SKILLS IN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Designed for
RIGHT OF WAY SECTION
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

by
JANE OAKLEY
RESOURCE SOLUTIONS
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
University of Alaska Anchorage

RESOURCE SOLUTIONS

UAA is an EO/AA EMPLOYER AND LEARNING INSTITUTION
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PURPOSE

To provide participants with review and practice in the skills for building professional relationships with clients and coworkers through effective communication.

OBJECTIVES

Participants will be able to:

- Explain the four team functions and how they can be used as a planning and diagnostic tool.
- Identify their own behavioral styles and learn how to increase their flexibility in relating to others.
- Assess the potential for developing credibility and building trust in professional relationships and situations.
- Analyze real-life conflict situations to determine how they will investigate and manage them.
- Deal with their own anger and the anger of others in confrontational situations.
- Follow the guidelines for reflective listening, giving and receiving feedback.
- Select appropriate conflict management strategies and practice applying them to work-related case studies and role-plays.
OUTLINE

Introduction and Expectations

Building a Team
- Team Functions
- Ground Rules
- Group Process Skills

Building Professional Relationships
- Dimensions of Trust and Credibility
- Behavioral Styles: A Dimension of Credibility
- Identifying and Profiling Styles
- Identifying Communication Needs: An Exercise

Analyzing Conflict Situations
- A Definition of Conflict and Confrontation
- Nature of Differences in Conflict
- Situation Assessment: A Small Group Exercise
- Lessons Learned

Communication Skills
- Reflective Listening
- Giving and Receiving Feedback
- Framing and Reframing
- Dealing with Anger

Strategies for Managing Conflict
- Reallocation of Fixed Resource: a Demonstration
- Determining What Strategy to Use
- Mutual Gains Approach
- Steps in the Process
- Competency Standards
- Role Plays and Case Studies
- Lessons Learned

Closing and Evaluation
Jane Oakley is the Training Coordinator for Resource Solutions, a program of the Office of Community Partnerships at the University of Alaska Anchorage. She has twenty-five years experience working as a curriculum design specialist, a trainer and consultant with agencies and organizations in the public, private and nonprofit sectors. She conducts workshops on facilitation, strategic planning, teambuilding, interpersonal communication, conflict management, successful meetings and collaborative problem solving for Resource Solutions and coordinates other training and consulting projects.
BUILDING A TEAM
TEAM FUNCTIONS

WHAT IS A TEAM?

A team is a group of people working together to achieve a common goal. Team members are motivated to do a good job, to work in the same direction and to take pride in accomplishments of the group as well as those of individual members. (Vaill, 1989, p. 17)

WHAT IS TEAMWORK?

Teamwork doesn’t happen automatically and it doesn’t result just from the exhortations of a single leader. It results from members paying attention to how they are working together, identifying issues that block teamwork and working them through and consciously developing patterns of working together that all members find challenging and satisfying. Team members have to talk to each other about how they are working as a team; they have to process their group actions. This calls for a collective self-awareness, openness and maturity that are still not widely found in many teams in our culture. (Vaill, 1989, p. 18)

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE TEAM

- The atmosphere tends to be relaxed, comfortable and informal because members trust and respect each other.
- The group’s task is well understood and accepted by the members.
- The members listen well to each other; there is a lot of task-relevant discussion in which most members participate.
- There is mutual respect for individual differences.
- Members communicate openly expressing both their feelings and ideas.
- Conflict and disagreement are present but are centered around ideas and methods, not personalities and people.
- Members share in decision making.
- Individual goals are identified with team goals.
- When actions are decided upon, clear assignments are made and accepted by the members.
- Members are willing to be self-critical.
MODEL FOR TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

TEAM FUNCTIONS

Even the most smoothly functioning teams can experience problems from time to time. The cause of the problems can often be traced to conflicting expectations, unclear goals or excess competition. People differ in their attitudes, values, habits and styles of operating. When they fail to communicate their feelings and ideas clearly, misunderstandings occur. Problems tend to develop around the following four functions or issues.
GOALS
- Do members understand and accept the team’s core mission?
- Have their individual needs been incorporated into the team objectives?
- Are there any hidden agendas?

ROLES
- What do members see as their responsibilities?
- What do they expect from the other members?
- Is there duplication of effort?
- Does each team member understand and clearly communicate what his or her role is?
- Do members specify the help they need from others on the team?

PROCEDURES
- What is the overall game plan for achieving the stated objectives?
- How are decisions made?
- How are problems solved and conflicts resolved?
- Do members agree how the group will operate?

RELATIONSHIPS
- How do members feel about and treat each other?
- Do they trust, support, respect and feel comfortable with each other?
- Do members recognize their interdependence and feel strong ties to the group that ensures a smoothly operating team?

TEAM ROLES FOR EFFECTIVE MEETINGS AND DECISIONS

FACILITATOR
- Single point of contact
- Keeps the group moving, involved and on track
- Manages the agenda
**TIMEKEEPER**

- Pays attention to time to meet deadlines
- Helps group stay focused
- Helps group determine how they want to spend their time

**RECORER**

- Captures what’s going on with a minimum of editing
- Flipchart or notes help group to remember key points and decisions

**PROCESS OBSERVER/GATEKEEPER**

- Process has to do with how the group completes the task rather than the content of what is discussed
- Observes what’s happening in the group
- Pays attention to how well the group is working together
- Provides feedback to the group

**RANKING EXERCISE**

**INDIVIDUAL TASK**

Rank order the team functions of goals, roles, procedures and relationships from 1 to 4 in the order of causes of failure in teams.

**TEAM TASK**

Then rank order them as a team using consensus decision-making. How do your individual and team scores compare with the experts’ ranking?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Ranking</th>
<th>Group Ranking</th>
<th>Experts’ Ranking</th>
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**GROUND RULES**

Ground rules are the principles which group members agree to adopt in order to have an effective meeting. They come from the group members and the facilitator and are written where everyone can see them during the meeting. They usually address the process problems that occur in groups. They also set a standard against which the facilitator and the group can measure their behavior. The facilitator uses the ground rules as a guide for knowing when to intervene in the group process (Schwarz, 1994).

Ground rules may include any of the following (Schwarz, 1994; Oakley, 1998):

- Maintain confidentiality
- Agree on what important words mean
- Give everyone a chance to participate
- Test assumptions and inferences
- Share all relevant information
- Be specific; use examples
- Be willing to discuss sensitive issues that are relevant
- Be honest and direct without putting others on the defensive
- Commit to the start/finish times
- Avoid interruptions
- Explain the reason behind suggestions and statements
- Avoid sidebar conversations
- Keep discussion focused
- Avoid put-downs
- Make decisions by consensus
- Listen reflectively (i.e. questioning, paraphrasing, empathy statements)
- Jointly design ways to test disagreements and solutions
BUILDING PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS
BUILDING PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The participatory nature of reality has focused scientific attention on relationships. Nothing exists at the subatomic level, or can be observed without engagement with another energy source.

Margaret Wheatley

All of us depend upon a network of relationships because we need others’ ideas, input and support in order to accomplish our assigned tasks and goals. The vehicle for developing and maintaining effective relationships is communication. An interpersonal relationship involves meeting others’ social and cultural needs and expectations to a greater or lesser degree. Those needs are:

- Inclusion—feeling that we belong to the group and are included in its activities
- Control —being trusted to manage our responsibilities and tasks, having enough autonomy to get the job done
- Acceptance—being respected and confident in who we are and what we do
- Self-esteem—feeling competent and confident in who we are and what we do

An effective relationship is one in which the parties:

- View the relationship as important enough to work at it.
- Encourage the open expression of thoughts and feelings.
- Listen to understand, not judge.
- Treat each other with respect.
- Face differences directly.
- Work toward solutions that result in mutual gain.
INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

TRUST AND CREDIBILITY

Relationships are built on trust. Any time two people enter into a relationship, they are trying to answer a number of unspoken questions to determine if they can trust each other. These are questions we ask every time we interact with people in the work place or seek assistance from any provider of professional services (a doctor, an engineer, a friend, a consultant).

What are some of the unspoken questions you would ask? In other words, what do you need to know about someone before you can trust that person?

List those questions below:

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

THE DIMENSIONS OF CREDIBILITY

The answers to the unspoken questions that we ask will be determined by the other person’s behavior and our perception of what that behavior means. Because credibility is based on perception, it varies with the person and the situation. Generally, there are four basic dimensions that determine a person’s credibility. They include:

- Propriety
- Intent
- Competence
- Style

Credibility is not a constant. It is a perception that develops over time and changes either for better or worse as the relationship changes. Credibility is fragile and can easily be destroyed.
**CONCEPT**

The way another person responds to us is a function of that person’s behavioral or social style.

**A VARIETY OF BEHAVIORAL STYLES**

Each person has a unique but identifiable behavioral or social style.

There are certain things that people say and do that provide us with solid clues to their dominant style.

Each style also has certain built-in needs and expectations.

There are no right styles; all styles have their own strengths and weaknesses.

Once we learn how to recognize the characteristics of that style, we will be able to communicate more effectively. We do this by adapting our style to the needs of others. The degree to which we can do this determines our behavioral flexibility.

**DIMENSIONS OF BEHAVIORAL STYLES**

Open vs. Self-contained
- Relationship vs. task
- Characteristic behaviors (See Scoring Matrix)

Direct vs. Indirect
- Fast vs. slow pace
- Characteristic behaviors (See Scoring Matrix)

Styles represent four possible combinations of openness (responsiveness) and directness (assertiveness).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relater:</th>
<th>High openness</th>
<th>Low directness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socializer:</td>
<td>High openness</td>
<td>High directness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinker:</td>
<td>Low openness</td>
<td>Low directness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director:</td>
<td>Low openness</td>
<td>High directness</td>
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Remember—

We have characteristics of all these styles, but we tend to have one style that is dominant or more comfortable for us. We can learn to adapt our style in such a way that it better meets the needs of the person with whom we are communicating. Being flexible in our style is always a conscious choice.
BEHAVIORAL STYLE SUMMARY

RELATOR

- Accepts change slowly and reluctantly
- Likes close personal relationships
- Supports and actively listens to others; warm and accepting
- Works slowly and cohesively with others
- Agreeable, steady and calm, supportive
- Shares personal feelings and emotions
- Approaches risk cautiously
- Dislikes interpersonal conflict
- Patient and considerate, loyal and dependable
- Asks many questions, amiable, consistent
- Slow to take action and make decisions

UNDER STRESS

- May appear submissive, passive, dependent, hesitant, defensive, indecisive.
- Needs reassurance about being liked.
- Remove any threat to relationships and move slowly.

THINKER

- Serious and persistent
- Orderly and perfectionist
- Seeks facts and data; “show me” attitude
- Structured and organized
- Asks specific questions about specific details
- Good problem-solving skills
- Concentrates on details
- Diplomatic with others
- Critical of performance
- Complies with authority
- Cautious in acting and making decisions
- Dislikes too much involvement.
**UNDER STRESS**

- May withdraw or appear over-reliant on data and documentation. Resistant to change, slow to act. May appear withdrawn, lacking in imagination, or resentful.

- Needs guarantees about being right, understanding of principles and details. Remove any threat to accuracy.

**SOCIALIZER**

- Quick pace, stimulating and talkative
- Gregarious and spontaneous
- Dramatic opinions and actions
- Jumps from one activity to another
- Works quickly and excitingly with others
- Operates on intuition
- Likes involvement
- Exaggerates and generalizes
- Tends to dream and get caught up in dreams
- Undisciplined about time
- Risk-taker; enthusiastic and optimistic
- Good persuasive skills
- Emotional and friendly

**UNDER STRESS**

- May attack. May appear manipulative, over-eager, impulsive, inconsistent, superficial, unrealistic, and wasteful of time.

- Needs to get credit, action and interaction. Needs quick pace for stimulation and excitement

- Remove threat to prestige.
**DIRECTOR**

- Independent and strong-willed
- High ego strength
- Prefers maximum freedom to manage self and others
- Low tolerance for feelings, attitudes and advice of others
- Wants immediate results, decisive actions and decisions
- Likes control and dislikes inaction
- Works quickly and impressively by self
- Questions status quo
- Fast, impatient pace

**UNDER STRESS**

- May dictate. May appear restless, critical, blunt, intrusive, uncooperative, irritable, or aggressive.
- Needs control of situation and self. Needs tangible evidence of progress and fast pace for moving toward goals.
- Remove any threat to accomplish.
BEHAVIORAL STYLE EXERCISE

Finish these sentences with as many responses as you can think of based on what you already know about yourself and what has been confirmed by identifying your behavioral style. When you have completed the exercise, you will meet in your behavioral style group to compare the similarities and differences in your answers.

In order to effectively communicate with me, remember that I need/expect ... 

I get frustrated in communicating when ...

Some of my strengths in relating to others are ...

Some of my weaknesses in relating to others are ...

When I am expressing strong feelings, I may ...
ANALYZING CONFLICT SITUATIONS
WHAT IS CONFLICT?

Conflict is a situation in which two or more parties believe that what each wants or needs is incompatible with what the other wants or needs. Managing conflict involves managing differences between individuals or groups.

Confrontation means to stand or meet face to face. It is an opportunity for two or more parties who are in conflict to work together to resolve a problem or issue.

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE ABOUT CONFLICT?

- List some of the images, thoughts, feelings that come to mind when you hear the words “conflict” or “confrontation.”
- What is it about conflict situations that you find most difficult or frustrating?

WHY ARE PEOPLE ANGRY?

In their book, *Dealing with An Angry Public*, Lawrence Susskind and Patrick Field list six types of anger that are typically displayed in public disputes (Susskind & Field, 1996, pp. 16–36.

- People who have been hurt often express anger out of frustration with wrongs that cannot be righted. The hurt may take the form of personal injury, financial loss or loss of a service that they depended upon.
- People express anger when they feel they have very little control over the risks they encounter.
- People express anger when their fundamental beliefs or values are being challenged because these beliefs or values give meaning to their lives.
- When people feel weak in the face of others who are more powerful, their anger may increase.
- People are angry when they feel they haven't been treated fairly or with respect and especially if they've been manipulated, trivialized, ignored or lied to.
- Anger may be part of a carefully thought-out strategy aimed at manipulating the reactions of others. Public displays of anger can be an effective means of rallying the troops, altering the perceptions that others have of them, or bullying others into accepting their demands.
WHAT CAUSES CONFLICT?

NATURE OF THE DIFFERENCES IN A CONFLICT

(Kindler, 1987)

People may differ on the following four aspects of an issue:

- **Facts**: The present situation or the present problem.
- **Goals**: How things ought to be; the future conditions or outcomes.
- **Methods**: The best, easiest, most economical, most ethical way to accomplish the task.
- **Values**: Beliefs about what is most important or most ethical in a situation.

Differences over facts are usually easier to manage than differences over values. The chances for managing conflict effectively increase if you can identify the areas of agreement and disagreement. “We seem to agree on what the problem is and what we’d like to achieve, but we disagree on the best way to reach that goal.”
REASONS FOR OR CAUSES OF CONFLICT

- **Information**: The parties have different information (or misinformation) and therefore have arrived at a different understanding of the problem or issue and how to solve it. There may be inadequate data or a lack of information.

- **Perception**: Sometimes people have been exposed to the same data, but their past experience causes them to interpret it differently.

- **Style**: People may have difficulty being flexible enough to interact with someone of a different style.

- **Role**: Sometimes the different roles that people have cause them to take different positions. The representatives of labor are expected to look at things differently, advocating different positions and priorities than the representatives of management. The roles of each cause them to attend to different data and to perceive it differently, as well as advocate different goals and values.

- **Competition**: When two or more people pursuing the same goals or rewards see each other as adversaries and see it as their right to deny the other person(s) access to those goals or rewards. Power plays or the advancing of one's own position often occurs if cooperation isn't achieved.

- **Inappropriate behaviors**: Failure of a person to take appropriate actions, follow through on a task, or give proper support or instruction. Aggressive behavior such as shouting, swearing, threatening others.

- **Relationships**: The parties may have a lack of trust based on perceptions, past experience, unrealistic expectations or an imbalance of power.

- **Political implications**: Political overtones may create tension such as media involvement, bipartisan discussions, etc.

- **Loss of control**: The parties may feel a loss of control over a resource they felt they “owned.” Now someone else is imposing restrictions on the resource.

HOW CAN WE MANAGE CONFLICT EFFECTIVELY?

- By analyzing conflict situations
- By selecting and using appropriate conflict management strategies
SITUATION ASSESSMENT

SITUATION MAPPING

A situation map is a visual way of displaying interrelationships in an issue or conflict situation. The map contains two main elements 1) the party and processes involved in the situation (represented by circles) and 2) relationships among the parties and processes (represented as lines that connect the circles). The relationships may or may not be quantifiable and they may be either positive or negative. A situation map helps show where one party is affected, other parties are also affected.

Situation mapping isn’t about developing a product that you will share with others. In fact, in some cases, sharing a situation map could have negative repercussions. The real value of situation mapping is in the process of mapping. The process encourages us to think about a situation systematically. Mapping helps us move beyond linear thinking to better understand the relationships and/or the complexity of the situation. Consequently, situation mapping is a learning activity that involves systems thinking. By using a situation map as a group discussion document, we learn how others understand the situation.

SMALL GROUP EXERCISE

You will be working in small groups of 4–5 people. Take a few minutes to have each member of your group share a difficult project or issue that has been successfully resolved. Then select 2 situations to map—one situation that involved 1–3 stakeholders and another that involved 4–6 or more stakeholders.

• Write a 1–2 sentence definition/description of the problem or situation.

• Then map the situation using circles to represent the stakeholders (individuals, agencies, groups, processes).

• Draw connecting lines to represent the relationships among the stakeholders and describe the nature of the relationship by writing it above or below the line (e.g. openly hostile and uncooperative, upset and frustrated; positive and willing to work together).

• Make a list of the stakeholders and their perspectives (positions) to one side of the map. What are some of the root causes in this situation?
COMMUNICATION SKILLS
GUIDELINES FOR REFLECTIVE LISTENING

Listening is an important skill for building and maintaining effective working relationships. It is a process whereby we observe, interpret, evaluate and respond to a speaker's message. It is an active, not a passive process.

The term reflective listening accurately describes the process. The listener actively responds to the speaker and reflects back acceptance, support, and clarification of what is being said. Reflective listening involves the following four skills.

• **Prompting** is the skill of using simple verbal and nonverbal responses to encourage the speaker to continue talking and to communicate the attention of the listener. It is something we do naturally such as smiling, head nodding, maintaining eye contact, and saying, “Uh-huh” or “I see.”

• **Questioning** is a skill that either expands or narrows the speaker's responses.
  - **Open-ended questions** are used to uncover facts and feelings and give the speaker an opportunity to expand on the subject. These questions begin with who, what, when, why and how.
    - Example: “What are your access needs?”
  - **Closed-ended questions** are used to clarify and can be answered with a yes or no. They are intended to limit the speaker’s response.
    - Example: “Have you seen the design for this project?”

• **Paraphrasing** is the skill of restating what someone has said in different words in order to clarify the message and reinforce that you are listening and understand the message. If not properly used, this skill can make you sound as if you are parroting back what the other person is saying.
    - Example: “So you think we need to revise the design and begin the review process again.”

• **Empathy statements** are special types of paraphrasing, which communicate an understanding of both the content and feelings of the speaker's message. They let the other person know you have heard what they said and how they feel about it.
    - Example: “Everyone has strong feelings about this issue, as Jack mentioned, but if we are patient, we should be able to work out a solution.”

(Adapted from Steil, 1983)
BENEFITS OF USING REFLECTIVE ListENING

- It demonstrates acceptance and checks understanding.
- It helps you remain calm in stressful situations and gives you time to think.
- It calms the other person in stressful situations and overcomes defensiveness or highly emotional behavior.
- It communicates trust and confidence in the other person’s ability to work through problems.
- It helps the other person open up and share information and feelings that can help in problem solving.
- It helps the other person become less afraid of negative feelings.
- It helps keep ownership of the problem with the person involved in the problem. It demonstrates your respect for the other person.

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS THAT IMPROVE ListENING

- Be willing not to do all the talking.
- Show acceptance of the other person.
- Make listening 51% of your responsibility in any communication situation.
- Listen to hear what the other person is not saying; try to be aware of feelings that are not being verbalized.
FRAMING OR REFRAMING A PROBLEM OR ISSUE

As disputants discuss a problem or issue, each takes a different position based on their frame of reference. Each person defines or frames the issue, situation or problem with his own interests and concerns in mind. The role of the mediator is to assist the parties in reframing the mental pictures they have about the issue so it can be solved. This requires translating the individual, positional statements into a joint, constructive statement that is free of adversarial language based on individual bias and emotions. Reframing builds on positional statements by taking them to a neutral level where both parties can agree on a definition of the problem or issue. From there the parties can work toward mutually agreeable outcomes.

In his book, *Getting Past No*, William Ury says, “To change the game, change the frame.” The purpose of reframing is to shift the focus from positions to interests. Strong, emotional, value-laden statements contain underlying interests or concerns. The mediator has a responsibility to listen attentively and reflectively by paraphrasing and asking open-ended questions. She listens to uncover each party’s interests and concerns and restate or reframe them in such a way that both parties can agree that the problem has been clarified and properly defined.

**STEPS IN REFRAMING**

- Listen attentively to how each party describes and defines the problem or issue.
- Reflect back what you have heard by asking open-ended questions and paraphrasing.

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<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Paraphrasing (Restating)</th>
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<td>Why is this important to you?</td>
<td>What is important to you is ....</td>
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<tr>
<td>What are your concerns?</td>
<td>You’re concerned that ....</td>
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<tr>
<td>What if you were able to …?</td>
<td>So, you’d be willing to ....</td>
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<tr>
<td>What would make this fair?</td>
<td>To make this fair, you need ...</td>
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<tr>
<td>What do you see as the next step?</td>
<td>So, you think the next step is ...</td>
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<tr>
<td>How can we?</td>
<td>So, you think we should ...</td>
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<tr>
<td>What can be done to?</td>
<td>The options you favor are ...</td>
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<tr>
<td>What timeframe is acceptable to you?</td>
<td>This situation needs to be resolved by ... because ...</td>
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- Eliminate the adversarial language and define the problem or issue according to interests rather than positions. Use objective, neutral language and frame the issue so it is a joint problem statement.
- Get agreement from both parties that the problem or issue statement accurately describes their joint interests.
EXAMPLES OF REFRAMING

- Frame the issue in terms of the problem rather than the personalities, attitudes or behaviors of the parties.

- Frame the issue so it is objective rather than judgmental.
  
  **Frame**: “I don’t work well with Martha standing over my shoulder telling me what to do. She’s not getting her work done and I’m not getting my work done. She makes me a nervous wreck.”

  **Reframe**: “Let’s talk about how work can be delegated and supervised.”

- Frame issues so they are a joint problem.

- Frame the issue so it is more specific.
  
  **Frame**: “This is not just Jane’s deadline. I have to meet it too, but I can’t if she doesn’t get me the information I need.”

  **Reframe**: “So the question is, ‘How are you going to work together to meet the July 15th deadline?’”

- Frame the issue so that multiple solutions are possible.
  
  **Frame**: “The bookkeeping system is lousy. I don’t receive copies of the accounts assigned to my projects and I don’t have separate account numbers for my charges to the General Fund so it’s difficult to be a responsible manager.”

  **Reframe**: “Let’s talk about what your accounting needs are.”

- Frame the issue within areas where people have the authority and resources to make a decision and implement it.
  
  **Frame**: “You are trying to control the decision-making process so that the State doesn’t have to comply with the new regulation.”

  **Reframe**: “Let’s talk about how much flexibility the State has in developing a plan to meet the new EPA ruling on ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel and the role of public participants.”
• Frame issues in terms of future action rather than past blame.

**Frame**: “Public notice on this type of permit has never been required. It is a waste of valuable time. You’ve had my application for five months. This project is scheduled to begin in another week and your failure to complete the process by then will cost us thousands of dollars.”

**Reframe**: “Let’s talk about why public notice on this particular permit is being discussed and how we can avoid this problem in the future.”

• Separate issues or problems from people to depersonalize the conflict.

**Frame**: “I’m tired of Susan’s sarcastic remarks and accusations that are based on misinformation. She continues to undermine this process at every turn.”

**Reframe**: “Let’s review the ground rules and add any that can help us stay focused on moving toward agreement.”
GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Feedback is a response to a situation or the behavior of another person. It involves sharing facts, ideas, opinions or feelings, either positive or negative.

APPROPRIATE BEHAVIORAL FEEDBACK

When giving feedback about a difficult situation, it is important to describe the facts as you know them. When giving feedback about someone else’s behavior, it is important to describe the actual behavior of the other person as you see and experience it (behavioral data) and your feelings about or response to the behavior. An example of a feedback statement might be: “I can’t talk with you about this situation when you’re yelling at me.” or “I appreciate your willingness to work with me on this.”

The advantage of this two-step method (behavior + feeling) is that it gives the person receiving the feedback a clear picture of his/her behavior and what effect that behavior has on others. When given directly, it often opens up the opportunity to discuss issues and work out a resolution to problems. It is important to give negative feedback constructively in order to avoid an overly defensive reaction.

Feedback is most effective when accompanied by 1) a climate of trust and concern; 2) a desire to work on the relationship; 3) time to work on the issue; and 4) complementary expectations that such feedback is appropriate and desirable.

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORAL FEEDBACK

JUDGMENTS
Responding to another person’s behavior in the form of a judgment (i.e., “You are really paranoid.”).

INTERPRETATIONS
Interpreting the meaning of someone’s behavior; acting as an amateur psychologist (i.e., “I think you have a real hang-up about authority.”)

TRIANGULATION
Feedback about one person that is given to another person (i.e., “Your neighbors tell me that you have a reputation for stirring up trouble.”). This type of feedback results in one person being caught in the middle of the triangle. It compromises confidentiality and makes it difficult, if not impossible, to get the two people together.
GUIDELINES FOR GIVING FEEDBACK

Always give feedback in private.

- Telegraph ahead if you think the feedback may be painful for you or the receiver. “You may not like what I have to say about …, but I think …”

- Speak to specific, observed behavior rather than personal qualities or personal worth. The behavior must be something the person can do something about.

- Use situational descriptions and open-ended questions to get the other person’s perspective i.e. “Bill, we’re experiencing an increase in accidents. What do you think is causing it?” This indicates openness to looking at all the facts leading to the unfavorable result.

- Keep information current and relevant to the situation.

- Use “I” statements to describe how you are feeling about the situation and the other person’s behavior.

- Check with the receiver after giving the message to see if it was accurately received.

- Feedback is a tool for growth and understanding, not a weapon to hurt or destroy the receiver.

GUIDELINES FOR RECEIVING FEEDBACK

- Don’t ask for feedback unless you are willing to be receptive rather than defensive.

- Remember that all feedback has validity in terms of another person’s perceptions or beliefs about your behavior or the situation. Their perceptions/beliefs may not agree with yours.

- You control the feedback given to you by agreeing with it, disagreeing with it or modifying it.

- Respond to feedback by using “I” statements.

- Check out feedback with others to see if they have similar perceptions of your behavior.

*Remember to speak to data and check your assumptions!*
LEVELING OR “I” STATEMENTS

DISAGREEMENT STATEMENTS
• I understand your position, but ...
• I believe differently. I believe that ...

FEELING STATEMENTS
• I feel that ...
• I get ... or am ... when ...

RESOLUTION STATEMENTS AND QUESTIONS
• I would like to see if we could ...
• I’d like to work with you to improve ...
• What do you suggest as a fair solution?
• What can you (we) do to correct this?
• What options do you think you (we) have?
DEALING WITH ANGER

Most conflict situations involve differences of some kind and disagreement, but generally anger is not displayed in the workplace even when it is felt. Anger is a genuine emotion that can be controlled and expressed appropriately. The word anger comes from a Middle English word meaning “affliction” and from an Old Norse word meaning “grief.” It is related to the old English word for narrow and to the Latin word meaning to strangle. All of these words describe emotions associated with anger.

Anger takes many forms from rage, hostility, attacking someone verbally or physically to glowering silence. Direct expressions of anger might include swearing or saying “I’m furious with you.” Modified expressions of anger might include words like “I’m annoyed, irritated and fed up.” Indirect expressions of anger would be even less forceful such as, “I’m disappointed, frustrated or upset.”

THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN DEALING WITH ANGRY PEOPLE

- Their anger may be appropriate based on what they believe about the situation and/or about you.
- Another person’s anger belongs to them. It says nothing about you.
- Listening is the key to finding out what is going on when someone is angry.
- Your attentiveness and empathy can help to defuse the other person’s anger.
- Paraphrasing and asking questions can help to clarify assumptions, misperceptions and may help others change their belief about the situation or you.
- Learning to control your own emotions in conflict situations gives you time to think, sort out the facts and feelings and perhaps influence others to work toward a resolution of the tension.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT YOUR OWN ANGER

- Recognize that you’re angry.
- Identify the cause of your anger.
- Determine what you believe about this situation and whether or not your belief is realistic, rational and appropriate.
- Think about possible solutions and decide what action you will take.
**Things to Remember When You Are Angry**

- Emotion is high and you may have lost your perspective.
- Wait until you have analyzed the situation and gotten your emotions under control before you take any actions or give the other person feedback.
- You need someone who will listen. If the other person is also angry, he/she may need time to calm down and analyze the situation.

**Questions to Ask in Conflict Situations**

(Cohen, 1984)

- Is the problem really solvable? Am I beating my head against a brick wall, tilting at windmills, immersing myself in self-righteous indignation? We can't confront every conflict!
- How serious is the problem? Have I done everything I can to adjust to it by minimizing its negative impact?
- How permanent is the problem? Will it solve itself in time if I do nothing?
- Am I upset about something that's not really my problem? Could I be moving into someone else's turf when it's actually none of my business?
- Have I examined my share of responsibility for this problem?
- Am I escalating the conflict, feeling sorry for myself or playing martyr?
- Have I exhausted all problem-solving efforts with those who can most directly do something about the problem? Am I willing to face the person in honest, direct, constructive dialogue?
- Is someone else in a better position to deal with the problem?
- Am I looking for a quick fix to a complex problem? Do I need more information?
- What are the risks/rewards if I engage in a toe-to-toe battle on this issue? Is the problem so critical that I'm willing to pull out all the stops to get what I want?
COMMUNICATION SKILLS EXERCISE

During this exercise, you will be meeting in small groups of 4–5 participants. Each group member will make a statement that defines a position taken by a party (property owner, agency representative, etc.) in a real situation. The person sitting next to the first member will respond by asking questions, listening, clarifying, reframing, and giving feedback in order to move from a highly charged, emotion-laden atmosphere to one where it is more likely that the parties can talk about common interests and resolving the problem. Try to respond in ways that will get to the bottom of the issue without putting the other person on the defensive. (Review the information about reframing on pages 24–26.)

Continue these impromptu, round robin role plays until everyone has had an opportunity to be the confronter and the responder. Write down any particularly skillful examples of paraphrasing or reframing.
STRATEGIES FOR
MANAGING CONFLICT
STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING CONFLICT

KINDLER STRATEGIES

This model for managing conflict was developed by Dr. Herb Kindler (1987) and involves the use of two variables in making decisions about which of nine strategies to select. The variables are:

- How involved do I want or have to be in this situation (interaction intensity)?
- How flexible can I be in this situation (viewpoint flexibility)?

The strategies include:

- **Maintenance**: You unilaterally avoid confronting differences or delay making changes.
- **Smoothing**: You unilaterally accentuate similarities and downplay differences.
- **Domination**: You unilaterally induce, persuade, force compliance, or resist.
- **Decision Rule**: You jointly set objective rules that determine how differences will be handled.
- **Coexistence**: You jointly establish a basis for both parties to maintain their differences.
- **Bargaining**: You jointly seek means to split differences, set trade-offs, or take turns.
- **Yielding**: You offer no resistance to the other party’s views, blending your efforts with theirs.
- **Supportive Release**: You unilaterally release the issue, stipulate any limits, and provide needed support.
- **Collaboration**: You jointly problem solve to integrate views.

**Mutual Gains Approach**

*(Susskind & Field, 1996, p. 37–38)*

- Acknowledge the concerns of the other side.
- Encourage joint fact-finding.
- Offer contingent commitments to minimize impacts if they do occur.
- When possible compensate knowable, but intended impacts.
- Accept responsibility, admit mistakes, and share power.
- Act in a trustworthy fashion at all times.
- Focus on building long-term relationships.

The mutual gains approach to managing conflict as described by Susskind and Field (1996, pp. 37–38) includes the following key behaviors.
### PROBLEM TYPES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Agreed On</th>
<th>Solution Agreed On</th>
<th>Best Problem Solving Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Command-Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Steps in Collaborative Problem Solving**

*(Adapted from The Montana Consensus Council)*

**Step 1: Assess the Situation**
- Who has a stake in the disagreement?
- What are the key issues?
- Are the key issues a priority for stakeholders?
- What is the source (cause) of disagreement? (roles, goals, mistrust, etc.)
- Are stakeholders willing to come to the table to discuss a workable solution?
- Are the decision makers open to implementing any agreements that may emerge?
- How much time and energy are you willing to devote to this issue?

**Step 2: Design the Process and Develop a Work Plan**
- Define the purpose.
- Clarify objectives, tasks, and products.
- Specify timelines and deadlines.
- Determine the collaborative structure.
- Define ground rules.
- Identify participants.
- Define consensus or the criteria for a workable solution.
- Clarify responsibilities to each other.
- Clarify responsibilities to others – agency, public, etc.
- Agree on meeting procedures and process coordination.
- Define procedures for communicating with the media and others.
**STEP 3: CRAFT THE AGREEMENT**

- Clarify people’s interests.
- Build a common understanding of the situation.
- Generate options to accommodate all interests (when possible).
- Evaluate options.
- Recognize the need for discussion away from the table.
- Avoid closure on single-issue agreements when you need to focus on the total package of issues.
- Ensure others affected by the decision are kept informed.
- Confirm agreements in writing.

**STEP 4: IMPLEMENT THE AGREEMENT**

- Link informal agreement to a formal decision-making process.
- Clarify who is responsible for each implementation task.
- Develop a schedule for implementation.
- Jointly monitor implementation.
- Create a context for renegotiation
## A CONFRONTATION SEQUENCE

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Awareness of a Problem</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party A contacts Party B</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Party B becomes aware that a problem exists.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Confrontation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party B responds as result of initial contact.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party A listens.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Party B expresses feelings and reactions, and explains perspective.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Must recognize own defensive feelings and “hold on.”</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party A asks questions, clarifies, reframes the issue, if necessary.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Party B clarifies, listens, asks questions.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party A determines My • Your • Our problem.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Party B determines My • Your • Our problem.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Determining the Outcome and Follow Up</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resolution Required?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Finalized?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do we wish to resolve?</td>
<td>No need to go any further. Issues settled, clarified.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes = Possible solutions.</td>
<td>No = Implement alternatives.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COMPETENCY STANDARDS FOR DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The National Institute for Dispute Resolution (1993), Burdine (1990) and Honeyman (1990) offer criteria and standards for determining performance competency and effectiveness in conflict situations. Not all of these standards are appropriate for every situation, but they provide a starting point for evaluating effective behaviors.

**Investigation**: Effectiveness in identifying and seeking out relevant information pertinent to the case.
- Asked neutral, open-ended questions.
- Listened to disputants describe problems and issues.
- Summarized and paraphrased their statements.
- Detected and addressed hidden issues.
- Defined and clarified the issues.
- Demonstrated an understanding of the scope, intensity, and contentiousness of the case.
- Gathered information through incisive, tough, and uncomfortable questions.

**Empathy**: Conspicuous awareness and consideration of the needs of others.
- Established atmosphere in which anger and tension were expressed constructively.
- Conveyed respect and neutrality to the parties.
- Questions were neutral and open-ended, listened respectfully.
- Voice inflection, gestures and eye contact used appropriately.
- Remained calm and level-headed.
- Recognized emotions and responded appropriately.
- Demonstrated an open mind.
- Was able to restate and reframe disputants’ statements and issues in ways both parties could understand.

**Impartiality**: The ability to view an issue or situation without bias; to be free from bias in judgment.
- Manner of introductions and initial explanations showed equal respect for all disputants.
- Listened to both sides.
- Asked objective questions, conveyed neutral atmosphere.
- Demonstrated that he/she was keeping an open mind.
- Non-verbal communication did not favor either party.
Generating Options: Pursuit of collaborative solutions and generation of ideas and proposals consistent with case facts and workable for opposing parties.

- Generated, assessed and prioritized alternative solutions.
- Assisted the parties to develop their own options and to evaluate alternative solutions for themselves.
- Avoided commitment to solutions early in the process.
- Recognized underlying problems as opposed to symptoms.
- Created and recommended workable solutions consistent with case facts.
- Vigorously pursued avenues of collaboration among the parties.

Generating Agreement: Effectiveness in moving the parties toward finality and in closing an agreement.

- Assisted the parties to evaluate alternative solutions.
- Clearly conveyed limitations to possible agreement and consequences of non-agreement for each party.
- Emphasized areas of agreement.
- Clarified and framed points of agreement.
- Asked tough questions to highlight unrealistic and poorly thought-out positions.
- Consistent use of reality testing.
- Effectively broke apparent impasses.
- Showed tenacity throughout.
- Packaged and linked issues to demonstrate mutual gains from agreements.

Managing the Interaction: Effectiveness in developing strategy, managing the process, coping with conflicts between clients and professional representatives.

- Had effective techniques for redirecting parties’ focus away from unproductive conversations.
- Maintained optimism and forward movement, emphasized progress, showed tenacity.
- Showed a good grasp of each party’s essential requirements to reach agreement vs. areas of flexibility.
- Made all decisions about caucusing, order of presentation, etc. consistent with rationale for progress toward resolution.
- Managed all client-representative relationships effectively.
- Gave appearance of being ready to cope with any problems.
S KILLS IN E FFECTIVE C OMMUNICATION

BIBLIOGRAPHY


ROLE PLAYING

PURPOSE OF ROLE PLAYING

You will be working in small groups of four people to role-play work-related communication situations. The purpose of these simulations is to practice actual skills so that you will have some new learning or relearning upon which to draw when you find yourself in the real-life situation. Role-playing gives you the opportunity to practice new behaviors and receive constructive feedback from your peers in a “laboratory” environment.

GUIDELINES FOR ROLE PLAYING

Role-playing makes everyone feel uncomfortable and self-conscious at first. It may seem contrived and very unrealistic especially if you don’t take it seriously. Playing the role as realistically as possible is the key to success. This is not acting. It is practicing skills that can contribute to our success in the workplace.

Each of you will have the opportunity to play different roles some of which are not related to your current job position. The value of doing this is that it gives you the opportunity to look at situations from a different perspective. You are free to improvise as long as you follow the basic guidelines for your role.

Take time to read your role description carefully and think about what you will say and do. You are encouraged to take notes and use them during the role-play. When everyone in your group is ready, decide who will do their role play first. While two members of the group are role-playing, the other two will act as observers in order to give feedback.

FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES

The role players should sit facing each other without a table between them. Make sure that the two observers are seated to one side of the role players and out of their direct line of sight to avoid breaking their concentration.

Play the roles as realistically as possible without interruptions. Try to imagine yourself in the actual situation and focus on the purpose of the exercise as well as how the person whose role you are playing might behave in this situation.

If you get bogged down, you can call for a time-out to collect your thoughts before starting again.

When the role-play is completed, the role players will critique themselves and then ask for feedback from the observers.
Remember to discuss what went well first and then discuss any problem areas. Be sure that feedback describes specific, observable behavior and doesn’t judge the person.

**PRACTICE THESE SKILLS NATURALLY:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening Skills</th>
<th>Feedback Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal prompting</td>
<td>Descriptions of both content/feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended questioning</td>
<td>Use of “I” messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close-ended questioning</td>
<td>Directed toward modifiable behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrasing for clarification</td>
<td>Sender telegraphed ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy statements</td>
<td>Sender checked back with receiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual agreement achieved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>