

# Turning Lemons into Lemonade



## Public Conflict Resolution

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When you hear the word  
“conflict”  
what images come to mind?





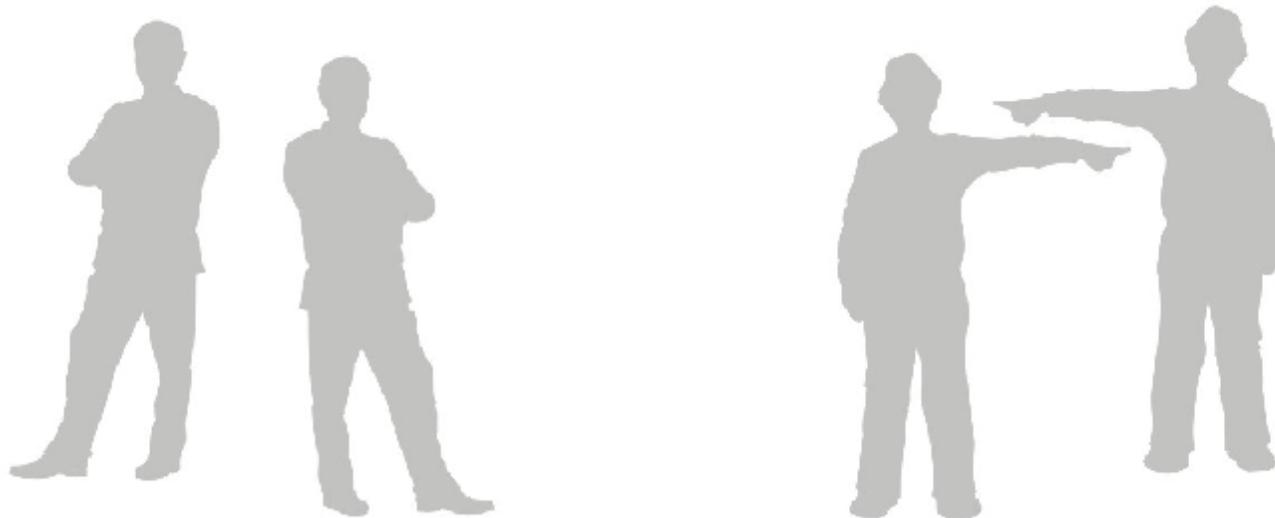
- “The goal of organizational leadership is not to eliminate conflict, but to use it.”
- “Conflict is a predictable social phenomenon and should be channeled to useful purposes.”

Source: Lippitt, Gordon, et.al, “Cutting Edge trends in organization development,” Training and Development Journal, 1989.



## Public Conflict

- Dying communities and organizations avoid conflict or work on it in ways that destroy relationships.





# Conflict



- Successful communities and organizations anticipate conflict and work on it in ways that keep relationships intact.



## Positive aspects of public conflict:

- Problem addressed / action taken.
- Conflict resolved.
- Better long-term relationship.
- Stimulate creativity.
- Personal / professional growth.



## Positive aspects of public conflict:

- Strengthen democracy (Participatory problem-solving).
- Change for “common good.”
- Can live with solution.
- Leadership emerges.
- Community / organization growth.



## Negative aspects of public conflict:

- No results.
- Little shared problem solving.
- Little creativity.
- Destroys relationships.
- Destruction of democracy.
- No sense of “we.”



## Negative aspects of public conflict:

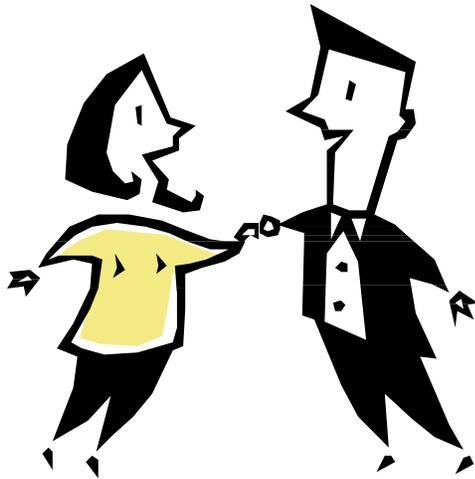
- Someone wins - someone loses.
- Unwillingness to work together.
- Expensive litigation.
- Community declines.
- Leadership declines.
- Loss of self-esteem.





## Why accent the positive aspects?

- “Shadow of the future”  
-- sustainable relationships.





## Symptoms of the Abilene Paradox:

- Failure to communicate real needs and beliefs.
- Invalid and inaccurate information leads to counter productive results.
- Members of group experience frustration (someone blamed).
- Cycle.



## Reasons for the Abilene Paradox:

- Action anxiety.
- Negative fantasies.
- Failure to assess real risk.
- Fear of separation.





## Group think = False consensus

- The group puts direct or subtle pressure on any member who questions group stereotypes, plans, goals or commitments.





## Symptoms of group think:

- Invulnerability - excessive optimism.
- Discount warnings about inadequacies of group assumptions.
- Unquestioned belief in group's morality.
- Stereotyped views of "enemies" as evil or dumb.
- Share illusion of unanimity.
- Self-appointed mind guards to protect group from adverse information.



# The Thomas-Killman Conflict Mode Instrument

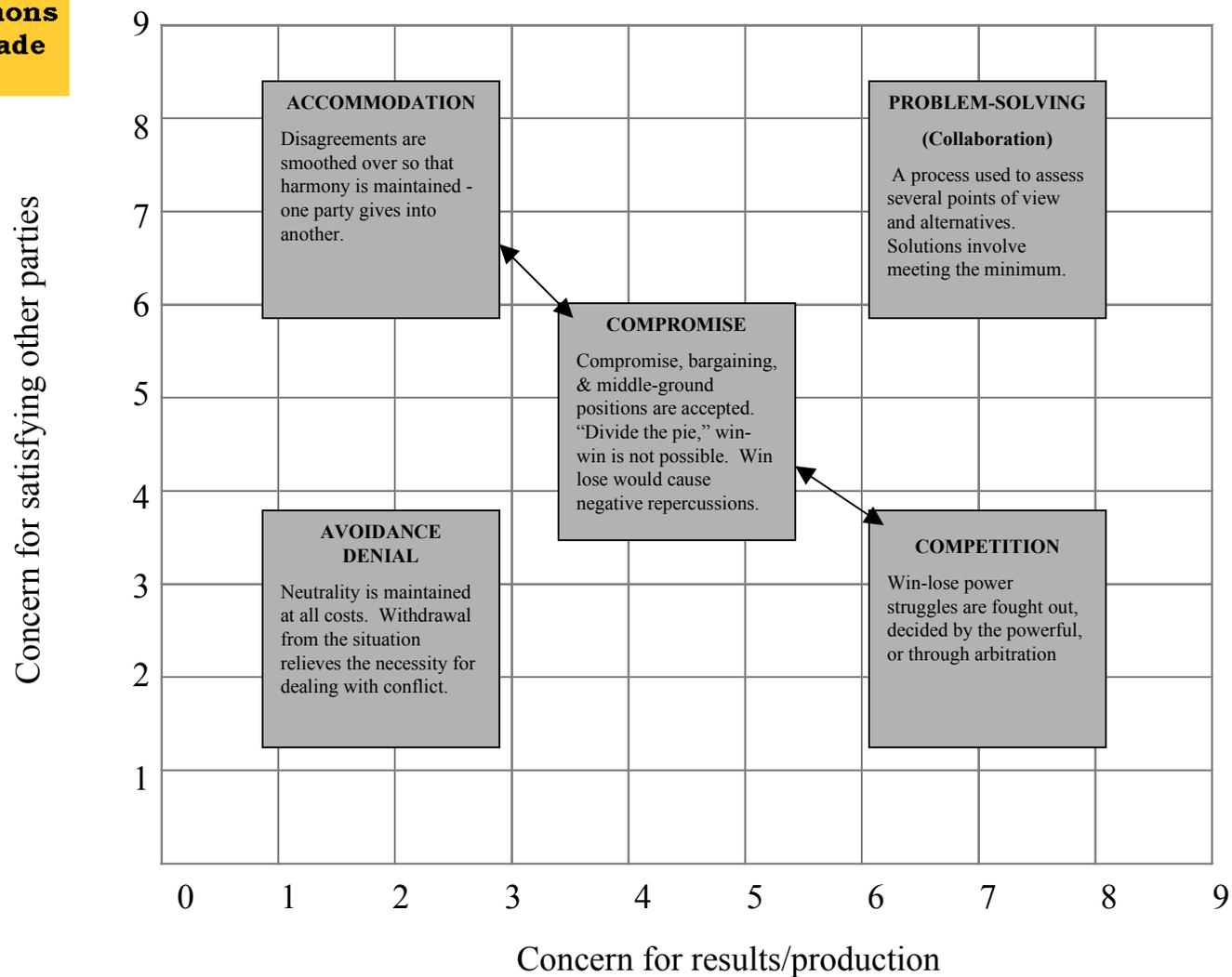
**Purpose:** To help you better understand your “natural” conflict resolution style.

- No “right” or “wrong” answers.
- Be honest with yourself.
- Confidentiality. No sharing of test scores required.





# The Conflict Grid





## Assumptions of the compromise approach:

- Pie is limited.
- Best solution is to divide the pie.
- Win-win is not possible.
- Win-lose = too many negatives.
- Everyone wins something.
- ***But*** everyone loses something.





# Positions

Positions are...

- something one has decided as a way to settle a conflict or a difference.
- a pre-determined solution.



## Problems with positions:

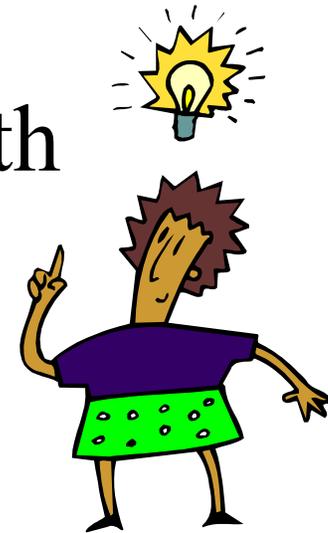
- Predetermined way to solve problem.
- Don't understand real interest of parties in dispute.
- Limits creative options.



# Interests

Interests are...

- needs, beliefs, values underneath positions.
- why something is important.



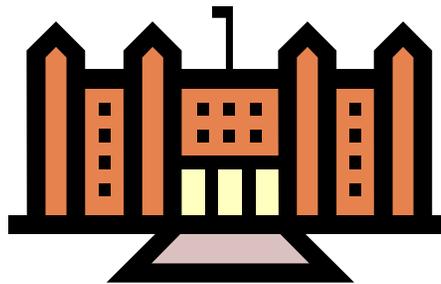


## Examples of interests:

### Interests

Cost-efficiency  
Educational quality  
Stretch resources

Community pride  
Value historic school  
Educational quality



Want school  
consolidation

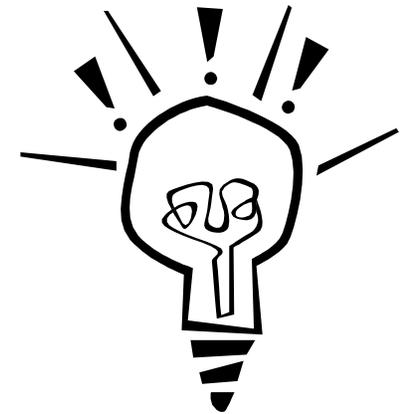
### Positions

Oppose school  
consolidation



## Why focus on interests?

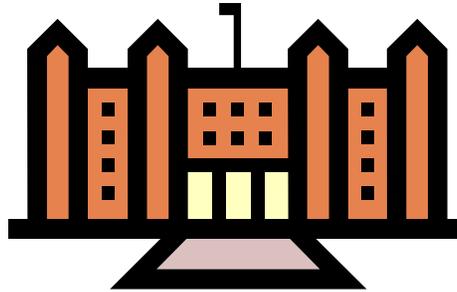
- Gets to heart of issue.
- Moves people beyond polarized positions.
- Sets stage for mutual understanding.
- Leads to group cooperation.
- Sets stage for issue re-framing.
- Sets stage for generating creative options.





## Examples of two positions:

“We must consolidate our school!”



“We oppose consolidation of our school!”



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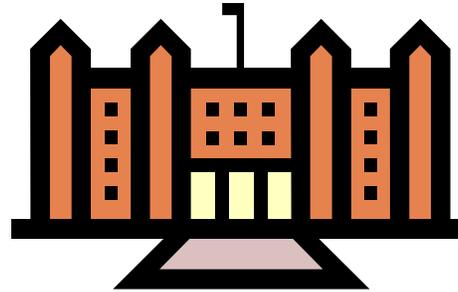
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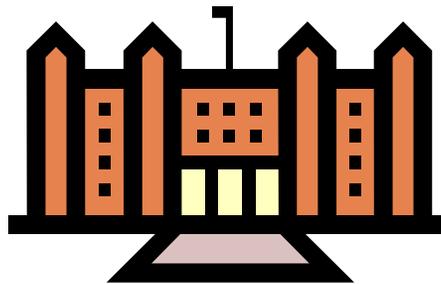


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## How to actively listen:

Active listening is accomplished by...

- concentrating on the message you hear.
- getting the main ideas (content).
- identifying feelings.
- providing appropriate feedback.



## Effects of active listening:

- It helps people relax and develop trust.
- It facilitates focus on the relevant issues.
- It conveys empathy, respect and acceptance of persons.
- It helps identify and summarize each person's ideas, perceptions and concerns.
- It leads to a clear statement of problems and issues.



## “I” messages

An “I” message is a method of describing your own needs, values and feelings openly, honestly and directly. It does this by emphasizing the first person pronoun, claiming ownership of your feelings, expressing your needs directly and describing the situation instead of evaluating it.

### Examples:

“I am really discouraged by the lack of interest committee members seem to have for my proposal.”

“It’s important to me to keep up with this new project. It’s an area I’m not very familiar with, and I need to stay on top of things.”



## “You” messages

A “You” message emphasizes the second person pronoun and blames or accuses the other for your feelings, or judges others’ behavior. Its effect on another is to cause the other to become defensive. Instead of opening up conversation, it makes the other wary of your intentions and causes him or her to either withdraw from the conversation, or attempt to justify his/her own feelings.

### Examples:

“You’re so unreliable and incompetent.”

“You make me so angry! You made me late and I missed half the presentation! It’s all your fault.”



## Confrontive assertions

The confrontive assertion formula elements:

- 1) **When you...** (behavioral description)
- 2) **I feel...** (feeling word)
- 3) **Because...** (effect it has on my life)

Confrontive assertions tend to place blame on people. They can be accusatory, and at their worst, demean the character of the person you're speaking to. This is counter-productive to interest-based problem solving because it entrenches positions by focusing on the individual.



## Confrontive assertions continued...

Examples:

“When you are absent from committee meetings I feel strongly that staff effectiveness is reduced because we don’t have the benefit of your experience and knowledge in plant site relocations.”

“I felt really angry when you didn’t show up. I got there late and felt panicky when I found I had missed half the presentation. I need to know you will be able to give me a ride when you say you will, or else I will make other arrangements.”



## Productive assertions

Once you understand the formula elements, other words and phrases may be substituted to create productive assertions--statements that show you are concerned with how one person's actions affect others. Productive assertions move people toward mutual interests and away from individual positions.



## Productive assertions continued...

Examples:

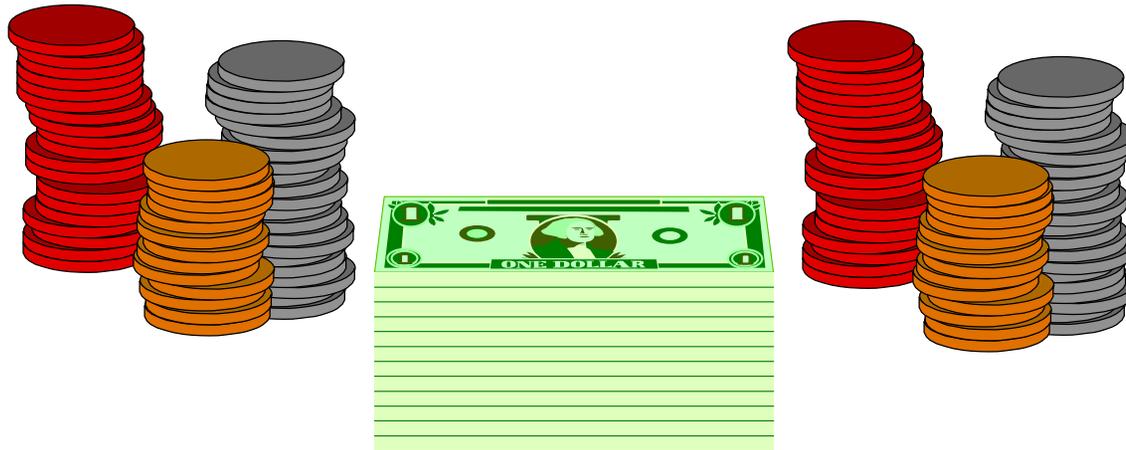
“I am really excited about this proposal and I believe it will benefit us all. But I am puzzled by your position, and I’m beginning to feel pressured about reaching a quick agreement.”

“I really become concerned when you “come on hard” with the other commission members during our meetings. Some of the members tend to withdraw when it happens and then we can’t draw on their expertise.”



## Productive assertions continued...

“I get anxious when I see that your committee expenses are about to exceed our budget and I’m puzzled when I don’t see any corrective action being taken.”





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## The planning stage:

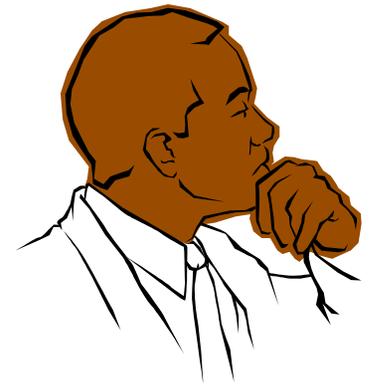
- Assess the issues.
- Identify stakeholders.
- Design a strategy.
- Set up a program.





## The deliberation stage:

- Set the tone.
- Establish procedures.
- Educate each other (whenever it is needed).
- Define the problem.
- Specify information needs.
- Generate options.
- Develop criteria for option evaluation (see Unit 10).
- Evaluate options (see Unit 10).
- Reach agreements (see Unit 10).
- Develop a written plan.





## The post-deliberation stage:

- Ratify the agreement.
- Implement the agreement.





## The bottom line for interest-based problem solving:

- R-E-S-P-E-C-T.
- Listen to and legitimize views/feelings.
- Get the facts.
- Reframe the issue to reflect interests (not positions).
- Generate alternatives to satisfy interests.



## Three degrees of alternatives:

- **BATNA:** Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement
- **WATNA:** Worst Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement
- **MLATNA:** Most Likely Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement





## You are ready to negotiate when:

- Your interests, options and alternatives are known;
- The process is in place and acceptable to the stakeholding parties;
- The communication systems are in place and workable;
- You have adopted a negotiating strategy.





## Roles of neutrals in public disputes:

### Address Relationship Barriers

- Counselors/therapists
- Conciliators/conveners
- Team builders



## Roles of neutrals in public disputes:

### Provide Procedural Assistance

- Coaches
- Trainers
- Facilitators
- Public Issues Educators
- Mediators



## Roles of neutrals in public disputes:

- Data and Information Providers
- Arbitrators





## Ways to overcome deadlock and generate movement:

- Use facts.
- Use doubts.
- Appeal to commonly held standards.
- Identify priorities.
- Identify constraints on others.





## Ways to overcome deadlock: (continued...)

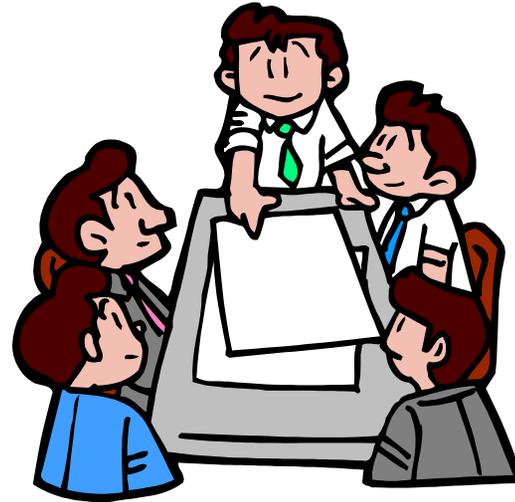
- Trade-offs.
- Compromise - don't give up key interests.
- Integrative solutions.
- Stroke the parties.
- Use humor.





## Ways to overcome deadlock: (continued...)

- Role reversal.
- Peer pressure.
- Focus on the future.
- Remind parties what happens if agreement is not reached.
- Be agent of reality.





## Ways to overcome deadlock: (continued...)

- Break issues into parts.
- Legitimize feelings.
- Keep talking, try again.





## Decision techniques:

**Win/Win.** If a potential solution is available that meets everyone's interests, it will be a mutually beneficial and agreeable solution.

**Both/And.** It may be possible to select two leading options (both) and combine them (and) into one acceptable solution.

**Negative Voting.** Members of the group vote out options that are completely unacceptable. This can be used to narrow a large list of potential options to a manageable size.

**Straw Vote.** Group members make a tentative, non-binding vote on their preference to get a quick sense of where each is leaning.



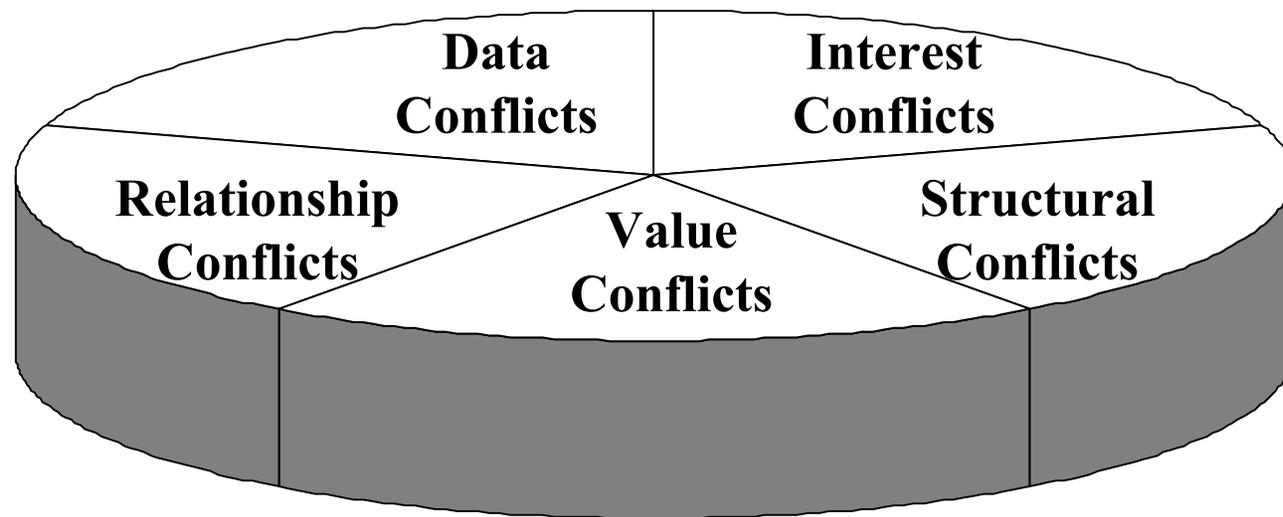
## Techniques for evaluating options:

- Categorize/Prioritize.
- Rank order.
- Advantages/Disadvantages.
- What I like about...
- Criteria checkerboard.
- Test or use pilot projects.
- Examine what others have done.
- Ask an expert.
- Build a joint map.





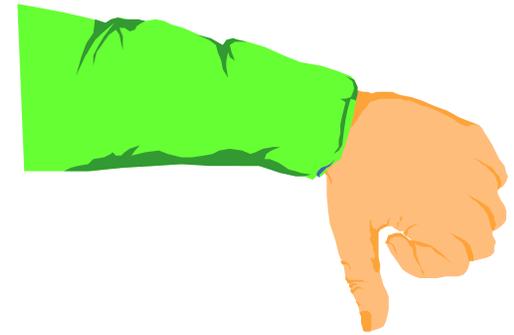
# A road map to identifying five types of conflict:





## Data conflicts caused by:

- Lack of information.
- Misinformation.
- Differing views on what's relevant.
- Different interpretations of data.
- Different assessment procedures.





## Ways to address data conflicts:

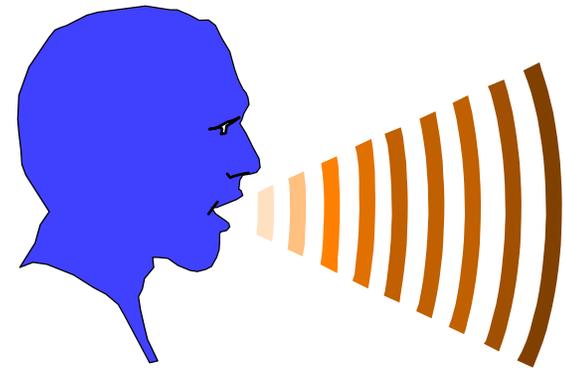
- Reach agreement on what data are important.
- Agree on process to collect data.
- Develop common criteria to assess data.
- Use third-party experts to get outside opinion or break deadlock.





## Relationship conflicts caused by:

- Strong emotions.
- Misperceptions/stereotypes.
- Poor communication.
- Miscommunication.
- Repetitive negative behavior.





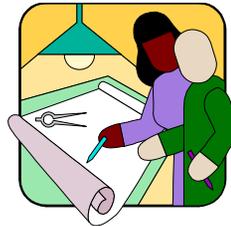
## Ways to address relationship conflicts:

- Control negative expressions through procedures and ground rules.
- Promote process that legitimizes feelings.
- Clarify perceptions - build positive perceptions.
- Improve quality and quantity of communication.
- Block negative repetitive behavior by changing structure.
- Encourage positive problem-solving attitudes.



## Value conflicts caused by:

- Different criteria for evaluating ideas or behavior.
- Exclusive intrinsically valuable goals.
- Different ways of life, ideology and religion.





## Ways to address value conflicts:

- Avoid defining problem in terms of values.
- Allow parties to agree and disagree.
- Create sphere of influence in which one set of values dominates.
- Search for superordinate goal that all parties agree to.



## Structural conflicts caused by:

- Destructive patterns of behavior or interaction.
- Unequal control, ownership, distribution of resources.
- Unequal power and authority.
- Geographical, physical or environmental factors that hinder cooperation.
- Time constraints.



## Ways to address structural conflicts:

- Clearly define and change roles.
- Replace destructive behavior patterns.
- Reallocate ownership or control of resources.
- Establish fair and mutually acceptable decision-making process.
- Change negotiations from positional to interest-based bargaining.
- Modify means of parties (less coercion, more persuasion).
- Change physical and environmental relations.



## Interest conflicts caused by:

- Perceived or actual competitive positions/interests.
- Content.
- Procedures.
- Psychological interest.



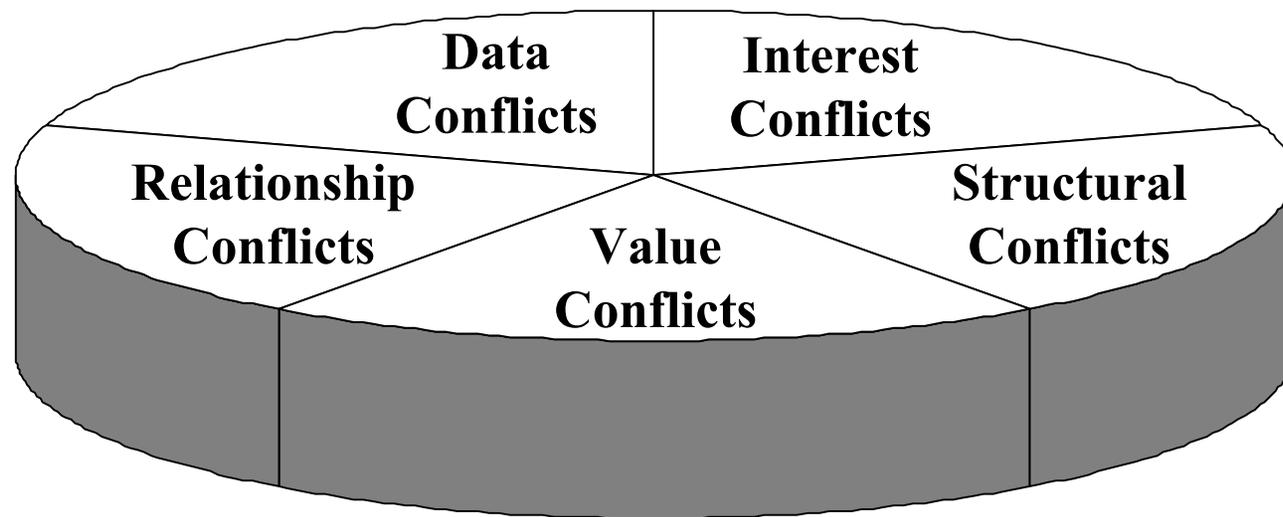


## Ways to address interest conflicts:

- Focus on interests, not positions.
- Look for objective criteria.
- Look for solutions that meet needs of all parties.
- Search for ways to expand options/resources.
- Develop trade-offs to satisfy interests of different strengths.



## Causes of conflict:

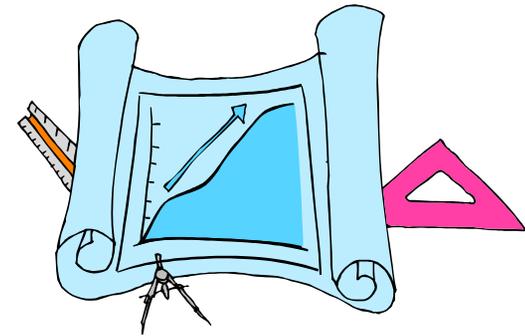




Turning lemons  
into lemonade

## Process blueprint:

- Who the participants will be.
- What the participants will be asked to do.
- How decisions will be made.
- The nature of the final product.
- Duration.
- The authority of the group.
- The stage of the policy process this group is serving.
- The cost of the process.
- What are the ground rules and protocols.





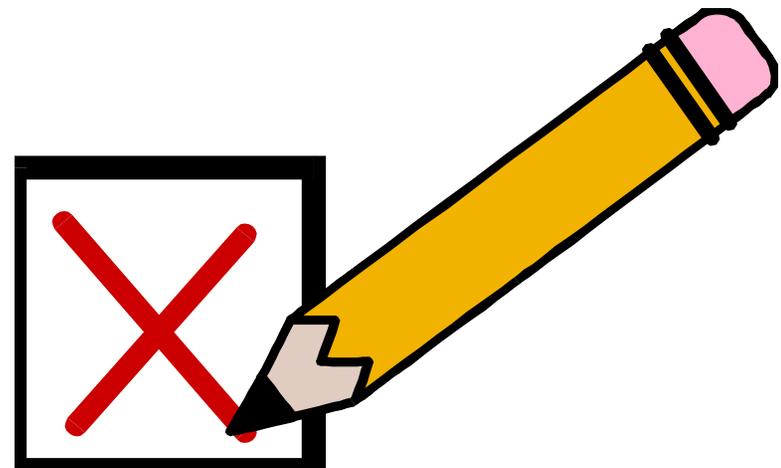
## The role of task groups within committees:

- Task groups are organized by the committee to gather information on specific issues to identify related concerns, or to develop alternative strategies to solve a problem.
- Task groups broaden participation and expand resources available to the program.
- Task groups should not be organized so that they represent homogeneous interests.
- Individuals invited to join a task group contribute their expertise and experience on a specific topic without having to invest the time to participate in a larger program.
- Tasks groups report their results to the committee.



# Techniques for citizen involvement:

- Charrettes.
- Community Meetings.
- Focus Groups.
- Hotlines.
- Interviews.
- Polls and Surveys.
- Public Hearings.
- Referenda and Ballot Initiatives.
- Team Building Activities.
- Workshops.
- Written Comments.





## Advantages of consensus:

1. It requires sharing of information, which leads to mutual education, which, in turn provides the basis for crafting workable and acceptable alternatives.
2. It promotes joint thinking of a diverse group, which leads to creative solutions.
3. Because parties participate in the deliberation, they understand the reasoning behind the chosen solution and are willing to support its implementation.



## The principles of consensus:

A number of essential principles underlie the practice of consensus and contribute to its success.

- To achieve consensus, everyone in the group must actively participate.
- To participate fully and freely, all group members must have a common base of information and keep up to date on the progress of the group.
- The group must create and maintain an atmosphere in which everyone feels free to state his or her views and to disagree.



## The principles of consensus: (continued...)

- Disagreements should be respected; they can illuminate unrecognized problems and serve as a catalyst for improving the decision.
- When someone objects or disagrees, the goal of the group is to discover the unmet need that has produced the objection and to find a way to meet that need in a revised agreement, rather than suppress the objection.