

---

# **Dynamics of Conflict**

---

# Conflict Management

## Course Objectives:

- Become aware of how our attitudes, feelings and beliefs about conflict affect its outcome.
- Identify organizational and cultural factors that influence workplace conflict situations.
- Assess the effectiveness of our individual conflict management styles in a range of situations.
- Learns and apply a process model for analyzing and managing a current conflict situation.
- Learn and practice skills needed to effectively manage conflicts and reach agreements including:
  - Evaluating the cost and benefits in a conflict situation.
  - Diagnose the core of the conflict.
  - Use Active Listening to understand the other person's position.
  - Use assertion ("I statements") to clearly state your own position.
  - Use supporting and confronting to acknowledge feelings and identify differences.
  - Use problem solving and negotiation to create win/win outcomes.
- Receive feedback on the effectiveness of skill practice.



## **Purpose**

---

To provide you with skills and information so that you view conflict not as an obstacle but as a process whose skillful management can bring greater awareness, workplace productivity, and commitment.



## **Constructive**

---

- opens up and clarifies issues
- solves problems



## **Destructive**

---

- diverts energy from more important things
- problem worsens



## SOME THOUGHTS AND ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT CONFLICT

1. Conflict is neutral in and of itself, neither good nor bad, right nor wrong, with no inherent qualities of its own. It is a natural fact of human interaction. Expect it... it will happen.
2. Your perceptions, thoughts and feelings dictate what conflict situations mean and what the consequences will be. Differences have no inherent qualities of their own.
3. Your ability to deal effectively with conflict depends on:
  - your ability to diagnose and understand conflict situations
  - your awareness of, and the ability to select from, a variety of appropriate behaviors
  - your awareness of and ability to deal with your own feelings in conflict situations
4. Basic strategies, skills, and techniques can be learned but will work effectively only when they are adapted to fit your own personal style.
5. Sometimes it is not possible to manage conflict in a way which makes everyone a winner, but it still must be dealt with.
6. Mastering of skills is not easy without considerable practice.
7. The most common and unproductive conflict management trap of all is trying to change the other person.
8. Intellectually understanding all of this, however, is not enough. True self-knowledge requires examining yourself and your impact on others.

Source: N T L - Managing Conflict



## Definitions of Conflict

---

Conflict is a consequence of difference that needs to be managed to achieve effectiveness.

It begins when we **perceive** that someone has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect, something we care about.

The more deeply we care about the issue, the more intense the conflict.

*Adapted from Dr. Kenneth W. Thomas*

---



# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

## Five-Step Model

### 1. MAKE DECISION TO MANAGE THE CONFLICT

- Clarify goals and intentions for managing conflict
- Decide to manage the conflict or not

### 2. DIAGNOSE CONFLICT ISSUES

- Determine source of core difference

### 3. PLAN STRATEGY

- Determine place, time, context
- Plan for phases to occur in the dialogue
  - ventilation
  - clarification
  - understanding
  - problem solving

### 4. ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE

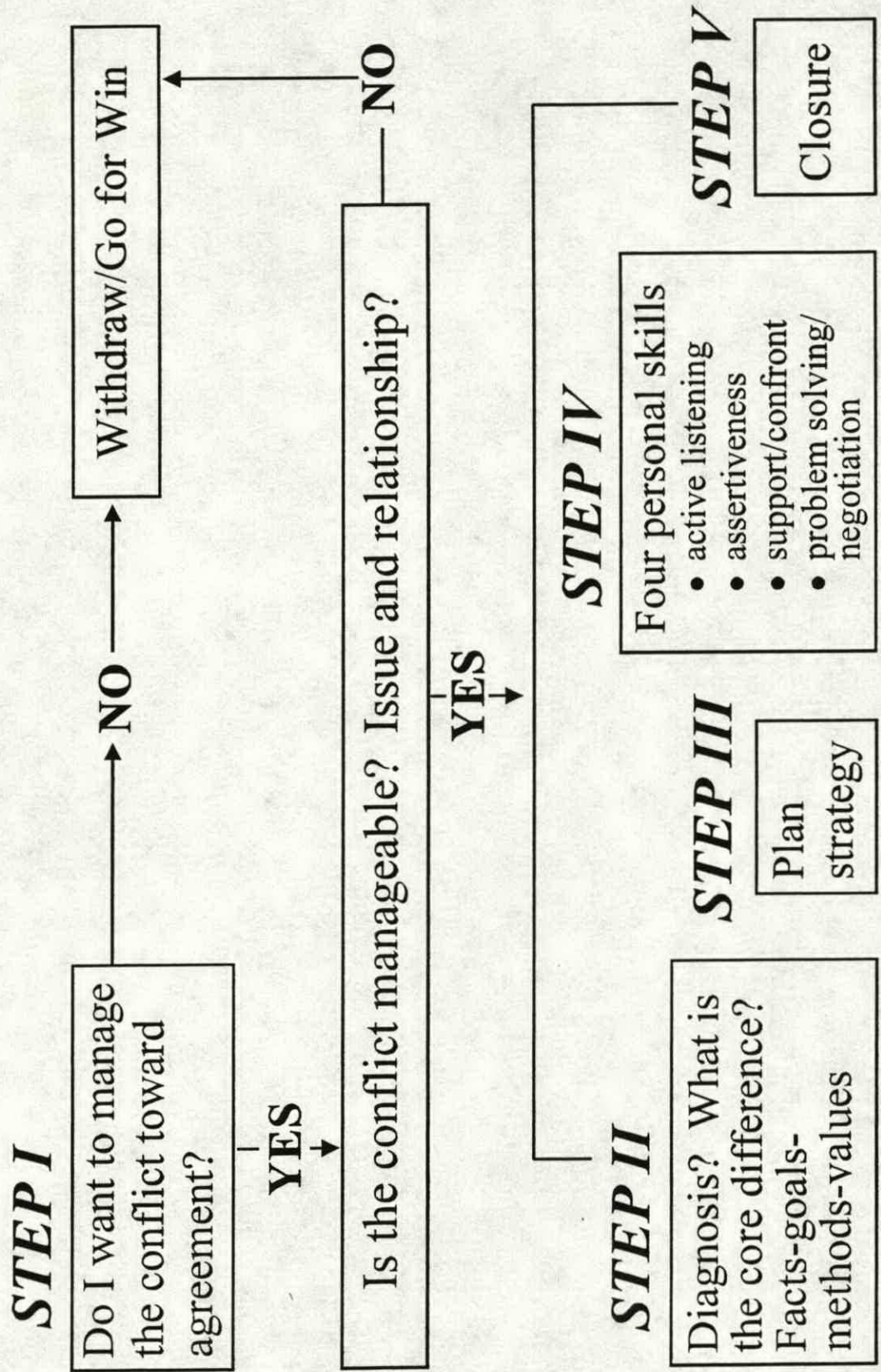
- Use Listening to understand
- Use Assertion to present your information
  - describe
  - explain Impact
  - specify requirements/needs
  - identify consequences
- Use Problem Solving to come to joint agreement
- Use Conciliatory language or gestures and other communication skills as required

### 5. COME TO CLOSURE

- Agree upon for actions and accountabilities
- Make the agreement clear and concrete

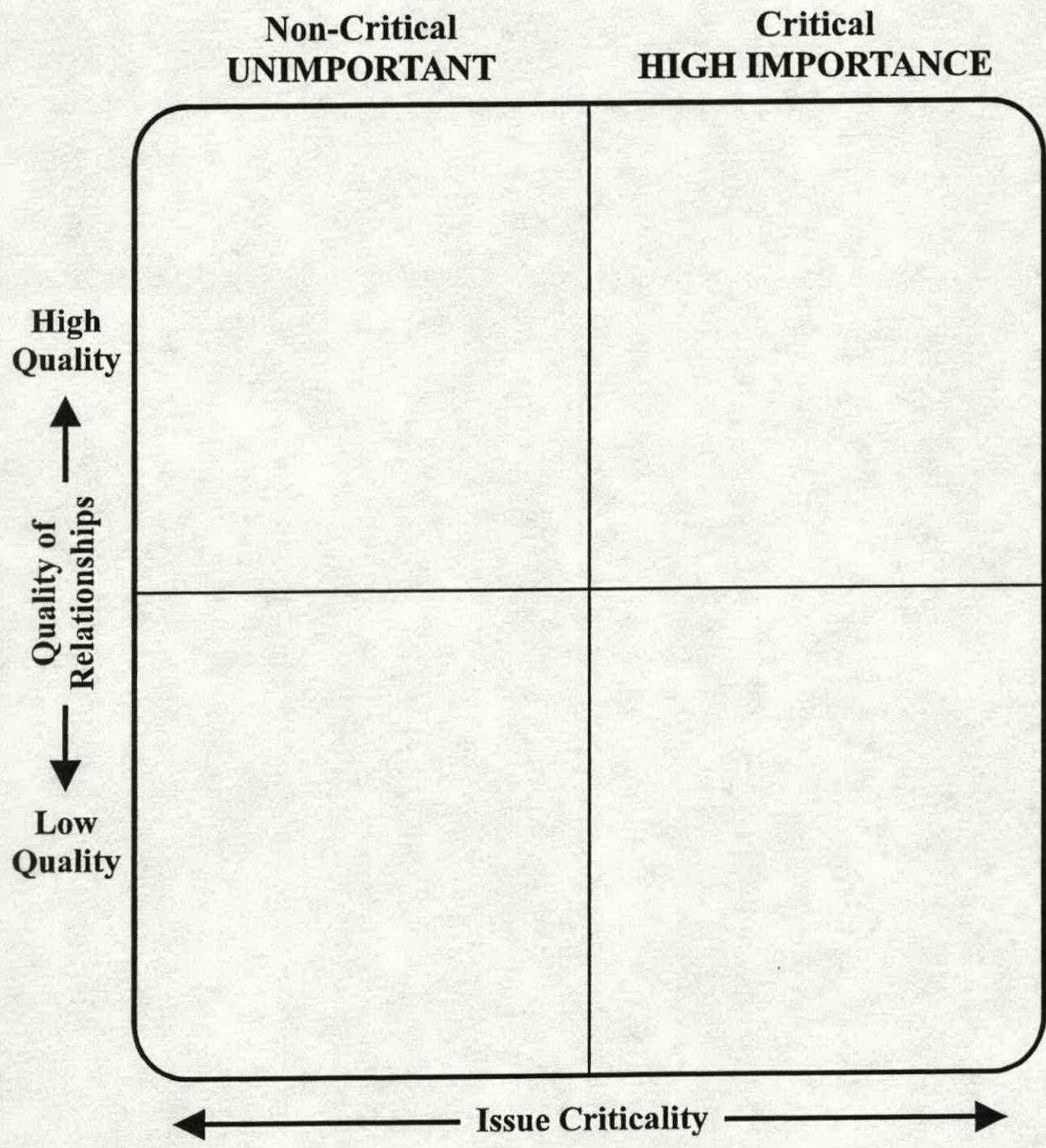


# 5-Step Model Map of Managing Conflicts and Agreement



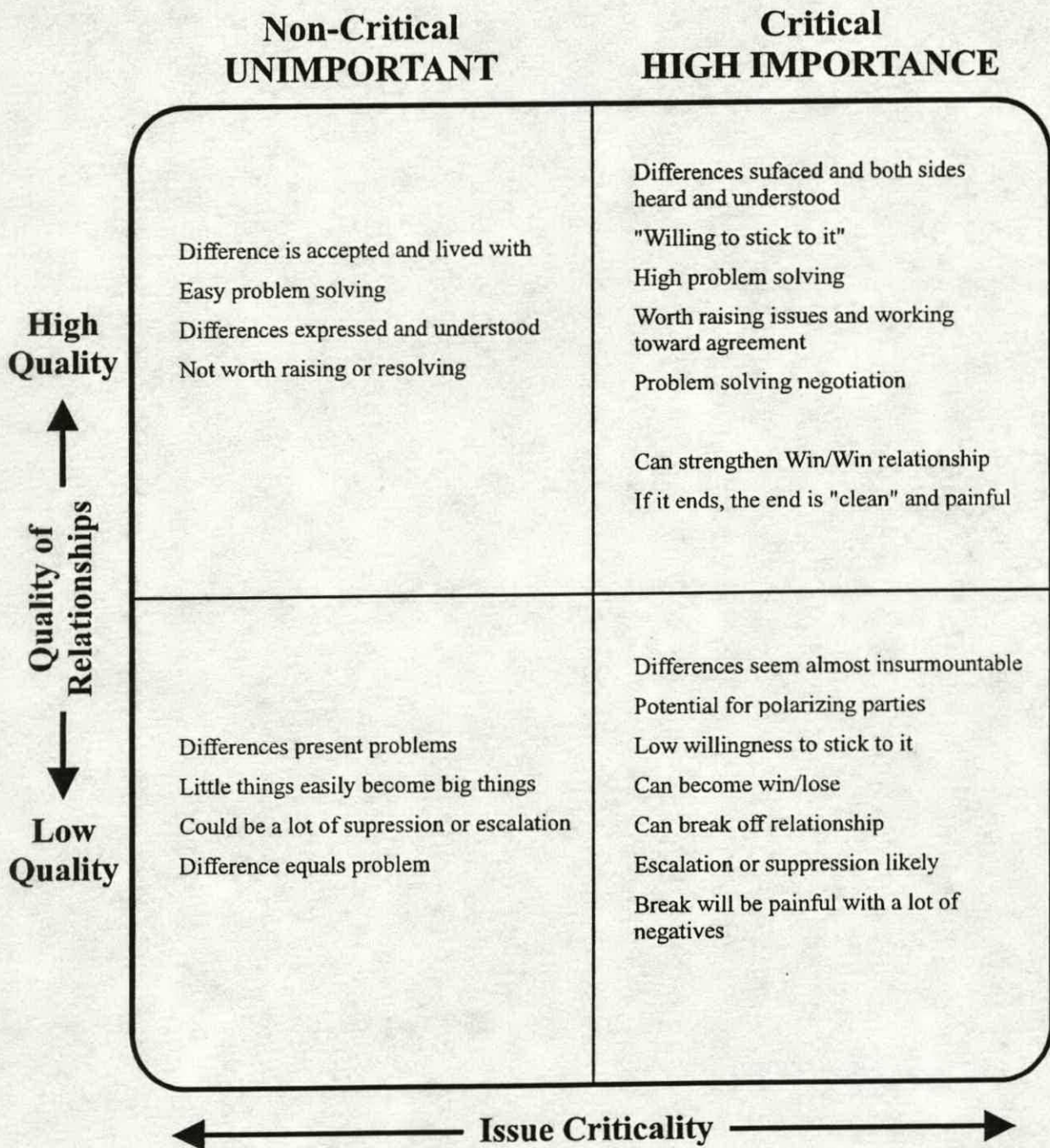


# Issue Matrix Potential Outcomes





# Issue Matrix Potential Outcomes



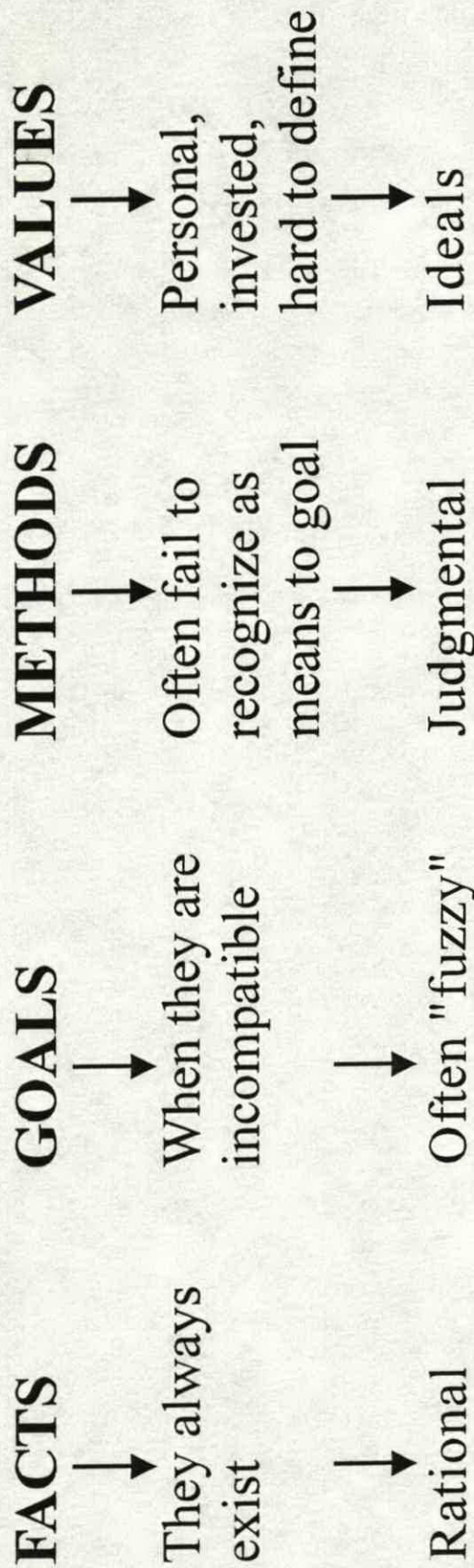


**There is a great difference between I can't (VICTIM)  
and I choose not to (POWERFUL)**

- Treat yourself as an equal
- Don't give personal power away
- Difference makes good relationships



## Four Core Differences



**When you get to HOW (methods) – re-look at the WHAT (facts) and the WHETHER (goals).**

**Don't try to change values – operationalize.**



# Diagnose Core of Conflict

If conflict is in . . .

FACTS	GOALS	METHODS	VALUES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stop talking, play back.</li> <li>- State the difference, support/confront.</li> <li>- How validated?</li> <li>- What criteria?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify the difference that make them incompatible.</li> <li>- What happens if met?</li> <li>- Try to set common goals.</li> <li>- If cannot agree, who decides?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify real difference.</li> <li>- Get away from method and establish criteria (means not end).</li> <li>- Create new method.</li> <li>- Who decides?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify them.</li> <li>- Validate for each other.</li> <li>- How to operationalize, not change.</li> <li>- Identify common goals.</li> </ul>

- **Your contribution to effectiveness is to pull out the difference, make it explicit.**
- **Allow the difference to live. This is different from agreeing to disagree.**
- **It is a complementary, not a polarized position from which to manage.**



## Some Guidelines for Diagnosing a Conflict

Before responding to a conflict situation, it is useful to pause and ask two questions:

1. What is the nature of the differences between us?
2. What might be the reasons for our differences?

### The Nature of the Differences

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

- We may differ over **FACTS** (the present situation, the present problem, etc.)
- We may differ over **GOALS** (how things ought to be, the future conditions we want)
- We may differ over **METHODS** to reach goals (the best, the easiest, the most economical, the most ethical route to follow)
- We may differ over **VALUES** (the beliefs about the priorities or principles which should be observed in choosing goals and methods)

Differences over values are usually the most difficult to manage. They come much closer than facts to the fundamental beliefs of the parties and are thus much more threatening. Disagreements that begin over facts sometimes persist until they appear to be conflicts over goals or values and become almost impossible to reconcile.

The implication is that it pays to identify the area of disagreement as quickly as possible. The chances for managing conflict effectively increase if you can say something like: “We seem to agree on what the problem is and what we’d like to achieve, but disagree over the best way to reach that goal.”

### The Reasons for the Differences

As part of the conceptualizing process, it is useful not only to identify the nature of the difference, but to seek the reasons for it as well. Among the most common reasons are these:

**Informational** – The two parties have been exposed to different information — and thus have arrived at a different understanding of what the problem or issue is and what course of action makes the most sense.

**Perceptual** – Sometimes people have been exposed to the same data, but their past experience causes them to interpret it in different ways. Two witnesses may view the same event, but experience it in two different ways, since the past of each causes them to attend to different aspects of the same situation or to arrive at a different meaning.



**Role** – Sometimes the different roles (e.g., boss, supervisor, employee) of people cause them to take different positions. The representatives of labor are expected to look at things differently, advocating different positions and priorities than the representative of management. The roles of each cause them to attend to different data and to perceive it differently, as well as to advocate different goals and values.

### **Practical Values of This Analysis**

What is the practical value of going through this kind of diagnostic process? Like solving any problem, as a conflict problem-solver, you are likely to do a more effective job if you know the parameters of the situation with which you are dealing. A key process in conflict is that of influence — the effort of each party to get the other to understand, appreciate, and accept the objectives. If parties want to influence each other, obviously it helps if they have a clear picture of where they stand and how they got there.

- If the two parties realize that they have probably been exposed to different data, they may view the job to be done as one of mutual education, rather than conflict. The task is to increase the pool of information to which both are privy.
- If they determine that their information base is very similar but they have just perceived it differently because of differing past experiences, these perceptions need to be re-examined. Then the question becomes: “Why is it that we view the same information in such different ways?”
- If the parties suspect that the principle reason for different views grows out of their different roles, they can often take a less personalized view of the conflict. If each can say, “If I were in his/her place, I would probably be advocating the same point of view,” they will deal with the other party in a somewhat different and more understanding way. The task then takes on an added dimension:

e.g., “How can I help a person in that role better understand and appreciate my concern, and what does he or she need from me?” By recognizing the constraints within which the other party must operate, you can be more realistic in knowing what to expect and what posture makes the most sense.



# UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENCES

## Three Diagnostic Questions

1. What is the nature of the difference?
2. What factors underlie this difference?
3. What stage has it reached?

## The Nature of Differences

1. Facts: Do both parties have different definitions of data, different pieces of relevant information, or different impressions of power and authority?
2. Goals: Is it a difference in what each wants to accomplish?
3. Methods: Is it differences in procedures, strategies, or tactics?
4. Values: Is it a question of fairness, morality, justice, or ethics?

## Underlying Factors: (Ask why)

1. Do they have access to the same information?
2. Information factors?
3. Do they perceive common information differently?
4. Perceptual factors?
5. Are they influenced by their role?
6. Role factors?

## Stage of Evolution

1. The phase of anticipation—looking ahead, rumors
2. The phase of consciousness but unexpressed
3. The phase of discussion—questions raised, opinions shared, information exchanged
4. The phase of open dispute—present cases, issues sharpened, expressed openly
5. The phase of open conflict—choosing up sides

*From Schmidt & Tannenbaum*



# Diagnosing Core of Conflict

## *Worksheet*

---

### **Facts:**

What are the facts that relate to your current conflict situation?

Are all the facts known? If not, how can you get more facts?

How can your set of facts be validated? How can you check them out to be sure they are real or true?

What criteria will you use to determine their validity?



# Diagnosing Core of Conflict

## *Worksheet*

---

### **Goals:**

What is your goal in this situation?

What is the other person's goal?

Are these goals in agreement? If not, what is the difference that makes them incompatible?

What happens to the other person if you meet your goal?



**Goals** *(continued)*:

What happens to you if the other person meets his or her goal?

What are some higher order goals you both have in common?

If you cannot agree on the goals, who decides?



# Diagnosing Core of Conflict

## *Worksheet*

---

### **Methods:**

What is the real difference between your method and the other person's method?

What are some criteria for evaluating whether these methods will achieve the desired outcomes?

What are some new or different methods that will achieve the same results?

If you cannot agree on the methods, who decides?



# Diagnosing Core of Conflict

## Worksheet

---

### Values:

What are your core values in this situation?

What are the other person's values in this situation?

How can you validate each other's values?

How can you continue to operate in this situation without compromising each other's values?



# Conflict Management

## Action Planning Worksheet

### STEP I MAKE DECISION TO MANAGEMENT THE CONFLICT

Why have you decided to manage the conflict?

---

---

What are your goals/intentions for managing this conflict?

---

---

### STEP II DIAGNOSE THE CONFLICT

What are the core differences contributing to the conflict?

---

---

What do you plan to do to manage these differences?

---

---

### STEP III PLAN THE STRATEGY

Where and when will the discussion take place?

---

---

Do you need to gather more information than what you currently have? If so, with whom do you need to speak? What other sources should you consult?

---

---



**STEP IV    ENGAGE IN DISCUSSION**

What is your confrontation/assertion message for this conflict?

---

---

---

What are possible alternatives that would satisfy you regarding this conflict?

---

---

---

**STEP V    COME TO CLOSURE**

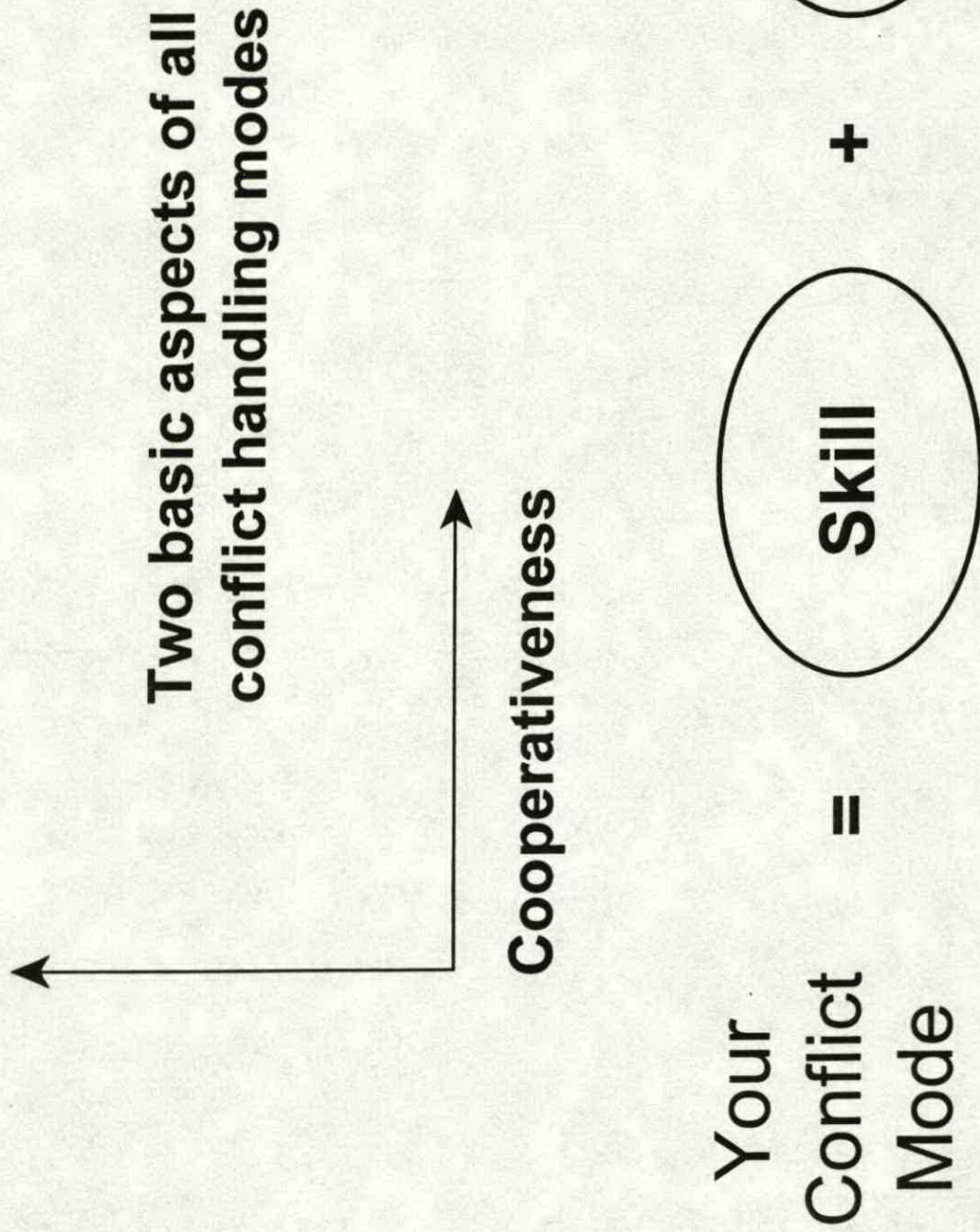
How will you contract for accountability?

---

---



# Five Modes for Handling Conflict





	Competing (forcing)	Collaborating (problem solving)	Compromising (sharing)	Avoiding (withdrawal)	Accommodating (smoothing)
1.				A	B
2.		B	A		
3.	A				B
4.			A		B
5.		A		B	
6.	B			A	
7.			B	A	
8.	A	B			
9.	B			A	
10.	A		B		
11.		A			B
12.			B	A	
13.	B		A		
14.	B	A			
15.				B	A
16.	B				A
17.	A			B	
18.			B		A
19.		A		B	
20.		A	B		
21.		B			A
22.	B		A		
23.		A		B	
24.			B		A
25.	A				B
26.		B	A		
27.				A	B
28.	A	B			
29.			A	B	
30.		B			A

Total number of items circled in each column:

Competing

Collaborating

Compromising

Avoiding

Accommodating

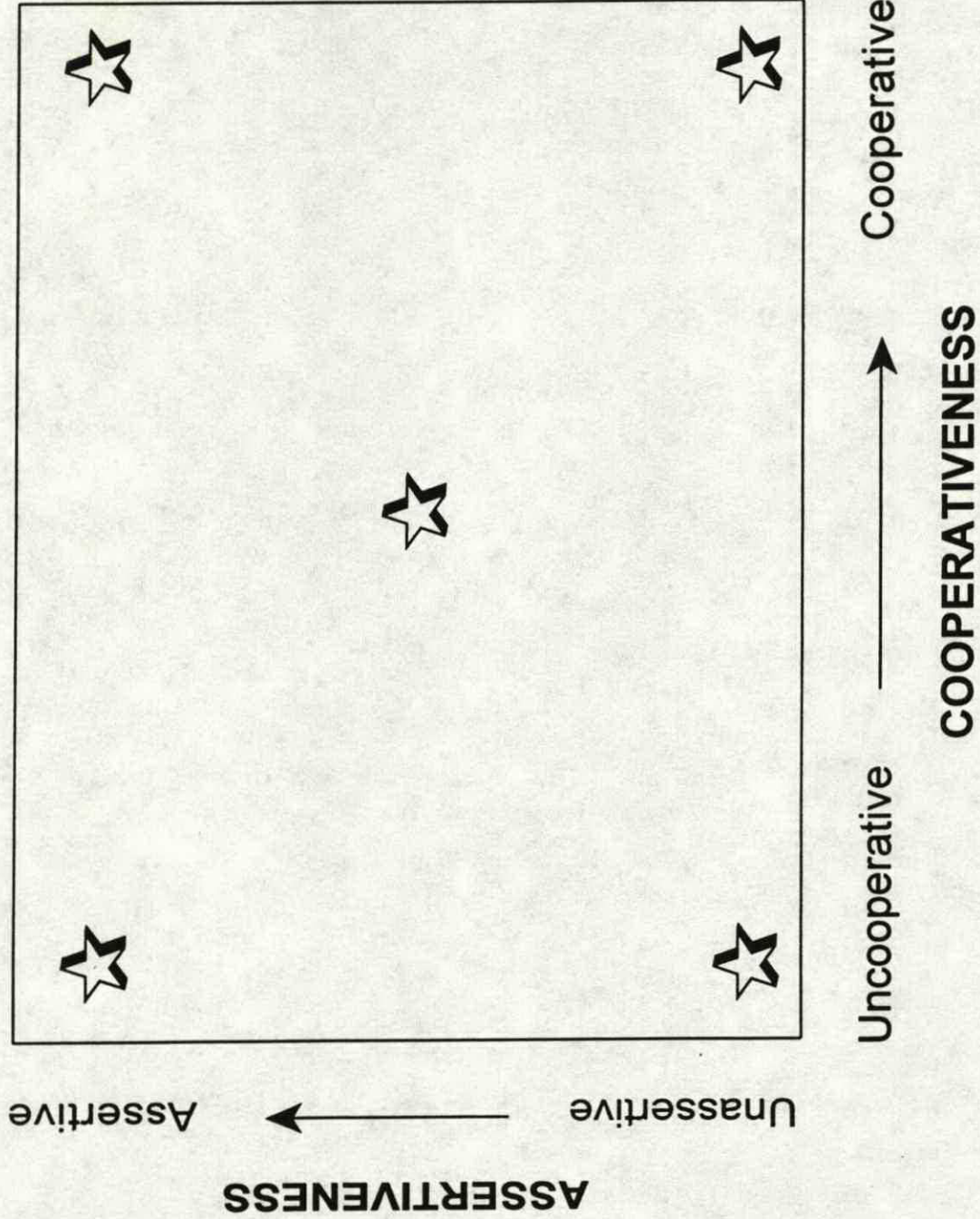


	Competing	Collaborating	Compromising	Avoiding	Accommodating
High 25%	100%	12		12	12
				11	11
		11	12	11	10
		10	11	10	9
	90%			9	8
		9	10		7
		8		9	8
	80%				
			9		6
		7		8	
Middle 50%	70%			7	
		6	8		5
				6	
			7		
	50%				
		5	7		
				6	
				5	
	40%				4
		4		6	5
Low 25%	30%			5	
			6		
					3
	20%	3			4
			5		
				4	
		2			3
	10%				
			4	3	
			3	2	2
		2	1	1	
	1	1	1	1	
0%	0	0	0	0	

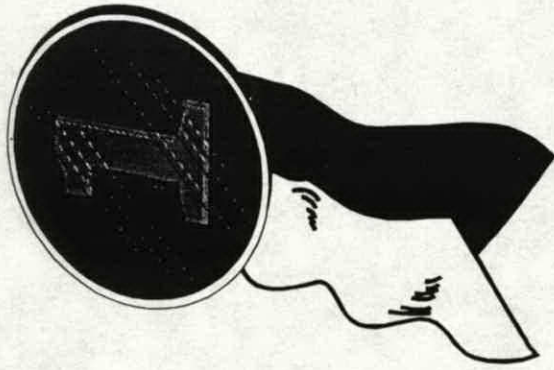
Overhead 05



# The Five Conflict Handling Modes



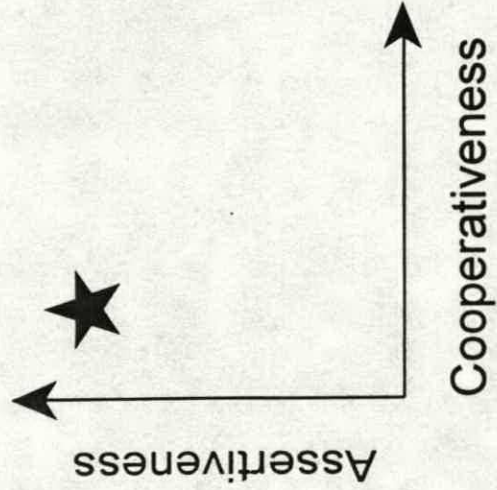




# Competing

*“My way or the highway”*

- Quick Action
- Unpopular Decisions
- Vital Issues
- Protection





# Competing Skills

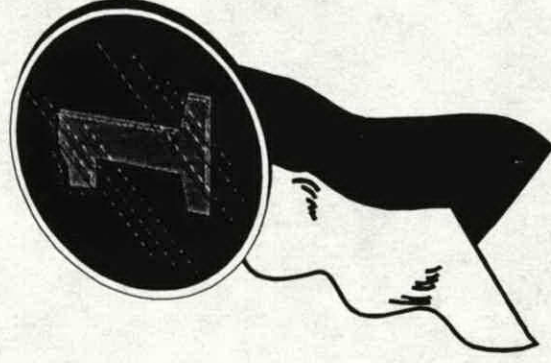
.....

- The Ability to Argue or Debate
- The Ability to Use Rank or Influence
- Asserting Your Opinions and Feelings
- Standing Your Ground
- Stating Your Position Clearly



# Overuse of Competing

- Lack of Feedback
- Reduced Learning
- Low Empowerment
- Surrounded by “Yes Men”





# Underuse of Competing

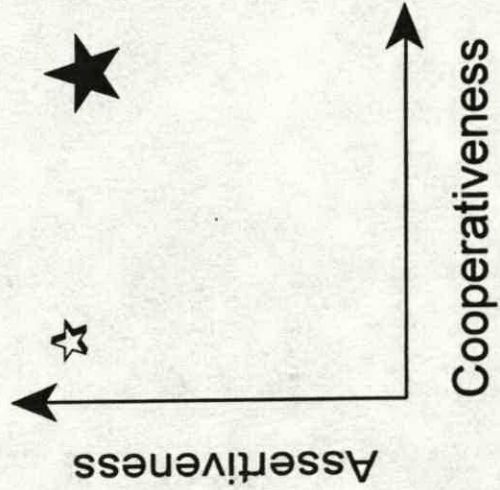
- Restricted Influence
- Indecision
- Slow to Act
- Contributions Withheld





# Collaborating

*“Two heads are  
better than one”*



- Integrating Solutions
- Learning
- Merging Perspectives
- Gaining Commitment
- Improving Relationships



# Collaborating Skills



- The Ability to Listen
- Nonthreatening Confrontation
- Analyzing Input
- Identifying Concerns





# Overuse of Collaborating

- Too Much Time on Trivial Matters
- Diffused Responsibility
- Others May Take Advantage
- Work Overload





# Underuse of Collaborating



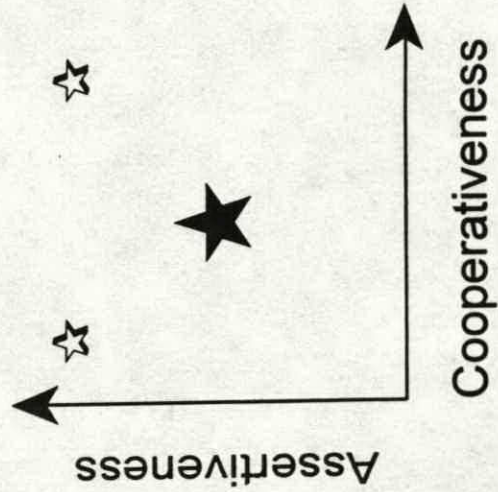
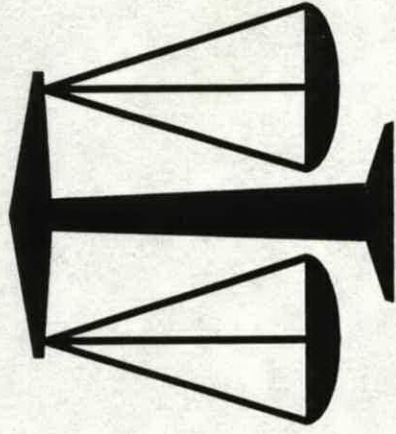
- Deprived of Mutual Gains
- Lack of Commitment
- Low Empowerment
- Loss of Innovation



# Compromising

*“Let’s make a deal”*

- Moderate Importance
- Equal Power—Strong Commitment



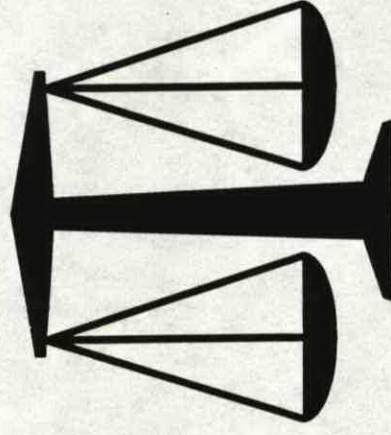
- Temporary Solutions
- Time Constraints
- Backup



# Compromising Skills



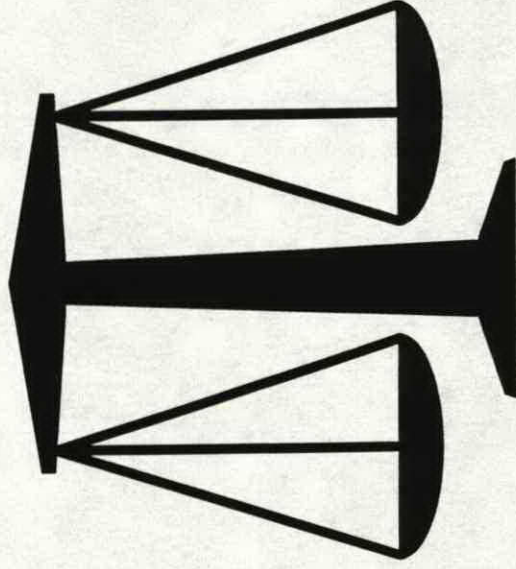
- Negotiating
- Finding a “Middle Ground”
- Making Concessions
- Assessing Value





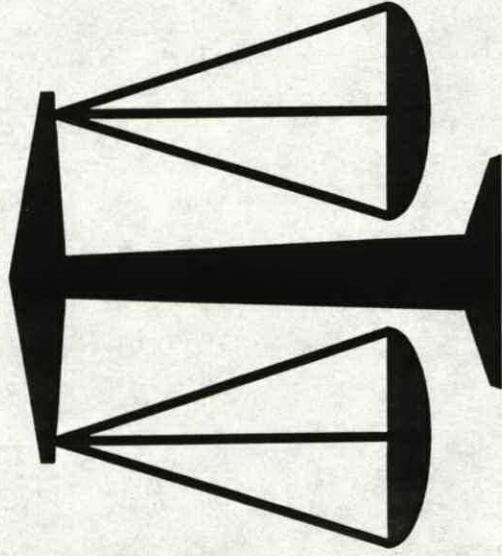
# Overuse of Compromising

- Lose Big Picture/  
Long Term Goals
- Lack of Values/  
Trust
- Cynical Climate





# Underuse of Compromising



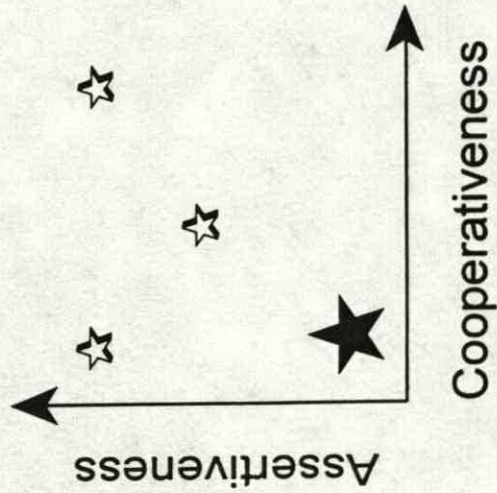
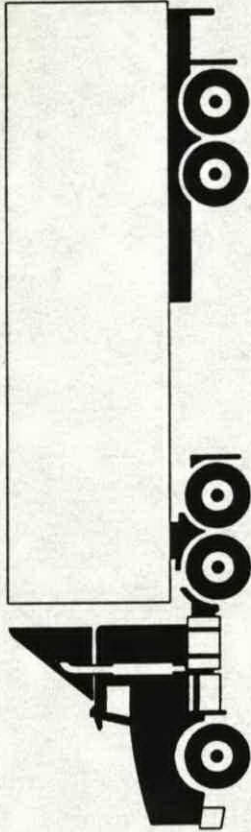
- Unnecessary Confrontations
- Frequent Power Struggles
- Unable to Negotiate Effectively



# Avoiding

*“I’ll think about it tomorrow”*

- Issues of Low Importance
- Reducing Tensions



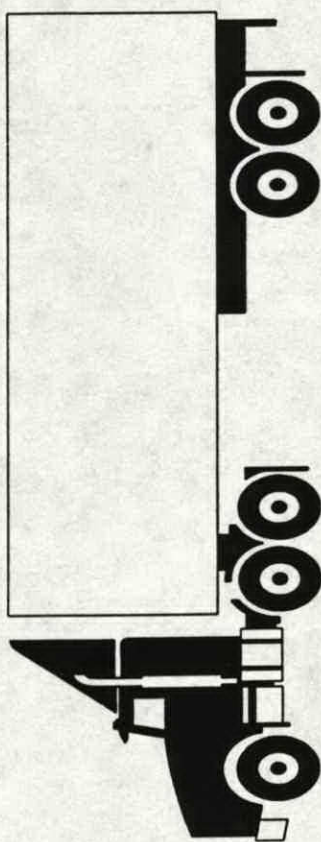
- Buying Time
- Low Power
- Allowing Other Symptomatic Problems



# Avoiding Skills



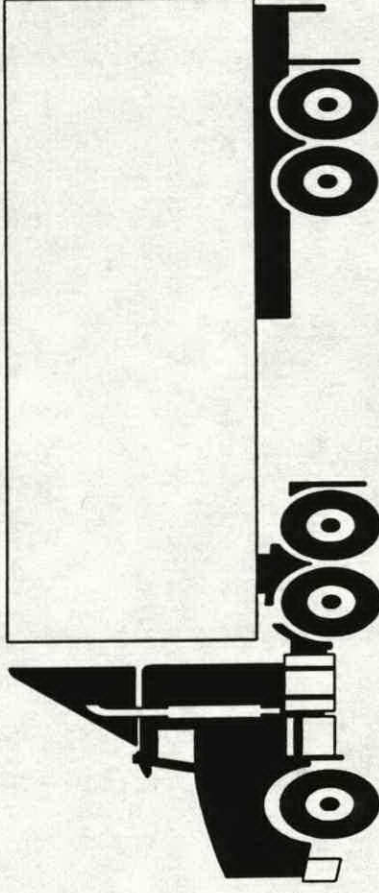
- Ability to Withdraw
- Sidestepping
- Sense of Timing
- Able to Leave Things Unresolved





# Overuse of Avoiding

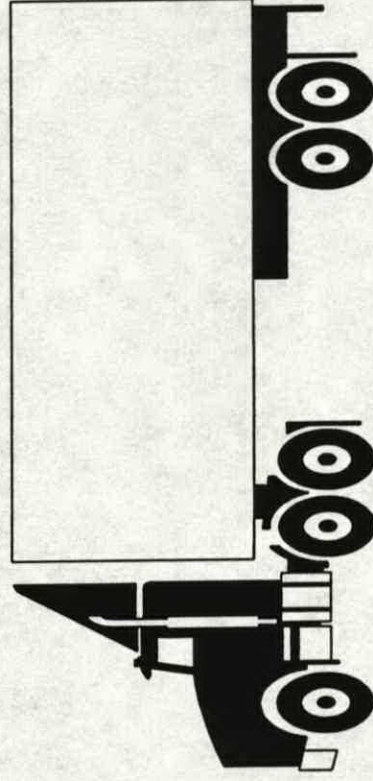
- Lack of Input from You
- Decisions Made by Default
- Issues Fester
- Cautious Climate





# Underuse of Avoiding

- Hostility/Hurt Feelings
- Too Many Causes
- Lack of Prioritization/  
Delegation



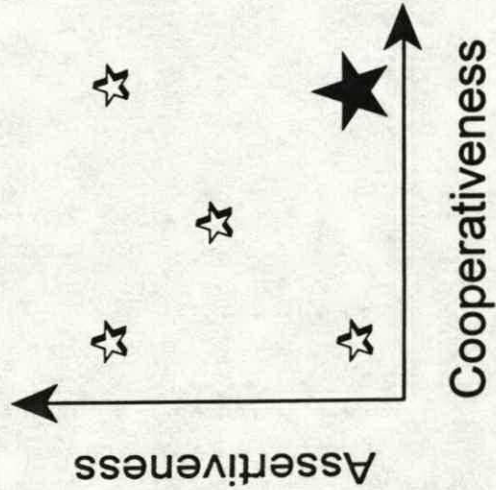


# Accommodating

*"It would be my pleasure"*



- Showing Reasonableness
- Developing Performance



- Creating Good Will
- Keeping "Peace"
- Retreating
- Low Importance



# Accommodating Skills

.....

- Forgoing Your Desires
- Selflessness
- Obeying Orders
- Ability to Yield





# Overuse of Accommodating

- Ideas Get Little Attention
- Restricted Influence
- Loss of Contribution
- Anarchy





# Underuse of Accommodating



- Lack of Rapport
- Low Morale
- Exceptions Not Recognized
- Unable to Yield



---

# Critical Skills

---



# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

## Five-Step Model

### 1. MAKE DECISION TO MANAGE THE CONFLICT

- Clarify goals and intentions for managing conflict
- Decide to manage the conflict or not

### 2. DIAGNOSE CONFLICT ISSUES

- Determine source of core difference

### 3. PLAN STRATEGY

- Determine place, time, context
- Plan for phases to occur in the dialogue
  - ventilation
  - clarification
  - understanding
  - problem solving

### 4. ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE

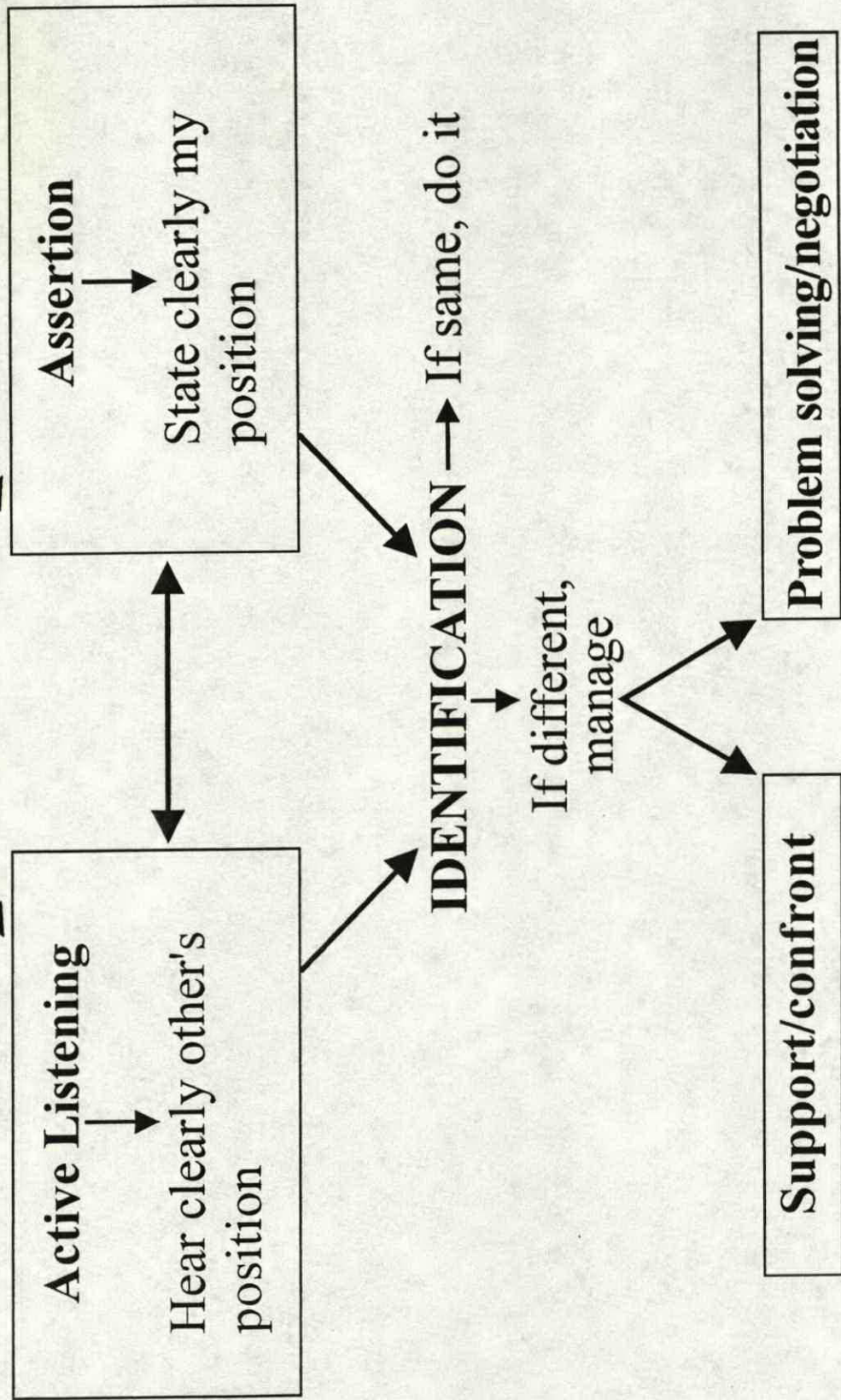
- Use Listening to understand
- Use Assertion to present your information
  - describe
  - explain Impact
  - specify requirements/needs
  - identify consequences
- Use Problem Solving to come to joint agreement
- Use Conciliatory language or gestures and other communication skills as required

### 5. COME TO CLOSURE

- Agree upon for actions and accountabilities
- Make the agreement clear and concrete



# Moving to Agreement





## Critical Skill – Active Listening

Listening is difficult even when our position is the same or similar. Listening is compounded when the other views things differently.

Conflict includes a rational element (the substance of our difference) and an emotional element (how individuals feel about the difference).

**Active listening** is the skill of integrating both parts of the communication—the content (what the person is saying) and the process (how a person says it). Most are skilled at hearing the content or rational element. **BUT THIS IS ONLY HALF THE MESSAGE!** Feelings must be identified, surfaced, and responded to if the whole message is to be understood. Feelings are dealt with in conjunction with the rational aspects.

Active listening has two ingredients:

**Empathy** is the ability to understand the other's view of reality even though it is different from ours and the feelings are not the same. It is the ability to identify the other's feelings.

**Acceptance** is the ability to take the other's position as true for them irrespective of any agreement.

Active listening is **NOT AGREEMENT**—it is accurately hearing the total message the other is sending.



## Examples for Empathic Listening Practice

1. *Your co-worker says:* "I'm starting to hate my job. There's never enough time for my family. All I do is work. Last week I worked 70 hours and didn't see my kids at all because I got home so late every night."

---

---

2. *One of your direct reports comes to you to complain about the lack of overtime.* "When I signed on in this department, I was expecting at least 10 hours of overtime a week. I see you giving everyone else the opportunities for overtime, but not me. What do you have to do to get on an overtime list?"

---

---

3. *One of your direct reports is angry with you.* "I don't understand why you're so against me. I saw the list of names to go to the conference on the new systems, and almost everyone from our team is going except me!"

---

---

4. *Your peer approaches you in the cafeteria.* "You know, your people have been taking breaks whenever they feel like it while I'm telling my people they have to go at a certain time. How am I supposed to enforce the rules if your people don't follow them. I'm fed up with my people challenging me about the rules because they see your people not following them."

---

---



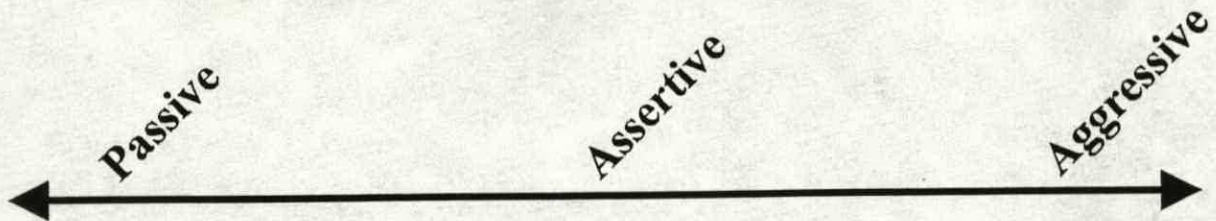
## **Ground Rules for Assertion**

1. Nothing is obvious until it is stated.
2. You have no right to demand or expect something you haven't asked for.



# Assertion

## DEFINITIONS



**Passive:** To act or behave in a way that disregards your own rights and concerns.

**Assertive:** To act in a way that respects the rights and concerns of both parties.

**Aggressive:** To act or behave in a way that disregards the rights and concerns of the other.

**Passive Aggressive:** To act (pretend) that the other's needs/concerns are more important than own, but indirectly do things to meet own needs/agenda. On surface, looks merely passive—but is disguised aggressive.



## Assertion "I-Message" Examples

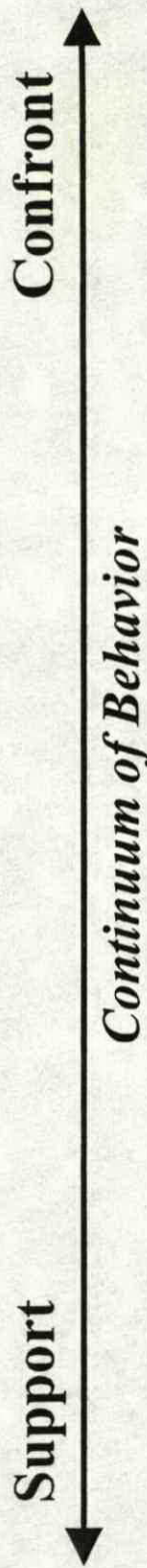
BEHAVIOR	EFFECTS	FEELINGS
When you come in at 8:30 and leave at 4:00...	those project reports may not be finished on time and...	that really worries me.
That volume on your radio...	makes it hard for me to concentrate on this assignment...	and that's very frustrating to me.
When you make a personal change in my department without consulting me...	it throws off my production schedules for the week and makes my work much harder...	and I resent that.

### PLANNING

When...	Something happens...	My feelings...
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____



# Critical Skill – Support/Confront



## Definitions:

**Support:** to accept as valid for the other whatever the other values, feels, thinks, irrespective of agreement

**Confront:** to make explicit the difference between us (verbal hook)  
– makes legitimate my view for me  
– verbal skill

## Guidelines:

- Support/confront – on the same issue
- Be able to move back and forth on the support/confront continuum
- Focus on the issue – not the person
- State a position so it can be heard without fighting



## Critical Skill: Support/Confront

Conflict resolution requires that the real differences between people be made explicit before problem solving proceeds.

**Support** – Hear and accept what others say as real for them without judgment.  
Support is for the other person.

**Confront** – Stating your own position and differentiating yourself from the other.  
confront is for self.

Skill is to do both as close in time as possible.

Without support – other position is lost.

Without confront – my position is lost.

“Your position is...

My position is...

The real difference between us is...

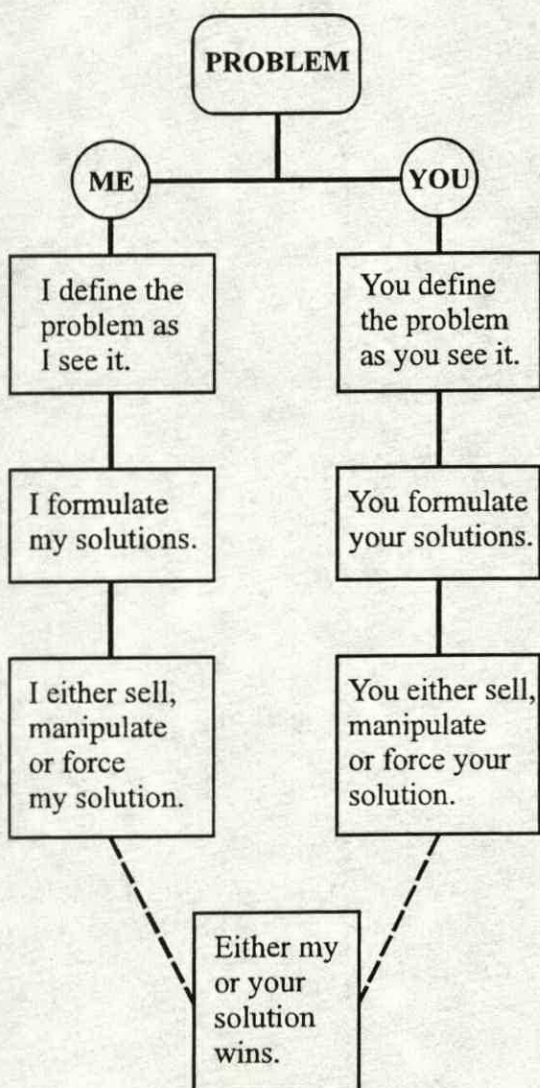
Now let's move to solve the difference!”

The personal skill of support/confront is critical to the process of managing conflicts and agreement.

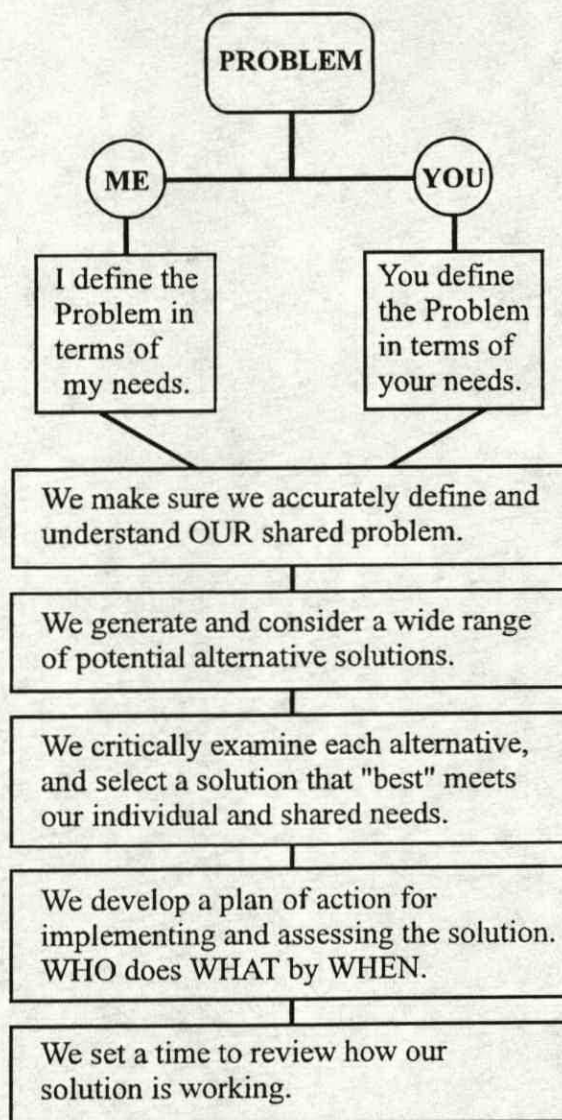


# Two Ways of Solving Problems

## Typical (Traditional)



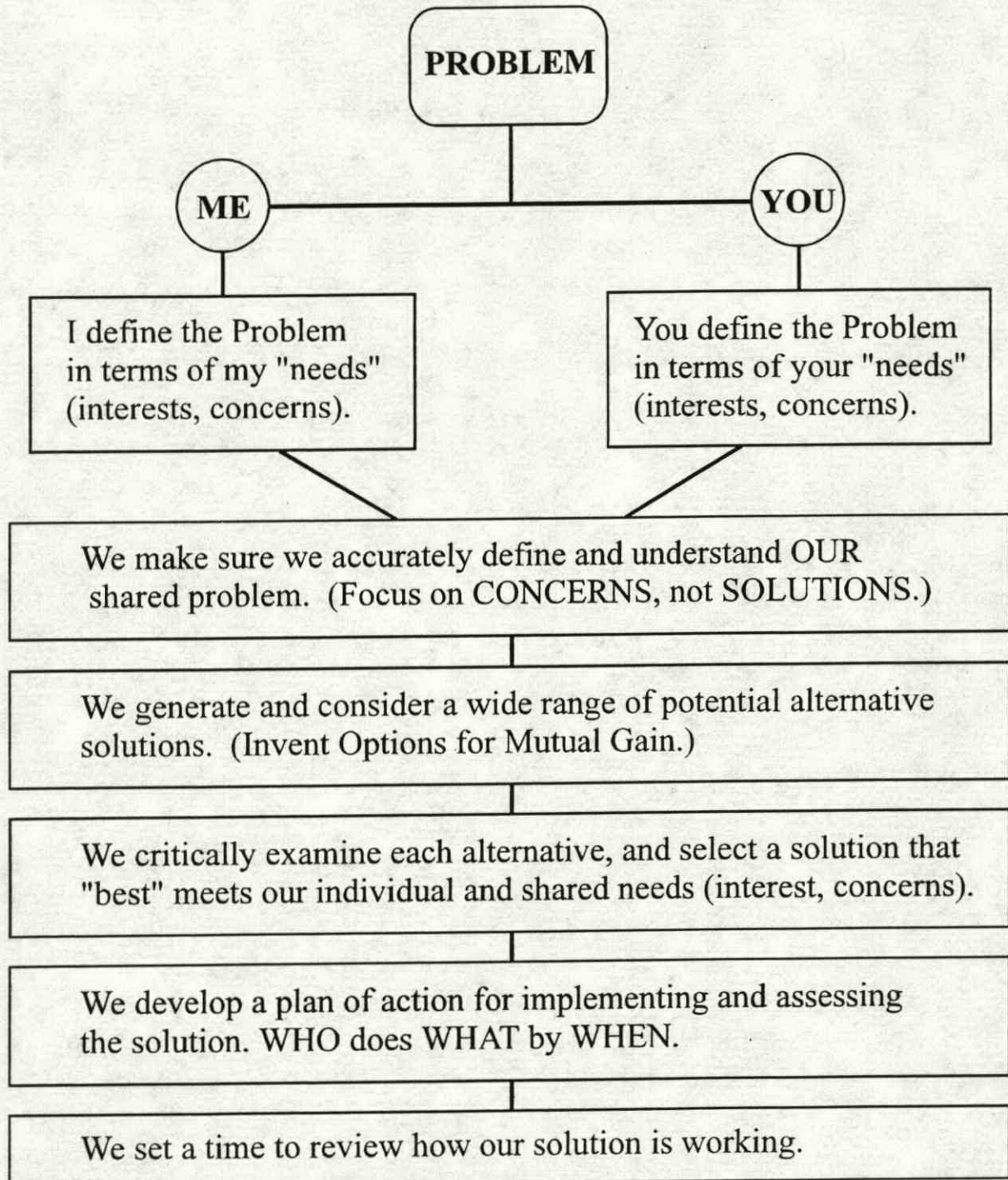
## Mutually Acceptable Problem Solving





## Critical Skill: Problem Solving/Negotiation

### Mutually Acceptable Problem Solving





# Critical Skill: Problem Solving/Negotiation

## Mutually Acceptable Problem Solving

### A. Introducing the Problem Solving Method

1. Make sure there is sufficient time to work on the problem.
2. Explain the win/win method to the other, and how it differs from win-lose methods.
3. Reflect the other's questions, feelings, and concerns. (*Active Listening, P.24*)

### B. Step I: Identifying and Defining the Problem

1. State your wants, feelings, or concerns specifically and precisely. (*Assertion, P.25*)
2. State your problem in terms of unmet "needs" (concerns); not in terms of the solution you want. (*Assertion, P.26*)
3. Obtain the wants, feelings, and concerns from the other. (*Support/Confront, P.28*)
4. Express problem definition in terms of conflict of "needs" (concerns), not competing solutions. (*Support/Confront, P.29*)

### C. Step II: Selecting the Solution

#### (GENERATING ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS)

1. Obtain a number of alternative solutions from the other.
2. Prevent the evaluation of any solution as they are being generated.
3. Contribute a number of alternative solutions.
4. Write the solutions down.
5. Restate the problem if things stop or slow down.

#### (EVALUATING THE ALTERNATIVES AND CHOOSING THE "BEST" SOLUTION)

6. Encourage the other to candidly and honestly evaluate each solution. (*Active Listening, P.24*)
7. Honestly and candidly assert your own evaluations of each solution. (*Active Listening, P.24; Assertion, P.25&26*)
8. Eliminate any solution that is objected to by either party. (*Support/Confront, P. 28, 29*)
9. Encourage the selection of a solution to be "tried out" to see if it works.
10. Write out the mutually agreed-upon solution into a clear statement.

### D. Step III: Implementing the Solution

1. Work with the other to design a plan of action for carrying out and evaluating the solution; that is, who does what by when, and how the parties will know if it is working. (*Action Plan*)
2. Work with the other to set a date and time when the mutually agreed-upon solution will be reviewed.



## Action Plan For Implementing An Agreement (Use For Step 5 – “Closure”)

Who	What	By When
Criteria for Evaluating Win/Win Outcome:		
Date and Time for Reviewing Outcome:		
Signatures of Parties Involved:		
1. _____		
2. _____		
3. _____		



# **Communication Techniques that Support the 4 Critical Skills**



# PERCEPTION CHECK

*(To help you understand others)*

- **What:** Your description of what the other person feels, and your request for confirmation
- **Examples:**
  - “I get the impression you’d rather not talk about this. Is that true?”
  - You look like you were confused by my comment-- were you?
  - You were disappointed not to be invited to the meeting?



# BEHAVIOR DESCRIPTION

*(To help you stay objective)*

- **What:** Description of specific, observable actions of others, rather than stating inferences, accusations or generalizations about motives.
- **Examples:**
  - “You interrupted me 3 times.” *instead of* “You never listen to me.”
  - “Jim and Bill have done most of the talking and the rest of us have said very little.” *instead of* “Jim and Bill always have to be in the spotlight.”



# BROKEN RECORD

*(To help you be persistent, and stick to your point calmly)*

- **What:** Calm repetition of your point over and over again in the face of manipulative “traps,” irrelevant logic, or a “wall” in front of you.



# FOGGING

*(To keep you from being manipulated)*

- **What:** A skill that allows you to manage receiving to manipulative criticism by calmly acknowledging to your critic that there may be some truth in what he/she says, while you remain judge of what you do.
- **Examples:**
  - “You may be right.”
  - “There may be some truth to that.”



# NEGATIVE ASSERTION

*(To help you be more comfortable  
with your own errors)*

- **What:** A skill that teaches acceptance of your errors and faults (without having to apologize) by strongly and sympathetically agreeing with hostile or constructive criticism of your negative qualities.
- **Examples:**
  - “You’re right, I blew it!”
  - “Yes, I did make a mistake in my numbers.”



# NEGATIVE INQUIRY

*(Helps you help others become more assertive)*

- **What:** A skill whereby you ask for critical feedback in order to use the information. This helps your “critic” to be more assertive and direct.
- **Examples:**
  - “What is it about that report that bothers you?”
  - “Help me understand why that work schedule is a problem for you.”



# CONCILIATORY GESTURES

*(To help you relax tensions)*

- **What:** A verbal gesture that shows desire or openness to resolve the conflict in a mutually acceptable way. It makes one vulnerable to the other.
- **Examples:**
  - Apologizing
  - Expressing empathy for other's problems
  - Asking for honest feedback
  - Accepting personal responsibility for part of the problem
  - Sharing your thoughts, feelings, motives



---

# Skills Practice

---



# Skills Necessary to Successfully Manage Conflict

## 1. Ability to determine nature of conflict:

- diagnose conflict to determine whether core is in facts, goal, methods, values or a combination of these. A values conflict is significant only when opposing views affect another in a tangible way.
- Non-tangible effects of conflict are best tolerated.

**RESULT:** Confrontation will be directed at issues amenable to solution.

## 2. Ability to effectively initiate confrontation:

- An effective initiation strategy is to state the tangible effects the conflict has on you.
- Avoid attack, may lead to →
- Defensive reactions which will block resolution.
- Confrontation is not synonymous with verbal attack.

**RESULT:** Resolution is more likely when not blocked by attack.

## 3. Ability to hear other's points of view:

- Reflective/active style of listening.
- Listen, then paraphrase what has been said.
- Then re-present your viewpoint.
- Avoid value statements.

**RESULT:** When confronter listens, other party's defenses are lowered and that person is left more ready to hear.

## 4. Ability to utilize problem-solving process: (5 steps)

- a. Clarify problem.
- b. Generate and evaluate number of solutions.
- c. Decide on solution together.
- d. Plan implementation of solution. How? When?
- \*\* e. Plan for an evaluation.

**RESULT:** Conflict successfully resolved when necessary skills employed and problem-solving steps followed.

**NOTE:** \*\* Essential step – often first solution tried is not the best one. If the first solution fails, begin process again at step (a).



## Skill Practice Evaluation

To be completed after the discussion ends.  
Please circle appropriate number.

1. To what extent did you reach the goals you set for the discussion?

Goals not met at all			Reached about half of goals			Goals were totally met
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Which was the primary approach to handling differences? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. To what extent were you:

a) Supportive?

Not at All			Moderately			To a Great Extent met
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

b) Confrontive

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

4. To what extent was other:

a) Supportive?

Not at All			Moderately			To a Great Extent met
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

b) Confrontive?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

5. To what extent did behaviors used impact the following:

Assured each position was heard and understood

Helped

Did Not  
Help

\_\_\_\_\_

Allowed differences to be made explicit

\_\_\_\_\_

Made for confrontation rather than argument

\_\_\_\_\_

Assisted in conflict resolution

\_\_\_\_\_

6. To what extent was the other able to present to you his/her position, ideas, or feelings?

Not presented			Presented in a tentative fashion			Presented clearly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7



7. To what extent do you believe you were able to communicate your position to the other?

Other was probably very confused				Other probably had general idea			Other understood fully
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

8. To what extent did you really listen to the other's ideas and opinions?

Seldom or never				Some extent			Very great extent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

9. To what extent did the other really listen to your ideas and opinions?

Seldom or little				Some extent			Listened a very great extent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

10. How confident are you that the other will be willing to share differences with you again?

I have no confidence whatsoever				At least 50/50			I am totally confident
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

As soon as both of you have completed these questionnaires, discuss each of the questions and share your responses.



---

# Readings

---



# Conflict Management: Learning Partner Dialogue

This exercise contains a series of open-ended statements intended to help you discover and share your reactions to conflict and your ways of dealing with it. You also will have an opportunity to learn from your partner's responses.

This dialogue experience is most effective if your answers are spontaneous and unrehearsed. Therefore, it is requested that you do not look ahead in this exercise.

## **Summary of the directions:**

- a. Take turns initiating the discussion
- b. Complete each statement **ORALLY**.
- c. Do not look ahead in the exercise.
- d. Do not skip items. Respond to each one in the order in which it appears.

.....	
The time I felt best about dealing with conflict was when...	1
.....	
The time I felt best about dealing with conflict was when...	2
.....	
The quality that I value the most in dealing with conflict would be...	3
.....	
I am most apt to confront people in situations such as...	4
.....	
My greatest weakness in handling conflict is...	5
.....	
When I see a serious conflict developing between two people <i>I care about</i> , I tend to...	6
.....	
When someone <i>I care about</i> is actively hostile toward me (i.e., yelling, threatening, abusive, etc.), I tend to...	7
.....	
My greatest weakness in handling conflict is...	8
.....	
I feel most vulnerable during a conflict when...	9
.....	
When I confront some <i>I care about</i> , I...	10
.....	
My greatest strength in handling conflict is...	11
.....	
My greatest strength in handling conflict is...	12
.....	



## Appendix - Dealing With Others

After completing the *Thomas~Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument*, it is not uncommon for people to ask questions like: "Now that I know all this, what do I do with it?" "How do I deal with that person in my office who is overly competing (collaborating, compromising, avoiding or accommodating)?" "What do I do when I feel that I have reacted in a way that could cause a negative situation?" Here are a few suggestions to consider.

### **Sensitivity to Certain Modes**

Just recognizing what mode someone is in heightens your awareness about how to communicate with them. Certain sensitivities may be associated with different modes. For example, the following characteristics may accompany overuse of a particular conflict mode:

#### **Competing:**

The competing person may feel that you are criticizing them.

Others may not understand where the competing person is coming from.

Be assertive, but choose your words carefully. Don't be afraid to ask a competing person about their motives and to share your own.

#### **Avoiding:**

The avoiding person may feel pushed by you, and further retreat.

Others may feel that the avoiding person "doesn't care" or that they are not capable.

Be persistent, but gentle. For example, accept that the avoiding person is "too busy," and ask when would be a better time.

#### **Collaborating:**

The collaborating person may feel that you are dumping all responsibility, or not cooperating, or that you are unappreciative.

Others may feel that the collaborating person is meddling, or making things more complicated than they need to be.

Take time to acknowledge the collaborating person's good intentions, and set clear boundaries.



## Appendix - Dealing With Others

### **Compromising:**

The compromising person may feel that you are unreasonable or slow to agree.

Others may feel that the compromising person doesn't stand for anything or wants to resolve everything in quick fix fashion.

Explain that you do not want to be unreasonable, but that certain concerns must be addressed before you can feel comfortable with the resolution.

### **Accommodating:**

The accommodating person may feel that you are taking advantage of them, and that you care only about your own concerns.

Others may feel that the accommodating person is a push-over.

Ask the accommodating person about their needs and concerns. Let them know that you are trusting them to acknowledge what is best for them.

### **Handling Difficult Situations**

Keep in mind that you are never "stuck" with the outcome of an interaction. You can always go back and give additional clarity and input to the situation. Sometimes, just by acknowledging the mode that you were in at the time reduces negative feelings. You can always change the mode you are in and "make the pot right," so to speak. When confronted with a difficult conflict situation, it often helps to frame the situation, by separating facts from feelings, acknowledging where you are coming from and validating the other person's feelings. We all have a desire to be known and understood. If possible, demonstrate that you are aware of yourself and considerate of others. Also, know when to let go. You cannot change other people, you can only change yourself.

When an interaction with another person does not go well, we sometimes create obstacles for ourselves. We may be labeled and perceptions can spread. As a result, we may find ourselves trapped in a role that we do not want, thrown off track, or at the very least frustrated with our situation.



## Appendix- Dealing With Others

### Tips for Communicating Effectively

Remember that everyone wants to be heard and understood.

- People "hear" best when:
  - They do not feel threatened.
  - They sense that you are aware of their concerns and feelings. You state your position clearly.
  - You demonstrate active listening skills such as eye contact, validation, echoing (paraphrasing what they have said) and attentive body language.
- Don't be afraid to be direct, state your role in the situation and self-disclose the reasons for your position.
- Take more time with people that you have limited contact with. They may not know you well enough to understand where you are coming from. Use more self-disclosure in the beginning of a relationship until a rapport is developed.
- Pay attention to your own physical and mental comfort, and the physical and mental comfort of others.

Listen to yourself; pay attention to how you react to others.

- Don't be afraid to ask for feedback and to check for understanding during a conversation.
- Whenever we find fault in another person, we tend to admonish ourselves of any wrong doing. Learn to accept responsibility for your part in all interactions.
- Take time to reflect on your interactions with others. Even in a negative situation, you can learn a lot by evaluation; looking at your options, how you acted or reacted, and how you can avoid similar outcomes in the future.
- Use prevention. An extra minute spent in communicating well upfront can save hours and days on the back end of a situation.