



**Turning lemons  
into lemonade**

## Unit 6 Communicating for Collaboration: Speaking for Yourself Instructor's Guide

### **Public Conflict Resolution**

Assertion skills are introduced and then practiced. How to deal with tough emotional responses in others and in yourself is also discussed.

#### **Purpose**

The intent of this unit is to improve the assertion skills of both advocates and neutrals in conflict situations. Advocates and neutrals also learn how to deal with the emotional responses within themselves and others.

#### **Objectives**

As a result, participants will:

- Learn why speaking for one's self is an important skill for resolving conflicts.
- Learn the difference between "I" and "You" messages.
- Learn how to properly phrase "I" statements in confrontive and productive assertions.
- Learn how to use the assert-reflect sequence.
- Become familiar with other "feeling words."
- Learn how to handle difficult emotions in others.
- Learn how to handle one's own anger.

#### **Time**

45 minutes

#### **Materials Needed**

Flip Chart and Easel  
Markers  
Overhead Projector

#### **Overheads**

23 "I" Messages  
24 "You" Messages  
25 Confrontive Assertion  
26 Productive Assertions

## Handouts

1. Sample Feeling Vocabulary
2. Handling Difficult Emotions in Others
3. Handling Your Own Anger
4. The Truck Case from Unit 3

## Directions

1. The trainer reads the following: "Speaking for yourself requires sharing your needs, values and feelings openly with others to deal completely and concurrently with the issue. It means managing yourself; not manipulating others. Speaking for yourself allows you to get to the crux of an issue, deal with the tension and differences without blaming, demanding, defending or deceiving others. It's straight forward, honest, and respectful communication; it's achieved through the use of "I" messages and the avoidance of "You" messages."

## Overhead 23 & 24

2. There are two types of messages that neutrals and advocates in conflict situations send to others: "I" and "You" messages. The trainer uses **Overheads 23 and 24** to discuss "I" and "You" messages. Ask the participants for examples in their work or personal life that illustrate the effect of both "I" and "You" messages in expressing feelings.

## Overhead 25

3. The trainer says that the Confrontive Assertion is a special "I" message. There are times when you want to signal another person that he/she needs to avoid or alter a given behavior in order to satisfy your needs. The Confrontive Assertion Formula is used to help keep assertion relatively short and easy for the receiver to grasp. It also helps the sender remember the three necessary elements described on **Overhead 25** (Confrontive Assertions).

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 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.”

4. Having shown **Overhead 25** (Confrontive Assertions), the trainer mentions that there is a fourth element to confrontive assertions that may be used:  
**...and what I'd like is...**(make a suggestion for the future)

Example:

"...and what I'd like is...for us to discuss how this situation can be avoided in the future."

## Overhead 26

5. Once the participants understand confrontive assertions, other words and phrases may be substituted to get across more productive assertions. The idea being to make the assertion less individual, and thus less personal. Use **Overhead 26** (Productive Assertions).

Examples:

“I am really excited about this proposal and I believe it will benefit us all. But I am puzzled by your position, and members of the group are 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.”

"It makes us anxious when we see that your committee expenses are about to exceed our budget, and we're puzzled when we don't see any corrective action being taken."

6. The trainer says, "Use of a confrontive "I" message does not guarantee a non-defensive response on the part of the recipient. The recipient may not appreciate being told his/her behavior interferes with your efforts to satisfy your needs. He/she may become very defensive and highly resistant to

making a change. In this case, you will need to switch to active-reflective listening after making your assertion. Remember that active listening skills were discussed in unit 5."

7. As an exercise, have the participants break into pairs. Having already discussed the example assertions on **Overheads 25 and 26** (Confrontive Assertions and Productive Assertions), the trainer instructs the pairs to practice the assert-reflect sequence using the characters and story line given in the unit 3 handout "Ugli Orange Case." The Jones and Roland characters should take turns making assertions that are consistent with their interests, while the other person practices their active-reflective listening skills.
8. Because it can be difficult for people in conflict to express their feelings, the handout "Sample Feeling Vocabulary" is distributed. This list can be helpful for capturing the feelings of the parties involved, while still reframing their language in order to get at interests rather than positions. Write any other suggested terms down on the flip chart.
9. The trainer notes that assertions, reflections and enhanced vocabularies don't always remove the emotional obstacles to reaching agreement. Handling difficult emotions in others and anger in yourself is an important skill for anyone involved in resolving public conflict. The handout "Handling Difficult Emotions in Others" is distributed and read aloud by the trainer. Ask the participants if any clarification is needed. Do they see any approaches for dealing with difficult emotions in others that were left off of the handout? Write any responses on the flip chart.
10. Because people pay attention to and respond to more than what is said between people, body language is important in conflict situations. When working to resolve a conflict it is helpful if the disputants and neutrals keep in mind a few body language guidelines. Whether talking or listening, arms should not be crossed because this conveys a closed mindset—disinterested in other's ideas. Eye

contact is important, particularly when one is trying to make sure they are understood or are understanding what is being said. Unfortunately, eye contact can also have a negative impact in conflict negotiations. For example, if one party in a conflict has a notable power advantage over another they may use "stare downs" to intimidate the other. In such instances the neutral party (if there is one) should try to absorb the attention of the more powerful party so as to lessen the tension and pressure.

When speaking, the person should try to keep the palms of their hands up as they gesture. This suggests openness and offering. Always maintain at least three feet distance from a person you address. Being too far into another's personal space can quickly turn them off from hearing what you are saying and injects a new tension into your interactions.

Finally, try to soften your own motions. Abrupt and flailing gestures are distracting and often counter-productive in trying to find calm, peaceful, and rational solutions to conflicts.

11. The trainer addresses the difficulty of dealing with our own anger in conflict situations. The handout "Handling Your Own Anger" is passed around and read aloud. Have the participants respond to the questions on the handout. A list on the flip chart should be made of the on-going tension release techniques and one-off tension release techniques that the participants recommend. The trainer asks the participants how we can translate these personal ways of dealing with stress into the public sphere.



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Unit 6  
Communicating for Collaboration:  
Speaking for Yourself  
Handouts



# Sample Feeling Vocabulary Handout 1

## Public Conflict Resolution

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accepted  
accommodating  
affectionate  
alone  
amazed  
amiable  
angry  
anxious  
appreciated  
assured  
astonished  
attacked

belittled  
betrayed  
blamed  
bored

capable  
cared for  
cautious  
certain  
cold  
compassionate  
concerned  
confident  
confused  
considerate  
content  
cornered  
crushed

daring  
defensive  
dejected  
delighted  
desired  
desperate  
determined  
disappointed

discontented  
discounted  
discouraged  
disliked  
dissatisfied  
disturbed  
eager  
ecstatic  
elated  
embarrassed  
encouraged  
enraged  
enthusiastic  
envious  
excited

fearful  
friendly  
frightened  
frustrated  
furious

gentle  
glad  
gloomy  
guilty

happy  
hateful  
hesitant  
honest  
hopeful  
hopeless  
humiliated  
hurt

ignored  
important  
in a bind  
infuriated

insecure  
intimidated  
intruded upon  
irritated  
isolated

joyful

kind

left out  
liked  
lonely  
loved

miserable  
misunderstood

obliging  
on the spot  
open  
overwhelmed

tender  
thrilled

uncertain  
uncomfortable  
understanding  
uneasy  
unimportant  
unkind  
unpopular  
upset  
uptight

wanted  
warm  
worried



# Handling Difficult Emotions in Others

## Handout 2

### Public Conflict Resolution

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If we react to others defensively by attacking or withdrawing, conflict often increases. If, instead, we respond appropriately, we can help to bring the emotions to a level at which the issue can be dealt with more constructively.

Try the following:

<b>Receive</b>	Listen and say nothing for the moment. Give the other person room to discharge emotions. Respect the other person's communication of feelings.
<b>Notice</b>	Observe your own reaction.
<b>Center</b>	Tune into yourself. Breathe deeply.
<b>Listen again</b>	Ask yourself what you are picking up from the communication. Separate feelings from content. Strain out what is valid and let at least some abuse pass you by.
<b>Reflect back</b>	Reflect both feelings and content. "Let me check with you if..." "Is what you are saying...?"
<b>Clarify and Explore</b>	What are the other person's needs and concerns? Explore what is behind the words being used. Ask questions to shift the focus from anger to exploring the issues.
<b>Repeat the cycle</b>	Ensure that both feelings and facts are mutually understood.
<b>Move</b>	Acknowledge needs and concerns. Consider the next step e.g. develop options, make an "I" statement, take time out.

Materials adapted from: The Conflict Resolution Network PO Box 1016 Chatswood NSW Australia (02) 419 8500



# Handling Your Own Anger

## Handout 3

### Public Conflict Resolution

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- When anger is experienced, adrenaline is released into the body. Blood rushes to our legs, arms, and head; we begin to sweat and to breathe quickly. Our heartbeat speeds up; we may have a strong urge to yell, scream, kick, hit, or run. We tend to react by fight or flight.
- Anger is either physically released at the time it is experienced, or it is suppressed. Since it is rarely appropriate to release anger physically for fear of damaging relationships, or causing bodily harm, it is often suppressed.
- If not released at the time it is experienced, then anger gets stored in our bodies as muscular tension. The particular part of the body affected varies considerably from person to person.

#### **In what part of your body do you notice tension when angry?**

- If this tension is not released, one of two things may happen. It may build up until it can no longer be suppressed, and we explode at (or "dump" on) someone who may have had nothing to do with the original anger. It may remain unreleased and, over a period of many years, cause chronic muscular holding patterns and possibly damage to our immune system.
- When deciding on a way to release our anger which is right for us, we need to remember that the tension is best released in a manner consistent with the intensity of the emotion (e.g. when we feel like hitting someone, swimming may be more appropriate than meditating). Many people prefer regular, on-going activities which prevent the excessive build-up of day-to-day tensions in the first place. As well, most of us may also need some techniques for releasing some of the tension in a one-off way, after a particularly strong experience of anger or frustration or upset.

#### **What on-going tension release techniques do you use?**

#### **What one-off tension release techniques do you use?**