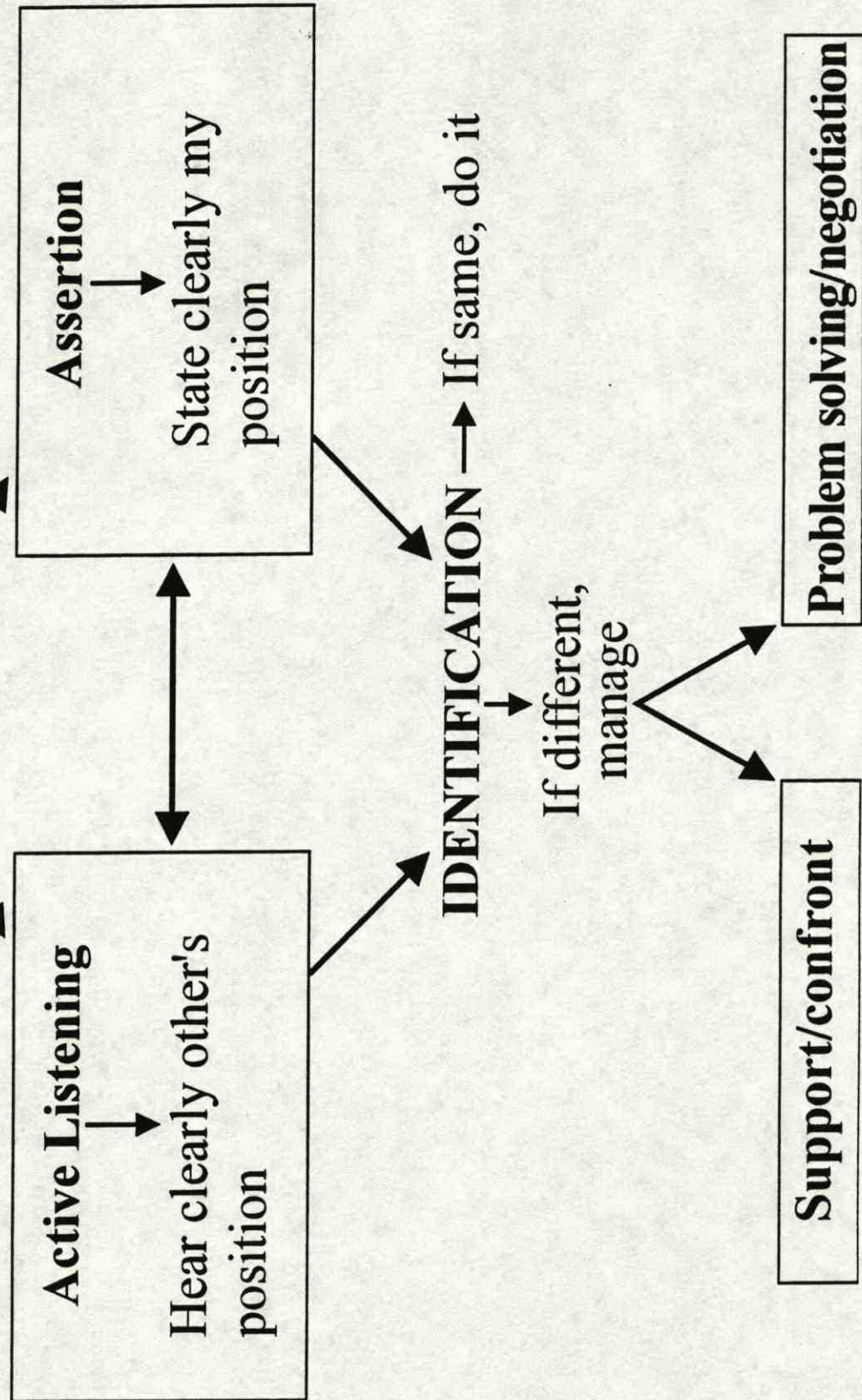


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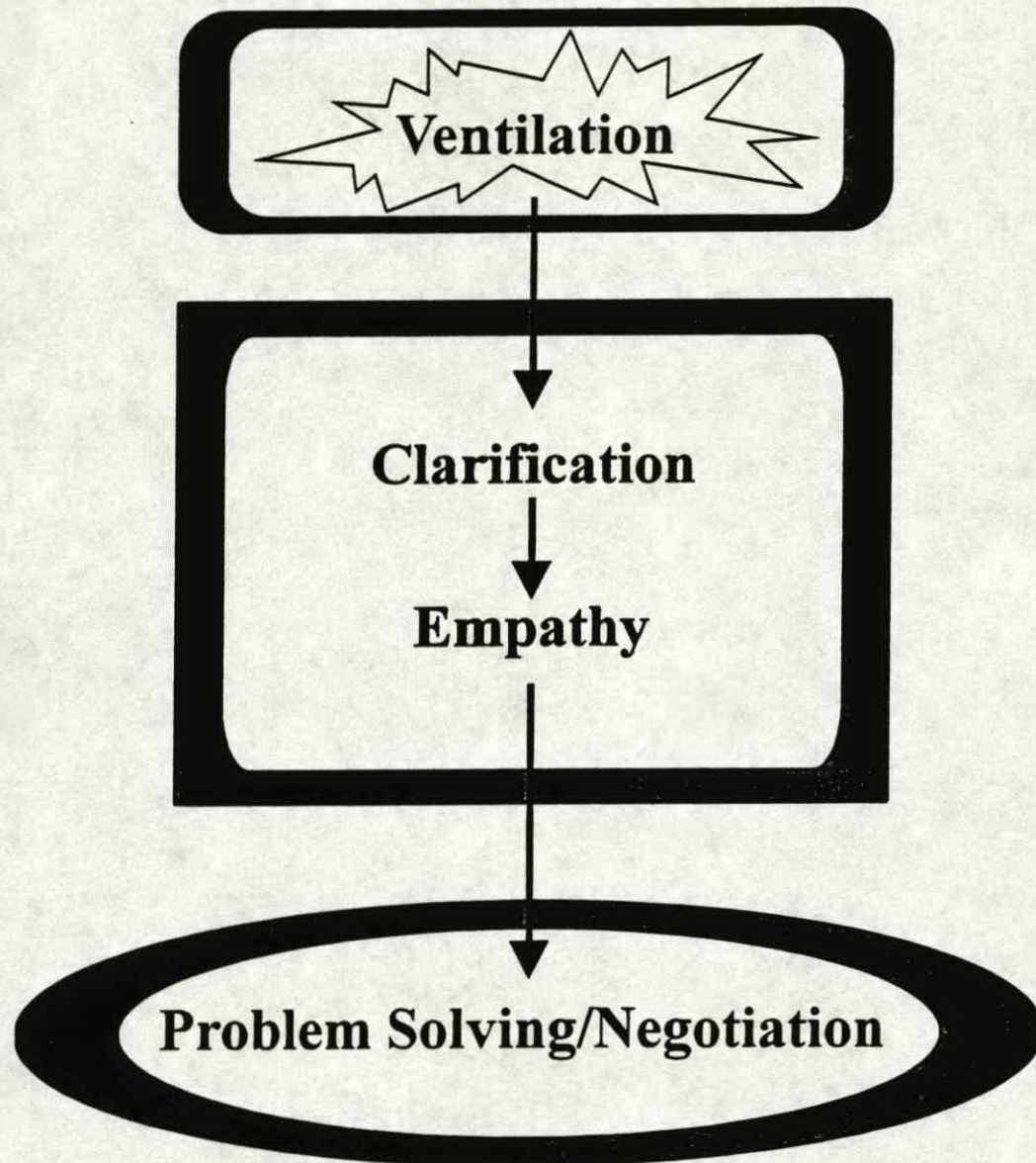
# Critical Skills

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# Moving to Agreement



# A Picture of a Conflict Management Dialogue



Source: N T L - Managing Conflict

## 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.

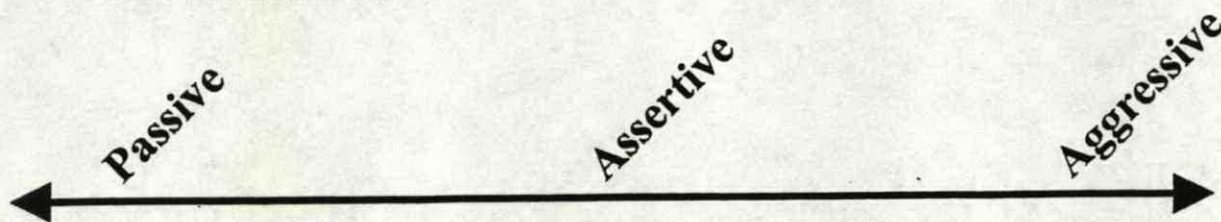
Active listening is **NOT AGREEMENT**—it is accurately hearing the total message the other is sending.

## **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

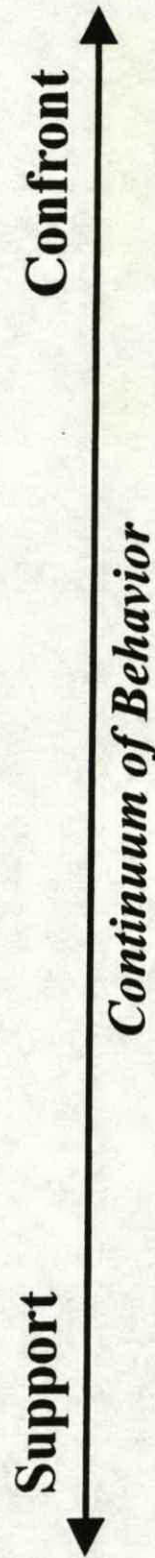


**Passive:** To act or behave in a way that disregards your own rights and concerns.

**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.

# 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.



# 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)

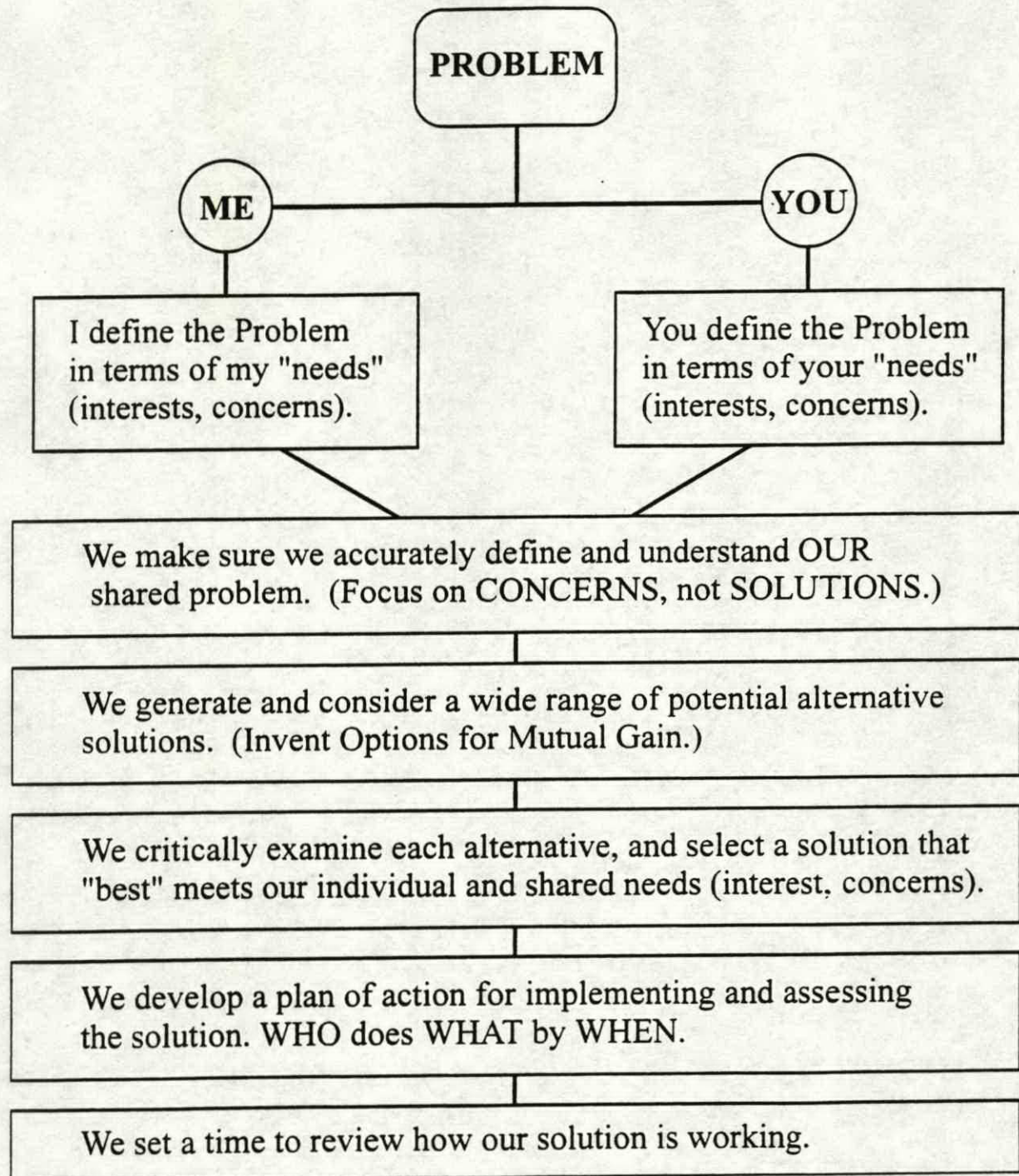
- a. Clarify problem.
- b. Generate and evaluate number of solutions.
- c. Decide on solution together.
- d. Plan implementation of solution. How? When?
- \*\* e. Plan for an evaluation.

**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).

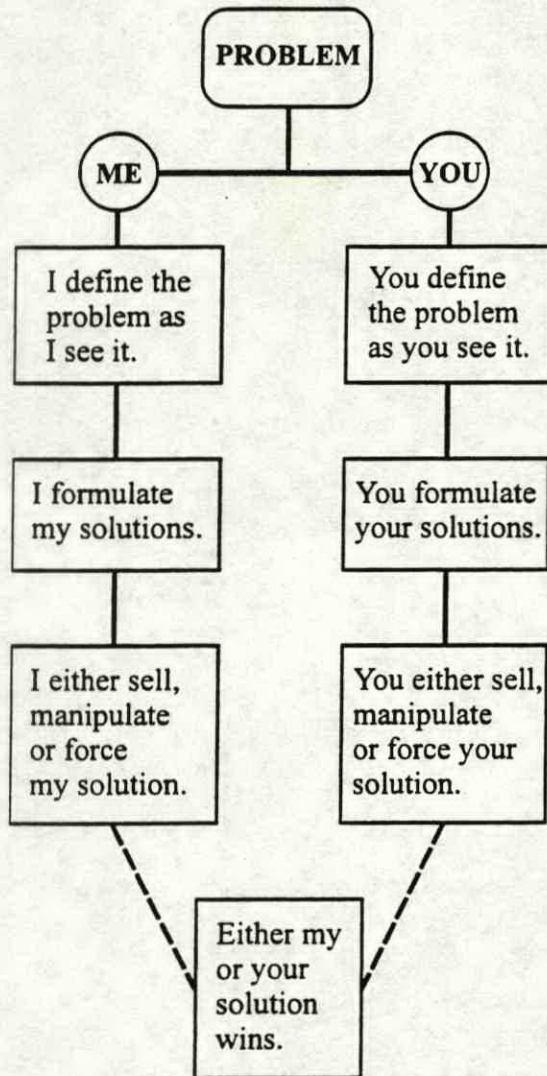
## Critical Skill: Problem Solving/Negotiation

### Mutually Acceptable Problem Solving

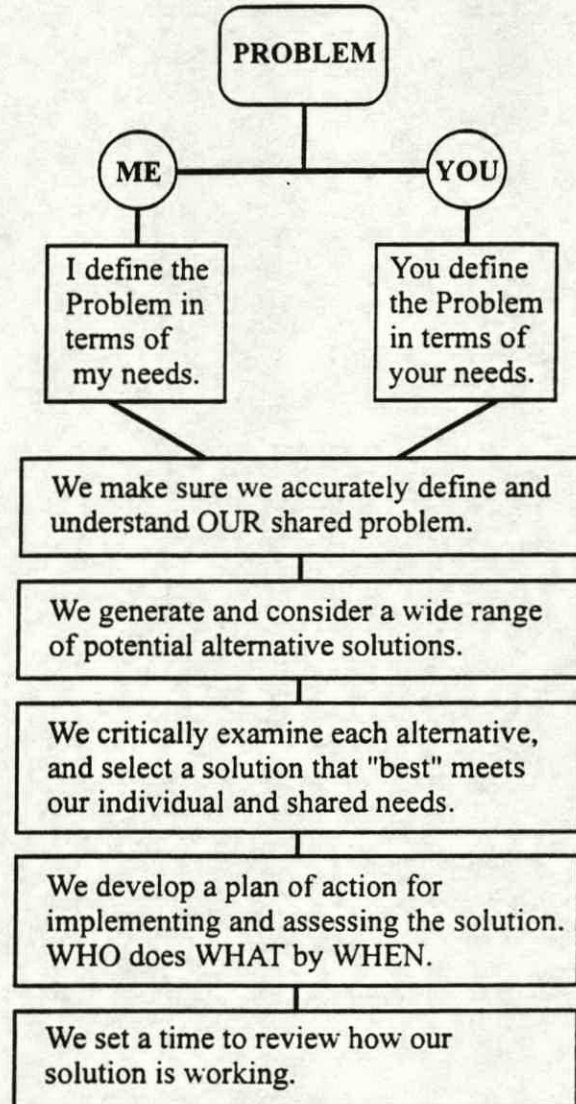


## Two Ways of Solving Problems

### Typical (Traditional)



### 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.

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

1. State your wants, feelings, or concerns specifically and precisely.
2. State your problem in terms of unmet "needs" (concerns); not in terms of the solution you want.
3. Obtain the wants, feelings, and concerns from the other.
4. Express problem definition in terms of conflict of "needs" (concerns), not competing solutions.

### 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.
7. Honestly and candidly assert your own evaluations of each solution.
8. Eliminate any solution that is objected to by either party.
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.
2. Work with the other to set a date and time when the mutually agreed-upon solution will be reviewed.

# **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 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

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# **Personal Plans, Worksheets, and Notes**

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# Conflict Management

## **Pre-Course Assignment:**

The Conflict Management Course will use actual "real world" examples of what conflicts you are dealing with as the context for learning and practicing conflict management skills. Please complete this worksheet prior to the course and bring it with you for your use in the skill practice session.

## **Scenario of a Recent Conflict**

Write a brief description (3 to 5 sentences) of a conflict situation you were recently involved in. Pick one in which you were unhappy with the outcome and would like to understand how you could have dealt with this conflict more effectively.

Who was involved?

What happened?

What was the outcome?

How do you feel about the outcome?

### **Scenario of a Current Conflict**

Write a brief description (3 to 5 sentences) of a current or recurring conflict that you need to deal with. Pick one that is both important to you and challenging for you to handle.

Who is involved?

What is happening?

How have you been dealing with this situation up to now?

# Diagnosing Core of Conflict

## *Worksheet*

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### **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*

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### **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*

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### **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

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### 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?

## 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."

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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?"

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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!"

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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."

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# 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
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

b) Confrontive

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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4. To what extent was other:

a) Supportive?

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

b) Confrontive?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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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.

# Conflict Management

## Action Planning Worksheet

### STEP I MAKE DECISION TO MANAGEMENT THE CONFLICT

Why have you decided to manage the conflict?

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What are your goals/intentions for managing this conflict?

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### STEP II DIAGNOSE THE CONFLICT

What are the core differences contributing to the conflict?

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What do you plan to do to manage these differences?

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### STEP III PLAN THE STRATEGY

Where and when will the discussion take place?

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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?

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**STEP IV    ENGAGE IN DISCUSSION**

What is your confrontation/assertion message for this conflict?

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

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**STEP V    COME TO CLOSURE**

How will you contract for accountability?

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**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. _____		