

Corporation for National & Community Service  
Montana State Office

## IN-SERVICE TRAINING







Learning Circle H:

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# DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

## LC: DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS LEARNING OUTCOMES

*As a result of this session, participants will be able to:*

	Explain how managing one's "hot buttons" help in dealing with difficult conversations.
	Describe how to proactively clarify and recommend a course of action for addressing problems within their organizational and community context.
	Discuss the value of third party dispute resolution.
	Relate strategies for maintaining relationships during difficult conversations.



## PROPOSED AGENDA:

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### 1. Learning Circle Set-Up

- ✓ Welcome, introductions
- ✓ Session overview, packet, working agreements

### 2. Managing “Hot Buttons”

- Personal buttons
- Strategies for managing hot buttons

### 3. Review What Makes Conversations Difficult

- ✓ Analysis

### 4. Guidelines & Strategies

- Maintaining relationship principles
- RISC
- Negotiation
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Party dispute resolution

### 5. Learning Circle Close-Out

- ✓ Summary of Session, Reflection, Closing remarks



## My Personal “HOT BUTTONS”

What they are; how I react to them; and how I manage them so they don't get in the way of my community organizing:



# Some Things That Make A Situation MORE OR LESS Difficult

- Seriousness of the stakes involved
- Quality of relationships between parties – commitment to each other
- Quality of communication
- The degree to which the languages of the parties are shared and/or understood
- Number of issues that the conflict involves
- Degree of multicultural/cross-cultural understanding between parties
- Extent of common ground between parties – shared values, mission, etc.
- History of resolving conflicts successfully between parties

- Duration of time the conflict has been active
- The way power is distributed between the parties
- Number and quality of resources available to help resolve conflict
- The current resolution climate
- The wants and desires of the stakeholders
- Number of people, organizations, or communities involved



Describe how to proactively clarify and recommend a course of action for addressing problems within their organizational and community context.



## RELATIONSHIP BUILDING/ MAINTAINING STEPS FOR RESOLVING A CONFLICT

(G. Woo, 2002)

- ☞ Think about what you know about how the “other” usually experiences “respect”
- ☞ Think about time, place, language, tone, setting, peace-facilitating context, etc. and position the resolution for success
- ☞ Reassure “the other” of your commitment to the relationship
- ☞ Resist judgment while listening for your partner’s point of view
- ☞ Listen for the unmet needs and interests of the “other”
- ☞ Relate what you understand to be the feelings that the “other” has about the situation
- ☞ Check your understanding of what are all the issues
- ☞ Resist rushing to get your needs met first
- ☞ Clarify your position making use of translation, metaphor, imagery that will be understood
- ☞ Think of the things that you are trying to share that don’t translate easily and make attempts to clarify or amplify ...



# Repeat Impact Share Consequences MODEL

D. Nakashima, 1996

## Repeat

- ◆ Repeat the inappropriate or unacceptable remark or describe the behavior.

“When you said \_\_\_\_\_.”

## Impact

- ◆ Tell the person of the impact or effect of their behavior on you. Take ownership of the feedback by making “I” statements when sharing your feelings (feedback addresses the behavior, not the person).

“I felt \_\_\_\_\_.”

## Share

- ◆ Share and specify a request of behavior change.

“I’m requesting /asking you to \_\_\_\_\_.”

## Consequences

- ◆ State the consequences if inappropriate behavior is not modified (depends on situation or relationship with individual).

“If you continue to say/do those things, I will \_\_\_\_\_.”



## ***Principles of Negotiation***

Negotiation is a process in which two or more parties share ideas, information, and options, seeking a mutually acceptable outcome.

Six principles form a theoretical framework for understanding negotiating practices:

1. **Distinguish “people” problems from the merits of the problem.**
2. **Focus on interests, not on positions.**
3. **Invent options for mutual gain.**
4. **Search for criteria of evaluation. Look for and examine several criteria for each option.**
5. **Know the best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA): the alternative to be selected if an agreement is not reached between the negotiating parties.**
6. **Analyze your bargaining power carefully.**

### ***How to develop possible BATNAs:***

- *Invent a list of actions you might conceivably take if agreement is not reached.*
- *Improve some of the promising ideas and convert them into practical options.*
- *Select, tentatively, the one option that seems best for you.*



In negotiation context: Remember always to consider the other side's BATNA.

- Analyze your bargaining power carefully. Bargaining power traditionally is defined as “the ability and power to hurt the other side or the power of superior resources.”

In this context bargaining power should be evaluated according to your:

- Skill and knowledge
- Good working relationship
- Good BATNA
- Good options
- Legitimacy
- Commitment



## **Other principles that can assist you in negotiation are:**

- Focus on and prepare what you want, not what you fear.
- Structure your interaction (relationships, processes, and issues) to clarify what you are doing at any one time.
- Jointly analyze, communicate, create, and decide.
- Assess your power relative to the power of others.
- Remain aware of the real external environment.

## **Some Negotiation Tips**

*(Adapted from the writings of Robert Bacal)*



### **Solicit the Other's Perspective**

In a negotiating situation use questions to find out what the other person's concerns and needs might be. You might try:

***What do you need from me on this?***

***What are your concerns about what I am suggesting / asking?***

When you hear the other person express his or her needs or concerns, use listening responses to make sure you heard correctly.

For example: ***So, you are saying that you are worried that you will get lost in the shuffle and we will forget about you...Is that right?***

***If I have this right, you want to make sure that the phones are covered over lunch?***

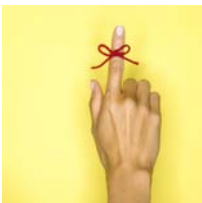


### **State Your Needs**

The other person needs to know what you need. It is important to state not only what you need but why you need it. Often disagreement may exist regarding the method for solving an issue, but not about the overall goal.

For example:

***I would like an hour on Tuesday to go to the doctor. I want to make sure I am healthy so I can contribute better to the organization.***



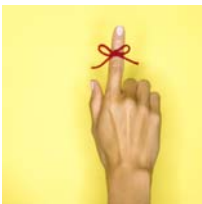
### **Prepare Options Beforehand**

Before entering into a negotiating session, prepare some options that you can suggest if your preferred solution is not acceptable. Anticipate why the other person may resist your suggestion, and be prepared to counter with an alternative.



### ***Don't Argue***

Negotiating is about finding solutions...Arguing is about trying to prove the other person wrong. We know that when negotiating turns into each party trying to prove the other one wrong, no progress gets made. Don't waste time arguing. If you disagree with something, state your disagreement in a gentle but assertive way. Don't demean the other person or get into a power struggle.



### ***Consider Timing***

There are good times to negotiate and bad times. Bad times include those situations where there is:

- a high degree of anger on either side
- preoccupation with something else
- a high level of stress
- tiredness on one side or the other

Schedule negotiations to avoid these times. If they arise during negotiations a time-out/rest period is in order, or perhaps rescheduling to a better time.

## *Continuum of Alternative Dispute Resolution Processes*

I	II		III		
Cooperative Decision Making	Third-Party Assistance with Negotiation and Problem Solving		Third-Party Decision Making		
	A	B	A	B	C
Parties Are Unassisted	Relationship-Building Assistance	Procedural Assistance	Substantive Assistance	Advisory Nonbinding Assistance	Binding Assistance
Conciliation	Counseling Therapy	Coaching Process Consultation	Minitrial	Nonbinding Arbitration	Binding Arbitration
Information Exchange Meeting	Conciliation	Training	Technical Advisory Boards	Summary Jury Trial	Med-Arb Mediation Then Arbitration
Cooperative Collaborative Problem Solving	Team Building	Facilitation	Advisory Mediation		Dispute Panels-Binding
Negotiation	Informal Social Activities	Mediation	Fact Finding Settlement Conference		Private Court/Judging

### *Definition of Third-Party*

Someone who is external to a conflict and intervenes between the parties to help them with their conflict management efforts.

### *Benefits of Third-Party Assistance*

- Impartial
- Process expert
- Content expert
- Messenger

## *When Is Third-Party Assistance Needed?*

### Factors:

1. Nature of the conflict
  - Highly emotional or adversarial
  - Complex
  - Deeply held values involved
2. Stakes involved
  - Continuation is too costly
  - Importance of future relationship
  - Valuable to all parties
3. Climate of the conflict
  - No rational discussion possible
  - Impasse or deadlock
  - Lack of trust and communication
  - Stakeholders need a face-saving opportunity

### *Third-Party Roles (Impartial)*

1. Mediator - Seeks a jointly determined, win-win resolution
2. Facilitator - Smooths procedures and processes for a productive interaction
3. Observer - Offers objective descriptions of the situation
4. Arbitrator - Has authority to decide the settlement of the conflict
5. Enforcer - Has power to impose settlement and conditions on the parties

### *Additional Third-Party Roles (Partial)*

Activist - Tries to influence the outcome of the conflict; typically biased toward one of the conflicting parties

Advocate - Works for a specific party; must promote the party's cause and interests

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Conflict Resolution I & 2. Macro International, Inc. & Circle Solutions, Inc.: Washington, D.C.