



Wyoming Leadership Symposium
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Resolving Conflict Within the IEP Team



Conflict

Functional Teams

Conflict

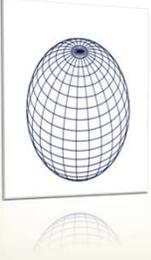
- *Conflict* is an expressed struggle between parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals.

Talk Through Conflict Using Interests-Based Problem Solving (2011).

Sources of Conflict

- Miscommunication
 - Misperceptions
- Different processing styles
 - Different values
- Unmet psychological needs
- Limited resources or unequal control

Circle of Conflict

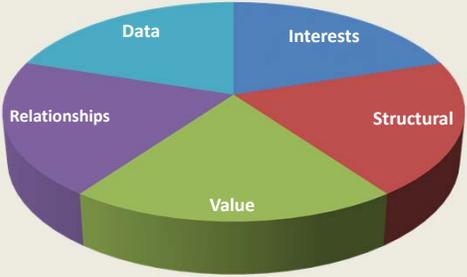


Why do people conflict?
Identify sources of conflict
in order to move beyond it.

Conflict is a signal or message that
something is not working and needs
to be different.

~ Talk Through Conflict Using Interests-Based Problem Solving, Education Service
Center Region 4 (2011).

Circle of Conflict



Circle of Conflict, Christopher Moore (1986).

Interest Conflicts

- Substantive interests or needs (money, service, time).
- Procedural interests or needs (how things are handled).
- Emotional interests or needs (safety, respect, power).

Value Conflicts

- Different beliefs.
- Different ways of seeing the world.
- Different criteria for evaluating ideas.

Structural Conflicts

- Unequal control of resources.
- Unequal power.
- Scheduling time constraints.
- Physical constraints.
- Destructive patterns of behavior (power, decision-making).

Relationship Conflicts

- Intense emotions.
- Repetitive, unwanted behavior.
- Stereotypes, labeling.
- Poor communication skills.
- Negative past history.

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Data Conflicts

- Lack of information.
- Misinformation.
- Differences in what is important.
- Different interpretation of data (test scores, resources).

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Conflict Wheel



The Dynamics of Conflict,
Mayer (2012).

Conflict Wheel

- If we can understand and locate the source of conflict, we can create a map to guide us through the conflict process.
- Different sources of conflict produce different challenges for conflict engagement.

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Conflict Wheel

- Human needs are at the core of all conflicts.
- Needs are embedded in a constellation of contextual factors that generate and define conflict.
- To efficiently address needs, it is necessary to work through some of these elements:

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Emotions

- Emotions are the energy that fuel the conflict.
- At times, emotions seem to be in control of behavior.
- Emotions are a source of power.
- Dealing with emotions typically requires the opportunity to express and release emotions.



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Communication

- We frequently rely on inaccurate or incomplete perceptions and stereotypes, and carry into our communication conclusions drawn from former interactions or experiences.
- Successful communication requires a reciprocal process.



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History

- The history of participants in a conflict, of the system in which the conflict is occurring, and the issues have a powerful influence on the course of that conflict.
- History provides momentum for the development of conflict.



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Structure

- Structural components of conflict include available resources, decision-making procedures, time constraints, legal requirements, communication mechanisms, and physical settings.
- Disputants need help identifying and accepting those structural elements that are unlikely to be altered.



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Values

- When a conflict is experienced as a struggle about values, it becomes intractable.
- It is hard for us to compromise when our core beliefs are challenged because we feel we are compromising our sense of integrity.
- We are unlikely to find our way through the conflict by employing a rational problem-solving strategy.



The Conflict Wheel is a circular diagram with a central orange circle labeled 'Needs'. Surrounding this are four blue segments: 'Values' (top), 'Structure' (left), 'Communication' (right), and 'History' (bottom). The outer ring of the wheel is divided into four quadrants: 'Conflict' (top-right), 'Avoidance' (bottom-right), 'Engagement' (bottom-left), and 'Retaliation' (top-left).

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Contextual Factors

- Culture, power, data, and personality.
- Culture affects conflict because it is embedded in communication styles and structure.
- Power can obscure the roots of conflict.
- Personality is understood in terms of style of conflict engagement or avoidance.
- Misunderstood data can exacerbate conflict.

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Conflict and Negotiation

- This next clip is a great example of value differences in conflict and what can happen if common values are discovered.
- Use the Conflict Wheel to identify the sources of conflict.
- Find the mismatch!

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The Space of Change

How Can We Create It?

Space of Change



The concept of space is both mental and physical. Be strategic in creating the space of change.

Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you will ever regret.

-Ambrose Bierce

Space of Change

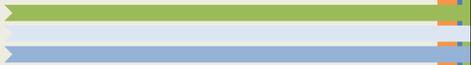
Creating the space of change refers to:

- Balancing power,
- Cultural sensitivity, and
- Preparing the physical environment.

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Balance of Power

- Assess the factors contributing to the impression of power. (Education, representation, language facility, resources. . .)
- Balance the power with intentional, directed conversation.



- Explain the process, encourage participation, etc.

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Cultural Sensitivity

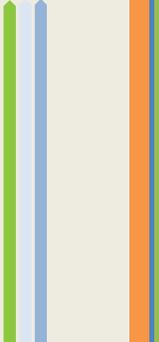
- Guard against reactive devaluation, or the tendency to dismiss or devalue the content of a message based on their negative feelings about the person delivering the message. *Meierding (2012).*

- Be mindful to language and cultural barriers.

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Environment & Power

- Adjust for an imbalance of power or cultural factors.
- The space should emanate respect and be comfortable.
- The facilitator must arrange the room and set the tone.



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Achieve the Balance

- Use symmetry to balance power:
 - Equidistant seating;
 - Parity in eye contact;
 - Mirroring body posture; and
 - Equally interested tone.



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Brain Science and Conflict

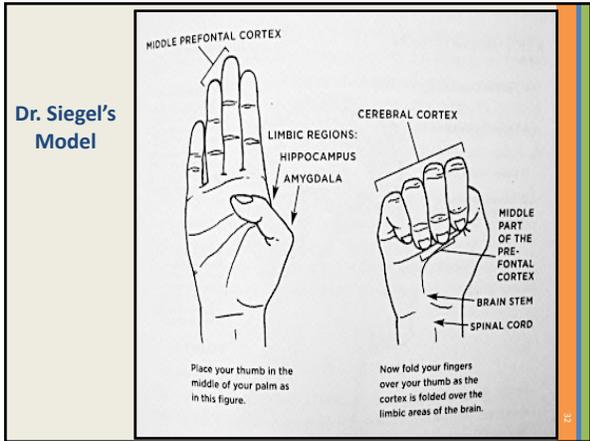
- The *limbic system* is the portion of the brain that deals with three key functions: emotions, memories, and arousal.
- The *frontal lobe of the cerebral cortex* is associated with most complex thinking.
- The *amygdala* is responsible for the fight or flee response activated by trauma or conflict.

Siegel (2011).



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Dr. Siegel's Model

When you flip your lid
your frontal cortex
is disengaged from
your amygdala



Emotionality

- Dealing with intense emotions often associated with conflict usually requires finding some opportunity to express and release emotions and to experience empathy. *Mayer (2012).*
- The facilitator creates the space for emotional release and models empathic listening.

Be Intentional

- Eliminate the *mind chatter* regarding your preconceived negative beliefs or assumptions.
- Model respectful, culturally neutral behavior to the parties.

- Group
- Dynamics

Disagreement

Can be the catalyst of change.

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Conflict is Necessary

- Disagreement or conflict is a necessary ingredient in the growth and development of individuals, families, communities, and societies.
- Conflict can help build community, define and balance needs, and make difficult choices.
- Working through conflict can be an important bonding experience.

Mayer (2012).

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Conflict as a Resource

- Conflict and collaboration are two faces of the same coin of community.
- Getting the right work done successfully and learning to fight gracefully about important things require the capabilities, skills, and tools of a competent facilitator, using conflict as a resource for group development.

The Adaptive School (2009).

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Normalizing
A must-have skill.

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It Is Normal!

- Conflict is part of the human condition.
- Choose words carefully to *normalize*, NOT *awfulize*.
- Escalation leads to negative outcomes.
- Normalizing conflict leads to the *space of change*.

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How Do You Normalize?

- Remember, there are many different considerations, perspectives, views.
- Disagreement encourages us to learn more, develop a deeper understanding.

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Symmetry
In tone and body language.

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Why Is This Important?

- Communication may be verbal or non-verbal.
- Communication could be through words - spoken or written, gestures, body language, facial expressions etc.

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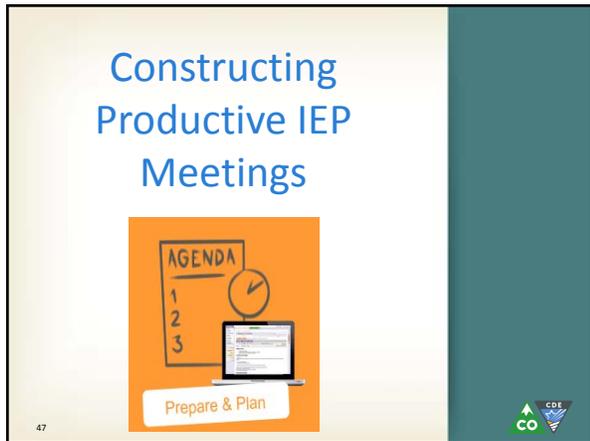
Why Is This Important?

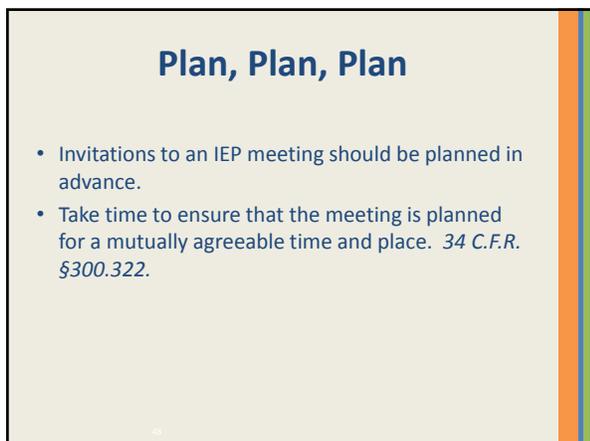
- 93% of communication is nonverbal
 - 55% of the meaning is transmitted through body language,
 - 38% is transmitted through the attitude/demeanor of the communication, and
 - 7% is transmitted through words.

Dr. Albert Mehrabian, *Silent Messages*.

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Agendas
Are living documents.

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Add Value

- It is common for groups to be overly ambitious in their estimates of what can be done in one meeting.
- Consider the group's history and your knowledge of the group.

Schwarz, et al. (2005).

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Communicate the Plan

- An important aspect of agenda design is the way the agenda is documented.
- Simply put, the agenda must be well communicated. People can't follow a plan they don't understand. *Kaner (2014).*
- From an IEP perspective, the opportunity for parent input into the IEP process is critical, and must be well documented.

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Agenda Questions

- Who is assigned the task of agenda building?
- How much time do you need?
- What method of delivery should be used?

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There is simply no other activity that can economize time and maximize success and satisfaction as much as a well-formed agenda.

≈ Garmston & Wellman ≈

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Agenda Design

Kaner (2014)

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graph LR; S([Start of Meeting]) --> T1[Topic #1]; T1 --> T2[Topic #2]; T2 --> T3[Topic #3]; T3 --> E([End of Meeting]);
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MEETING TIPS
for IEP Teams

IEP Agenda Handout

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- Productive
- Meetings

Physical Space
Should be comfortable.

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Build Success

- Consider the *history* of the parties when selecting a location.
- Consider the potential emotionality of the meeting.
- What other factors should you consider?



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Location

- The location chosen for the meeting may affect the interaction and dynamics between or among participants.
- In general, select (or encourage the selection) of a neutral location that is easily accessible and where neither party has strong emotional identification or physical control of the space.

Moore (2014).

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Establishing Comfort

- When you consider the different factors affecting communication, the parties' comfort should be high on the list.
- Comfort has both physical and emotional components. Heed both.
- Comfort levels are affected by issues of territoriality.
- Home court advantage can signify a power.

Madonik (2001).

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Visual Aids

Are not optional.

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Charting

- Entire CHAPTERS have been dedicated to the importance of charting, *Kaner (2014)* and *The Facilitator Toolkit (2007)*, including the chart writer's grip!
- It is all for a good reason.



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Charting

- Charting provides participants with *group memory*.
- It strengthens full participation.
- It validates the speakers.
- Having group memory extends the limits of the human brain.
- Group memory is one of the facilitator's most fundamental tools.

Kaner (2014).

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Convening Productive IEP Meetings



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Meeting Norms
Provide structure and safety.

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Ground Rules

- The purpose of ground rules is to improve how the group functions.
- They should improve efficiency and minimize conflicts and disruptions.
- The group rules should be centered on encouraging a respectful process, not simply policing the participants, e.g. share all relevant information.

Schwarz, et al. (2005).

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Ground Rules

- The term *ground rules* may imply sanctions for a violation or that there is an expectation that they may misbehave.
- Alternative terms include *meeting guidelines* or *meeting norms*.

Moore (2014).

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Meeting Norms

- Meeting norms may
 - Help parties feel safer.
 - Allow parties to show good faith.
 - Demonstrate that agreement is possible.

Moore (2014).

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GROUND RULES

- 1) HONOR TIME LIMITS
- 2) BE ADDITIVE, NOT REPETITIVE
- 3) PARTICIPATE FULLY - TAKE RISKS
- 4) BE OPEN TO NEW IDEAS
- 5) BE RESPECTFUL OF THOSE TALKING OR PRESENTING (NO SIDEBARS)
- 6) TURN ~~YOUR~~ ~~CELL~~ PHONES OFF

Seven Habits of Highly Effective IEP Teams Handout

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