

San Jose State University

From the Selected Works of Dr. Michele A. L. Villagran

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Managing Major Library Issues: Practical Tips from the Pros - "Conflict Management in Libraries"

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Available at: <https://works.bepress.com/michele-villagran/87/>



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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN LIBRARIES

By Michele A. Lucero

April 11, 2014

Agenda

- Conflict
 - Levels
 - Functions
 - Understanding Conflict
 - Causes of
 - Contributors at Work
- Managing Conflict
 - Steps to Conflict Resolution
 - Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Modes
 - Conflict Dynamics Profile
 - Dual Concerns Model
 - Do's & Don't's
 - Subsiding
- Resources
- Scenario



Dealing with Difficult Customers? Having a Disagreement with Co-Worker?



Turn
the
Other
Cheek

If you don't have anything nice
to say, don't say anything.



Let
Sleeping
Dogs Lie



Fools rush in where
angels fear to tread

“The Leader, as a rule, should look at the issues coldly and the people involved warmly. Leadership in resolving organizational conflict creatively requires empathy and equality, but not neutrality. The neutrality position is damaging because, by nature, it recognizes nothing. Empathy, on the other hand, means that leadership recognizes both the plight and the ideas of both sides in conflict, without necessarily totaling agreeing with either.”

Source: “Managing Conflict in Today’s Organizations” by Gordon L. Lippitt

Objectives

At the close of this session, you will be able to:

1. Cite the causes of workplace conflict.
2. Describe the methods of resolving conflict.
3. List the Do's and Don'ts of workplace conflict.
4. List examples of how to diffuse conflict and better serve your customers.

Intrapersonal or intrapsychic conflict

- Conflict that occurs within an individual
 - We want an ice cream cone badly, but we know that ice cream is very fattening

Interpersonal conflict

- Conflict is between individuals
 - Conflict between bosses and subordinates, co-workers, spouses, siblings, roommates, etc.



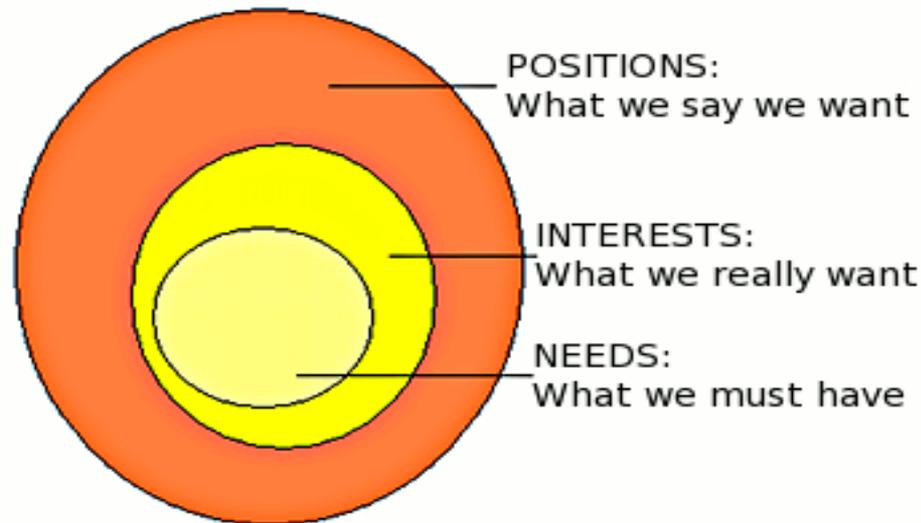
Functions of Conflict

1. Makes organizational members more aware and able to cope with problems through discussion.
2. Promotes organizational change and adaptation.
3. Strengthens relationships and heightens morale.
4. Promotes awareness of self and others.
5. Enhances personal development.
6. Encourages psychological development—it helps people become more accurate and realistic in their self-appraisals.
7. Can be stimulating and fun.
8. Does not always have to be negative.
9. News ideas are generated and fostered.
10. Conflict will ALWAYS exist.

Understand the Conflict

- POSITIONS
- INTERESTS
- POSSIBLE OUTCOMES
- LEGITIMACY
- THEIR INTERESTS

From "Training for Conflict Resolution," The Community Toolbox



Healthy vs. Damaging Conflict Examples

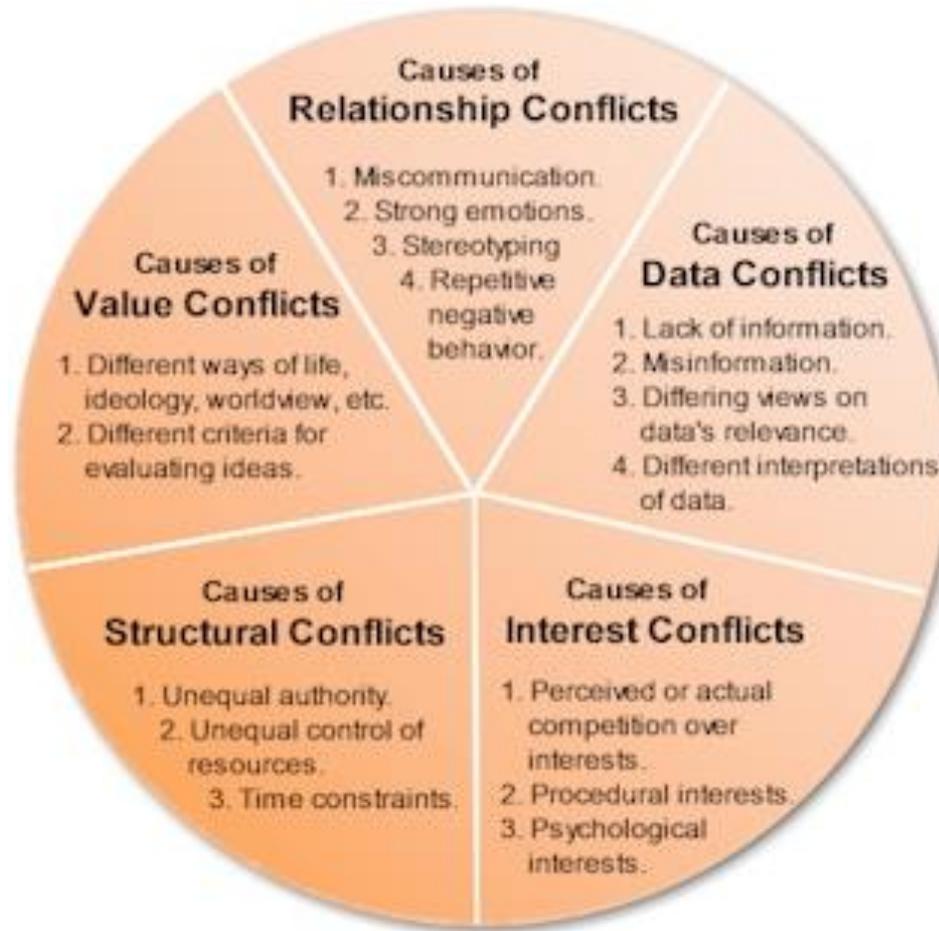
Healthy Conflict

- Disagreements that are communicated in a supportive environment that foster the generation of new ideas or ways to problem solve
- Tension that increases awareness or sheds light on a growing workplace problem

Damaging Conflict

- Name Calling
- Personal Attacks
- Silent and Withdrawn
- Afraid to speak up
- Cliques, gossip and rumors
- Lack of Mutual Respect

Causes of Conflict



Source: http://www.newresolution.org/wires/wirescrossed_Feb08.html

Common Contributors to Conflict at Work

When you're dealing with conflict, consider the underlying causes. Conflict is rarely as simple as it seems on the surface. Problems at work are often caused — or exacerbated — by the following:

- **Ambiguous roles and responsibilities**
- **Assumptions and expectations**
- **Core values not being met**
- **Differing personal lenses and filters through which people interpret the world**
- **Emotions hijacking conversations**
- **Miscommunication or vague language**

From "Conflict Resolution at Work" by Vivian Scott

What Can Be Done To Reduce Conflict in Your Organization?

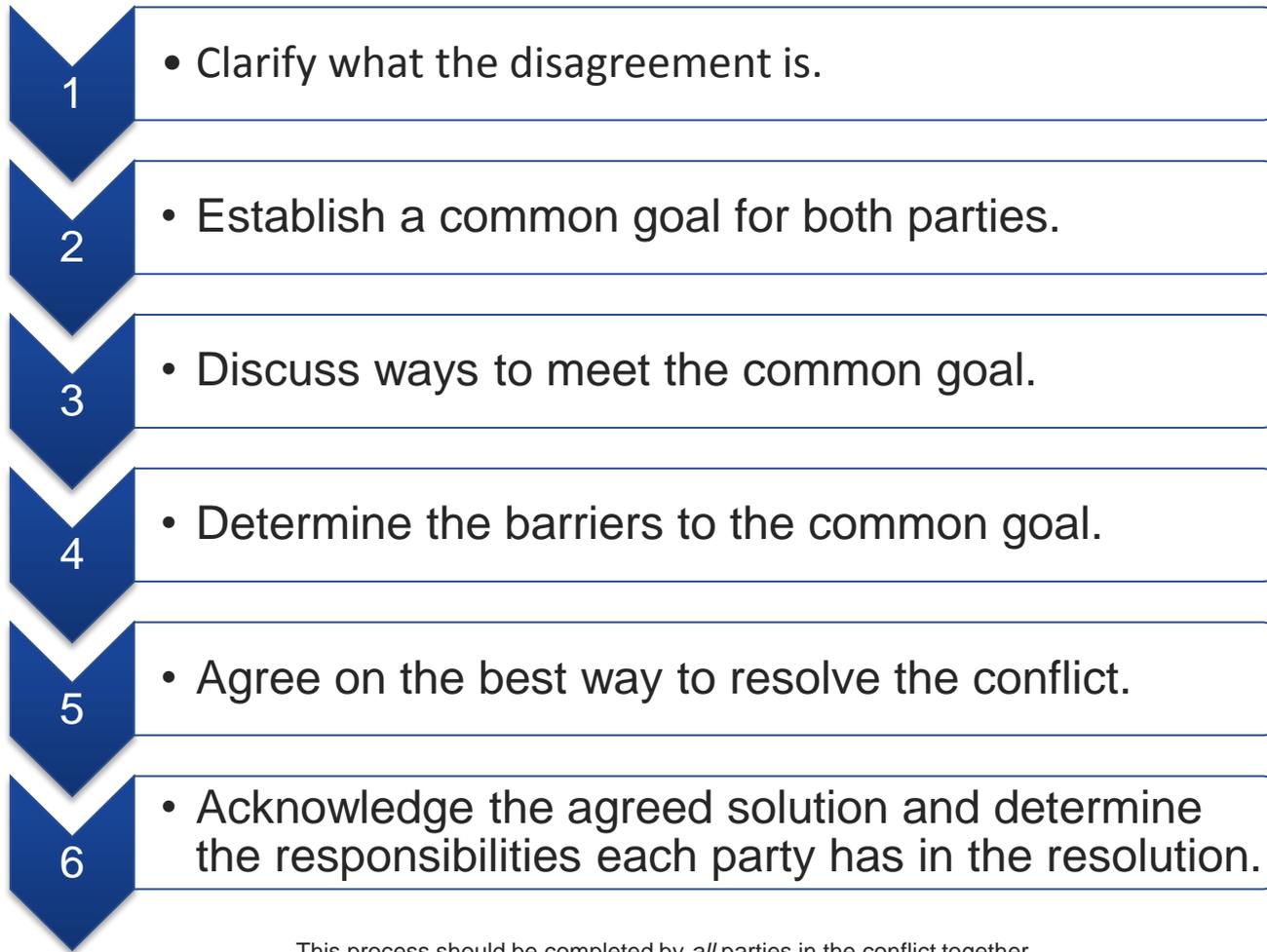


How to Manage Conflict

1. **Be candid.** Be willing to discuss issues when they surface.
2. **Be receptive.** Discuss all competing points of view.
3. **Depersonalize.** Look at issues as a “business-case” rather than a personal indictment.
4. **Be clear** about the decision-making rules of the game.
5. **Outlaw triangulation**--one combatant’s attempt to enlist additional support to “gang up” on an adversary.
6. **Learn to listen.**
7. **Accept responsibility** for the challenges that are yours or that you have created.
8. **Recognize successful conflict management.**

Source: “The Leader’s Role in Managing Conflict” by Howard M. Guttman

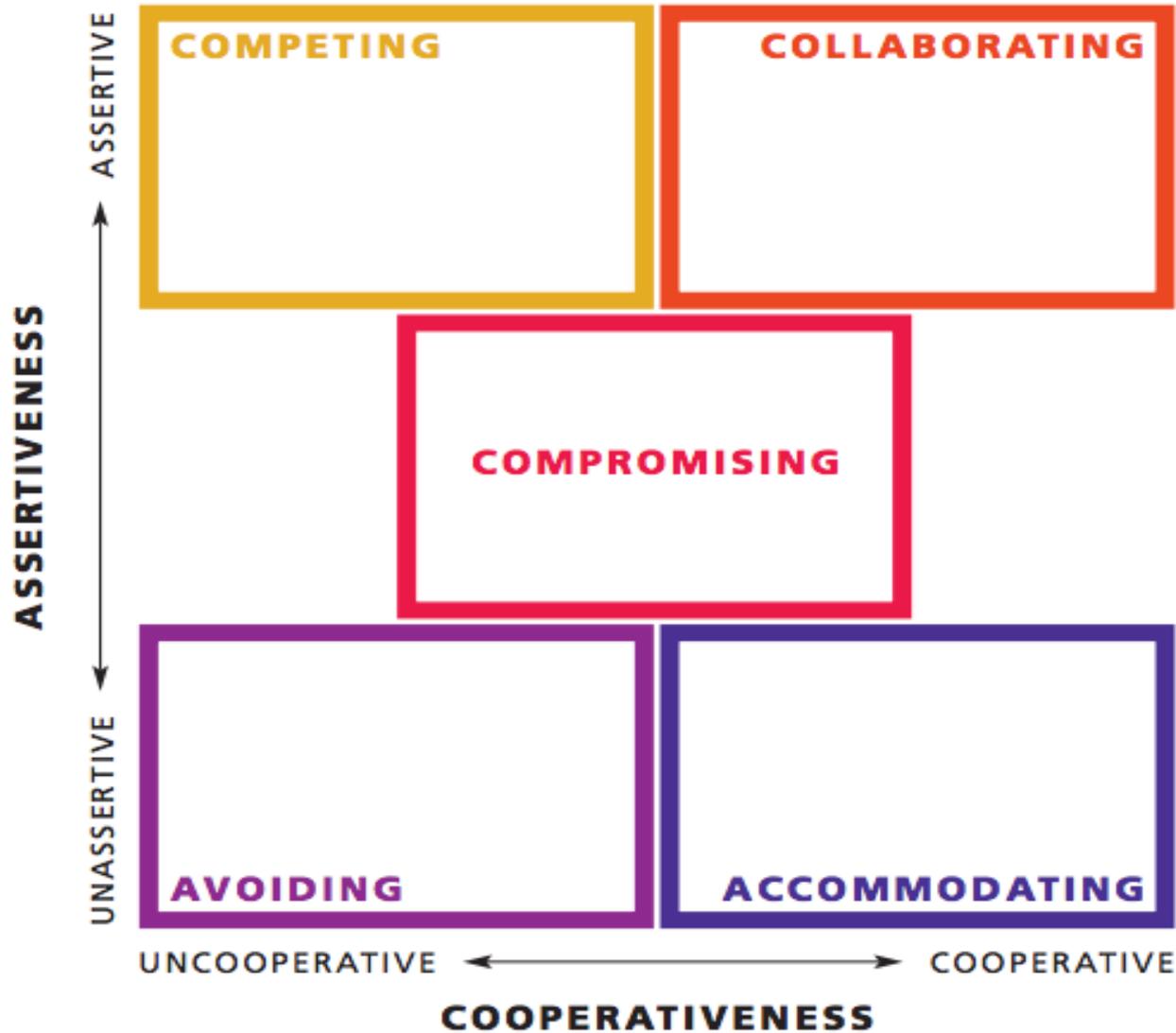
Steps in the Conflict Resolution Process



This process should be completed by *all* parties in the conflict together.

(“Conflict Resolution Skills for HR Professionals” by Marla Bradley)

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Handling Modes/Styles

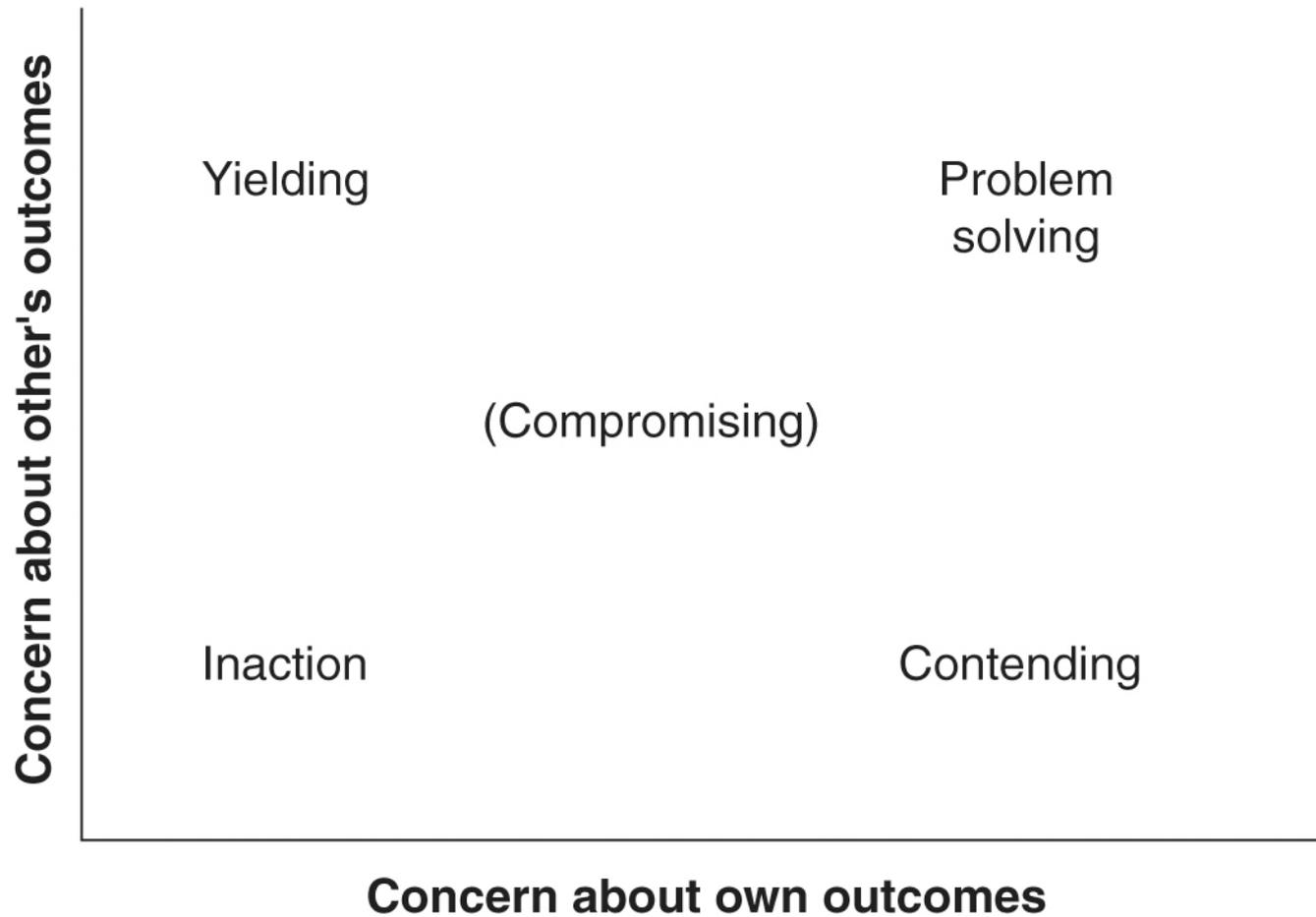


Conflict Dynamic Profile

- **CDP focuses on conflict behaviors** rather than styles. That is, rather than identifying conflict “styles” ---which represent a combination of behavior, personality, and motivation that can be difficult to change---the CDP focuses exclusively on the **behaviors people typically display when faced with conflict.**
- Focusing on specific sets of behaviors allows detailed examination, and subsequently greater understanding, of how people respond to conflict.
- **The more people know about how they act before, during, and after conflict, what sets them off most easily, and what responses to conflict are especially harmful in their own organizations, then the *better equipped* and (it is hoped) *motivated they will be to change.***

Source: <http://www.conflictdynamics.org/>

The Dual Concerns Model



Do and Don't of Resolving Conflict

Do...

- Understand that conflicts are inevitable.
- Resolve to address conflict quickly.
- Focus on the problem.
- Be open to solutions.
- Acknowledge how your customer is feeling.
- Listen actively.

Don't...

- Focus on personality traits that cannot be changed.
- Interrupt.
- Attack.
- Disregard the feelings of the customer.
- Avoid the conflict.
- Allow emotions to take over the conversation.
- Impose personal values or beliefs.

Signs that Conflict at Work is Subsiding

When you're attempting to resolve conflict in the workplace, you want to see signs that the situation is starting to improve. Your mediation strategies are working when you begin to notice that your employees:

- Have relaxed conversations and interactions
- Cooperate on tasks and projects
- Effective problem solving
- Change their word choices (for example, "them" becomes "us")
- Reduce their gossip
- Improve their tone of voice and relax their body language
- Keep their agreements
- Display a willingness to address new problems

Conflict Resolution Resources for the Workplace

Resolving conflict at work starts with the employees, but some situations call for additional resources. If you find yourself in a situation that needs a little extra help, look to your organization's internal experts and additional resources.

- **Internal expertise:**
 - **Human Resources:** Partner with HR to ferret out the resources your organization currently has in place and what the company may be willing to find or create for you.
 - **Mediator:** Turning to a mediator is a confidential way for all employees (including you!) to talk through existing problems and consider alternatives.
 - **Shared neutrals:** A panel of peers is a low-cost way to review, discuss, and mediate disputes.
- **External expertise:**
 - **EAP:** Check if your employer offers under employee assistance program
 - **Mediators:** A trained professional can effectively decipher issues and provide neutrality when you need it most.
 - **Training organizations:** Proactively training employees to address the inevitable workplace conflict saves time and money.

Scenario: Dealing with a Difficult Individual (Internal or External)

Head of Acquisitions

- Personable with 5 years experience and less than 1 year as department head
- Came to law library after working in another law library for 2 years in cataloging and more than 2 years in acquisitions
- Competent, sometimes disorganized
- Well liked and respected by his staff
- Creative, energetic, full of ideas for change
- Not all ideas of his are practical

Head of Cataloging

- High standards who rules her department with an iron hand
- Record of accomplishment
- Marvelous organizer
- Highly respected by her staff for her ability, hard work and fairness
- She is distant, severe, inflexible
- Resistant to innovation and change
- Been in the field for 20 years and department head for 10 years

Questions?

Thank you!

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