

HOLDING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Where relationships
gain strength.

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GROUP

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HOLDING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

OVERVIEW

“Nothing shows your true colors quite as vividly as difficult conversations.”

Mark Christensen

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Welcome & Objectives

Workplace leadership happens in the context of relationships. And daily interaction is the life-blood of working relationships. It's more than mechanics and it's more than desire. It is a craft. And the craft can be – should be – mastered by every workplace leader.

Every conversation is an opportunity to provide leadership. Difficult conversations – when the stakes are high, emotions are strong, and the pressure is on – are the ultimate opportunities to show your true colors as a leader.

This one-day workshop covers the skills and processes used to initiate and hold difficult conversations and resolve challenging, people-related problems. It is a highly interactive session that teaches skills to listen for understanding, provide feedback and objective data, diffuse emotional situations, and provide a proven step-by-step approach to solving people problems.

Objectives:

By the end of this workshop you should be able to:

1. Recognize the importance and power of difficult conversations.
2. Practice and apply a proven roadmap for holding difficult conversations.
3. Lead yourself well when faced with difficult conversations.
4. Set the stage for a successful conversation.
5. Master the skills for gaining mutual understanding and respect.
6. Transform difficult conversations into positive actions and outcomes.

What Makes Them Difficult?

What is it that makes difficult conversations so difficult?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin gray border, intended for the user to write their response to the question above.

Difficult Conversation Waiting for You

What difficult conversation is waiting for you right now? See if you can identify one that you find challenging and that holds high consequences?

Describe the situation

Who is involved?

What is this impact, or the potential impact, of this situation on you, your team, or the organization?

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ROADMAP

“One big secret to successful conversations is knowing where you want to go before you begin.”

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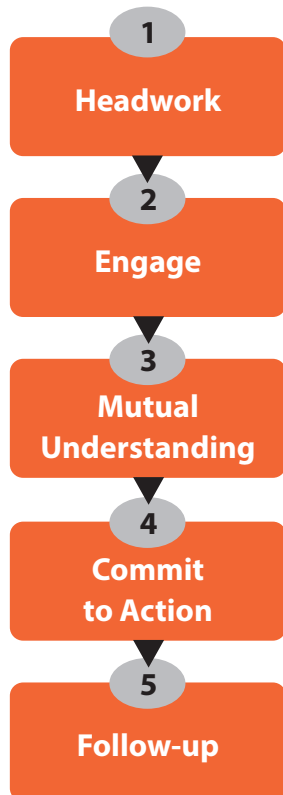
Interaction Process



Roadmap for Difficult Conversations



Step 1: Headwork



Purpose

Gather information, assess the situation, and determine the best approach, before beginning the conversation.

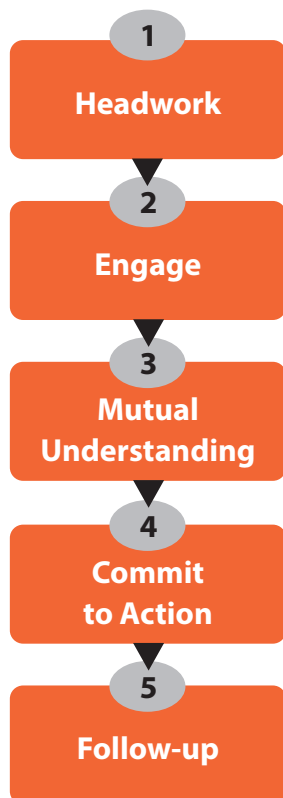
Key Actions:

- Define the situation.
- Weigh the issue vs. relationship.
- Manage self-talk.
- Plan your approach.

Success Criteria:

- Can you clearly state the issue or opportunity?
- Do you have all the information you need?
- Have you weighed the importance of the issue and the relationship?
- Do you have a solid plan for your approach?

Step 2: Engage



Purpose

Invite the other person to have the right kind of conversation with you, for the right purpose.

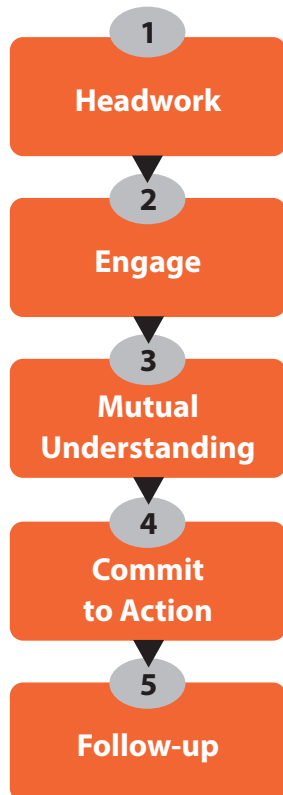
Key Actions:

- Set the tone.
- Clarify the WHAT, WHY, and HOW.
- Frame the conversation so that it is SAFE, FOCUSED, and PRODUCTIVE.

Success Criteria:

- The conversation takes place at the proper time and place.
- The purpose, desired outcome, and process for the conversation is clear.
- The conversation stays focused, safe, and productive.

Step 3: Mutual Understanding



Purpose

Reach a level of understanding between everyone involved so that productive work can resume and progress can be made.

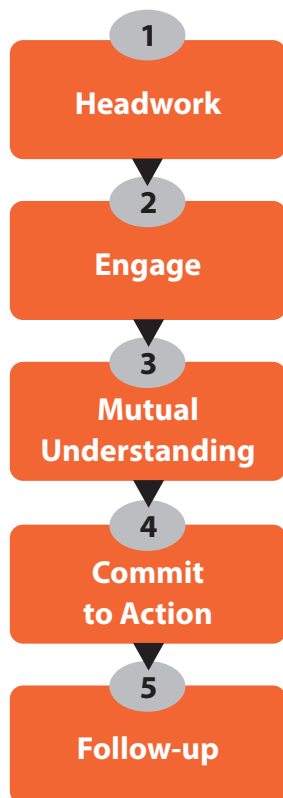
Key Actions:

- Stay focused on purpose.
- Listen to understand other points of view.
- Express your point of view.
- Summarize and gain closure.

Success Criteria:

- The conversation stayed focused on the desired purpose.
- You are able to summarize the other person's key points to his/her satisfaction.
- The other person can summarize your key points to your satisfaction.
- You are able to move productively to planning next steps.

Step 4: Commit to Action



Purpose

Define and commit to realistic action steps for moving forward.

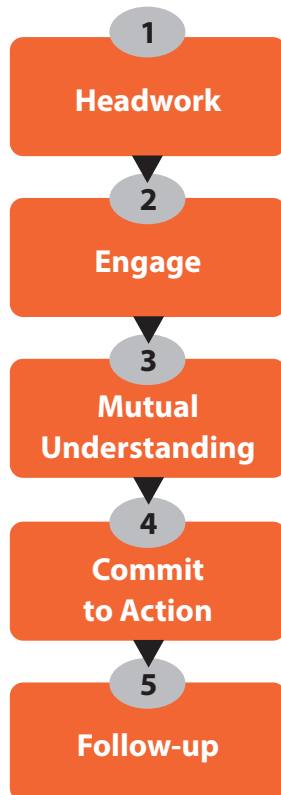
Key Actions:

- Express your desire to move to action planning.
- Agree on a general solution or course of action.
- Get commitment on specific actions (what, who, and when).
- Set a follow-up date.

Success Criteria:

- You agree on a clear course of action.
- You gain commitment on specific actions - who, what, why, how, how much, and by when.
- You clarify what help or support will be needed.
- You gain commitment on how you will follow-up with each other.
- You have a clear follow-up date.

Step 5: Follow-up



Purpose

Ensure progress is made on agreements and action items.

Key Actions:

- Build the relationship.
- Reinforce accountability.
- Learn from the experience.
- Hold the follow-up discussion.

Success Criteria:

- You have a set date for reviewing progress.
- You both meet your commitments and obligations.
- You look for ways to offer help and support to the other person.
- You provide feedback to the other person.
- You listen to understand the feedback from the other person.
- You find ways to build the relationship.

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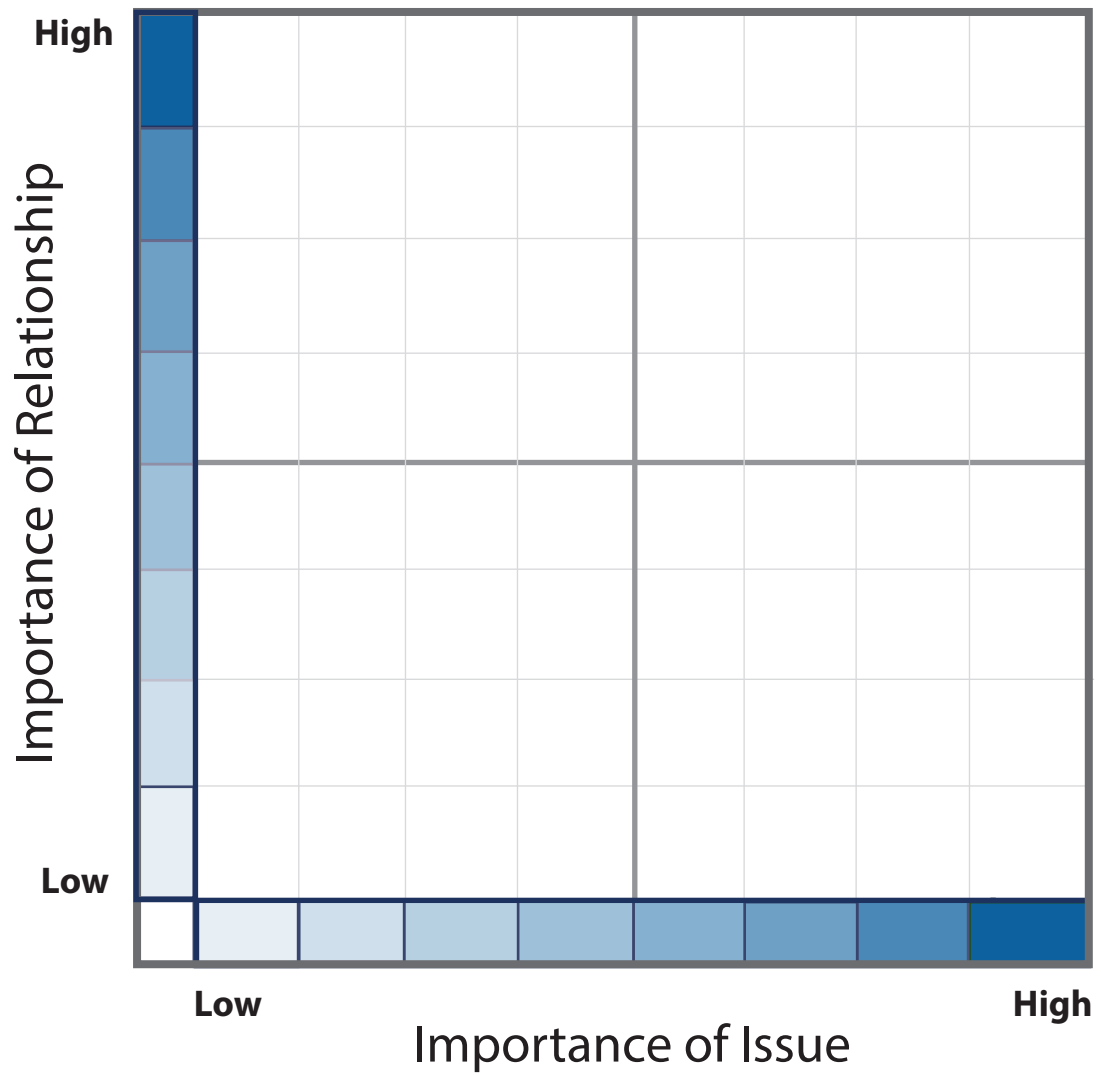
HEADWORK

“Every conversation is first created in your mind.”

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Issue vs. Relationship

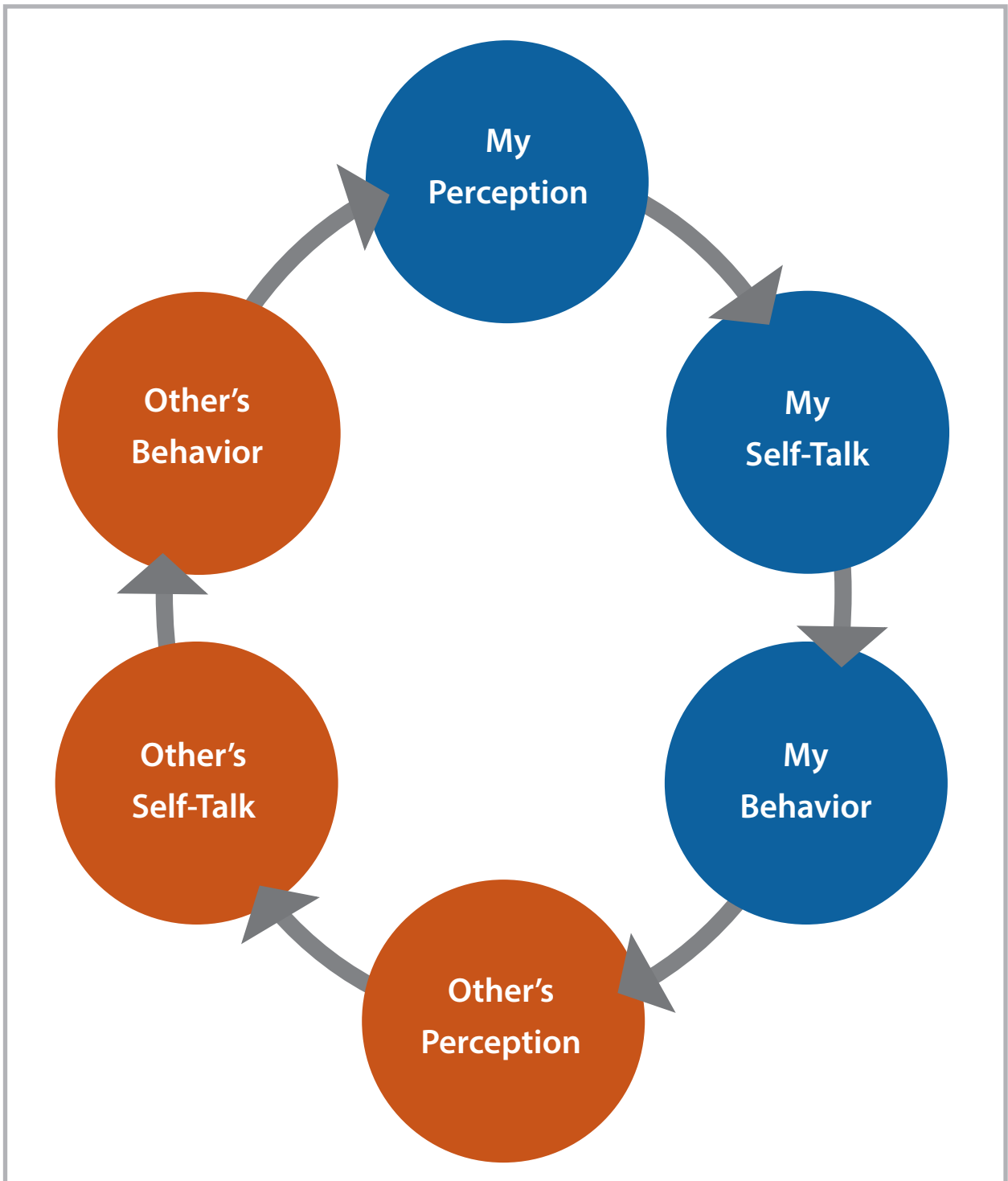


Owner vs. Victim



"Keep in mind that no one is an OWNER; and no one is a VICTIM. We are thinkers of thoughts with the ability to alter our thoughts at any time."
-Dennis Deaton (The Ownership Spirit)



Self-Talk



Manage Your Self-Talk

Consider your own self-talk during challenging situations, especially when collaboration is necessary.

- What are you telling yourself that could be undermining your success (HINDERING self-talk)?
- What truths should you be telling yourself that could enhance your success (HELPING self-talk)?

<p style="text-align: center;">Helping Self-Talk</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Hindering Self-Talk</p> 

Recognize and Check

"What am I telling myself and how do I know it is accurate?"

Reflect and Affirm

"I've managed similar ... and harder ... things than this."

"I can handle this. I will succeed. The outcome will be positive."

"I am the leader here. I can help us both succeed in this conversation."

Plan and Act

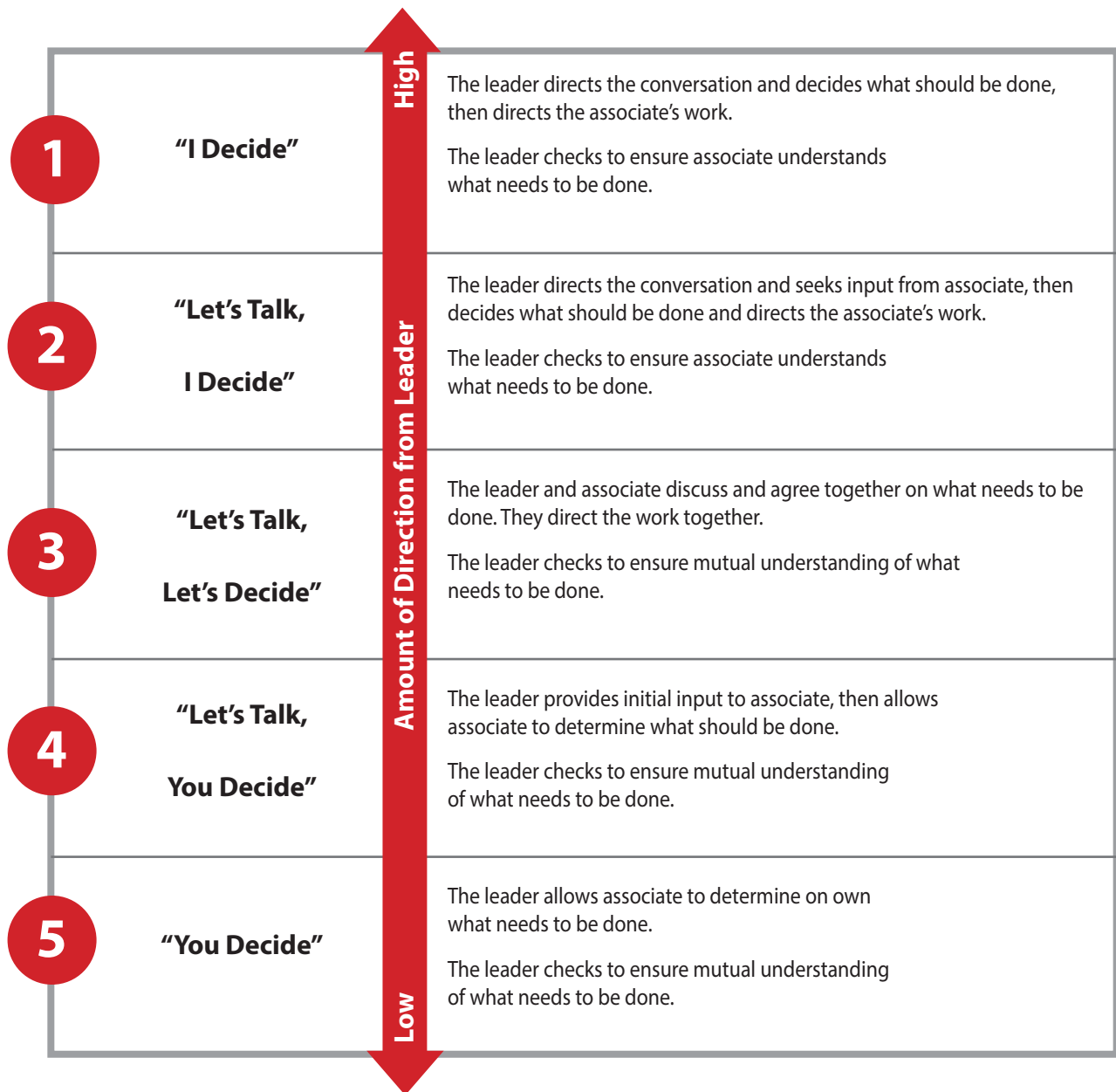
"My desired outcome is"

"I will accomplish it by"

"Success will look like this"



Adjust Your Style & Match Your Approach





Style and Approach

Worksheet

Use this worksheet to help you determine the approach you should take with an associate to achieve maximum collaboration.

Associate	Date
<p>Working Style</p> <p>How would you describe the working style of your associate?</p>	<p>Adjustment</p> <p>How should you adjust your style to match the style of your associate?</p>
<p>Top Issues</p> <p>What are the top issues or points for discussion with your associate?</p>	<p>Your Approach</p> <p>What level of leadership (refer to previous page) is appropriate approach?</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> 1. I decide. <input type="radio"/> 2. Let's talk, I decide. <input type="radio"/> 3. Let talk, let's decide. <input type="radio"/> 4. Let's talk, you decide. <input type="radio"/> 5. You decide.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> 1. I decide. <input type="radio"/> 2. Let's talk, I decide. <input type="radio"/> 3. Let talk, let's decide. <input type="radio"/> 4. Let's talk, you decide. <input type="radio"/> 5. You decide.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> 1. I decide. <input type="radio"/> 2. Let's talk, I decide. <input type="radio"/> 3. Let talk, let's decide. <input type="radio"/> 4. Let's talk, you decide. <input type="radio"/> 5. You decide.

Interaction

Worksheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

Step 1 Set the Stage

Define the Situation	Current Situation	↔	Desired Situation
	What do you see (behaviors, actions, results)? What is the impact?		What would you like to see? What would be the impact?

Barriers	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____	Self-Talk	Hindering Self Talk _____ _____
			Helping Self Talk _____ _____

Issue & Relationship	High Relationship Low Issue High	Approach	Match Your Approach to the Need: <input type="radio"/> 1 - "I Decide" <input type="radio"/> 2 - "Let's Talk, I Decide" <input type="radio"/> 3 - "Let's Talk, Let's Decide" <input type="radio"/> 4 - "Let's Talk, You Decide" <input type="radio"/> 5 - "You Decide"	Plan When and Where: When? Where?

Step 2 Engage

<p>Tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set the tone • Clarify the purpose • Clarify the outcome • Establish the process • Keep it focused, safe, productive 	<p>Purpose</p>	<p>Clarify WHAT the conversation is about, WHY it is important, and HOW you would like to proceed.</p>	<p>Outcome</p>	<p>Clarify the desired outcome of your conversation.</p>
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Step 3 Mutual Understanding

<p>Tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reclarify the purpose • Inform (observation and impact) • Explore (ask and listen) • Summarize 	<p>Inform</p>	<p>Describe what you observe and the impact</p>	<p>Explore</p>	<p>Ask for and listen to their response</p>
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Step 4 Commit to Action

<p>Tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarize • Transition to action planning • Get commitment on key actions, outcomes, and deadline. • Set a follow-up date 	<p>Action Plan</p>	<p>Course of Action</p>		
<p>Specific Actions</p>		<p>Outcome</p>	<p>Deadline</p>	
<p>Follow-up:</p>				

Step 5 Follow-Up

<p>Tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build the relationship • Ensure accountability • Hold follow-up • Learn from the experience 	<p>Notes</p>
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SKILLS & METHODS

“Master the skills that create success.”

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Key Interaction Skills and Methods

Use the worksheet below to help you practice, apply, and evaluate your success at interacting with impact.

- What was the situation? What was the purpose of your interaction?
- What technique did you use? What specifically did you do?
- What was the outcome?
- What would you do differently next time?

What did you do? How did it go?

INFORM	Purpose Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State WHAT you want to discuss • State WHY it is important • State HOW you would like to proceed 	
	Impact Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State what you have OBSERVED • Describe the IMPACT • Ask for and LISTEN to their response 	
EXPLORE	Questioning Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OPEN ENDED vs CLOSED • DIRECT vs INDIRECT • GUIDING vs REFLECTING 	
	Listening Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect FEELING • Reflect MEANING • Attending BODY LANGUAGE • VERIFY Understanding 	
CLOSE	Summary Statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead in ... • You said ... AND ... I said ... • Check ... 	
	Action Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHO will ... • Do WHAT ... • By WHEN ... • FOLLOW-UP Date 	



Purpose Statement Practice

A Purpose Statement can help you frame a conversation so that it gets started on the right track. A Purpose Statement helps to keep the conversation focused, safe, and productive.

Purpose Statements can be used at any point in the conversation, but are especially useful during the ENGAGE and MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING steps.

Use this worksheet to help you practice crafting and using a Purpose Statement.

Purpose Statement Practice

INFORM	<p>WHAT</p> <p>State WHAT the conversation is about and perhaps what it is NOT about.</p>	
	<p>WHY</p> <p>State WHY the conversation is important (to you, to the other person, to the team and organization).</p>	
	<p>HOW</p> <p>Describe HOW the conversation will proceed. What will be the agenda or structure of the conversation.</p>	



Outcome Statement Practice

An Outcome Statement can also help you frame a conversation so that it gets started on the right track. The Outcome Statement helps to establish what the conversation should produce. It should be stated at the beginning of the conversation but can also be used throughout the conversation.

Use this worksheet to help you practice crafting and using a Purpose Statement.

Outcome Statement Practice

INFORM	<p>WHAT</p> <p>State WHAT you hope will be the result of the conversation.</p>	
	<p>WHY</p> <p>State WHY that outcome is important.</p>	
	<p>HOW</p> <p>Describe HOW the outcome can be achieved and HOW you will know when it is achieved.</p>	



Impact Statement Practice

An Impact Statement helps you give feedback and articulate your observations and concerns. Impact Statements are most effective when you state them in first person (“This is what I have observed. This is what I perceive to be the impact of that. Would you share with me your viewpoint of this?”)

Use this worksheet to help you practice crafting and using an Impact Statement.

Impact Statement Practice

INFORM	<p>OBSERVATION</p> <p>State what you have OBSERVED (behavior, results, actions, words).</p>	
	<p>IMPACT</p> <p>State the IMPACT of what you have observed (on the team, the person, the organization, and yourself).</p>	
	<p>ASK and LISTEN</p> <p>Ask for and listen to the viewpoint of the other person. Ask meaningful questions. State back to the other person’s satisfaction what you heard.</p>	



Questioning Skills

Practice

Asking questions is an important part of listening, especially for the workplace leader. Some of your best coaching will happen through the use of questions.

The first key is to know what questions to ask and when to ask them. The second key is to know when to stop asking questions and just listen.

Use this worksheet to help you practice your questioning skills.

Questioning Skills Practice

EXPLORE	<p>OPEN ENDED vs CLOSED</p> <p>“Please tell me about your last project.”</p> <p>“Did you complete the project on time?”</p>	
	<p>DIRECT vs INDIRECT</p> <p>“Jim, were you here when the complaint came in?”</p> <p>“I wonder who was here when the complaint came in.”</p>	
	<p>GUIDING vs REFLECTING</p> <p>“Wow! What was that like?”</p> <p>“Mary, what specific actions did you take? What was the outcome? What will you do differently next time?”</p>	



Listening Skills Practice

You will communicate as much by EXPLORING as you will by INFORMING. In fact, your ability to listen will do more to inform others on your credibility as a leader than anything you might have to say. Be sure to listen so that others know they have been heard.

Use this worksheet to help you practice your listening skills.

Listening Skills Practice

EXPLORE	<p>REFLECT MEANING</p> <p>State back, to the other person’s satisfaction, what you understand to be the essence of their message.</p> <p>Verify understanding.</p>	
	<p>REFLECT FEELING</p> <p>Describe what you perceive to be the other person’s feelings, emotions, or personal impact.</p> <p>Verify understanding.</p>	
	<p>BODY LANGUAGE</p> <p>Ensure that your own body language is conducive to open communication.</p> <p>Be aware of what the other person’s body language is telling you.</p>	



Summary Statements

Practice

Summary statements help to bring important conversations to closure so that important meaning is captured and so that commitments can be made on necessary actions.

Whereas purpose statements help to frame the conversation on the front end, summary statements frame meaning on the back end.

Use this worksheet to help you practice crafting and using a Summary Statement.

**Summary Statements
Practice**

CLOSE	<p>LEAD IN</p> <p>“So, let me see if I can summarize what we have been talking about.”</p>	
	<p>YOU SAID AND I SAID</p> <p>“You said that having more flexibility in the schedule would really help you ...</p> <p>“And I expressed my concern that we absolutely must meet the deadline or we will lose the customer.”</p>	
	<p>CHECK</p> <p>“Do I have that right? Did I miss anything?”</p>	



Action Planning Practice

Action planning is the litmus test for meaningful collaboration. If it was worth taking time to talk about it, there is probably a need for meaningful action to take place.

The primary purpose of action planning is to gain commitment on necessary next steps. Where there is collaboration, there will be a need to commit for action. And where there is a commitment for action, there will be a need for accountability. Action planning is the tool that pulls all of that together.

Use this worksheet to help you practice your skills at action planning.

Action Planning Practice

CLOSE	<p>ACTIONS</p> <p>“So, will you talk with the vendor as soon as possible?”</p>	
	<p>OUTCOMES</p> <p>“And we agreed that you need to get a commitment from him as a result of your conversation ... correct?”</p>	
	<p>TARGET DATES</p> <p>“When do you feel you can hold the conversation and get the commitment?”</p>	
	<p>FOLLOW-UP</p> <p>“Great. So let’s check in with each other first thing Friday morning. Okay?”</p>	

HOLDING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

CONFLICT

“Not all difficult conversations are conflict situations, but most conflict conversations are difficult.”

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Three Words For Conflict

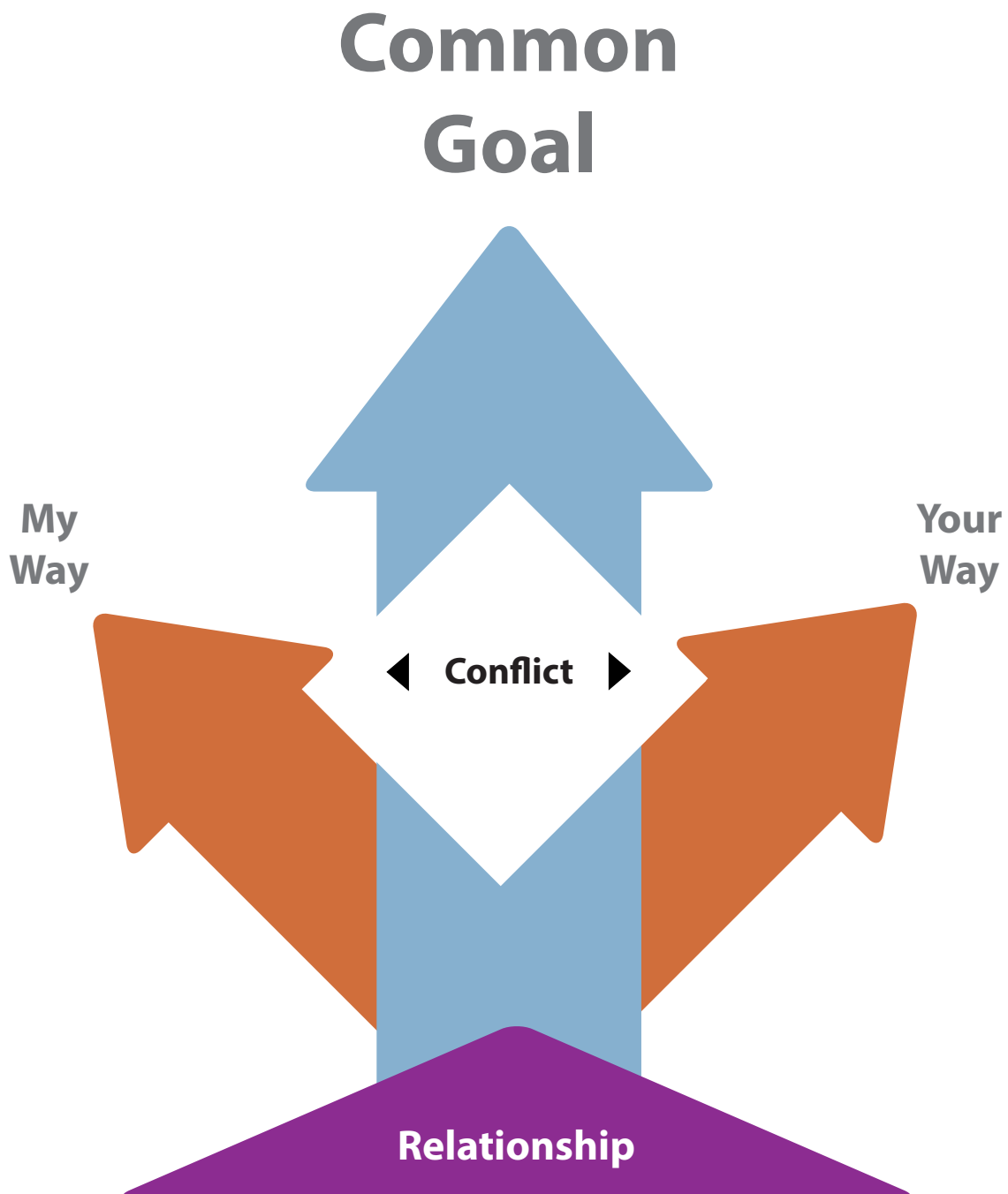
1

2

3

The Conflict Model

All conflict happens in the context of relationships.

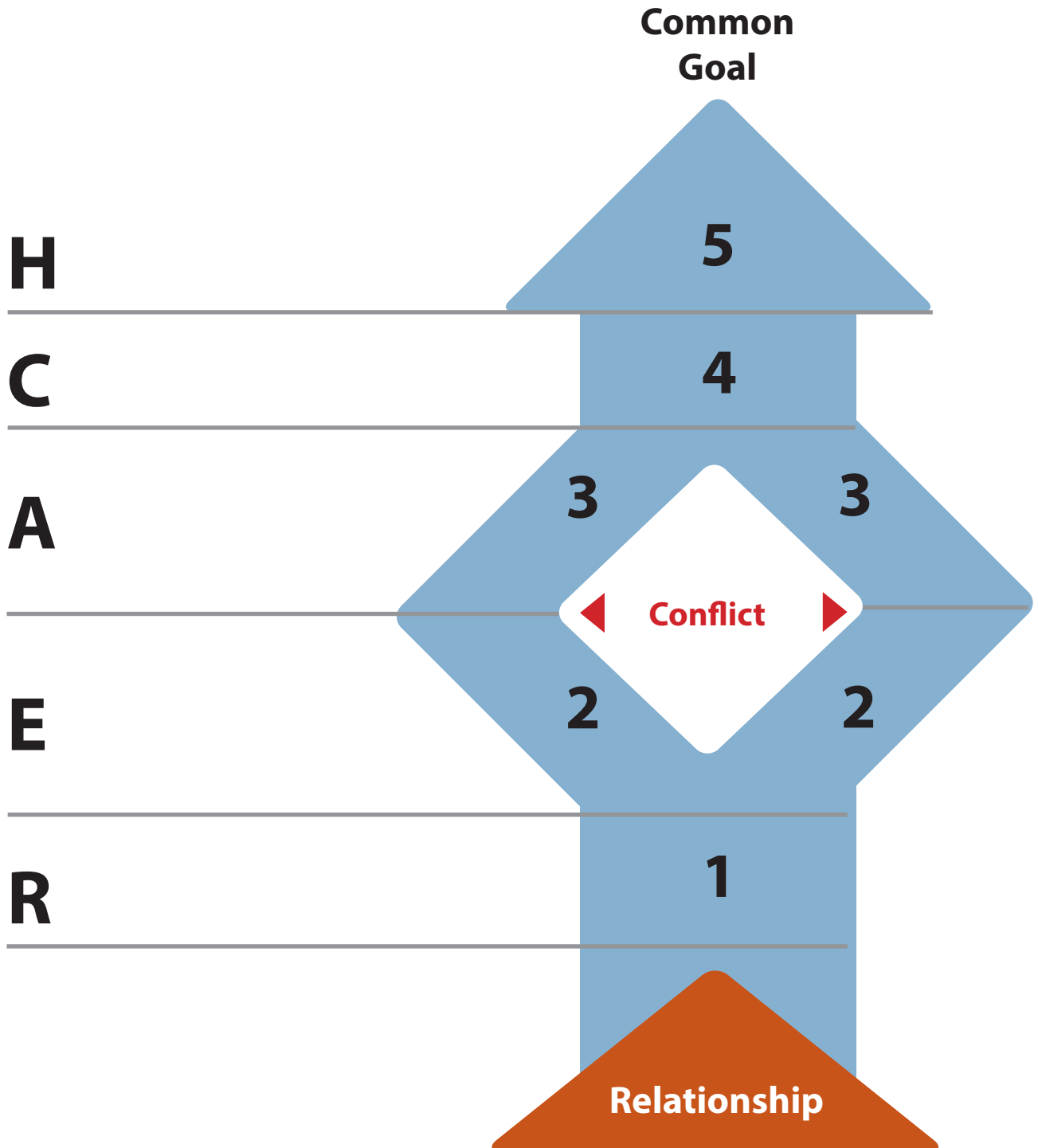


Principles for Managing Conflict

1. Reasonable people can disagree.
2. Conflict provides an opportunity to build relationships.
3. Seek for understanding before all else.
4. Focus on needs and interests, not positions.
5. Attack the issues and not each other.
6. Help the other person succeed in the conversation.
7. Recognize and acknowledge the emotions involved. Don't inflame, but don't run from them.
8. Be flexible, patient, and open.
9. Learn from the experience.

"Your success at managing conflict should not be measured by how often conflict arises, but by how well you turn the conflict into positive energy for moving your team closer to success."

R-E-A-C-H



R-E-A-C-H

REACH – Mutual Understanding			
As We See It	<table border="1"><tr><td>"Your Position"</td><td>"My Position"</td></tr></table>	"Your Position"	"My Position"
	"Your Position"	"My Position"	
	<table border="1"><tr><td>"Your View"</td><td>"My View"</td></tr></table>	"Your View"	"My View"
"Your View"	"My View"		
<table border="1"><tr><td>"Your Needs & Interests"</td><td>"My Needs & Interests"</td></tr></table>	"Your Needs & Interests"	"My Needs & Interests"	
"Your Needs & Interests"	"My Needs & Interests"		
Goal	Our Common Goal		
Action	Our Next Steps		