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"Communicating *through* Conflict"

Ann Chastain
Extension Educator
Greening Michigan Institute
email: chastain@msu.edu

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Conflict

Conflict is…

- Normal
- Happens continuously
- Emotional
- Stimulates changes
- Part of life
- Major *or* minor ~ depending on the situation and energy

Why do we get into conflict?

- Different goals (concerns or desires differ from another person's)
- Common goals but different approaches
- Change
- Scarce resources
- Poor communication

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Can you manage conflict?

- Anticipate conflict
- Design systems to minimize conflict
- Improve leadership & communication skills

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When you are prepared you can…

Build on the *positive outcomes* of conflict:

- Stimulates creativity
- Builds long-term relationships
- Personal, professional, and organizational growth
- Problem addressed, conflict is resolved
- Shared decision-making strengthens team
- Leadership emerges

Minimize the *negative outcomes* of conflict:

- No results
- Destroys relationships
- Destruction of trust
- Someone wins, someone loses
- Unwillingness to work together
- Expensive litigation
- Community leadership declines
- Loss of individual / team confidence

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Think of **one word** that best describes how ***you*** feel when ***you*** have to deal with a conflict situation.

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Fight OR **Flight**

WHICH IS YOUR STYLE UNDER STRESS?

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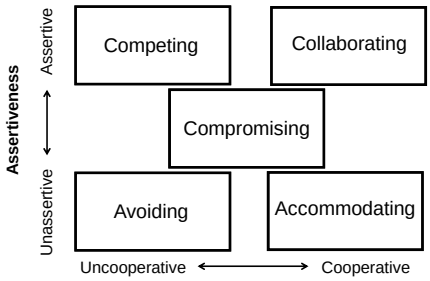
The Five Conflict Modes



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Which is your *'default'* approach to conflict **?**

***compete *avoid**
***accommodate * compromise**
***collaborate**

THE THOMAS-KILMANN INSTRUMENT (TKI)

http://www.kilmanndiagnostics.com/catalog/thomas-kilmann-conflict-mode-instrument

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Food for thought…

Managing Conflict Situations in your work:

How might your personal conflict style affect some chronic conflict situations?
- What might you do differently?
- What can your team do differently?

- ✓ You have choices in a conflict
- ✓ Give yourself time to think
- ✓ Choose your words carefully…

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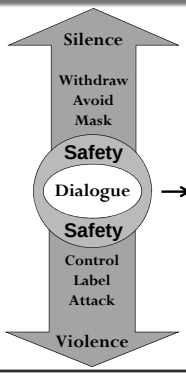

The free flow of <u>understanding</u> between two or more people

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Communicating Through Conflict

Preserve the Relationship | Create Safety | Develop a Shared Purpose

OPENING

Tell the facts & impacts, on yourself & others, without judgment

Explain the outcome you want
I'd really like us to resolve this in a way that works for both of us.

Ask for other views, thoughtfully and with respect:
How do you see the situation?
I wonder if maybe . . .
Is it possible that . . .
Do you see it differently?
What am I missing?

DIALOGUE = Open, Honest Communication

LISTENING

RESOLVING

Commit to stay in dialogue, by asking: *"Are you willing to…?"*

Recognize each others' needs, the reasons behind the position each is taking; ask *"Why do you want that?"*

Invent a mutual purpose with both/and thinking: *"How can we satisfy <u>both</u> your needs <u>and</u> mine?"*
"What do we both care about?"

Brainstorm both/and solutions.

Apologize or Contrast

Diagnosis & Intervention for complex problems:
Data - Agree on which data are important & which criteria to assess data
Relationships - Improve communication & build positive attitudes
Interests - Develop integrative solutions; focus on interests not positions

MSU Extension, February, 2013. References: Bushe, **Clear Leadership;** Karer, **Participatory Decision Making;** Moore, **The Mediation Process;** Patterson et al., **Crucial Conversations;** Reese, **Facilitator Excellence;** Schuman, **The Handbook for Working with Difficult Groups.**

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TEA

Tell your facts and feelings, without judgment

Explain the general outcome you would like

Ask for the other persons' views, thoughtfully and respectfully

Active Listening Skills Continuum

Ask-------Probe-------Restate------Paraphrase-------Summarize-------Reframe

Ask: Listening begins with someone talking. Sometimes to get a conversation going all it takes is a simple question: *"What do you think about that?" "How are you feeling about that?" "What's your view?"*

Probe: Use gentle questioning to help others share their thoughts and feelings if someone has withdrawn or is silent. If they're still not talking, guess what they might be thinking and ask them if you're right. This should help them feel safer sharing.

Restate: Repeat what was said, using words close to those of the speaker. Restating assures the speaker that you have heard them. It also demonstrates your intention to start the conversation from where "they are" instead of skipping ahead to what you want to say. In other words, it shows your intention to understand their position.

Paraphrase: Restate what you think the speaker meant, using your own words. Begin with phrases like: *"So I think you're saying…"; "I'm hearing that…", "Let me see if I understand…", "So your view is that…"* and check to see that you understood things correctly: *"Did I get that right?"* If the answer is *"No"* try again. It may take several tries to get it right. This step helps to confirm that you both understand what was communicated.

Summarize: Paraphrase, adding your understanding of the emotion the speaker is expressing. This can also be called 'mirroring'. Use phrases like: *"I sense that you're feeling…", "I get the impression that…", "Maybe you're feeling…"* This legitimizes the speaker's feelings and often helps them release negative emotions so they can look towards constructive solutions.

Reframe: State the situation in neutral language, describing what you've understood the speaker really wants. For example, **from** *"I'm sick & tired of the way they make me do most of the work,"* **to** *"I'm hearing that you'd like them to share the load and be equal partners in this project."* This leads into envisioning constructive solutions to the problem.

References: Burley-Allen, M. **Listening, The Forgotten Skill,** 1995. Bushe, G.R. **Clear Leadership,** 2001. Dugger, J. **Listen Up: Hear What's Really Being Said,** 1995. Dr. Lela Vandenberg, 2010, MSU Extension, adapted from Karen Beauregard, DRC Training Manual

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Positions **and** ***Interests***

Positions: A group's desired outcome(s)

Interests: A group's underlying goals, concerns, values or needs

Invent a mutual goal: Discussing everyone's interests, *not their positions,* leads toward shared solutions

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"I know that you believe
you understand
what you think I said,
but I'm not sure you realize
that *what you heard*
is not what I meant"

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Ann Chastain
Extension Educator
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email: chastain@msu.edu