Slide 1

HOW TO BECOME COMFORTABLE AND
CONFIDENT IN THE FACE OF CONFLICT

MODULE 9: ADDRESSING THE
CONFLICT

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Slide 2

Collaboration Process

There are many processes you can use for
collaborative problem solving, with anywhere from 3
to 6 steps, or more.

The basic concept for any collaborative problem
solving is this: identify the interests before you talk
about solutions, and use the interests to frame the
problem and evaluate the solutions.

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Slide 3

Collaboration Process

I've created a longer process for you that breaks
down each step in a simple way. All of the steps in this
simplified version are included in every effective
collaboration process — they are often just hidden.

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Slide 4

Collaboration Process

1. Share an iMessage to invite the other to collaborate.

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Slide 5

Collaboration Process

2. **Listen** and **negotiate communication agreements** you want to put in place before you begin to have the discussion. (Use the iMessage you created to open up conversation about your needs in terms of the process and ask what their needs are.) **Agree on a time** to have the conversation if they aren't ready to begin immediately.

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Slide 6

Collaboration Process

3. Ask them to share their perspective on the situation.*

* you may go first in a situation where the other person doesn't have a perspective until they understand the conflict ie. if the conflict you are raising is one they didn't know existed

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Slide 7

Collaboration Process

4. Listen, ask them clarifying and interest-exploring questions to identify the interests they have (write them down).

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Slide 8

Collaboration Process

5. Using iMessages you've prepared, share your perspective and interests. Make sure they understand your interests (write them down).

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Slide 9

Collaboration Process

6. Reframe the problem so that it's about how you can meet both of your interests with the solution(s).

For example, the original problem might be framed in your mind as "Will we have the meeting in Charlottetown or Summerside?". A problem framed in interest-based language will take the focus off positions and place them on the interests under those positions. It might look like this: "How will we work together to ensure effective communication, fairness and a manageable workload?"

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Slide 10

Collaboration Process

7. Brainstorm ideas without judging or evaluating them (write them down).

Identify whether there is information or advice you need to gather or generate ideas, and make a plan to go get it and come back to the discussion.

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Slide 11

Collaboration Process

8. Evaluate the ideas using the interests as the criteria.

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Slide 12

Collaboration Process

9. Decide on the best solutions and make a detailed plan about who is doing what and when (write it down).

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Slide 13

Collaboration Process

10. Talk about what will happen if the agreement doesn't work.

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Slide 14

Collaboration Process

11. Plan a time to come back together to evaluate how the plan is working and make adjustments (using your interests as the guide, adding more if there are positions raised during evaluation).

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Slide 15

Build on existing skills

Focus your existing communication skills on interests:
- open questions
- active questioning
- summarizing
- naming interests, and
- iMessages

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Slide 16

Active Questioning

Active questions are open questions that are effective listening tools to:

- Get more information about the problem from the other's perspective
- Clarify understanding of what has been said or has happened
- Help to identify your own and the other's interests (values, hopes, needs);

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Slide 17

Open Questions

Any question that can be answered with a "yes" or "no" is a *closed* question and is often of little assistance in communicating openly.

Open questions, that require the other person to actively participate in a discussion, are the more useful kind of questions to ask. Unless you are verifying; when you want 'yes' or 'no'.

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Slide 18

Open Question Activity

- Do you know how to fly this thing? (pilot to co-pilot)
- Are you going to do your homework right after supper? (parent to teenager)
- Did you take your medication? (home care support to client)
- Did you ask Mary how she got along at her doctor's appointment? (adult sister to adult sister)

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Slide 19

Types of Open Questions

Each type is useful at different stages of the conflict/ problem solving process.

- Broadening Questions
- Clarifying Questions
- Interest Exploring Questions
- Brainstorming Questions
- Consequential Questions

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Slide 20

Broadening Questions

Invite more comment, get at hidden messages

Purpose:
- useful when beginning a discussion
- gives the other person free rein to talk and share whatever information or point of view is most relevant to him/her
- are encouraging and non-threatening
- allows additional information or unstated issues to surface
- opens the door for further discussion

Examples:
- What happened?
- Tell me more about...
- Then what?

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Slide 21

Clarifying Questions

Clear up ambiguities, terminology

Purpose:
- to clarify vague or unspecific terms
- to move from the general to the specific

Examples:
- What do you mean when you say that he is irresponsible?
- Can you give an example of a time when she was pushy?
- How do you define respectful behaviour?
- When you say she is rude what are you specifically referring to?
- What kind of agreement was involved?
- Where does the conflict of interest arise?

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Slide 22

Brainstorming Questions

Develop new ideas and consider alternatives or options

Purpose:
- to consider alternatives or options
- to develop new ideas
- useful when issues and interests have been explored and identified

Examples:
- In what other ways do you think this could be handled?
- What are some ideas/alternatives that you can think of?
- Given _____ is important to you, in what ways do you think this interest could be satisfied?
- What other possibilities can you think of?
- How do you think this could be dealt with differently?

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Slide 23

Consequential Questions

Reflect about potential outcomes

- **Purpose:**
- to explore the consequences of a decision and what would happen next
- to examine the outcome of a choice or behaviour
- useful for reality testing

Examples:
- What do you think will happen if...
- Who do you think will be affected?
- How do you think she/he will feel and/or react?
- What will that be like for you?
- If your proposal was accepted, how would you make the payments?
- What will happen if you wait for the new information before taking steps?

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Slide 24

Acknowledge Understanding

Purpose:
- Identify and confirm the key messages
- Transition from a listening/discussion mode to problem-solving
- Develop a common understanding
- Allow speaker to move to other issues or parts of their story
- Close discussion on the topic
- Allow for confirmation or modification of what has been shared so far

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Slide 25

Summarizing

Method:

- Listener summarizes the key points that he or she has heard
- Listener confirms that the points identified do represent the parties' primary or most important issues or interests
- Uses neutral and common language when summarizing
- Is brief

Slide 26

Summarizing Example

Worker: "I hate these new policies. The old policies worked much better and didn't cause all these problems that are cropping up. I think the directors have moved too fast on this - half the workers don't even know we have new policies let alone how to implement them!"

Manager: "So there are some difficulties with the new policies and it sounds as though you want some clarification about how to put them into practice. Is that right?"

Slide 27

Some last bits of advice

- Don't let the warm and fuzzies distract you from nailing down an agreement.

- Build on positive outcomes to avoid conflict in future and ensure collaboration continues.

Homework

Please complete to form below, using this module to help you identify some questions to ask and any additional iMessages you need.

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