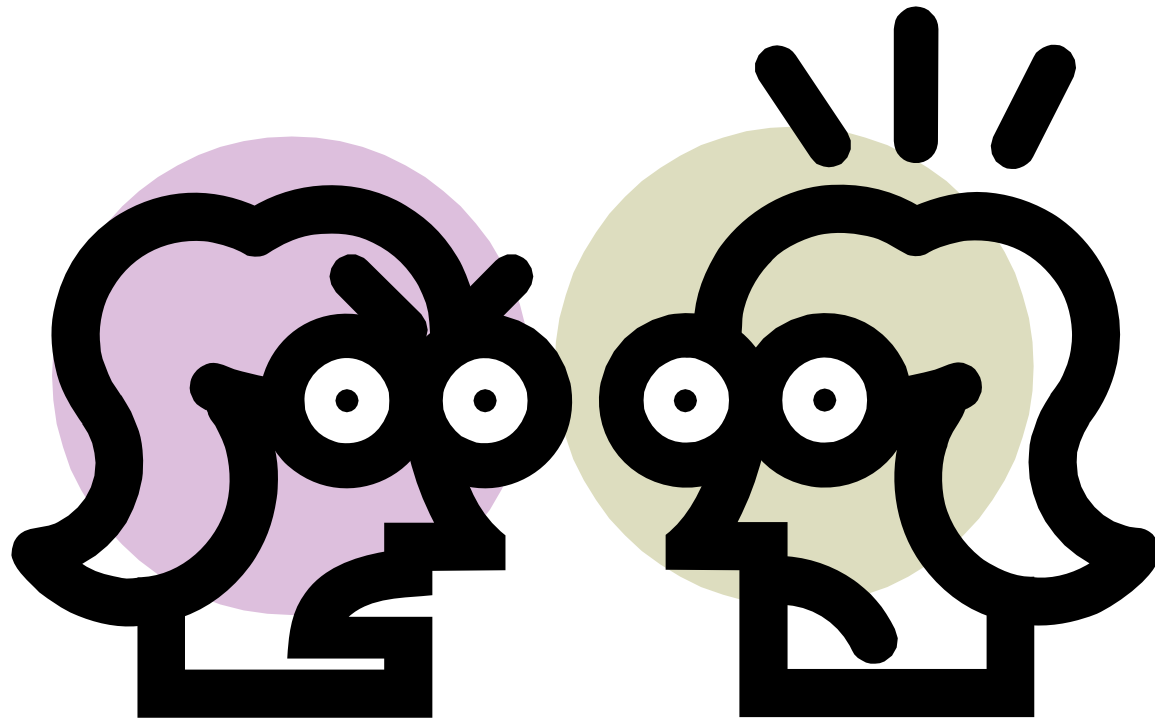




Conflict Management

**Communication
Collaboration
and Mediation**

Ever Have Conflict in Your Unit?





Three Types of Conflict

- **Goal Conflict**
Each party's goals threatening the goals of the other.
- **Judgment Conflict**
One party feels the other's conclusion is incorrect. The parties may agree on the goal but disagree on how to attain it.
- **Behavior Conflict**
One party evaluates the other on the basis of how they should behave, playing to our notions of justice, equity, and values. Violations of these standards can trigger emotional reactions of blame and anger.



What Causes of Conflict?

- Value differences
- Attitudes
- Needs
- Expectations
- Perception
- Lack or Disparity of Resources
- Personalities



A Conflict Scenario

- The annual fund-raising event is just around the corner. Unfortunately, the two head organizers, Marilyn and Leticia, are at a standstill. The event is coming up in two months, and they need to start making some headway. But here's the problem: they can't resolve their disagreement. Both of them know the ground rules for the meeting and both of them seem willing to resolve this.
- Marilyn and Leticia need to reach a resolution. They need to communicate with each other, to see that conflict can have creative outcomes, and to look back on this year's programming process as a positive leadership experience. They need to get beyond their disagreement and work together.



Ground Rules

Marilyn and Leticia have agreed to the following ground rules:

- Discuss the issue in good faith.
- Agree to be civilized.
- Don't interrupt each other.
- Keep the disagreement confidential.
- Don't criticize each other.
- Look fairly and equally at the pros and cons of all ideas.
- Be willing to examine their own values and prejudices and don't automatically apply them to others.
- Provide solutions for solving the problem.



Roadblocks to Resolution

Roadblocks can derail the conflict resolution process.

- The conflicted parties are personalizing and letting their emotions control the conflict;
- The conflicted parties are not listening to what the other person is saying, and neither is actually communicating with the other person;
- The conflicted parties are being dismissive of whatever ideas or suggestions the other person is presenting;
- The conflicted parties are focusing on the past, and clinging to the same behavior that caused the conflict in the first place.



Getting Started

- This conflict resolution process would ideally begin by conducting separate interviews with both parties, where they can speak freely.
- The two will need to be brought together again, and it is at this time when you should continue to explore what the conflict is about.
- The two parties will likely be presenting only their perception of the conflict. They will not be seeing things clearly because they are so emotionally involved.
- As a mediator, it's important to understand each person's perception of the problem.

Marilyn

Leticia

Experience

Marilyn has volunteered at the library for 10 years. She has been on the board for the past five years and has long been active in various community projects. She has received many awards for her years of service.

She has helped determine the programming for the library's annual fund-raiser since she started volunteering at the library.

Leticia has volunteered at the library for the past year. She has been on the board for the past three months and is eager to contribute to the community. She has close ties to the business community.

She feels that the current programming for the library's annual fund-raiser ignores the emergence of a culturally diverse community.

Belief

She believes that her experience gives her the best perspective on who participates in community events. The same people who have participated in the past continue to participate now.

She believes a recent survey confirms her view that the community is changing and that the new demographic should be targeted.

Program Preference

- Traditional Irish step dancers
- Potluck dinner

- Multicultural book readings
- Modern dance troupe with a global theme
- Catered event

Advertising Preference

- Post fliers in the schools and coffee shops
- Place an ad in the Herald

- E-mail library patrons
- Get a matching grant

Explore the Conflict

Marilyn: *"We've always had a traditional dance performance and potluck dinner. And we've always posted fliers in the schools and coffee shops, and placed an ad in the Herald. It's worked this way for several years."*

Leticia: *"We've got newcomers to the community who want something fresh, and posting fliers is no longer effective. We should cater the event, e-mail our library patrons, and write a proposal to get a matching grant!"*





Avoid Personalizing the Disagreement!

Marilyn: *"Periodically, a new board member tries to change the program format. Inevitably, their ideas fail to attract an audience and waste our limited resources. I've been on this board five years and I don't want that to happen again. And one more thing: fliers are more effective than e-mail because the library lacks a master list of e-mail addresses."*

Leticia: *"See. She doesn't get it. This community is changing. No matter what, she is going to push for outdated methods and ignore new community members."*

Establish the Cause: Agree on the Facts First

Leticia: *"Basically, we can't agree on a solution for this year's fund-raising program."*

Marilyn: *"Yes, that about sums it up."*



Determine Individual Desires

Leticia: *"I want programming that reflects this community's diversity and to see new promotional techniques."*

Marilyn: *"I think programming should appeal to the people who actually attend and we should use advertising methods that I know to be effective."*





Ask Each to Explain Further

Leticia: *"I'll go first...A new demographic survey of this community shows that it is changing. There are lots of new families with all kinds of backgrounds. I want to appeal to this community by presenting authors from different cultures; by bringing in a modern dance troupe, and using up-to-date marketing techniques. But Marilyn doesn't want to acknowledge the need for change."*

Marilyn: *"If Leticia would just stop worrying about making every newcomer happy we could move forward and nail this program down."*



Effective Communication

- Establish eye contact and don't interrupt.
- Ask questions that show a willingness to understand.
- Express your own concerns, and keep your emotions out of it.
- Stick to the issues. Avoid dredging up unnecessary things from the past.
- Show empathy. Take responsibility for your role in the conflict

Explain Each Other's Wants

Leticia: *"Marilyn thinks it's important that the people who actually go to the events should have programming that reflects their taste. She believes her program and method of promoting will ensure that happens."*

Marilyn: *"And she wants to develop programs that attract new members of the community, especially based on the evidence in the demographic survey."*



Establish a Platform for Change

Marilyn: *"Yes, I've looked at the survey. I recognize the community is more diverse now."*

Leticia: *"I'm glad you see that the community is changing. I want you to know that I understand your concern about them not wanting to participate. But don't you think that we should at least try to involve them?"*



Construct a *Mutual Statement of Need*

Leticia: *"I guess the question is: how can we have a program that attracts our diverse community while also appealing to the core audience?"*

Marilyn's: *"That seems like a reasonable question to answer."*





Brainstorming

What is brainstorming?

- NO judgment!
- Think of as many ideas as possible.
- The more options the better;
- All ideas are welcome;
- Combinations of ideas are sought;
- Proposing or hearing an option does not mean accepting it.

Resolution

Marilyn: *"Well, after brainstorming we have reached a solution that we're going to present to the board. We're going to keep the fliers and the potluck idea..."*

Leticia: *"...And with the money saved by not catering the event, we will invite a modern dance troupe, have various author's readings, and the traditional dance performance."*





Implement the Solution

Once the solution has been identified, an action plan may be written up so the individuals know exactly how they will achieve their solution.

The action plan becomes the clear, concise expression of the agreed upon solution and it is stated in a manner that is understood by all.

Roles and responsibilities are defined.

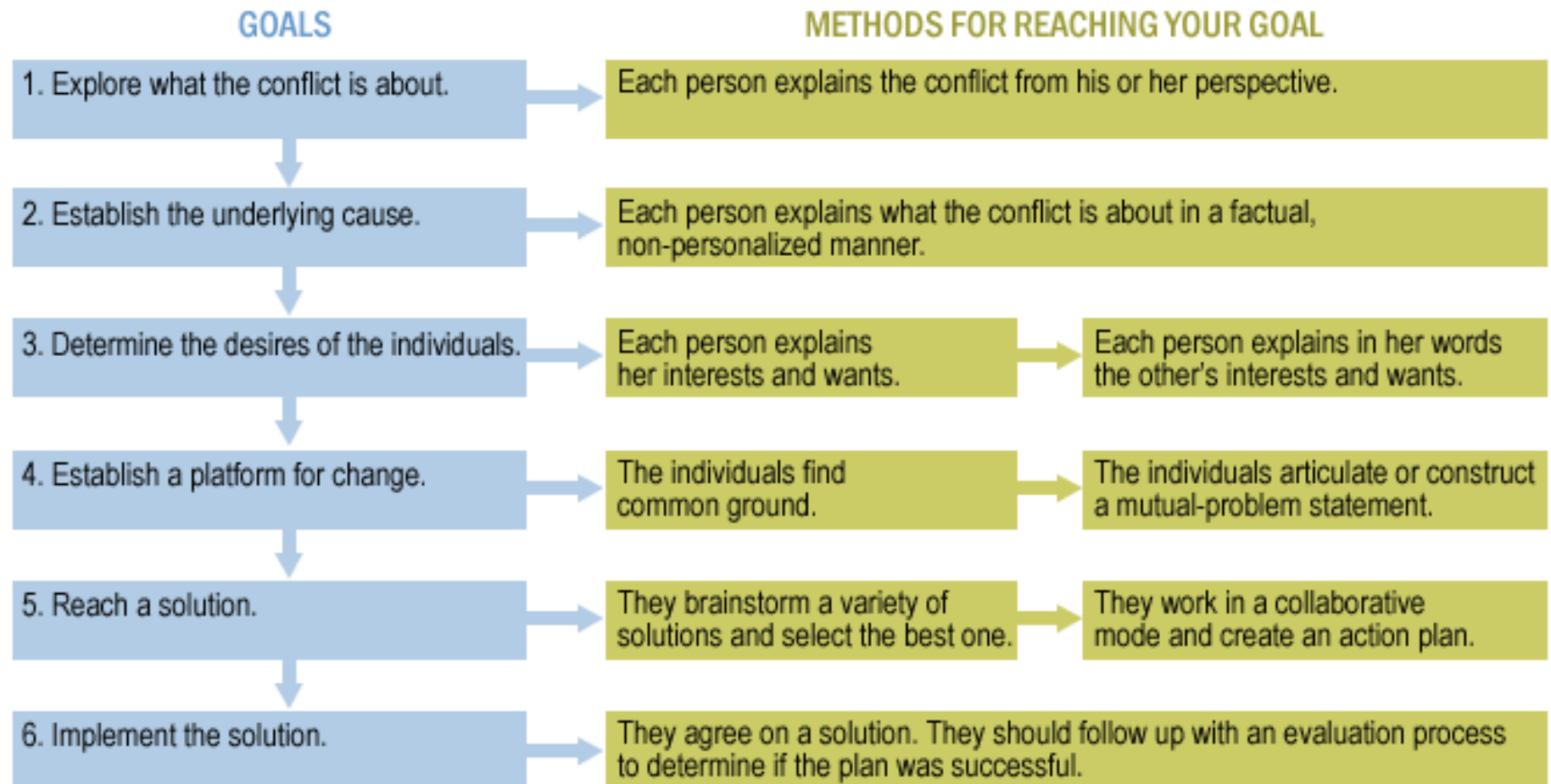




Review

- Ground rules provide a foundation for resolution.
- Once the parties are brought together, you should explore their perceptions of the conflict.
- Separate personal issues that are not central to the problem.
- Determine the all wants or desires.
- Each person should restate the other party's wants.
- A platform for change happens when the parties recognize they can work together toward a solution.
- Once a solution has been reached, the parties can implement it.

Problem-Solving Process for Resolving Conflicts



ROADBLOCKS TO OVERCOME

Parties are personalizing the conflict.



Attack the problem, not the person.

Parties are not actively listening.



Set aside own thoughts, resist drawing assumptions.

Parties are dismissive.



Consider the other person's feelings.

Parties are focusing on the past.



Use forward-thinking language.

METHODS TO OVERCOME ROADBLOCK



Common Questions

When can conflict be considered destructive?

- It diverts energy from more important activities or issues;
- It destroys the morale of teams or individual team members;
- It polarizes or divides teams or groups of people

What happens when conflicts go unmanaged or unresolved?

- Unresolved conflicts can lead to lingering animosity between the parties involved. It can lead to unforeseen problems that manifest themselves in ways or actions that have little to do with the original nature of the conflict. Unresolved conflicts can also pull other people into the web of dysfunctional conflict. If it reaches epidemic proportions, an unresolved conflict can seep into and damage the very fiber of an organization



Common Questions

Is conflict ever OK?

- Although many people and organizations view conflict as an activity that should be avoided, conflict is a natural result of people working together. Without conflict, complacency can occur and the development of the team or the team member can be impeded.
- Many people have never been taught how to effectively deal with conflict. Appropriate skills can help teams and anyone else in the organization to deal with and effectively resolve disagreements, which ultimately will lead to a more productive organization.

When can conflict be considered constructive?

- People change and grow personally from the conflict;
- The conflict results in a solution that has group buy-in;
- The involvement of everyone affected by the conflict increases;
- Cohesiveness builds among the members of a team



Conflict Management Self-Assessment

- Do I face conflicts head-on in my life?
- How would I rate my own communication and listening skills?
- How could I improve my own communication and listening skills?
- Am I sensitive to other people's differences and perceptions as well as opinions?
- Would I feel comfortable practicing these problem-solving techniques in a real-world situation?
- What steps in the conflict management process would be the hardest to execute?
- Can you envision yourself successfully resolving conflicts in your volunteer, work, or home life?



Final Questions and Comments

