

Welcome to *Conflict Management!*

In this workshop, we will examine:

- Conflict styles and how they influence the ways your conflicts are (or aren't) resolved
- Ways to “unpack” a conflict and understand what’s really at stake for all parties
- Communication strategies to make talking through a conflict easier
- Ways in which we unconsciously respond to conflict, and how they may affect our communication strategies

The rest of this handout contains exercises that we will do during the talk, as well as a list of suggested resources that you can use to learn more or get more help dealing with conflict.

**Exercises**

**Question 1:** Use this space to describe (2-3 sentences, just to jog your memory) a conflict that really bothered you. It can be one involving your graduate studies, a work situation, or a personal conflict. Just try to have it be something you remember well and that you felt/feel strongly about.

We won't share this; it's just for you to keep in mind during the slides and analyze in the exercises.

**Question 2:** Consider your conflict, and do a VPN analysis. Try to look at the conflict from your point of view, as well as the point(s) of view of others. What do you think was going on? Were your values different from others'? Where might perceptions be different? Were your needs or others' not being met? Were there multiple issues? (You don't have to use all the numbered options, and feel free to use a Venn diagram or similar instead of this linear format!)

	You	Other(s)
Values	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Perceptions	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Needs	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.

After you have sketched things out, rank the issues in order of either importance or things that you think are 'root causes.'

Then ask yourself: if you could ask one question, and get a full and honest answer, what would it be?

**Question 3:** Consider your conflict, and do a TRIP analysis. Try to look at the conflict from your point of view, as well as the point(s) of view of others. What do you think was going on? Was there any difference of opinion about the precise nature of the conflict? What were the likely relationship goals? How about the identity goals? Were process concerns an issue? (You don't have to use all the numbered options, and feel free to use a Venn diagram or similar instead of this linear format!)

	You	Other(s)
Topic	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Relationships	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Identity	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Process	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.

**Question 4:** Ask yourself these questions:

- What did I learn from these exercises that I can apply to my approach to conflict?
- Which one of these analyses worked better for me? Why? Is this likely to be situation-dependent?
- How many of the issues was I already aware of? What (if anything) new did I learn?
- What do I tend to have trouble seeing when I am upset or in conflict?

**Question 5:** Discuss in small groups (and make notes for yourself here):

1. When you are the leader, what will you do to minimize likelihood of misunderstandings in VPN or TRIP areas? Feel free to combine elements from both of the analysis types, consider conflict styles, etc.
  
2. What could you do today, in your current situations, to minimize misunderstandings or advocate for clarity in these areas?

**Question 6 (goes with the storytelling):**

1. Listen to the first part of the story (up to the break) and notice your responses as you listen. After the break, sketch them out:

Some things to think about:

- How did you feel physically? Did you notice any changes in your body as you listened?
- How did you feel emotionally? What did the story make you feel?
- How did you feel about engaging in the conflict (even by listening)? Did you want to help? Did you want to withdraw? Did you want to be somewhere else? Etc...

2. Listen to the second part of the story, and try to do “active listening” OF THE FATHER’S WORDS/TO THE FATHER What did the father say? What did he not say?

3. Think about everything we talked about in this seminar. How did Gavin (in the story) deal with the conflict, and how does it relate to what we covered? What else did it bring up?

## Additional Resources for Conflict Resolution

**Conflict Coaching:** Conflict coaching basically involves sitting down with someone else who will ask you the questions that it can be hard to ask yourself, especially when emotions are running high. Coaches will go through a process similar to the one described in this workshop: asking you what your perceptions were of what happened, why the situation was problematic for you, and helping you to uncover the differences in values, perceptions, and needs that are contributing to the conflict. Some coaches may be able to help you to understand which parts of the situation cannot change.

- Any trusted neutral: this is usually someone who is widely perceived to be fair and neutral, and who does not have a stake in the particular dispute. It should also be someone who makes you feel comfortable, and whose judgment, discretion, and skills you respect.
- The Graduate Ombudspersons: [rochester.edu/college/gradstudies/current/ombuds.html](http://rochester.edu/college/gradstudies/current/ombuds.html) The ombudspersons are trusted neutrals, and can help you talk through issues, provide advice and a second opinion, point you at other resources, and facilitate solutions to conflicts.
- The Center for Student Conflict Management (see below). In addition to offering formal structures for resolving conflict, they also offer conflict coaching.

**The University Intercessor's Office:** [www.rochester.edu/intercessor](http://www.rochester.edu/intercessor) The intercessor generally deals with specialized issues of harassment and discrimination. If your conflict may include these issues, they are an excellent resource. The intercessor's office also maintains a list of conflict coaches.

**Center for Student Conflict Management:** [www.rochester.edu/college/cscm/resolution.html](http://www.rochester.edu/college/cscm/resolution.html) If you wish to tap into more formal structures for resolving conflict, the University offers both mediation and restorative circles for members of the University Community.

For more reading on theory and practice of conflict resolution:

The Harvard University Program on Negotiation [www.pon.harvard.edu](http://www.pon.harvard.edu) is a long-term project dedicated to understanding theory and practice of how conflict is resolved. It grew out of the Law School, in recognition of the fact that legal "rights-based" negotiation is frequently not optimal. This project's books include the landmark *Getting to Yes* by Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Patton, as well as two books by William Ury that expand on this topic: *Getting Past No* and *The Power of a Positive No*.

**Other readings:** *Crucial Confrontations* and *Crucial Conversations Tools*, both by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler. These books detail very nicely how peoples' fears and what is not being said and taken into consideration frequently make solving problems difficult. Contains an expanded conflict style section and good exercises on making it emotionally "safe to talk."

*Dealing With People You Can't Stand:* Rick Brinkman and Rick Kirschner. Contains another type of conflict style inventory and a "toolbox" of tactics for resolving conflict.

*The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution* by Bernard Mayer and *Interpersonal Conflict* by William Wilmot and Joyce Hocker. These textbooks contain a lot about theory of conflict, as well as explorations of ways to achieve conflict management and resolution.

*The Handbook of Conflict Resolution* by Morton Deutsch. In addition covering theory and practice, this book does an excellent job of explaining how participants in conflict identify the point at which conflict started, and the causes of the conflict, very differently. This “punctuation” in conflict can have serious implications for how the conflict is resolved.

If you wish to explore community-based conflict resolution/community resources:

*Rochester Association of Family Mediators* [www.rafm.net](http://www.rafm.net) (contains links to Rochester mediators)

*The Mediation Center* <http://www.mediationctr.com> (a particular group of mediation practitioners that have has a large training program)

*Partners in Restorative Initiatives* [www.pirirochester.org](http://www.pirirochester.org) (a local nonprofit that specializes in helping organizations institute restorative practices, including Circle practices, in many venues including schools and universities.)