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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.




l'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.




### Collaboration Process 1. Share an iMessage to invite the other to collaborate.


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.



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



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




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




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?"




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.




### Collaboration Process 8. Evaluate the ideas using the interests as the criteria.

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




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


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).




Focus your existing communication skills on interests:  open questions  active questioning  summarizing  naming interests, and iMessages			
<ul> <li>active questioning</li> <li>summarizing</li> <li>naming interests, and</li> </ul>	-	-	nterests:
<ul><li>summarizing</li><li>naming interests, and</li></ul>	<ul><li>open question</li></ul>	ns	
naming interests, and	active quest	oning	
	<ul><li>summarizing</li></ul>		
□ iMessages	naming inter	ests, and	
	□ iMessages		


### **Active Questioning**

16

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);




### Open Questions

17

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'.




### Open Question Activity

18

- Do you know how to fly this thing? (pilot to copilot)
- 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)




## 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


# 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?


# 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?


## 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?


## 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 will be affected? 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?


### Acknowledge Understanding

24

### Purpose:

- □ Identify and confirm the key messages
- $\hfill\Box$  Transition from a listening/discussion mode to problem-solving
- Develop a common understanding
- $\hfill\Box$  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



### 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




### Summarizing Example

26

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?"



### 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.


