

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS IN THE NONPROFIT WORKPLACE

PARK COUNTY NONPROFIT NETWORK  
COMMUNITY MEDIATION CENTER

## CONFLICT IS EVERYWHERE. WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT NON-PROFIT WORK?

- 1. The folks we serve are often in crisis.
- 2. We are committed to making a difference (we have a personal stake in it).

## TYPES OF CONFLICT, RESOLUTION

- Conflict can be internal, external, physical, ethical, legal, etc. And often comes in **combos**.
- **Conflict resolution** is a way for two or more parties to find a peaceful solution to a disagreement among them.



## WORKPLACE CONFLICT



## CONFLICT IN OUR FAMILY OF ORIGIN

- We learn about conflict as small children
- Our family of origin shapes the way we think about conflict
- Then we learn how the rest of the world works

## STYLES OF CONFLICT



**THE AVOIDER:** tries to stay out of conflict in the first place. They may withdraw physically or psychologically and may be saving their energy for an issue in which they can be more productive.  
Uses: unsafe situations, when conflict may resolve on its own, when cool down time is needed  
Limitations: may leave unresolved issues, escalation, lack of commitment



**THE ACCOMODATOR:** a friendly helper who cares more about the relationship than personal goals. They are nonassertive but cooperative. They want to smooth over difficulties and pacify others.  
Uses: when the relationship is more important than the current issue, demonstrate flexibility  
Limitations: expense of own needs, may feel like a "doormat," continued problem(s)

## STYLES OF CONFLICT



**THE COMPROMISER:** bargains with the other party for a solution. They believe you have to be satisfied. It can be a lose/lose approach with each party losing a little. They tend to ask for more than they can get.  
Uses: good for fast decision-making or minor issues or to avoid win/lose, when parties are of equal strength or when competition or collaboration fail  
Limitations: Everyone may feel disappointed, quick fix may not address underlying needs



**THE COMPETITOR:** tries to employ power and dominance to win. Believe compromise is generally unacceptable. They place high value on achieving personal goals and less on maintaining a relationship.  
Uses: when immediate action is necessary, concern for safety, issues are too important to lose  
Limitations: may permanently damage relationships, loss of support, intimidating/offending

## STYLES OF CONFLICT



**THE COLLABORATOR:** tends to have both a high concern for the goals of all the parties and high concern for maintaining the relationship between the parties. They work at trying to resolve the underlying causes of the conflict. They believe relationships can survive conflict.  
Uses: when there is time to craft a solution, when concerns are too high for compromise,  
Limitations: all parties must embrace the approach and work in good faith to come up with a solution that will meet all needs; requires time, and skill.

## STYLES OF CONFLICT EXERCISE

- 1. What was conflict like in your family of origin? What did you observe as a child?
- 2. How has that influenced how you observe/deal with conflict as an adult?
- 3. Which one of the conflict styles do you tend to react with? Is it different when you're angry, tired, hungry, dealing with a certain person or topic?

## MEDIATION BASICS – WHAT WE DO @ THE CMC

- We use the same 6 step process across all of our programs – justice court, family issues, business disputes, landlords and tenants – and it works.
- Mediator's Opening (the Rules)
- Opening Statements (& Reflecting)
- Gathering Information & Framing Interests
- Establishing an Agenda
- Collaborative Problem Solving
- Forming a Durable Agreement

## EXAMPLE I. MICHAEL SCOTT



## WHAT GOOD MEDIATORS DON'T DO

- Assume, Judge
- Violate confidentiality
- Advocate for the weaker party
- Impose values or opinions
- Function as therapists
- Give advice
- Find the "Truth"
- Make promises
- Lose self-control
- Dictate settlement terms
- SOLVE THE PROBLEM!

## MEDIATION FAST PLAY...

The ORANGE Example.



## HOPEFULLY...



## SKILLS FOR MEDIATORS...(AND ALL PEOPLE,TBH)

- OBSERVATION
- ACTIVE LISTENING
- GOOD QUESTIONING
- SELF-AWARENESS/ EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

## THE POWER OF OBSERVATION



## THE POWER OF OBSERVATION

- We communicate in so many other ways than our voice (eyes, facial expressions, body language).
- To observe something (to really see it) is also to acknowledge its importance
- It establishes a foundation for the other skills (listening, good questions, suspending judgement and emotional intelligence)

## OBSERVING EMOTIONS

- Key emotions: GRIEF, ANGER, FEAR
- Signs: nervousness, posture and position, shaking, trembling, eye movement, snickering
- These emotions are the keys to unlock conflict
- Addressing emotions allows rational dispute resolution to occur and satisfaction, fairness and justice to be realized

## ACTIVE LISTENING

- Active listening takes effort – to be alert and ready to hear something.
- Silence can be a very effective tool (it's uncomfortable, but useful).
- The GOAL of active listening is for the parties to gain a common understanding.

## RULES FOR ACTIVE LISTENING

- Be Present.
- Acknowledge, empathize and validate feelings.
- Suspend judgement and be curious.
- Listen for data, facts, feelings, relationships and underlying interests.
- Paraphrase and reframe the issue to keep the focus on collaboration.
- Do all these things while remaining, and appearing, NEUTRAL.



## POSITIONS VS. INTERESTS

POSITIONS	INTERESTS
<p>What they say they want</p> <p>Positions are surface statements of where a person or organization stands, and rarely provide insight into underlying motivations, values or incentives.</p> <p>Position Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- She's too loud. I can't work with her.</li> <li>- This is the way we've always done it!</li> <li>- It's me or them.</li> </ul>	<p>Why they want it</p> <p>Interests are a party's underlying reasons, values or motivations. Interests explain why someone takes a certain position.</p> <p>Interest Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I'm an introvert, I'm sensitive, or I have a hard time focusing.</li> <li>- I'm scared. I don't like change, or I have an interest in it staying the same.</li> <li>- I'm angry. I don't feel heard. I need to feel valued.</li> </ul>

## ASKING SKILLFUL QUESTIONS

Skillful questions reflect your attention, empathy and interest. They are **open-ended** and can either **narrow** or **expand the focus**.

- Opening: What are the major issues from your perspective? (sticking points)
- Information gathering: What else is relevant? Can you tell me **more** about...
- Perspectives/expectations: **Why** is this important to you? What concerns you most?
- Expanding: Do you see any other **options**? What would happen if...?
- Hypothetical: If your situation were **ideal**, what would it look like?
- Focusing: Where do we **go** from here?

## RULES FOR SKILLFUL QUESTIONING

- Relate what you hear (to the person, other party, other experiences)
- Clarify and ask more questions.
- Make no judgments and beware of assumptions.
- Reflect feelings (everyone wants to feel HEARD).

## COMMUNICATION SKILL: EMPATHY



## COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN PRACTICE

One effective way to use observation, listening and insightful questioning skills is REFLECTING, including PARAPHRASING, AND REFRAMING statements and interests.

Reflecting involves the listener restating or reflecting back to the speaker the FACTS and FEELINGS of the message. (Understanding is NOT the same as AGREEING).

The listener takes the message, deletes any inflammatory language and redelivers it in a neutral frame to which another can positively respond. The listener defines or "frames" the INTEREST to enhance problem solving.

## COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN PRACTICE

Co-worker: "She really pisses me off. I worked with that client for 4 years and never had this problem. I wish she'd just get with the program."

REFLECT: I'm hearing that you're...  
QUESTION: Tell me more about...

Client: "I've called ---- times and haven't gotten a response. This process is so worthless."

REFLECT:  
QUESTION:

Co-worker: "I can't work with him. First of all, he's loud, and he never listens to anyone else's ideas."

REFLECT:  
QUESTION:

## QUESTIONS, RESOURCES...

- [cmcmontana.org](http://cmcmontana.org) – 406-522-8442

THANK YOU!