DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE LEADERS

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

MANAGING CHALLENGING SITUATIONS AND PEOPLE

Renée A. Daugherty, Ph.D.
Professor
Human Development and Family Science
Extension Specialist - Leadership Development
   and Educational Methods
Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
Oklahoma State University
233 Human Environmental Sciences
Stillwater, OK 74078
(405) 744-6282
renee.daugherty@okstate.edu

Sue E. Williams, Ph.D.
Professor and Head
Human Development and Family Science
233 Human Environmental Sciences
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK 74078
(405) 744-5057
sue.williams@okstate.edu

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

EXTENSION

Introduction

Dealing constructively with disagreement has profound results. We open ourselves to making real contact with others. We complete unfinished business. We expand our vision of what is possible at home, at work, and in our communities. Managing challenging situations and people is a growth experience that can be learned.

Every human being is unique. Disagreement reflects that uniqueness. When we are able to do something constructive with our differences, we move closer to a peaceful, productive, and satisfying workplace and community. Rather than thinking of unique people as "difficult," try thinking about them as "people who present challenging situations."

This session focuses on constructive ways of coping with challenging situations and people in both personal and professional settings.

Objectives

As a result of participating in this module, participants will:

1. Recognize the personal and professional benefits of successfully working with challenging people and situations.

2. Understand their own approaches to managing conflict.

3. Identify the characteristics of challenging people and situations.

4. Manage interpersonal differences.

5. Manage agreement when setting personal and organizational goals.

Length and Sample Agenda

The module should take approximately 3 hours to complete. Each section may take you more or less time to complete than what is listed. Feel free to revise this agenda to fit your purposes and time constraints.

0:00   Introduction and Background, Objectives, Terms, and Conflict as Opportunity (15 minutes)

0:15   Challenging People and Situations, Gold Watch Exercise (20 minutes)

0:35   Managing Conflict Creatively and Activity: Your Conflict Management Style (25 minutes)

1:00   Categories of Challenging People and General Strategies (20 minutes)

1:20   Break (15 minutes)

1:35   Communicating One-On-One, Listening, and "I" Messages (20 minutes)

1:55   Managing Agreement: Avoiding False Agreement (10 minutes)

2:05   Case Studies (45 minutes)

2:50   Fill out and collect Evaluations (8 minutes)

2:58   Closing Comments (2 minutes)

3:00   End

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE LEADERS

Description of Module Contents

- **Participant's Packet** – Contains all the informational content of the module. Duplicate and hand out to participants, one each.

- **PowerPoint Presentation** – Present while teaching the module.

- **Module Outline (in this Instructor's Guide) – A multipurpose teaching aid.**

  ○ The **Right Column** contains all the information from the Participant's Packet along with corresponding slide numbers.

  ○ The **Left Column** contains the numbered PowerPoint slide headings in bold, bulleted talking points, and directions for the instructor in italics.

  ○ **Shadowed boxes** contain Activity instructions and special quotes. Activities are signified by orange (or grey) dividing lines in the Participant's Packet.

- **Appendix** – Contains the "Are You Listening?" and "Your Conflict Management Style" Activities. See the Module Outline for instructions.

- **Evaluation Forms** – Attached to the end of the Participant's Packet. Collect the evaluations after having participants complete them at the end of your session.

Preparation

1. Review the PowerPoint, Participant's Packet, and Module Outline thoroughly.

2. Practice presenting the module until you can do so confidently; above all, avoid reading the Module Outline talking points or Participant's Packet to the participants. Feel free to make notes on the Module Outline to personalize your presentation.

3. Develop a plan for presenting the module and facilitating discussion.

4. Gather necessary equipment (computer, projector, etc.).

5. Duplicate enough Participant's Packets for each participant.

Evaluation

The evaluation form, at the end of the Participant's Packet, is the only formal feedback received from this module. It is your responsibility to encourage all participants to complete the evaluation form at the end of the session and to collect it. Evaluations assist in improving programs and also help document the results of educational programs provided by Cooperative Extension. Return completed evaluation forms to your Extension Educator.

Additional Readings

Bramson, R.M. (1988). *Coping with difficult people.* New York: Dell.

Maister, D. H. (2000). *True professionalism.* New York: The Free Press.

Fisher, R. and Ury, W. (1992). *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in.* (2nd ed.) New York: Houghton Mifflin.

1. Managing Challenging People and Situations

- This session focuses on constructive ways of coping with challenging situations and people in both personal and professional settings.

Use the next four slides to introduce ways people deal with challenging situations. Start some discussion. If people are reluctant to talk, share an example from your own experience.

2. Yelling to handle challenging situations and people

3. Using resources and data to make a point

4. When followers just don't want to go along with the leader

5. Using physical force or threats to persuade others

6. Objectives

Go over objectives from the Participant's Packet and Slide 6.

Point out that term definitions are in the Participant's Packet, but you will cover them as you go along.

Introduction and Background

(Slide 1)

Dealing constructively with disagreement has profound results. We open ourselves to making real contact with others. We complete unfinished business. We expand our vision of what is possible at home, at work, and in our communities. Managing challenging situations and people is a growth experience.

Every human being is unique. Disagreement reflects that uniqueness. When we are able to do something constructive with our differences, we move closer to a peaceful, productive, and satisfying workplace and community. Rather than thinking of unique people as "difficult," try thinking about them as "people who present challenging situations."

This session focuses on constructive ways of coping with challenging situations and people in both personal and professional settings.

(Slides 2-5)

Objectives

(Slide 6)

As a result of this session, you will be able to:

- Recognize the personal and professional benefits of successfully working with challenging people and situations.

- Understand your own approaches to managing conflict.

- Identify the characteristics of challenging people and situations.

- Manage interpersonal differences.

- Manage false agreement when setting personal and organizational goals.

Definition of Terms

Challenging: When all people are not in agreement and the circumstances for interaction are not agreed upon by those involved. Challenges require resolution to maintain a positive and productive environment.

Conflict Styles (4 types):

- **Aggressive/Confrontive:** An individual with a tendency toward "taking the bull by the horns" and a strong need to control situations and/or people.

- **Assertive/Persuasive:** An individual with a tendency to stand up for themselves without being pushy. This individual has a proactive approach to conflict and is willing to collaborate.

- **Avoiding/Reactive:** An individual with a tendency to be passive or withdrawn in conflict situations. This person avoids confrontations.

- **Observant/Introspective:** An individual with the tendency to observe others and examine him/herself analytically in response to conflict situations. These individuals are usually very cooperative in managing challenging situations.

False Agreement: When individuals agree (consciously or unconsciously) simply to avoid conflict when they actually have strong concerns about a proposed action.

"I" Message: A method of communicating with people which allows the person affected by the challenging behavior of another to express the impact this behavior has on him or her. This method places the responsibility of modifying the behavior on the person who demonstrates that challenging behavior.

Interpersonal Differences: Occur when two people or a group of people see a situation differently. For example, one person might consider a situation very unacceptable while another would consider the same situation very acceptable.

"You" Message: A message that is directed at another person and has a high probability of putting this person down, making him/her feel guilty, making the person feel his/her needs are not important, and generally making the person resist change.

Conflict as Opportunity
(Slide 7)

Successful leaders understand that every conflict in the workplace, family, or community presents an opportunity for personal and organizational change, learning, growth, and improved performance. In most organizations or communities, conflict is simply the sound made by cracks in the system – the alarm triggered by barriers to success.

Recognizing the Opportunity

By heeding the alarm and responding capably to it, leaders can:

- Access important information.

- Identify deficiencies.

- Strengthen strategies for change.

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7. Conflict as Opportunity

- Every conflict presents an opportunity for personal and organizational change, learning, growth, and improved performance.

Conflict is the side effect of the participation and collaboration of employees, volunteers, and community leaders in problem solving. It is something that high-performing organizations expect and accept. It should be anticipated, learned from, and managed – not ignored or squelched.

In one example from industry, a new Chief Information Officer with Union Carbide faced a mandate for sweeping change. He saw that conflicts over new technological and strategic directions offered an opportunity to examine people's fears about the impending changes. His team opened a conversation regarding the changes and sought out the discomfort that people felt. The team spent months discussing, explaining, and resolving conflicts before launching the change. The result was greater cohesion in the company, and the CIO was seen as someone who could listen and respond. He and his team learned more from surfacing the conflicts than they would have ever learned from suppressing them.

Challenging People and Situations
(Slide 8)

Every family, organization and/or community has one - a challenging person. This individual may be difficult in any number of ways. Fortunately, challenging people are few. Unfortunately, the havoc they wreak can be quite large.

We all view the actions of others based on our value system and life experiences. Behaviors that are considered very objectionable by one individual may be very acceptable to another person. No two people are alike. Dealing with challenges varies from situation to situation. Each person will react differently in the same situation.

Varied acceptance of objectionable behaviors often paves the way for challenging situations. These challenging situations can be magnified by close working environments. As leaders, you have encountered a wide range of challenging situations.

Understanding your tolerance and acceptance level is key to managing challenging situations and people effectively.

8. Do you understand your own beliefs, attitudes, and values?

- People react differently to the same challenging situations.

- Understanding your tolerance and acceptance level is key to managing challenging situations and people effectively.

Activity: Gold Watch

Allow the participants five minutes to read the Gold Watch exercise handout included in the Participant's Packet.

Ask them to independently rank the six characters in order with 1 being the least objectionable and 6 being the most objectionable.

Allow about 2 minutes for this.

After they are done, lead a discussion about the participants' rankings. Begin by asking how many people gave John a 1 or 2 and why. Now, ask how many gave John a 5 or 6 and why. Do the same for the other five characters.

Now, and ask the participants to provide experiences and input about managing challenging situations and people.

Conclude by referring to the "Refection" comments below the rankings.

Activity: The Gold Watch

To begin understanding your personal tolerance and acceptance level, consider a challenging situation featured in the Gold Watch exercise. This situation will begin to provide you with an insightful look at how you instinctively respond to challenging situations and people. Your immediate reactive thoughts and feelings may surprise you.

The Gold Watch

John is a thirty-five-year-old salesman with Anderson and Sons, Inc., an old, established wholesaler of office equipment. He has a wife and two children.

On a recent sales tour of the Persian Gulf, John met Abdul, an office-equipment supplier who was interested in a line of photocopiers worth $500,000. Abdul told John that he would give John an order for the photocopiers in return for a gold watch worth $13,000. Abdul showed John the watch he wanted in a catalog, and John said that he would see what he could do.

On returning to Chicago, John told Charles, his boss, about the proposition, asking if he could go ahead and buy the watch in order to obtain the order. Charles was outraged and said, "This is immoral! It's not decent American business practice to offer bribes. We're living in a civilized society. If I find out that you've been bribing customers to get orders, I'll fire you on the spot! Have I made myself clear?"

After the confrontation with Charles, John left the office and drove to the home of Terry, his friend and colleague. He explained his plight and then said, "What can I do, Terry? It's an important order, and there's a chance of repeat business; Abdul is interested in office furniture and typewriters as well as more photocopiers in the future."

Terry thought for a moment and then said, "John, why don't you finance the deal yourself? Buy the stupid watch and land the contract. With your commission and any future business, you'll get a decent return on your investment. Don't even tell Charles; he's so ridiculously old-fashioned - he has no idea how to do business with our Middle Eastern friends."

John left Terry's home, went to his car, thought for a few minutes, and then drove to his bank. Mr. Gray, the bank manager and a close friend of John's father, listened to John's reasons for wanting the $13,000 loan. Despite the fact that John's checking account was overdrawn, he agreed to give John the loan immediately.

The next day, John went to a jewelry store near his office and asked a clerk for the specific gold watch requested by Abdul. While he was waiting for the clerk to bring him the watch, Jane, Charles' secretary, came into the store to buy a birthday present for her mother. Unobserved by John, she watched as the clerk gave the watch to John in exchange for $13,000 cash. In her astonishment, she forgot about finding a present for her mother, hurried back to Anderson and Sons, burst into Charles' office, and asked, "How can a salesman who earns $30,000 a year afford a $13,000 watch?"

Charles was furious. He rushed out of his office and found John just returning from the jewelry store. "You're fired!" he shouted.

"Let me explain . . .", muttered John, but Charles bellowed, "No excuses! I warned you!" At that moment a fax came through, which read as follows: "No longer interested in photocopier deal. Found alternative supplier. Abdul."

Instructions: Rank the following characters from 1 (least objectionable) to 6 (most objectionable).

_____   John

_____   Abdul

_____   Charles

_____   Terry

_____   Mr. Gray

_____   Jane

Reflection: Now, consider how individuals in your community would rank these characters. They would probably rank the characters differently – some much differently than you – and, if confronted with a similar situation, react differently than you. The first step in coping with challenging people and situations is to step back and deal with the situation, remaining calm, not allowing yourself to become personally threatened by a unique set of circumstances or individuals. Based on their cultural background, values and experience, they might also rank the characters differently and react to the situation in a manner that you do not agree with. Are they wrong? Coping positively with challenging people and situations often means that you must be flexible and use positive techniques for communication.

9. Managing Conflict Creatively

- It is important to understand both the characteristics of those in your community as well as your own conflict management styles.

Activity: Your Conflict Management Style

Refer participants to the self-assessment instrument "Your Conflict Management Style" in the Appendix. Briefly review the instructions.

Allow 10-15 minutes for them to complete and score the instrument.

Present the four conflict styles from the Participant's Packet and slide 9 and engage participants in discussing their scores/styles.

Managing Conflict Creatively
(Slide 9)

Every encounter with people whose views differ from your own offers the potential for friction, wasted time, bruised feelings, and foolishness.

Managing interpersonal differences and conflict isn't easy. Signs of mismanagement are everywhere -- backbiting, rivalry, bitter divorces, bickering interest groups. Mishandling these differences leaves emotional scars, diverts energy from where it is really needed, and undermines morale. No wonder so many people walk away from disagreement. Despite the risk of pain and irritation, however, the rewards for handling disagreement constructively are gratifying.

It is important to understand the characteristics of the difficult people in your community and strategies for dealing with these problems. It is equally important to understand how you tend to handle challenging people and challenging situations.

Activity: Your Conflict Management Style

This activity is located in the Appendix at the end of this Packet.

Conflict Styles

What is your conflict style? Consider the following descriptions:

Aggressive/Confrontive – a tendency toward "taking the bull by the horns" and a strong need to control situations and/or people. Those who use this style are often directive and judgmental.

Assertive/Persuasive – a tendency to stand up for oneself without being pushy, a proactive approach to conflict and a willingness to collaborate. People who use this style depend heavily on their verbal skills.

Observant/Introspective – a tendency to observe others and examine oneself analytically in response to conflict situations as well as a need to adopt counseling and listening modes of behavior. Those who use this style are likely to be cooperative, even conciliatory.

Avoiding/Reactive – a tendency toward passivity or withdrawal in conflict situations and a need to avoid confrontation. Those who use this style are usually accepting and patient, often suppressing their strong feelings.

10. Conflict Resolution Teams

- Conflict Resolution Teams are made up of people who are aware of conflict management styles and are knowledgeable about conflict resolution strategies.

- This team listens when conflicts arise and helps manage and resolve conflicts.

11. Categories of Challenging People

- There are seven types of challenging people that make managing conflict more difficult.

Introduce categories and strategies to deal with each.

12. Complainers

- Complainers gripe persistently, but never try to do anything to resolve the complaint.

- Either because they feel powerless to do so or because they refuse to bear the responsibility for a solution.

Discuss strategies for dealing with complainers in Participant's Packet.

Conflict Resolution Teams
(Slide 10)

A Conflict Resolution Team can be a helpful tool. The team is a small number of people who are aware of their conflict management styles and knowledgeable about conflict resolution strategies. It is very important that the team be composed of people of integrity, who view and manage conflict in different ways, and are able to communicate openly and constructively regarding conflict in a variety of situations. They can serve as a listening team when conflicts arise in a program. As such, they can be available to discuss conflict situations and ask questions to help the person think through the strategies he/she can use to manage or resolve the conflict. As you develop a Conflict Resolution Team in your programs, share the "Managing Conflict Creatively" inventory with the team and discuss.

Seven Categories of Challenging People and Ideas for Coping with Them
(Slide 11)

As community leaders, you must work with many different people. At times, communicating with these individuals poses challenges. Following are some ideas for coping with the unique individuals you come in contact with regularly. The seven categories are designed to provide strategies for dealing with these individuals but will not encompass a person's entire personality.

Complainers
(Slide 12)

Complainers gripe incessantly, but they never try to do anything to resolve the complaint. This is either because they feel powerless to do so or because they refuse to bear the responsibility for a solution.

- Listen attentively, even though it will be difficult.

- Acknowledge what the complainer says by paraphrasing the comments.

- Do not agree with the complaints.

- Be prepared to interrupt and take control of the situation - complainers love to ramble.

- Use limiting responses that will pin the complainer to specifics.

- Avoid the accusation-defense-reaccusation sequence where you defend an accusation and then are reaccused. They can be like an error loop in a computer program that goes on and on.

- State the facts without comment and without apology.

- Switch to problem solving.

- Be prepared to begin this strategy from the beginning several times. Complainers are slow learners.

Super-Agreeables
(Slide 13)

Super-Agreeables are always very reasonable, sincere, and supportive on the surface – at least in your presence. But they do not produce what they say they will, and sometimes they even act contrary to what they have led you to expect. They are peacemakers. Harmony is so important to them that they will deny or ignore that anything is ever wrong. They are more concerned with peace than truth.

- Ask for honesty. Make it safe for this person to be honest and candid with you and comfortable in disagreeing with you.

- Do not allow them to make unrealistic commitments when you know they couldn't possibly fulfill them.

- Be prepared to compromise so that you are both in a win situation.

- Clarify their commitments. Help them face the facts instead of focusing entirely on your feelings or the feelings of the group.

Negativists
(Slide 14)

Negativists object to everything. They assert that whatever you proposed won't work or is impossible. All too often, their affect on you is to completely deflate any optimism you might have for a project or situation.

- Avoid getting drawn into their attitude – the Wet Blanket virus is highly contagious.

- Have a comeback. State your own realistic optimism.

- Do not agree with them or humor them.

- Ask how they would solve the problem. Do not hurry to propose solutions.

- Use their negativism constructively. It can help to have a devil's advocate. They may make points you need to consider.

- Be prepared to take on a project by yourself if you can't change their attitude. Your success might do wonders for their negative perspective.

13. Super-Agreeables

- Super-Agreeables are reasonable, sincere and supportive, but they do not produce what they say they will.

- They are afraid to interrupt the harmony of the group.

Discuss tips for dealing with Super-Agreeables in Participant's Packet.

14. Negativists

- Negativists object to everything.

- Often their affect is to completely deflate any optimism you might have for a project or situation.

- Move forward with your positive plans and expect some of the negative people to move along with you.

Discuss tips for dealing with Negativists in Participant's Packet.

15. Silent-Unresponsives

- Silent-Unresponsives answer every question you have with a "yes," "no," a grunt, and sometimes with an "I don't know" or "If you say so." A longer answer, you will not get.

Discuss tips for dealing with Silent-Unresponsives in Participant's Packet.

16. Indecisives

- Indecisives can ruin any project because they put you off until it is too late to do anything about it.

- They won't let go of anything until it is perfect, which is never.

- They may see the problem as a whole, but cannot identify the starting point.

Discuss tips for dealing with Indecisives in Participant's Packet.

Silent-Unresponsives

(Slide 15)

Silent-Unresponsives answer every question you have with a "yes," "no," a grunt, and sometimes with an "I don't know" or "If you say so." A longer answer, you will not get.

- Ask open-ended questions.

- Allow adequate time for them to respond – sometimes people need more time to reflect and respond than you realize. Don't assume that they should respond on your time schedule.

- Use the friendly, silent stare.

- Recycle the conversation, if necessary. Be prepared to start over.

- Tell them what you plan to do and what your plan assumes about their needs, thoughts, and wishes.

Indecisives

(Slide 16)

Indecisives can ruin any project because they put you off until it is too late to do anything about it. They put off making a decision until the decision is made for them. They also won't let go of anything until it is perfect, which is never. They may see the problem as a whole, but cannot identify the starting point. To get around them try this:

- Bring the issues out in the open and make it easy for them to be direct. Pursue all signs of indecision.

- Help them solve the problem or problems.

- Assist them in putting the alternatives in rank of importance.

- Emphasize the importance of quality and service.

- Give the individual lots of support after they have finally made a decision.

- If at all possible, keep control of what you are working on.

- Watch for signs that the pressure to make a decision is overloading the individual.

17. Hostile-Aggressives

- Hostile-Aggressives try to bully and overwhelm you.

- They make cutting remarks or throw temper tantrums when they do not get their own way – which they are convinced is the only way.

- There are three subtypes of hostile-aggressives:
  - Sherman Tanks
  - Snipers
  - Exploders

Discuss tips for dealing with the three categories of Hostile-Agressives in the Participant's Packet.

Hostile-Aggressives

(Slide 17)

Hostile-Aggressives try to bully and overwhelm you by bombarding you. They make cutting remarks or throw temper tantrums when they do not get their own way – which they are convinced is the only way. There are three subtypes of hostile-aggressives:

A. Sherman Tanks

Sherman Tanks have a strong need to be right and will indiscriminately roll over people to prove a point. Try these strategies:

- Hold your ground – don't be bullied. Some of these people will respect you for it; most will at least leave you alone and seek easier prey.

- Avoid a public power struggle. A public confrontation may insult and further inflame the hostile-aggressive person. Working with this person in a more private context has a better chance of success and you maintain your dignity.

- Talk with this person to acknowledge the difficulty of this high maintenance relationship and bring out the implications of this behavior.

B. Snipers

Snipers use innuendoes, calculated digs, and unfunny teasing to cut others down.

- Let snipers know that you know what they are doing. Ask them to explain what was meant by their remarks.

- Avoid responding with your own negative remarks.

- Stand up for fellow victims. Say firmly that you do not believe the negative remark, or point out something good about the person who is being attacked.

- Build a network of people who trust you. Make a favorable impression on co-workers and others around you by doing such things as being supportive of supervisors and subordinates.

C. Exploders

Exploders respond with an uncontrollable outburst that must run its course. They may be angry with you, but they may actually be upset with someone or something else and you end up bearing the brunt of their anger because you are safer to get mad at.

At some point, all people have the potential for demonstrating anger. Anger is normal and natural. We are not responsible for being angry, only for how we use anger once it appears. Four primary situations will elicit anger in just about anyone:

- Fatigue – when people are tired, rundown, and hungry.

- Embarrassment – when people are belittled or demoralized in a public setting.

- Frustration – a thwarted plan of most any magnitude.

- Rejection – when a person is hurt.

For some quick-tempered people, anger becomes more than a human emotion. It becomes a chronic pattern of self-defeating rage, whose trigger is unpredictable.

These strategies can help you deal with Exploders.

- Stand up for yourself, without being threatening.

- Give them time to run down.

- Encourage them to sit down; this will make them less aggressive.

- Identify the true object of their wrath.

- Speak from your own point of view; do not attack them.

- Avoid a head-on fight. Fighting with them only feeds their adrenaline.

- Be prepared to be friendly. Exploders are often very friendly after you have calmly stood up to them.

Know-It-All Experts
(Slide 18)

Know-It-All Experts believe (and want you to believe) they know all there is to know about anything worth knowing. They are usually condescending, imposing, or pompous. And, in all likelihood, they will make you feel like an idiot. There are two subtypes of know-it-all experts:

A. Bulldozers

Bulldozers are genuine experts with an attitude problem. They are competent, careful people who make plans and carry them out, despite great obstacles. They just have very little need – or use – for other people. You can put their contribution in perspective if you:

- Do your homework on the subject.

- Listen to and acknowledge what they say.

18. Know-It-All Experts

- Know-It-All Experts believe that they know all there is to know about anything worth knowing.

- They are usually condescending, imposing, or pompous.

- Two subtypes of know-it-all experts, Bulldozers and Balloons.

Discuss tips for dealing with Know-It-All Experts in the Participant's Packet.

- Question them firmly, but do not confront them. They hate being wrong. If you must confront them, do it alone and in private.

- Avoid being the Counter-Expert.

- Let them be the expert they think they are.

B. Balloons

Balloons are bogus experts who pose as the real thing. They have an overwhelming need to be respected as supreme authorities. They usually know something about the subject matter in question – sometimes they genuinely believe they have expertise. To cope with them: Use factual information to call their bluff. Be sure to leave them an out – present the facts as an alternate set of possibilities for them to consider.

The know-it-all-expert is very common in community development work. Many people bring academic preparation and life experiences to community projects; however, at times their attitudes can be counter-productive. When coping with this type of person, keep in mind that you have good leadership skills, and this "expert" needs you and your talents to move your community forward. This attitude will help put the know-it-all-expert in perspective.

Summary

By understanding these techniques for coping with challenging people, you can develop a constructive response to their behavior, and in turn, you can influence their behavior, resulting in a less strained, more productive community.

General Strategies for Handling Challenging People and Situations
(Slide 19)

Carefully consider these ten points for dealing with challenging people and situations. Successfully managing difficulty will mean that people in your community can move forward to address community needs and issues.

1. Put problem people in proper perspective.

You are nothing but an afterthought to them, so don't take their antics personally. They are too busy worrying about themselves to be concerned about you. You just happen to be either an obstacle or an essential ingredient to their getting what they want. You have to figure out how to break free of their control.

19. 10 General Strategies

List and discuss briefly the ten strategies for dealing with difficult people in the Participant's Packet.

2. Take your pick - positive or negative.

You can't concentrate on constructive, creative alternatives while you cling to negative feelings. Go somewhere to vent your emotions and cool off. Think about the result you really want, the consequence or outcome that best benefits you and your community. Focusing on a beneficial outcome will help you let go of the hurt.

3. Don't expect difficult people to change.

They won't, and in one way, that's good. Because their behavior is often predictable, this enables you to plan ahead, plotting the tactics you'll use next time. Troublemakers may not change, but by choosing a better approach, you can change the outcome.

4. Learn to respond as well as to listen.

Come forward and state that you feel annoyed, upset, enraged. No one can read your mind. Sometimes the offense was totally unintentional and can be easily resolved if allowed to surface. Ask questions instead of making accusations. If you let others save face, you give them room to change their minds.

5. Give and request frequent feedback.

Regardless of your position in your community, you need to know the perceptions of fellow citizens. Don't stew about what someone else is thinking – ask! Use open-ended questions to let emotional people vent their feelings before you try to reason with them and explore options. When you link your objectives with others' wants, not only do you have their attention, but you also both win.

6. Look first at policies and procedures.

This strategy puts the disagreement on a professional level and prevents blaming a person's distasteful attitude or sinister motive. Don't place blame unless you made a mistake yourself. In this case, apologize quickly and move on. If you both pay attention to each other's needs when identifying options, each of you can feel you are exercising some control. At times, all that is needed is a change in the system.

7. Deal directly and discreetly.

Choose face-to-face talks over written communication that can be misconstrued, phone calls that can conceal facial reactions, or ambassadors who do the talking for you. You don't want an audience for personal disagreements. Confront your accuser tactfully, putting your foot down when others are walking over you. Get to the point because a preamble of excuses or warm-ups robs your effectiveness.

8. Document for self-protection.

Get potentially troublesome verbal agreements in writing to prevent the other party from reneging. Keep community action teams informed with periodic progress reports. Send copies to anyone affected, as evidence, in case a misunderstanding should occur.

9. Be straightforward and unemotional.

The more you remain calm and matter-of-fact, the sooner you gain another's confidence. People want to feel that you're leveling with them, that they can trust you. Remember that respect from others begins with self-respect. Don't continue a conversation with anyone who refuses to give you the courtesy you deserve. You have options such as asking for politeness or leaving the room.

10. Be gracious.

Someone else's rudeness doesn't give you the right to be rude. Turn a bad situation into your advantage by disarming the offenders, treating them with the kindness you'd like to be shown, sharing credit, and allowing others to feel important. Make friends with your enemies – you never know when you'll need them. Others won't have to run you down to build themselves up if you're gracious in showing appreciation and giving recognition. When your own ego is healthy, you are rich. You can afford to be generous.

Communicating One-On-One
(Slide 20)

The ability to communicate successfully one-on-one with a difficult person in a challenging situation can often make the difference between a smoothly running community project and an "emotional battlefield." As a community leader, your efforts to develop good communication skills when interacting with coworkers, program participants, and other community leaders is vital.

Try these suggestions to improve your one-on-one communication:

- Spend time on rapport. Don't jump right in and get down to business. Time invested in small talk and informal conversation builds an important bridge and gets those warm vibrations flowing between you and the other person.

- Minimize interruptions. When you indicate that you will not allow interruptions, you affirm that the other person is important to you.

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20. Communicating One-on-One

- The ability to communicate successfully one-on-one with a difficult person in a challenging situation is vital to the success of your community projects.

Go through tips for improving one-on-one communication.

- Watch out for psychological barriers. If a big desk separates you and the other person, you might be perceived as aloof. Making an effort to come around your desk and sit face-to-face or side-by-side communicates you are an open person who is willing to make an effort for the other person.

- Be aware of your posture. Arms folded or fists clenched may indicate you are closed to what the other person is saying. Leaning forward can spell increased attention.

- Use intensity to your advantage. Loudness may convey authority, but it can also signal a lack of self-confidence or a false sense of security. Speaking almost in a whisper can be used to force attention, to increase intimacy or to indicate a sense of confidentiality or importance.

- Go to the person's turf. When working with others, this shows you're reaching out.

Listening
(Slide 21)

Another important aspect of one-on-one communication is developing good listening skills. Remember that talking is only one part of communicating. The ability to listen well is one of the most important tools for managing conflict. Skillful listening requires you to:

- Pay respectful attention to what the person is saying and how the person is feeling.

- Let the speaker know your interpretation of his/her message conveyed through interested silence, body language, and verbal responses.

The purpose of your feedback is to acknowledge, summarize (paraphrase), or clarify what the speaker has said. Consider the following aspects of good listening skills:

- Make the other person feel as if your discussion is the most important thing you are doing at the moment.

- Give the person undivided attention.

- Allow the person to complete their statements before shaking your head or saying "NO."

- Guard against fidgeting, squirming, or looking at the clock during the conversation.

- Reserve your questions until after the person has finished their message.

- Focus your attention physically and mentally on the other person.

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21. Listening

- An important aspect of one-on-one communication is developing good listening skills.

- The ability to listen well is one of the most important tools for managing conflict.

Go through the aspects of good listening skills in the Participant's Packet.

- Do not attempt to finish the person's statements for them.

- Express interest by asking thoughtful questions and by contributing your insights.

- Allow the person to whom you are listening to set and stay on the agenda.

- Follow up on the discussion and keep the person posted on what is happening.

- Respond to the person in a sensitive and respectful manner.

- Give the person credit for ideas and projects that result from the conversation.

- Allow the individual time to express him/herself.

- Make the person feel comfortable and valued.

- Take the person's thoughts and concerns seriously, rather than joking about them.

- Guard against becoming defensive before the individual can fully explain their point.

- Assume that the person has something worthwhile to say.

In our very verbal society, it is sometimes difficult to develop good listening skills. Remember that listening, especially in a challenging situation, is often just as important as talking.

Activity: Are you Listening?

To test how well you have developed your listening skills, ask several people you have talked with recently to complete the "Are You Listening?" activity in the Appendix at the end of this packet.

Activity: Are you Listening?

Encourage participants to complete this activity later with a friend to determine their own listening strengths.

22. "I" and "You" Messages

- "You" messages are directed at others and have a high probability of putting them down, making them feel guilty, making them feel their needs are not important, and generally making them resist change.

Point out examples in Participant's Packet.

Using "I" Messages Rather Than "You" Messages
(Slide 22)

"You" Messages = A Negative Approach. Most of the messages we send to people about their difficult behavior are "you" messages. When directed at others, "you" messages have a high probability of putting them down, making them feel guilty, making them feel their needs are not important, and generally making them resist change.

Examples of "you" messages are:

Ordering	What you have to do is . . .
	Stop doing that!
Blaming	You're acting like a child!
	You're driving me crazy!
Providing Solutions	You should forget that idea.
	You'd better reconsider that plan.
Warning	You'd better not do that!
Lecturing	If I were you, I would . . .
Judging	You were wrong when you . . .
Moralizing	The proper thing to do now is . . .
Shaming	That's a bad idea.
Withdrawing	Let's not talk about that.
Belittling	Don't make a mountain out of a molehill.
Cross-examining	Why in the world would you do that?
	Where did you go?
	Why didn't you complete the report?

"You" messages remove the responsibility for behavior change from the other person. Perhaps the worst of all "you" message is the "if-then" threat:

"If you don't _____, then I will _____."

23. "I" Messages

- An "I" message allows a person who is affected by the behavior to express the impact it has and leave the responsibility of modifying the behavior with the person who demonstrated it.

- An "I" message consists of three parts:

  - the other person's specific behavior

  - the resulting feeling you experience because of their behavior

  - the tangible effect on you.

Take five minutes to have participants practice writing an "I" message. Explain that practice with these messages will help in future challenging situations.

"I" Messages – Impact on Me
(Slide 23)

An "I" message, on the other hand, allows a person affected by the behavior of another to express the impact it has on him or her and, at the same time, leave the responsibility of modifying the behavior with the person who demonstrated that particular behavior. An "I" message consists of three parts:

1. The others person's specific behavior.
2. The resulting feeling you experience because of their behavior.
3. The tangible effect on you.

A community leader might say to a volunteer:

"When you come to a project planning meeting unprepared, I feel frustrated because I must choose between doing your job or letting you, and possibly the project, fail."

A community leader might say to a project co-leader:

"When I try to help you and you don't say anything, I feel confused because I don't know how you feel about my help."

In effect, the "I" message allows the sender to implicitly say, "I trust you to decide what change in behavior is necessary." In this manner, "I" messages build relationships and equally importantly, they do not place the sender in the position of enforcing a new behavior, as is frequently the case with the "you" message.

A helpful guide for forming an "I" message is:

When (*other person's behavior*), I feel (*your feelings*) because (*reason or tangible effect on you*).

Try writing your own "I" message on the lines below.

When you _____,
I feel _____
Because _____.

Practice forming "I" messages with your group and other people you feel comfortable working with. Then, when you find yourself in need of an "I" message, one will come to you more easily.

Situations to Consider:

- Community volunteers do not seem interested in helping you with an important project.
- You and a co-leader are organizing an awards banquet. The co-leader doesn't do his/her agreed-upon task.
- A fellow community volunteer keeps telling you how to do something you already know how to do.

24. False Agreement

- It is important that fellow community leaders are not agreeing with a plan or project just because they don't want to hurt anyone's feelings or appear to be a troublemaker.

- When people are reluctant to disagree, often the entire organization can take the wrong path.

Refer participants to the "On the Road to Abilene" scenario in their packet. Allow the participants a couple minutes to read this scenario before continuing.

Managing Agreement: Avoiding False Agreement

(Slide 24)

Managing challenging people and conflict situations is an important role of the successful community leader. This involves managing agreement and includes the ability to recognize "false agreement." It is important that fellow community leaders are not agreeing with a plan or project just because they do not want to hurt anyone's feelings, "rock-the-boat," appear to be a troublemaker, and/or are too lazy to suggest alternatives. When people are reluctant to disagree, often the entire organization can take the wrong path, which can create many difficulties for the organization and those affiliated with it.

Jerry Harvey, Professor of Management Science at George Washington University, tells a story to illustrate the point.

"On the Road to Abilene"

> Several years ago, my wife, her parents and I spent a misery-ridden Sunday afternoon driving 53 miles through a raging dust storm across a lonely desert in an un-air-conditioned car to eat a greasy meal in a hole-in-the-wall cafeteria in Abilene, Texas.
>
> During the subsequent family fight in which each blamed the others for the disaster, we discovered that none of us had wanted to go in the first place. Each had incorrectly believed that everyone else had wanted to go, however, we each had been unwilling to confront one another with the reservations we had about taking the trip. Ironically enough, we wanted to "keep peace in the family." Paradoxically, the four of us each decided silently that we didn't want to go and then proceeded to do just the opposite.
>
> Once things had cooled off enough to piece together what had happened, I gave a name to such "insanity." I describe it as follows:
>
> **The Abilene Paradox** – Organizations frequently take actions in contradiction to the desires of many of their members, defeating the very purposes the organizations are designed to achieve.

Many organizations function similarly to the family in Dr Harvey's story. As a community leader, what can you learn from this story?

- Phony conflict, involving blaming, can occur after false agreement has been mismanaged.

- There is a difference between real conflict and phony conflict. Real conflict involves substantive differences. Phony conflict consists of the blaming behavior, which occurs after agreement has been mismanaged. Knowing how to differentiate the two is important in the same way that it is important to know whether a headache is caused by a brain tumor or stress. The treatment of the two ailments is very different.

- Being in false agreement can cause as many or more problems as being in disagreement.

- People in all kinds of communities can be more effective if they learn the skills of agreement management, as well as those skills necessary to cope with conflict.

Communities considering the causes of false agreement might help develop a working environment that does not foster this paradox. Basically, communities can become involved in the "Abilene Paradox" because community members often have the real fear of being separated from others. All of us fear being ostracized or rejected and might resist disagreeing with an idea or project for fear of being criticized or labeled as a non-team member. Similar to Dr. Harvey's story, others may have the same or similar reservations, but resist expressing concern for the same reasons.

Skills to Manage Agreement

- To manage agreement, leaders must learn the skills of "owning up" and "risk taking."

Discuss skills briefly.

Two skills are necessary to manage agreement in communities. One is called "**owning up**." It can be learned and consists of learning to make first person statements beginning with the word "I" (I think, I feel, I believe). This approach:

- Clearly reveals one's own beliefs and feelings.

- Does not attribute a belief or feeling to others.

- Does not evaluate the beliefs or feelings of others.

The second skill is called "**risk taking**." It means accepting the risk of disagreement and rejection in order to discover the possibility of real agreement. Harvey says, "If you can't risk the real conflict, you can't enjoy genuine agreement."

It is important for community leaders to create an environment where all stakeholders feel safe enough to risk open communication that might challenge a procedure, idea, or project. Positive and constructive disagreement can lead to improving the community.

Summary

- False agreement can lead to projects to which no one is actually committed and that are doomed to failure.

One community leader cited a fundraising project as an example of "false agreement" – when no one really wants to do the candy sale or similar project, but they will not voice their opinion. Thus, the project goes forward with little or no commitment on the part of those involved, and it is doomed to failure.

On a larger scale, consider the consequences of "false agreement" when major economic development is being considered or major physical renovations of facilities are being undertaken. The mismanagement of agreement can result in significant negative results. Strive to manage both conflict and agreement in a healthy manner to avoid finding yourself and your community "On the Road to Abilene."

Activity: Case Studies

1. Tell your group that they will now practice the skills they have learned by completing a case study as a "Conflict Resolution Team." They will have 20 minutes to complete the exercise and then report.

2. Divide into groups of 3 to 5 people and assign a case study to each "Conflict Resolution Team."

3. Have each team select a leader who will report on the team's discussion at the end of 20 minutes.

4. As the teams work, walk around to each and listen to their discussion. Are they mentioning the strategies you've taught?

5. Be prepared to refer to handouts and help teams with their discussion.

6. Allow each team 3-5 minutes to report on their discussion and recommended strategies for addressing the conflict.

Case Studies
(Slide 25)

Practice using your understanding of how you approach managing interpersonal differences by considering some challenging situations that have occurred in community settings.

Case 1 – Conflict in Working Style

"Karen" and "George" work on the same committee, and their different working styles are causing problems. George is the kind of guy who doesn't worry about getting things done on time. He has excellent technical skills and does very good work, with frequent flashes of brilliance, but George also has a very hard time meeting deadlines. He also tends to be messy and disorganized – he says that being neat and organized is a sign of "obsessive compulsive behavior."

Karen is a person who is very concerned about getting things done on time. She is organized both in work and personal habits and credits her organizing skills for her ability to get high-quality work done on short time schedules.

Karen is concerned that work is not progressing and has brought the problem before your Conflict Resolution Team to get the team's advice on how to resolve the conflict.

Activity:

As a Conflict Resolution Team, use what you've learned in today's session to identify strategies to share with Karen to help her manage this conflict. Write the strategies below and your reflections on the next page.

Reflections: Write below the factors your team considered in developing the recommended strategies.

Case 2 – Accusation of Discrimination

Six communities in the area decided to collaborate on a project to create and operate a volunteer health care clinic for needy persons. Local leaders formed the Health Clinic Committee to include a representative from each community as well as four representatives from the health care profession.

Over the past year, the committee made progress. Three months ago, a clinic opened, staffed by volunteers, funded by donations, and governed by a volunteer board. The clinic operates on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 2 – 4 p.m. Volunteers include physicians, nurses, and pharmacists, as well as community volunteers who help with bookkeeping, facility and grounds maintenance, promotion, and resource development.

"Pat," a very vocal citizen from Smithton (one of the six communities), is now speaking against the committee and the clinic. Pat is going around saying that the clinic does not meet Smithton's needs and that the committee did not treat Smithton fairly and equally.

"Tom," a community leader, is concerned that Pat's remarks will have a detrimental affect on the clinic, as well as discourage people from serving on similar committees for the good of the area. Tom has brought this conflict to your Conflict Resolution Team to get the team's advice on how to resolve the conflict.

Complete the activity on the next page.

Activity:

As a Conflict Resolution Team, use what you've learned in today's session to identify strategies to share with Tom to help him manage this challenging situation. Write the strategies below.

Reflections: Write below the factors your team considered in developing the recommended strategies.

Case 3 – Conflict over Goals

"Peg" and "Nancy" have never gotten along. Ever since the first day that she met Nancy, Peg hasn't liked her. After working together on a few projects and sitting through many meetings, Peg decided that she just didn't want to have to deal with Nancy.

Peg's problem with Nancy has to do with issues of style as well as substance. Nancy talks loudly and never seems to be considerate of others. She is very competitive, too – to the point of making others look bad in order to look good herself. Nancy has openly admitted that she does not feel involved in the goals of the community – she's just showing up because she likes to get her picture in the paper.

A community leader has recruited Peg to work on a big assignment that is of great importance to the community. Peg was called in for a meeting to begin planning and working on this assignment. She walked in the meeting room and found the community leader and Nancy sitting together and laughing. The community leader turned to Peg and said "Hi, I guess you know Nancy. I thought you two would make a good team working closely together on this project. What do you think?"

Peg needs guidance on how to handle this conflict and has brought this challenging situation to the attention of your Conflict Resolution Team for advice on what she can do.

Activity:

As a Conflict Resolution Team, use what you've learned in today's session to identify strategies to share with Peg to help her manage this challenging situation. Write the strategies below and your reflections on the next page.

Reflections: Write below the factors your team considered in developing the recommended strategies.

Closing Thoughts on Managing Challenging Situations and People
(Slide 26)

26. Closing Thoughts

- As a community leader, you have within your power the ability to create a positive environment for your family, friends, and fellow community leaders by skillfully managing challenging situations and people.

- This module organized some common sense and common experiences of leaders to assist you in managing the interpersonal relations in your work community.

- Use the ideas and examples presented in this material to assist you in creating this positive environment.

End the session, and remember to collect evaluations!

There is probably nothing in this material that you didn't already know at some level of your experience. "Managing Challenging Situations and People" has simply organized some common sense and common experiences of leaders to assist you in managing the interpersonal relations in your work community. When confronted with a challenging person or situation, it is human nature to feel alone in dealing with the situation or to feel somehow responsible for "causing" the situation. As pointed out in this material, often other community leaders have had similar problems, and furthermore, the cause of the problem may be totally out of your area of responsibility. However, it is your responsibility to manage difficult people and situations constructively.

As a community leader, you have within your power the ability to create a positive environment for your family, friends, and fellow community leaders by skillfully managing challenging situations and people. Use the ideas and examples presented in this material to assist you in creating this positive environment.

Remember:

You can control yourself.

You can manage the situation.

But, you cannot control another person.

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Activity: Your Conflict Management Style

Instructions: Select a real situation you have been involved in to provide the frame of reference for your answers. Allocate 10 points among the four alternative answers given for each of the fifteen items below.

Example: When the people I work with become involved in a personal conflict, I usually:

Intervene to settle the dispute.	Call a meeting to talk over the problem.	Offer to help if I can.	Ignore the problem.
_____3_____	_____6_____	_____1_____	_____0_____

Be certain that your answers add up to 10.

1. **When someone I care about is actively hostile toward me, i.e., yelling, threatening, abusive, etc., I tend to:**

Respond in a hostile manner.	Try to persuade the person to give up his/her actively hostile behavior.	Stay and listen as long as possible.	Walk away.
_____	_____	_____	_____

2. **When someone who is relatively unimportant to me is actively hostile toward me, i.e., yelling, threatening, abusive, etc., I tend to:**

Respond in a hostile manner.	Try to persuade the person to give up his/her actively hostile behavior.	Stay and listen as long as possible.	Walk away.
_____	_____	_____	_____

3. **When I observe people in conflicts in which anger, threats, hostility and strong opinions are present, I tend to:**

Become involved and take a position.	Attempt to mediate.	Observe to see what happens.	Leave as quickly as possible.
_____	_____	_____	_____

Source: J.W. Pfeiffer & L.D. Goodstein, The 1982 Annual for Facilitators, Trainers   and Consultants, University Assoc., Inc.

4. **When I observe another person as meeting his/her needs at my expense, I am apt to:**

Work to do anything I can to change that person.	Rely on persuasion and "facts" when attempting to have that person change.	Work hard at changing how I relate to that person.	Accept the situation as it is.
_____	_____	_____	_____

5. **When involved in an interpersonal dispute, my general pattern is to:**

Draw the other person into seeing the problem as I do.	Examine the issues between us as logically as possible.	Look hard for a workable compromise.	Let time take its course and let the problem work itself out.
_____	_____	_____	_____

6. **The quality that I value the most in dealing with the conflict would be:**

Emotional strength and security.	Intelligence.	Love and openness.	Patience.
_____	_____	_____	_____

7. **Following a serious altercation with someone I care for deeply, I:**

Strongly desire to go back and settle things my way.	Want to go back and work it out - whatever give-and-take is necessary.	Worry about it a lot but not plan to initiate further contact.	Let it lie and not plan further contact.
_____	_____	_____	_____

8. **When I see serious conflict developing between two people I care about, I tend to:**

Express my disappointment that this had happen.	Attempt to persuade them to resolve their differences.	Watch to see what develops.	Leave the scene.
_____	_____	_____	_____

9. **When I see serious conflict developing between two people who are relatively unimportant to me, I tend to:**

Express my disappointment that this had to happen.	Attempt to persuade them to resolve their differences.	Watch to see what develops.	Leave the scene.
_____	_____	_____	_____

Source: J.W. Pfeiffer & L.D. Goodstein, The 1982 Annual for Facilitators, Trainers and Consultants, University Assoc., Inc.

10. **The feedback that I receive from most people about how I behave when faced with conflict and opposition indicates that I:**

Try hard to get my way.	Try to work out differences cooperatively.	Am easygoing and take a soft or conciliatory position.	Usually avoid the conflict.
_____	_____	_____	_____

11. **When communicating with someone with whom I am having a serious conflict, I:**

Try to overpower the other person with my speech.	Talk a little bit more than I listen.	Am an active listener (feeding back words and feelings.)	Am a passive listener (agreeing and apologizing.)
_____	_____	_____	_____

12. **When involved in an unpleasant conflict, I:**

Use humor with the other party.	Make an occasional quip or joke about the situation or the relationship.	Relate humor only to myself.	Suppress all attempts at humor.
_____	_____	_____	_____

13. **When someone does something that irritates me (e.g., smokes in a non-smoking area or crowds in line in front of me), my tendency in communicating with the offending person is to:**

A. Insist that the person look me in the eye.   Look the person directly in the eye and maintain eye contact.   Maintain intermittent eye contact.   Avoid looking directly at the person.

_____   _____   _____   _____

B. Stand close and make physical contact.   Use my hands and body to illustrate my points.   Stand close to the person without touching him or her.   Stand back and keep my hands to myself.

_____   _____   _____   _____

C. Use strong direct language and tell the person to stop.   Try to persuade the person to stop.   Talk gently and tell the person what my feelings are.   Say and do nothing.

_____   _____   _____   _____

Source: J.W. Pfeiffer & L.D. Goodstein, The 1982 Annual for Facilitators, Trainers and Consultants, University Assoc., Inc.

Conflict Management Style Survey:
Scoring and Interpretation Sheet

Instructions: When you have completed all fifteen items, add your scores vertically, resulting in four column totals. Put these on the blanks below.

Totals: _____ _____ _____ _____

Column 1   Column 2   Column 3   Column 4

Now total your scores for Columns 1 and 2 and Columns 3 and 4.

Column 1 + Column 2 = _____ Score A   Column 3 + Column 4 = _____ Score B.

If score A is significantly higher than Score B (25 points or more), it may indicate a tendency toward aggressive/assertive conflict management. A significantly higher B score signals a more conciliatory approach.

Column 1. Aggressive/Confrontive: High scores indicate a tendency toward "taking the bull by the horns" and a strong need to control situations and/or people. Those who use this style are often directive and judgmental.

Column 2. Assertive/Persuasive: High scores indicate a tendency to stand up for oneself without being pushy, a proactive approach to conflict and a willingness to collaborate. People who use this style depend heavily on their verbal skills.

Column 3. Observant/Introspective: High scores indicate a tendency to observe others and examine oneself analytically in response to conflict situations as well as a need to adopt counseling and listening modes of behavior. Those who use this style are likely to be cooperative, even conciliatory.

Column 4. Avoiding/Reactive: High scores indicate a tendency toward passivity or withdrawal in conflict situations and a need to avoid confrontation. Those who use this style are usually accepting and patient, often suppressing their feelings.

Activity: Are You Listening?

Instructions: Qualify each statement as Often or Seldom.

When you and I are talking together . . .	Often	Seldom
• You make me feel as if this is the most important thing you could be doing right now and that your time is truly mine.		
• Your attention is divided. You interrupt our conversation by answering the phone or addressing the needs of others who come by your door.		
• You begin shaking your head or saying "no" before I finish.		
• You make references to other conversations; there is a history to our communication.		
• You fidget and squirm and look at the clock as though you can't wait to get on to other, more important projects and conversations.		
• You begin asking questions before I finish my message.		
• You look me in the eye and really focus your attention on me.		
• You ask questions that let me know you weren't really listening.		
• You finish my sentences for me as though nothing I have to say could be new to you.		
• You express interest by asking thoughtful questions and by contributing your insights.		
• You change the agenda by taking over and changing the content of the conversation.		
• You follow up on what we discussed and keep me posted on what is happening.		
• You are sensitive to the tone of what I have to say and respond respectfully.		
• You give me credit for ideas and projects that grow out of our communications.		
• You try to speed things up and leap ahead with ideas/conclusions as though we're in a rush.		
• You smile at me and make me feel comfortable and valued.		
• You make jokes about things that are serious to me and thereby belittle my concerns.		
• You get defensive and argue before I can fully explain my point.		
• You seem to assume I have something worthwhile to say.		
• You ask questions which demonstrate your efforts to understand what I have to say.		
• Whether or not you agree with me, you make me feel that my opinions and feelings are respected.		

Source: Exchange Press, September/October, 1990.