



Handling Conflict

A Practical Tool Kit

Contents

Managing and Understanding Conflict

- 1 What is Conflict?
- 2 The Ingredients of Conflict
- 3 How individuals behave in Conflict
- 4 The Conflict Puzzle
- 5 The Progression of Conflict
- 6 Personal Response to Conflict
- 7 People and Conflict

Skills for Managing Conflict

- 8 Analyse the Conflict
- 9 Determine Management Strategy
- 10 Conflict and Negotiation Styles
- 11 Conflict Analysis Exercise
- 12 Pre-Negotiation
- 13 Negotiation
- 14 Post Negotiation

An Introduction to Mediation

- 15 Skills Needed as a Mediator
- 16 Functions and Types of Mediation
- 17 The Mediation Process

Managing and Understanding Conflict

What is conflict?

Conflict is a natural disagreement resulting from individuals or groups that differ in attitudes, beliefs, values, cultures or needs. It can also originate from past rivalries and personality differences. Other causes of conflict include trying to negotiate before the timing is right or before information that is needed has become available.

Conflict may occur in any environment such as family, community, organisation and in a local, regional or country location.

The ingredients of conflict

Needs - Needs are things that are essential to our well-being. Conflicts arise when we ignore others' needs, our own needs or the group's needs. Be careful not to confuse needs with desires (things we would like, but are not essential).

Perceptions - People interpret reality differently. They perceive differences in the severity, causes and consequences of problems. Misperceptions or differing perceptions may come from: self-perceptions, others' perceptions, differing perceptions of situations and perceptions of threat.

Power - How people define and use power is an important influence on the number and types of conflicts that occur. This also influences how conflict is managed. Conflicts may arise when people try to make others change their actions or to gain an unfair advantage over others.

Values - Values are beliefs or principles we consider to be very important. Serious conflicts arise when people hold incompatible values or when values are not clear. Conflicts also arise when one party refuses to accept the fact that the other party holds something as a value rather than a preference.

Feelings and emotions - Many people let their feelings and emotions become a major influence over how they deal with conflict. Conflicts may also occur because people ignore their own or others' feelings and emotions. Other conflicts occur when feelings and emotions differ over a particular issue.

Conflict is not always negative. In fact, it may be healthy when effectively managed. Healthy conflict may lead to...

- ▶ Growth and innovation
- ▶ New ways of thinking
- ▶ Additional management options

If the conflict is understood, it may be effectively managed by reaching a consensus that meets both the individual's and society's needs. This results in mutual benefits and strengthens the relationship. The goal is for all to "win" by having at least some of their needs met.

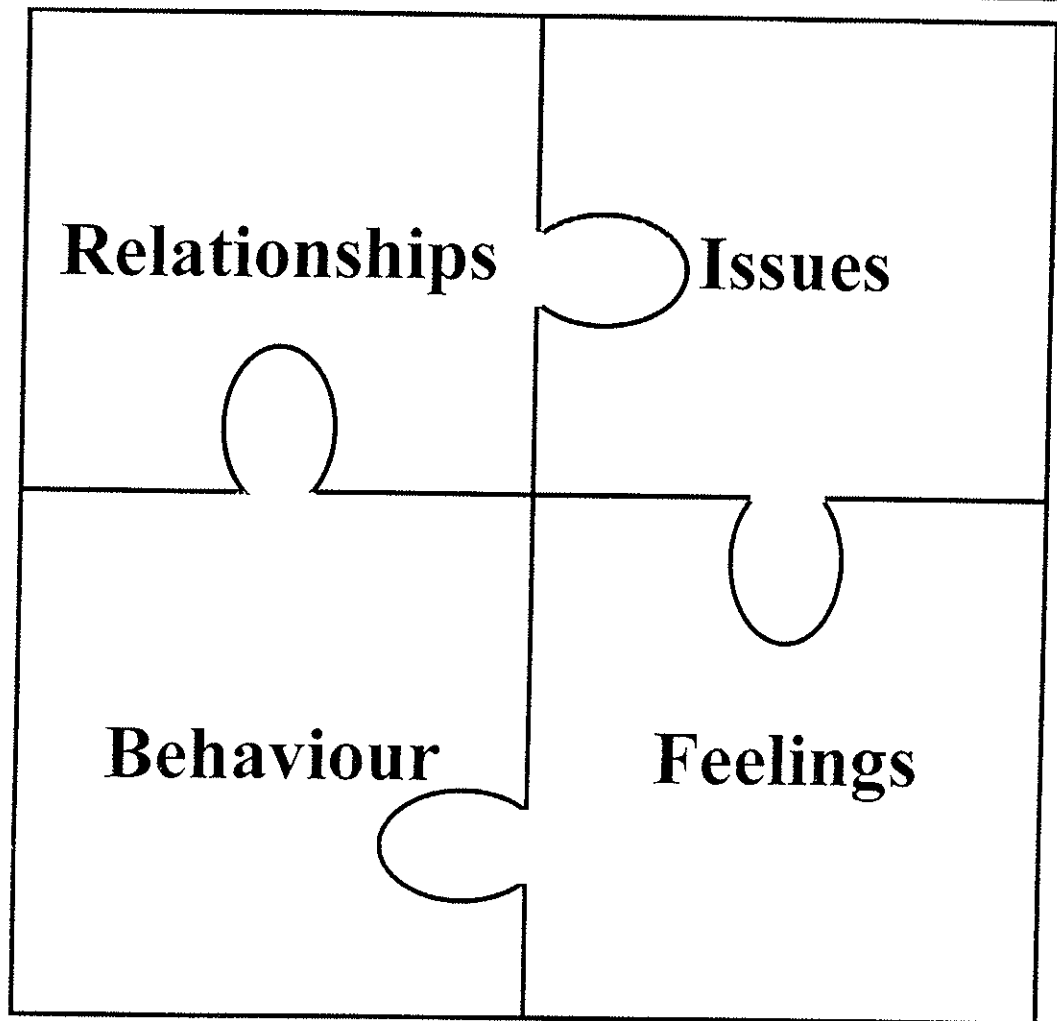
How individuals behave in Conflict

Often what is experienced first in a conflict is **BEHAVIOUR** (shouting, fighting, slamming doors, withdrawing etc. etc.). Behind the behaviour there is most likely a strong **FEELING** (anger, frustration, hurt, powerlessness etc.). There is a need to ask 'What is the person feeling?'

Behind the feelings there are normally **ISSUES** or experiences. There is a need to ask 'Why are they feeling that way?' In conflicts, issues usually involve another party or **RELATIONSHIP**. There is a need to ask 'Who else is involved here?'

MANAGING CONFLICT is usually about regulating behaviour. **RESOLVING** or **TRANSFORMING CONFLICT** requires an understanding of the issues, address the feelings, issues and relationships as well as the behaviour.

The Conflict Puzzle



Often what we experience first in a conflict is **BEHAVIOUR**.
(Shouting, fighting, slamming doors, withdrawing, etc.)

Behind the behaviour there is most likely a strong **FEELING**.
(Anger, frustration, hurt, powerlessness, etc)
We need to ask: "*What* is the person feeling?"

Behind the feelings there are normally **ISSUES** or experiences.
We need to ask: "*Why* are they feeling that way?"

In conflicts, issues usually involve another party or **RELATIONSHIP**.
We need to ask: "*Who* else is involved here?"

**All four
of these
are part
of a
conflict**

MANAGING CONFLICT is usually about regulating behaviour.

RESOLVING or TRANSFORMING CONFLICT requires that we understand and address the feelings, issues and relationships as well as the behaviour.

The Progression of Conflict

Stage 1

Two people disagree. They focus on the issue and resolve it. Focus on the issue not the person.



Stage 2

An important and potentially hurtful shift happens when the person is seen as the problem.



Stage 3

When the person is the focus other issues are remembered. People make general, not specific charges.



Stage 4

Other people become involved as both persons speak to "their" friends about the other person. Returning to the problem becomes less likely as people talk about the other person not with them.



Stage 5

The initial problem has escalated. Things are serious and more complex. It becomes 'tit-for-tat' and more public with other are involved.



Stage 6

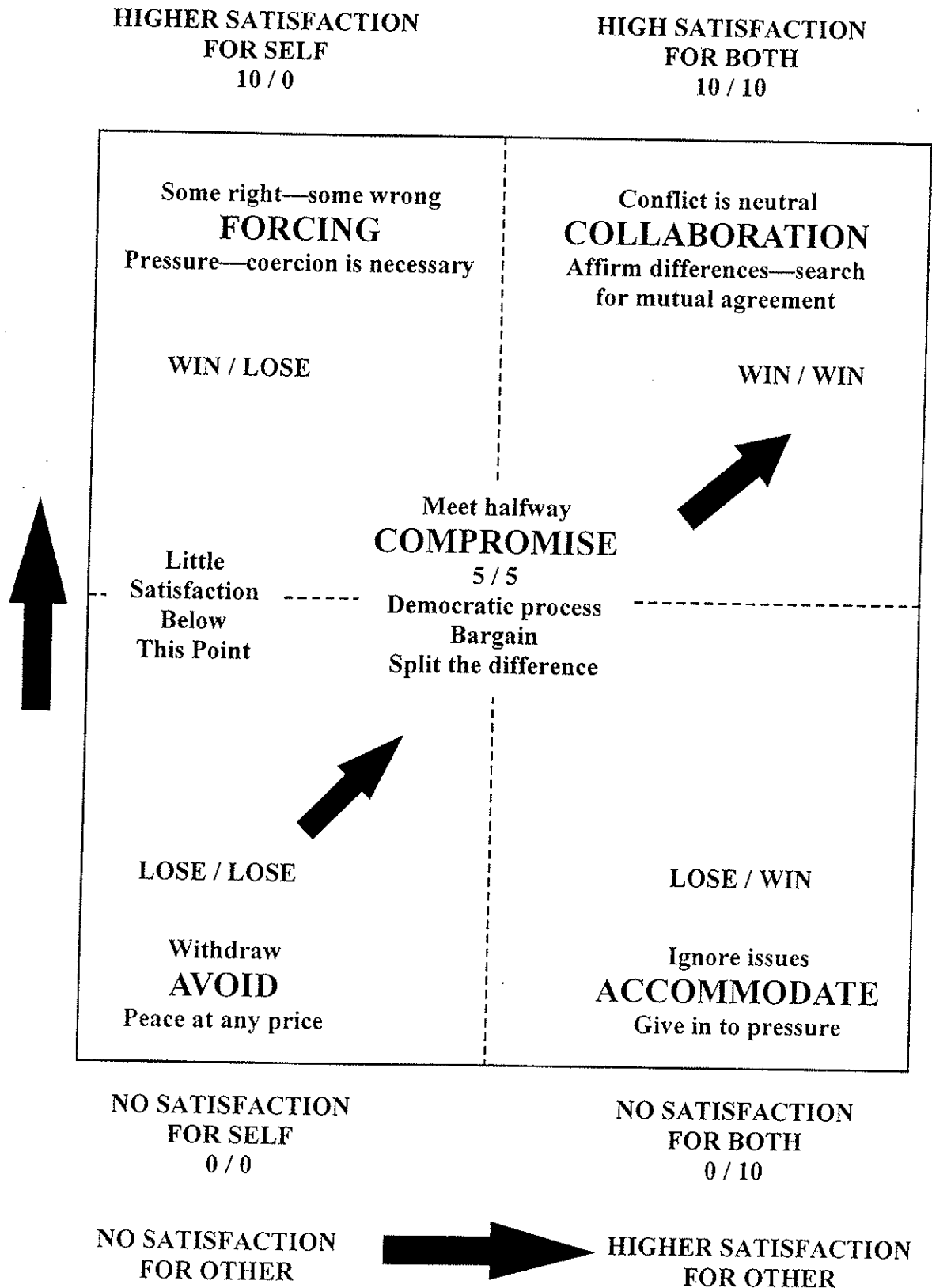
Hostility, hurt and self-justification increase. New hurts are added as the original problem is forgotten. Blaming and labeling are the talk most commonly heard.



Stage 7

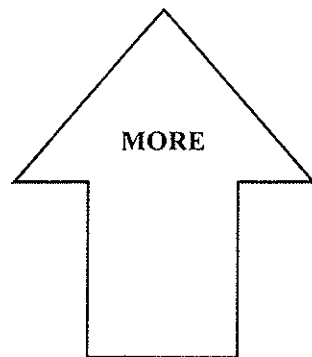
The result is entrenched polarisation. Sometimes structures emerge and support the conflict. The relationships involved are in tatters and people are hurting.

Personal Response to Conflict



People and Conflict

AVOIDANCE



IN CONTROL OF
THE
PROCESS

AND

OUTCOME

INFORMAL DISCUSSION
NEGOTIATION

Most often people
on their own

CONCILIATION
(FACILITATION)
MEDIATION

Outsiders giving
assistance

ARBITRATION
JUDICIAL
(LITIGATION)

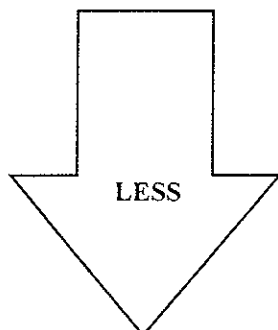
Outsiders taking
control

LEGISLATIVE

A public process

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE
(SEEK TO MOBILISE / INFLUENCE)

A civil protest

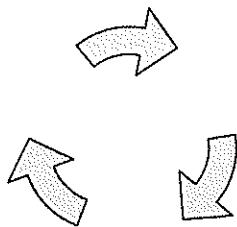


VIOLENCE
(PHYSICAL COERCION)

Skills for Managing Conflict

There are five key steps to managing conflict. These key steps are:

- Analyze the conflict
- Determine management strategy
- Pre-negotiation
- Negotiation
- Post-negotiation



Step 1: Analyse the conflict

The first step in managing conflict is to analyze the nature and type of conflict. To do this, you will find it helpful to ask questions.

Answers may come from your own experience, your partners or local media coverage. You may want to actually interview some of the groups involved.

Step 2: Determine management strategy

Once you have a general understanding of the conflict, the groups involved will need to analyze and select the most appropriate strategy. In some cases it may be necessary to have a neutral facilitator to help move the groups toward consensus.

Conflict Management Strategies

- Collaboration
- Compromise
- Competition
- Accommodation
- Avoidance

Collaboration - This results from a high concern for your group's own interests, matched with a high concern for the interests of other partners. The outcome is "**win/win**." This strategy is generally used when concerns for others are important. It is also generally the best strategy when society's interest is at stake. This approach helps build commitment and reduce bad feelings. The drawbacks are that it takes time and energy. In addition, some partners may take advantage of the others' trust and openness. Generally regarded as the best approach for managing conflict, the objective of collaboration is to reach consensus.

Compromise - This strategy results from a high concern for your group's own interests along with a moderate concern for the interests of other partners. The outcome is "**win some/lose some**." This strategy is generally used to achieve temporary solutions, to avoid destructive power struggles or when time pressures exist. One drawback is that partners can lose sight of important values and long-term objectives. This approach can also distract the partners from the merits of an issue and create a cynical climate.

Competition - This strategy results from a high concern for your group's own interests with less concern for others. The outcome is "**win/lose**." This strategy includes most attempts at bargaining. It is generally used when basic rights are at stake or to set a precedent. However, it can cause the conflict to escalate and losers may try to retaliate.

Accommodation - This result's from a low concern for your group's own interests combined with a high concern for the interests of other partners. The outcome is "**lose/win**." This strategy is generally used when the issue is more important to others than to you. It is a "goodwill gesture." It is also appropriate when you recognize that you are wrong. The drawbacks are that your own ideas and concerns don't get attention. You may also lose credibility and future influence.

Avoidance - This result's from a low concern for your group's own interests coupled with a low concern for the interests of others. The outcome is "**lose/lose**." This strategy is generally used when the issue is trivial or other issues are more pressing. It is also used when confrontation has a high potential for damage or more information is needed. The drawbacks are that important decisions may be made by default.

Conflict and Negotiation Styles

When To Use Which?

FORCING

Often appropriate when:

- An emergency looms.
- You are sure you are being right and being right matters more than preserving relationships.
- The issue is trivial and others really don't care what happens.

Often inappropriate when:

- Cooperation has not yet been attempted.
- Cooperation from others is important.
- Used routinely for most issues.
- Self-respect of others is diminished needlessly.

COLLABORATING

Often appropriate when:

- The issues and relationships are both significant.
- A creative outcome is important.
- Time and energy are available for discussion.
- Reasonable hope exists to meet all concerns.

Often inappropriate when:

- Time is short.
- The issues are unimportant.
- You are over-loaded with 'processing'
- The goals of the other person are wrong.

COMPROMISING

Often appropriate when:

- Cooperation is important but time or resources are limited.
- When finding some solution, even less than the best, is better than a complete stalemate

Often inappropriate when:

- Find the most creative solution possible is essential.
- You can't live the consequences.

AVOIDING

Often appropriate when:

- The issue is trivial.
- The relationship is insignificant.
- Time is short and a decision is not necessary
- You have little power but still wish to block the other person

Often inappropriate when:

- You care about both the issues involved and the relationship.
- Used habitually for most issues (leads to 'explosions' or 'freeze out')
- A residue of negative feelings is likely to linger.
- Others would benefit from caring confrontation.

ACCOMMODATING

Often appropriate when:

- You really don't care about the issue.
- You are powerless but have no wish to block the other person.

Often inappropriate when:

- You are likely to harbour resentment.
 - Used habitually in order to gain acceptance (outcome may be lack of self-respect).
-

Conflict Analysis Exercise

Think of a controversial issue to analyze. On a separate sheet of paper, answer these questions.

Groups involved

- ▶ Who are the groups involved?
- ▶ Who do they represent?
- ▶ How are they organised?
- ▶ What is their power base?
- ▶ Are the groups capable of working together?
- ▶ What are the historical relationships among the groups?

Substance

- ▶ How did the conflict arise?
- ▶ How are the main and secondary issues described?
- ▶ Can negative issues be reframed positively?
- ▶ Are the issues negotiable?
- ▶ Have positions been taken and, if so, are there common interests?
- ▶ What information is available and what other information is needed?
- ▶ What values or interests are challenged?

Possible strategies

- ▶ Would consensus serve all interests?
- ▶ Are there external constraints or other influences that must be accommodated?
- ▶ What are the past experiences (if any) of the groups working together?
- ▶ What is the timeline for a decision?
- ▶ How will the public and the media be involved and informed?
- ▶ Will an outside negotiator be needed?

Step 3: Pre-negotiation

To set the stage for effective negotiation, the groundwork must be laid. The following should occur prior to negotiation.

Initiation - One partner raises the possibility of negotiation and begins the process. If no one is willing to approach the others to encourage them to reach an agreement, a trusted outsider could be brought in as a facilitator.

Assessment - Conditions must be right for negotiation to be successful. Key players must be identified and invited. Each side must be willing to collaborate with the others. Reasonable deadlines and sufficient resources to support the effort must exist. Spokespersons for each group must be identified and involved. Parties need to determine which issues are negotiable and which are not.

Ground rules and agenda - The groups must agree on ground rules for communication, negotiation and decision making. They should agree on the objectives of the negotiation process. An agenda of issues to be covered needs to be developed.

Organisation - Meeting logistics must be established, including agreed upon times and places. People must be contacted and encouraged to attend. Minutes must be taken so that information can be distributed before and after meetings.

Joint fact-finding - The groups must agree on what information is relevant to the conflict. This should include what is known and not known about social and technical issues. Agreement is also needed on methods for generating answers to questions.

Step 4: Negotiation

Interests - When negotiating be sure to openly discuss interests, rather than stated positions. Interests include the reasons, needs, concerns and motivations underlying positions. Satisfaction of interests should be the common goal.

Options - To resolve conflicts, concentrate on inventing options for satisfying interests. Do not judge ideas or favour any of the options suggested. Encourage creativity, not commitment.

Evaluation - Only after the partners have finished listing options, should the options be discussed. Determine together which ideas are best for satisfying various interests.

Written agreement - Document areas of agreement and disagreement to ensure common understanding. This helps ensure that agreements can be remembered and communicated clearly.

Commitment - Every partner must be confident that the others will carry out their parts of the agreement. Discuss and agree upon methods to ensure partners understand and honor their commitments.

When evaluating options...

- ▶ Use objective criteria for ranking ideas
- ▶ Make trade-offs among different issues
- ▶ Combine different options to form acceptable agreements

Step 5: Post-negotiation

Once negotiation is complete, the group will need to implement the decisions made. Some key steps include:

Ratification - The partners must get support for the agreement from organizations that have a role to play in the agreement. These organizations should be partners and should have been involved in the previous steps. Each organization will need to follow its own procedures to review and adopt the agreement.

Implementation - You and your partners' jobs are not done when you've reached agreement. Communication and collaboration should continue as the agreement is carried out. The partnership will need to have a plan to monitor progress, document success, resolve problems, renegotiate terms and celebrate success.

Negotiation skills

Negotiation is an important skill for coming to an agreement when conflicts develop at home, at work and when dealing with issues like those related to watershed management. When negotiating...

Separate people from the problem

When negotiating, remember you're dealing with people who have their own unique needs, emotions and perceptions.

Some conflicts are based on differences in thinking and perceptions. These conflicts may exist mainly in peoples' minds. It helps for each party to put themselves into the other's shoes so they can understand each other's point of view.

Identify and openly discuss differences in perceptions, being careful not to place blame. In addition, recognize and understand the other side's emotions as well as your own.

Interest versus Position

People often confuse interests with positions. An interest may be reducing litter in roadside ditches. There are many possible ways of addressing this interest. One might be the position of mandatory recycling. Another position might be a deposit on bottles and cans. Still another could be organising a clean-up day.

Focus on interests, not positions

Focusing on interests, rather than positions, makes it possible to come up with better agreements. Even when people stand on opposite positions, they usually have a few shared interests.

It takes time and effort to identify interests. Groups may not even be clear about their own interests. It helps to write down each group's interests as they are discovered. It helps to ask why others take the positions or make the decisions they do. Partners will have multiple interests. Interests involving important human needs (such as security, economic well-being, a sense of belonging, recognition and control over one's life) are difficult to negotiate.

Develop optional solutions

When developing optional solutions that meet the interests of all sides try to meet as many of each side's interests as possible. Start by inviting all sides to brainstorm ideas (before reaching a decision).

Some obstacles to developing innovative options are:

- ▶ Judging and rejecting prematurely
- ▶ Searching for a single best answer
- ▶ Putting limits on scope or vision
- ▶ Considering only your own interests

To overcome these obstacles, view the situation through the eyes of different partners. Focus on shared interests to make the process smoother for all involved. Look for meaningful opportunities, not simple solutions.

Developing objective criteria

When developing criteria for selecting or combining possible alternatives it is best practice to revisit the conflicting interests. These can't be ignored or "wished" away. Instead discuss them as you begin developing criteria for judging alternatives. Also keep in mind principles such as fairness, efficiency and scientific merit.

Strive for criteria that are legitimate, practical and unbiased. You may also find it helps to explore the criteria used in making past decisions and discuss criteria with your partners or outside experts.

An introduction to Mediation

Skills needed as a Mediator

There are a number of key skills needed as a Mediator and it is important that people are fully skilled to be able to act as a mediator.

Communicator

Communication is important to ensure that all issues are fully addressed and no lack of understanding occurs.

Good Listener

Listening is crucial so that no relevant points are missed again misunderstood or misinterpreted.

Respect

Respect is important to be able to gain the confidence of all the parties.

Impartial

A mediator must always remain neutral and not take any one parties side.

Self Confidence

A mediator needs confidence to be able to tackle difficult issues that may arise during mediation

Non – judgmental

As with respect it is important not to pre-judge or judge so as to gain the confidence of all the parties.

Patience

Time is important when dealing with sensitive issues and therefore patience is crucial so that issues are fully addressed and resolved.

Empathy

Need to show empathy towards all parties and not one or the other.

Fact Finder

Fact finding is very important so that all issues can be addressed during mediation and all issues are addressed.

Being calm

Despite what the issues are and what is happening during mediation it is important to remain calm and build confidence with all the parties.

Tolerant

A mediator must be tolerant of all the parties despite the issues surrounding the conflict.

Open minded

An open mind is essential so that you do not bring your own personal opinions and views to the mediation process.

Create Trust

Trust is important if you are to successfully address all the issues causing the conflict and by all the parties involved.

Intuition

Intuition is important when dealing with sensitive or difficult issues.

Be organised

Ensuring that you are organised during a mediation process will result in its success so that nothing is overlooked.

Articulate

You must be able to fully communicate in a precise manner with all parties and at different levels depending on the parties.

Functions and types of Mediation

Many conflicts are resolved through informal discussion or negotiation by the parties involved themselves. When that doesn't happen or can't happen for any number of reasons one alternative might be mediation.

Definitions - Mediation assists communication between individuals or groups in order to manage or overcome estrangement and effect positive change.

In simple words - mediation is about helping people have difficult conversations.

There are certain characteristics which are fairly common to the practice of mediation.

- An impartial Third Party presence among people affected by conflict.
- A focus on the human dimensions of conflict (feelings, emotions).
- Attention not only to the resolution of issues but also to the restoration, renewal or adjustment of relationships affected by conflict.
- The application of a strategy or design to the activity of conflict intervention.
- A search for a solution which the parties view as credible or relevant.

There are a number of functions of Mediation:

1. To assist communication
2. To improve understandings
3. To support creative thinking
4. To explore accommodation
5. To facilitate agreements

The Mediation Process

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Create a neutral atmosphereBuild confidenceState the purpose of the meetingDescribe the processDevelop ground rulesExplain the purpose of note takingEmphasise confidentialityAssure understanding before moving on
Story Telling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Unfold 'each' storyListen for anger, feelings and the issuesUse facilitating languageBuild on positivesFacilitate the flowsSummarise each party's concernsCheck for accuracy and ownership
Framing the Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Check each party for -<ul style="list-style-type: none">- new information- new understandingsList the issuesHighlight common areas and concernsAscertain the willingness to proceed
Problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reaffirm the parties in their own power to reach a satisfactory outcomeRepeat the issue (s) new information and new understandingsHelp the parties to identify a starting pointGenerate suggestions/ideas/options on how they might work through each issueAccept all suggestions without judging their merit when they are givenEncourage all parties to talk directly to each other
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review the ideas and suggestions that have emergedClarify the preferred option (s) - verbal or writtenValidate the parties on their achievement (s)

There are several Methods of Mediation:

Formal Mediation

Where the mediator's role is formally recognised and the parties actually meet.

Intermediation

Where the mediator's role is formally recognised but the parties do not meet.

Meditative behaviour

Where the mediator's role is not formally acknowledged and there is no recognised process but it is understood that the mediator is in contact with opposing side.

Conciliation

Where the mediator is in contact with one side, encouraging inclusive thinking but not viewed as intentionally communicating information to the other side.

Why Mediation???

It's cheaper

It's quicker

Much more satisfying

Empowering

Attends and/ or addresses the Issues as well as Relationships