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
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Getting to the CORE of Conflict and Communications

Course Description and Objectives:

In support of the CORE PLUS program, the DOI 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. This courses were designed for DOI and focus 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 an integrated workplace conflict management system (CORE PLUS) as well as increasing the use of collaborative problem-solving approaches.

Participants will:

- Identify conflict as an opportunity to create change and build relationships.
- Recognize conflict and its causes, including behaviors that escalate or de-escalate conflict.
- Increase the ability to surface dissent and have difficult and meaningful conversations before situations escalate.
- Increase use of collaborative problem solving approaches and ability to engage in challenging conversations for more effective organizational performance.

Drivers for developing conflict management competency:

- Core competencies for senior executives in the federal government.
- Builds institutional capacity for open communication and collaborative problem solving.
- Supports open, transparent and participatory government.
Conflict Competency at DOI: CORE PLUS

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.

The Department of the Interior is fulfilling its commitment to institute an integrated workplace conflict management system through CORE PLUS through:

- Creating an environment for raising all kinds of concerns, 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 zero barriers for encouraging all employees to be able to either act responsibly on their own or get the help needed.

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!
Overview of CORE PLUS

- All types of concerns covered
- Multiple entry points
- Process options suited to the situation
- Assessment, Mediation, Facilitation, Coaching
- Resources available - DOI wide rosters of internal and external neutrals
- Voluntary participation
- Simplified administrative procedures
Getting to the CORE of Conflict & The 4 Rs

**Recognize**
- What is conflict and who is affected?
- Understanding what makes communication challenging.

**Respond**
- We are react, what matters is how we respond.
- Communications skills for collaboration.

**Resolve**
- Use a strategy that meets the needs of all.
- Challenging conversations process.

**Reflect**
- Learning from experience and challenges.
- What have you learned? Are you improving?
Recognize:

*Understanding conflict and what makes communication challenging*

*Intuition will tell the thinking mind where to look next.*

- Jonas Salk
Perception and Assumptions

"We don't see things as they are, we see things as we are."
Anais Nin

“Assumptions create a template through which we view the world.”
Sue Annis Hammond

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.

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 action we take and the behavior we exhibit.

Emotion, language, and culture provide a frame of reference for understanding people, events, and experiences as it filters our perception of our environment.

Being aware of our frame of reference (sometimes referred to as our assumptions, our mental models, and our worldviews) and how to work with our own and others’ assumptions are key skills. It helps to remember that:

- 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.

Working with 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.
The Ladder of Inference as a Reflex Loop

This meaning-making process is graphically depicted below.

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 reflex loop. We must be aware of this all too human trait and constantly ask ourselves, “am I seeing the whole picture?”

Think about a time when someone made an assumption about your motives that was clearly erroneous!

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What Makes Communication Challenging?

- Different Opinions
- Uncomfortable Topics
- Difficult Behaviors
- Strong Emotions
- Stakes are High

What makes a conversation challenging for you?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Why do people behave in challenging ways?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

How do you contribute to making conversations challenging?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

What strategies do you use or can you use to overcome these challenges in order to turn challenging conversations into successful ones?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
Tips for Dealing with “Difficult People”

Look Deeper
People don’t usually come to work to do a bad job or be difficult. Look below the surface at what drives and motivates that person. What needs might their behavior be satisfying?

Don’t assume people will be difficult. Reframe your thinking. Perhaps they are just different from you. What can you do to bridge your differences?

Examine Yourself
Look at yourself. People tend to assume that other people - “they” - are difficult. Are you sure? Could you be overreacting? Has this person pushed one of your “hot buttons”? How have you contributed to making the situation difficult? Why do you behave the way you do? Explore what you’re experiencing with a trust friend or colleague (without being a gossip, complainer, etc). Be open to making changes in your behaviors.

Approach the Person for a Private Discussion
Don’t let the situation fester. Ask the person you are having difficulty with for a private discussion. Don’t ignore a difficult conversation, regardless of who it’s with – your peer, boss, employee.

Use a soft entry. Acknowledge to the other person the conversation may be difficult. Create a positive atmosphere despite being upset or needing to deliver difficult feedback.

Talk about what you are experiencing (using “I” messages) and the impact of their actions on you and your work. If you are their supervisor, talk about the impact they are having on their work and/or other’s work. Be respectful. They might not realize the impact they are having. If they are aware, but don’t care, continue the discussion as positively as you can to reach the best outcome possible.

Find a way to make it in their best interest to be cooperative. Tell the person the impact that changing his or her behavior will have from a positive perspective. If you are their supervisor, tell the employee how choosing to do nothing will affect their career and job.
Be Open, Clear and Consistent
Encourage open and honest communication. Be clear and consistent. Don’t be defensive.

Change Your Approach
You can’t make someone change. However, you can change your actions in ways that may promote positive change in other’s behavior.

If one approach to communicating and interacting with the other person doesn’t work, try a new way. Don’t get stuck in the “get a bigger hammer” syndrome.

Don’t Reward Bad Behavior
Don’t let other people’s behavior draw you into behaving badly. An eye for an eye will make you both blind.

Don’t frequently cover up for others or routinely fix their problems. Give them the opportunity to grow and develop.

Focus on the Goal of the Conversation
Keep your eyes on the prize. Remember what you want to achieve, what you want changed. Focus on achieving your interests, not winning your positions.

Follow Up After the Initial Discussion
Check in with the other about how things are going. Has the situation improved? Has the behavior changed for the better? Or worse? Determine whether a follow-up conversation is needed or would make a positive impact.

Recognize Some Things Can’t Be Fixed
Some people have issues that need to be dealt with that go beyond effective communication and conflict management skills. If you find yourself in this situation, identify ways to mitigate the situation and improve the situation, even if it isn’t resolved. Get help if needed. At the same time, don’t be too quick to judge a person as beyond “repair.”
Definitions and Conflict Management

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 can escalate into a dispute. A dispute begins when someone makes a claim or demand on another who rejects it.
- Conflict involves change.

A dispute begins when someone makes a claim or demand on another who rejects it.

Conflict Management is the ability to recognize conflict (intra, inter and organizational) and to respond in ways that alleviate emotional tensions and enhance relationships, such that opportunities for growth, creativity, and productivity are enhanced, and disputes prevented. It also includes the resolution of any disputes that do arise, and the containment of power struggles, through appropriate interventions.

Levels of Resolution, by Ken Cloke
- Stop the fighting (Physical)
- Settle the issues (Cognitive)
- Resolve the underlying tension (Emotional)
- Reconcile (Spiritual)
Sources of Conflict

Conflict is inevitable. When managed effectively, conflict promotes dynamic thinking, encourages collaborative decision making, results in creative and comprehensive decisions, and enhances buy-in and commitment. Daily, conflict occurs as a result of the following factors:

**Relationships**
- Expectations, perceptions, assumptions
- Affiliations, alliances, history

**Interests**
- Individual, group, organization

**Structure**
- Administration, management
- Policies, procedures, practices

**Values**
- Differences, similarities

**Data**
- Lack of information, misinformation
- Different interpretations of information, disregard for information

Source: C. Moore, The Mediation Process
One way to look at interests is through the triangle of satisfaction. All three interests on each side of the triangle need to be satisfied to achieve true satisfaction in a resolution process. A result that meets my needs, a process that is FIT – fair, inclusive and transparent – and feeling heard and respected.

How well does the judicial process (court) satisfy all three types of interests? How well does a process like mediation meet all three pillars of the triangle of satisfaction?

In much the same way that the triangle of satisfaction has three pillars, good decisions are based on the triangle of involvement of the right people, the right product and a process that allows for high satisfaction and perceived fairness.
Who is Affected? Who Should Be Included?

Who has an interest in the outcome? Who can make a decision about the dispute? Who will be surprised? Who can sabotage the deal? Are there innocent bystanders?

All of these would be considered “stakeholders” in the decision-making process and including everyone who is a stakeholder is a fundamental principle of collaborative problem-solving processes such as interest-based negotiation, facilitation, and mediation.

In order to develop consensus, all interested parties should have an opportunity to participate in the process that creates the consensus. If an interested party is excluded from the process, it may feel it has 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.
Respond

We all react, what matters is how we respond.

They may forget what you said,
but they will never forget how you made them feel.
Carl W. Buechner
Ability to Reason in a Highly Emotional State

Adapted from the *Management of Assaultive Behavior* by Paul Smith
Self-Management: Managing Your Emotions Well

“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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calming Yourself</th>
<th>Calming others</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Taking a break</td>
<td>• Validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Taking a walk</td>
<td>• Vent with care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Count to 10</td>
<td>• Distraction</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Exercise</td>
<td>• Acknowledgement</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Mediation</td>
<td>• Apology</td>
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<td>• Visualization</td>
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The power of apologies:
• Without acknowledgement of responsibility: “I'm sorry that you are going through this.”
• With acknowledgement of responsibility: “I’m sorry that we did this to you.”

How do we recognize emotionality? When we communicate feelings and attitudes face-to-face,
• Body language accounts for ____%
• Tone of voice for ____%
• and the words we speak for ____%
Elements of an Effective Apology
©Marsha Wagner, Columbia University

An apology is a powerful means of reconciliation and restoring trust. However, sometimes even well-intentioned apologies can exacerbate a conflict. It may be helpful to consider what elements to include in a statement of apology to make it most effective and constructive.

Not all elements apply to all situations. Some of the most common considerations include the following:

1. A common understanding of the exact substance and nature of the offense, or perceived offense. (*Example:* “Yesterday on the telephone, I said…”)

2. Recognition of responsibility or accountability on the part of the one who offended. (*Example:* “I could have chosen other words.” “I spoke without thinking.”)

3. Acknowledgement of the pain or embarrassment that the offended party experienced. (*Example:* “It’s understandable that was upsetting to you.” “If someone had said that to me, I would not have liked it, either.” But not, “I’m sorry you’re so easily hurt.”)

4. A judgment about the offense. (*Example:* “I was insensitive.” “What I did was wrong.”)

5. A statement of regret. (*Example:* “I’m sorry I used those words.”)

6. An indication of future intentions. (*Example:* “In the future, I will try to think about the impact of my words before speaking.” “I hope we can have a relationship of mutual respect.”)

Sometimes it is helpful to include an explanation of why the perceived offender acted in this way, but it’s important not to reiterate the offense or to give a flippant excuse or defensive justification. (*Example:* “What I did was a poor attempt at humor.” But not, “When I’m mad, I can say anything but I don’t really mean it.”)

The circumstances of the apology are also important, and should be carefully planned. Many people appreciate a written apology, because it implies time and effort put into this step toward reconciliation. Some people who have been offended want an opportunity to state the intensity of their pain or embarrassment directly to the offender. Some people would appreciate a face-to-face apology, and a chance to shake hands or otherwise take the next step toward improved future relations. Some people who apologize want an acknowledgement that the apology has been received, or that the offender is forgiven.
Make the Conversation Safe

- For You
- For Others
- Starting the Conversation
- During Conversation

- Making people feel safe to engage in risky conversations and keeping the conversation safe even when things get difficult encourages people to engage in difficult conversations and to keep the dialogue going even when things get tough.

Disentangle Intent from Impact: I know my intentions and the impact you are having on me. I am unaware of your intentions and the impact I am having on you.

What makes a conversation feel safe?

- The perceived **intent** of the communication – is the speaker’s intent perceived to be honest and to help or to hurt?
- When people start feeling unsafe and move to flight or fight, it isn’t because of the content; it’s because of the intent (perceived or real).
- If your intent is “pure,” you can talk candidly. If not, you can’t. - and it’s all about how others perceive your intent (and vice versa).
- As long as your intent is pure and you make it safe for others, you can talk to anyone about almost anything.

- What do people base perceived intent on?
  - How people communicate -- aggressively versus assertively; words, tone of voice, body language
  - What people think/feel about you - based on past interactions, expectations, perceptions, stereotypes, etc

- How do you know when people feel unsafe? What do you do?
  - Watch their body language; listen for changes in their tone of voice; listen for changes in what they say. Are they shutting down and withdrawing?

- What happens when you don’t read the signals that others don’t feel safe and you just keep going?
• Chances are, they will flee or fight even more

- What do you do when you think other people feel unsafe?
  - Flight - end conversation, water down your message to make it more palatable? If you do this, will your message get heard and interests be met?
  - Try to make them feel safe again some other way?

**How to Make the Conversation Safe**

→ Step Out of the Content

→ Stop and rebuild safety before continuing on

1. Rebuild safety - People need to know two things to feel safe:
   a. You care about their best interests and goals
      i. You have to persuade people that you have common objectives (or complementary objectives) and want a win/win outcome
      ii. 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
      i. 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

2. Step Back In
   a. Continue the conversation with a renewed sense of trust and purpose

**Invitation to Dialogue**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEBATE</th>
<th>DIALOGUE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assuming there is a right answer and you have it</td>
<td>Assuming that many people have pieces of the answer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants attempt to prove The other side wrong</td>
<td>Participants work together toward common understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focuses on WINNING</td>
<td>Focuses on EXPLORING common ground</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening to find flaws and Make counter-arguments</td>
<td>Listening to understand, find meaning and agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defending own assumptions as truth</td>
<td>Revealing our assumptions for reevaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seeing two sides of an issue</td>
<td>Seeing all sides of an issue</td>
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<td>Defending one’s own views Against those of others</td>
<td>Admitting that others’ thinking can improve one’s own thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Searching for flaws and weaknesses in others’ positions</td>
<td>Searching for strengths and value in others’ positions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seeking a conclusion or vote that ratifies your position</td>
<td>Using a consensus-based decision making process</td>
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Adapted from Michael Roberto, Why Great Leaders Don’t take Yes for an Answer
Two Parts to Effective Communication

What and how you communicate is also important for making conversations feel safe and for having constructive conversations that encourage dialogue rather than debate.

**Listening to Understand**

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

**Speaking to be Understood**

- Expressing ourselves, our point of view is assertive communication.
- How we express ourselves – the words we use, tone of voice, body language – is especially important to whether or not others will be open to what we have to say.
- Speaking to encourage dialogue, not debate.
# How Good a Listener Are You?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I allow the speaker to express his or her complete thought without interrupting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. 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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I lean forward and make eye contact with the speaker.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I listen for the feeling behind the speaker’s message.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I paraphrase the speaker’s message to ensure I understand what they are saying.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. I don’t “turn off” the speaker because I don’t personally know or like the person speaking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. I express genuine interest in the other individual’s conversation with verbal and non-verbal cues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. I ask questions to clarify the speaker’s message.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. I avoid rehearsing what I want to say while others are talking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I pay attention to the speaker’s energy level, posture, gestures, facial expression, tone and pace of speech as well as their words.</td>
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Core Listening Skills

“If we were supposed to talk more than we listen, we would have two mouths and one ear.”  
-- Mark Twain

1. 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

2. 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.

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

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

4. 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.
5. 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-verbals. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. 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)

7. Reframe yourself as well as 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.”
Speaking to Be Understood

Speaking effectively means you’re expressing yourself in ways that other’s will hear and understand what you have to say (facts, feelings, interests, etc) as you intended.

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

3 Key Skills:

1. Reframing your own language

2. Yes/And – share your perspective

3. “I” Statements
   - 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)
# Reframing

**GOAL:** using language to validate what is said with the focus on capturing the underlying interests or needs and moves from:

- Negative ➔ Positive
- Past ➔ Future, Options
- Other ➔ Speaker
- Positions ➔ Interests
- Blaming ➔ Impact, Concerns
- Complaint ➔ Request
- Negative labels ➔ Positive/Neutral

**Highlights** Feelings, Reactions

**Clarifies** Behavior, Situation

## Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From negative</th>
<th>to positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“she’s not a team player”</td>
<td>“I would appreciate help from you”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From past</td>
<td>to future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“he’s always late…”</td>
<td>“I would like you to arrive on time…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From a focus on the other person</td>
<td>to a focus on the speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“you need to stop giving me bad information…”</td>
<td>“It’s important to me that the information is accurate…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From a focus on positions</td>
<td>to a focus on interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t want to go to a staff meeting at 4pm…”</td>
<td>“I am worried that the staff meeting won’t end on time, because I have to pick up my children on time”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From blaming</td>
<td>to a focus on impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“you made me miss the deadline”</td>
<td>“I felt really stressed when I didn’t receive your input for the report on time, because then I got behind and missed the deadline.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From a complaint</td>
<td>to a request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“you never listen to me”</td>
<td>“I need some assurance that you’re listening to me”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From negative labels</td>
<td>to positive (or neutral) attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g., “stubborn”</td>
<td>e.g. “tenacious”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Practice Exercises for Reframing

Below are statements that reflect what you might be thinking and would like to say. However, you know that it would be better to reframe your thoughts and feelings to say something more constructive. How would you reframe these statements? What could you say instead that still conveys your thoughts, feelings and underlying interests?

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 have 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 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
     - Negative labels to positive/neutral attributes

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
Approaches to Handling Conflict

**Self Assessment: Conflict Handling**

Assess your own approach to handling conflict. For this exercise, conflict is defined as a difference of opinion. Rate the following statements from 1 (most like you) to 5 (least like you).

_____ 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.
Respond Strategically

- 5 Conflict Handling Strategies
- We have conflict tendencies and preferences – self assessment tools exist
- Choose the strategic response that fits your situation

**Interest Based Negotiation** is the tool or technique to use in a collaborative approach to conflict.
RESOLVE

Use a Strategy that Meets the Needs of All

Communication works for those who work at it.
- John Powell
# Negotiation Worksheet

1. **Positions**
   - [ ]
   - [ ]

2. **Interests**
   - [ ]
   - [ ]

3. **Alternatives**
   - [ ]
   - [ ]

4. **Options**
   - [ ]
   - [ ]

5. **Standards** *(Precedent, benchmarks, prior practice, accepted principles, SMART)*
   - [ ]
Positions and Interests

**Interests** are those considerations, goals, and needs that drive peoples’ positions. Positions are otherwise known as one person’s solution to the issue: “What I want is...”. Interests are one person’s concerns about an issue: “This is important because....” Interests are not the same as the positions themselves, for we frequently modify or reevaluate positions, even if our underlying interests remain stable.

**Positions** are pre-determined outcomes, and are revealed through the assertions, demands, and offers you make during the negotiations. They are specific and definite, require justification, and lead to advocacy rather than inquiry.

**Interests** are the reasons for a position, and rather than requiring justification, start the discussion and require explanation. An interest is not an option, position, or proposal.

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.
**Positions**, the parties’ stand or demands, are just the tip of the iceberg, while the **interests** make up the greater part that lies beneath the surface of the conflict or dispute!

Five Core Concerns important to almost everyone: appreciation, affiliation, autonomy, role and status.

Options

"Interests are the building blocks of a possible agreement. Options, on the other hand, are possible solutions to a negotiation - ways to fit those building blocks together to satisfy the negotiators and create value.”

_Fisher and Ertel_

Options are all the possible ways in which the interests of the parties might be met. Options are things you do with your negotiating counterpart. They are potential solutions that meet your and your counterpart’s interests to the greatest degree possible.

Options are best generated through use of a brainstorming session together with your counterpart. They are potential solutions that are _On_ the negotiating table.

Resist accepting or rejecting options one at a time, as they are proposed. Rather, assess all the proposed options together, and evaluate them against the interests articulated or against some objective standard.

When generating options, remember:
- Generate lots of options before evaluating them
- Avoid making premature judgments about options
- Broaden options rather than look for a single answer
- Solving the problem is both your and their problem

The well-prepared negotiator:
- Considers potential options prior to the negotiation
- Evaluates options according to the importance of the interests they address
- Works to “expand the pie”
- Knows that the value of various options is subjective
Alternatives

The purpose of negotiation is to explore whether you can satisfy your interests better through an agreement than you could by pursuing your Best Alternative to a Negotiated Settlement (BATNA).

Bill Ury

Alternatives are the things you can do to pursue your interests without getting an agreement with the other side. Ideally an agreement should exceed what you can get away from the negotiating table, your BATNA -Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement

When considering your alternatives, remember:

- They only require you
- What you will do Away from the table
- Your “fall back” position if negotiation fails
- They often involve flight or fight
- Alternatives have costs and risks

The well-prepared negotiator:

- Considers alternatives before the negotiation
- Knows his/her alternatives (good and bad)
- Takes steps to strengthen alternatives
- Considers the other side’s alternatives

Questions that assist in developing alternatives:

- “If we don’t agree, I can always…..”
- “What will I do if this negotiation fails?”
- “What alternatives do I have?”
- “What alternatives can I create?”
- “How can I reality test the alternatives of my counterpart(s)?”
Standards

“Criteria of fairness are valuable as a sword to persuade others and as a shield to protect ourselves from being unfairly treated.”
Fisher and Ertel

Standards are independent and objective criteria used to evaluate options, especially when interests are in opposition.

When developing and using standards, remember:
- Legality and practicality will always be reference points
- Standards must be credible to both
- Standards help your counterpart explain a particular agreement

The well-prepared negotiator:
- Avoids a contest of wills
- Agrees to use objective criteria
- Then applies the standard to the dispute

Examples of standards:
- Accepted Principles
- Benchmarks: “Others in the industry do….”
- Efficiency
- Equal Treatment
- Market Value
- Moral Standards
- Precedent: “The last time this happened we….”
- Prior Practice
- Professional Standards
- Reciprocity
- Tradition
- What A Court Would Decide

A SMART Agreement is specific, measurable and mutual, attainable, realistic and time-based!
Challenging Conversations Worksheet

_____Make the conversation safe – be clear about your intent.
- What’s your purpose in having this conversation? Your intentions are important, and can usually be read by others.
- Having a supportive purpose will help the conversation go well.

_____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?

_____Check your assumptions
- Try to keep from running up the ladder of inference
- Remember to disentangle impact and intent – on you and others. Don’t demonize others and sanitize your own.

_____How have you contributed to the problem?
- How have they contributed?
- Apologize when appropriate

_____Identify Interests
- Identify your underlying interests
- Explore their underlying interests
- Share your perspective

_____Invite cooperation
- “I’d like to solve this in a way that we can both be satisfied”
- Talk about the problem, not the person

_____Develop accountability
- How will you move forward? What agreements have you reached?
- Who does what, by when?

_____Reflection
- What worked well, and what could be done differently next time?
REFLECT

What have you learned?
Are you improving?

Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors.
- African Proverb
Further Reading

**Course Designers: chiResolutions, LLC**

**chiResolutions, LLC**, founded in 2002 by Carole Houk, is a full service conflict management consulting firm based in the U.S., specializing in organizational conflict management systems design, conflict resolution skills training and advisory services for both the public and private sectors. CHI provides its clients with quality conflict management services that assist individuals, groups, and organizations in preventing, managing, and resolving conflict. Carole and her roster of over 200 experienced conflict management practitioners provide value to their clients through customized approaches and personalized attention. www.chiResolutions.com

**Carole Houk, JD, LLM** is a conflict management consultant, trainer and attorney. Carole specializes in the design and implementation of integrated conflict management systems for organizations. She designed an innovative and successful model for the early resolution of medical malpractice disputes for healthcare organizations, currently deployed at dozens of medical centers throughout the U.S. A mediator, facilitator, author and ombudsperson, Carole was the U.S. Department of the Navy’s first Dispute Resolution Counsel from 1997-2001. Since 2002, she has supported the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Office of Collaborative Action and Dispute Resolution as a true external partner as they have designed and implemented their integrated conflict management system for internal conflict, CORE PLUS.

**Nike Carstarphen, Ph.D.** is an independent 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.

**John Ford, BA, LLB** is an experienced workplace mediator and soft-skills trainer. John has provided training to thousands of employees at all levels in the workplace, across a wide range of industries. His workshops focus on the development of soft skills, such as communication, negotiation, facilitation, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, customer service and mediation.
In 2015, Susan Goodwin, Collaboration and Conflict Management Specialist DOI CADR, working in partnership with Liz Madison (Academy Director) and Anne Desmarais (Academy Assistant Director) developed the three-part webinar series of Getting to the CORE of Conflict and Communications (GTC3).

The online version of GTC3 leverages the classroom curriculum developed by chiResolutions.

- Breakout-groups and participant exercises designed for on-site engagement are transformed into virtual breakout-group discussions and chat box interactions.
- Lecture content is presented in-part via instructional videos, illustrative of the flip-the-classroom teaching strategy that values classroom interaction and on-demand accessibility of lecture presentations.
- Webinars are team-taught by a conflict management practitioner and peer-learning facilitator.
- Like the on-site training, webinars feature participant interaction, application and peer learning of conflict management and communication skills.
- The GTC3 course notebook, designed by chiResolutions, supports both on-site and virtual training versions of the course.

The Partnership and Community Collaboration Academy works with representatives of public agencies and nonprofit organizations to develop and present training, designed to advance multi-sector partnerships and community engagement. Learn more about the Academy at www.partnership-academy.net.