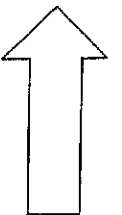
do not restate positions. "It sounds like the topic is that she doesn't clean up after herself," is a re-statement of the position. Be aware that language such as "it sounds like \_\_\_\_\_ is an issue for you" or "it sounds like you have an issue with \_\_\_\_\_" is adversarial and highlights division.



**"What's important"/Values** are usually phrased as one or two key positive words reflecting the needs, goals and values participants express.

- ★ Focusing on "what's important" to someone can make them feel heard without repeating the negative blame language they might be using.
- ★ Focusing on "what's important" shifts people out of being a victim, and empowers them to take ownership of what they want.
- ★ "What's important" can be used as goals for problem-solving.

**How to do it:** When reflecting values, it is important to say, "it sounds like \_\_\_\_\_ is important to you" or "it sounds like you're looking for \_\_\_\_\_" or "so is that about \_\_\_\_\_ for you?". Don't say, "it sounds like you value \_\_\_\_\_" because it sounds dorky and real people don't talk that way...unless, of course, you are a dork.



#### ❖ **Check-in Phrase:**

- Goal -- allow for clarification  
-- send the message that you're interested in understanding

#### **Examples:**

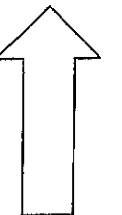
- "Is that right?"  
"Did I get that all?"

**Pulling it together:** When reflecting using Strategic Listening: weave feelings, values and topics together in the context of the story to create a full reflection of what has been said.

#### **Example:**

**Vent:** "I'm tired of answering the phones all the time as if I'm the secretary around here. People barely say, 'Good Morning' to me when they come in, but they expect that I'm going to answer their calls and give them messages. Did I unknowingly apply to be secretary just because I'm the only one in the office when I'm scheduled to be in? Am I the only one with work to do? If I took two hour lunch breaks and forty-five minute smoke breaks, I guess I would want a personal answering machine too!"

**One way to reflect this vent using Strategic Listening:** "It sounds like you're feeling used and fed up and that fairness is important to you. I think I'm also hearing you say that responsibility is important to you in reference to schedule and that you're looking for communication that is courteous. Also, it sounds like breaks and phone calls are things that you'd like to make a plan about and that accountability is important to you in both of those things. Is that right?"



#### ❖ **After the speaker clarifies, there is opportunity for others to speak**



## Approaches to Conflict

(Adapted from The Thomas-Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument by Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilman)

The difference in outcomes to a conflict depends on the approach the people involved use. There are five basic approaches:

Competing

Avoiding

Accommodating

Compromising

Collaborating

No one of these approaches is better than the other. Each has its time and place. The key to effective conflict management is using the right approach at the right time.

### Approaches to Conflict

#### Approach

Competing

#### Good for...

- a. Emergency situations when someone needs to act
- b. When you know you are right; the other person's judgment is inadequate.
- c. When you need to show that you are not a pushover.

Accommodating

- a. When you realize you are wrong.
- b. When the issue is more important to the other person.
- c. Building up social credit.
- d. Cutting your losses; the time and energy spent in trying to resolve the conflict to your benefit will only damage your interests.
- e. Letting the other person learn from their mistakes.
- f. Emergency situations.

Avoiding

- a. When the issue is trivial; example: teasing.
- b. When you haven't got a chance of getting satisfaction.
- c. Letting things cool off.
- d. Taking time to collect more information.
- e. When others can resolve the conflict more effectively.

Collaborating

- a. Learning all you can about the problem.
- b. Gaining a commitment from the other person to manage the conflict and stick to the resolutions.
- c. Maintaining relationships.

Compromising

- a. Reaching temporary solutions.
- b. Reaching fast solutions.
- c. Reaching solutions when your goals are in direct conflict.
- d. Cutting losses; you won't get all you want, but you will settle for some.

## Approach

## Shortcomings

### Competing

- a. You win and the other loses; potential for resentment.
- b. You may not get all the information you need because the others feel intimidated.
- c. You may lose.

### Accommodating

- a. You lose and the other wins; potential for resentment.
- b. Important issues go unaddressed.

### Avoiding

- a. A conflict can go unmanaged and get out of hand.
- b. Everyone may end up losing and no one's interests are served.

### Collaborating

- a. You may take more time than an issue warrants.
- b. You may cause an issue to become more serious by belaboring.

### Compromising

- a. You may be seen as a 'politician'.
- b. You may pay more attention to reaching solutions than to preserving principles or values.

## Open-Ended Questions

Open-Ended Questions Can:

- ❖ Keep people from getting defensive.
- ❖ Allow people to focus on what's important to them.
- ❖ Keep information flowing.
- ❖ Focus people on the problem instead of the person with whom they are angry.
- ❖ Break down the problem into manageable pieces.
- ❖ Protect your neutrality.
- ❖ Break through "code words" or euphemisms to determine topics.
- ❖ Focus people on solutions.
- ❖ Generate more creative solutions.

**Below are some examples of open-ended questions beginnings:**

- ❖ Describe...
- ❖ Tell me about...
- ❖ Break that down for me. What do you mean by...
- ❖ Explain...
- ❖ What...
- ❖ How...
- ❖ Talk about...
- ❖ Help me understand...

**Warning: Asking "Why?" often puts people on the defensive.**