



# *Resolving Conflict in a Sports Organization*



## Workshop Objectives

After participating in this workshop, you will be able to:

- describe the anger arousal cycle
- identify self-talk to allow you to manage yourself
- defuse an emotional or difficult person
- demonstrate effective listening and mental fitness
- address inappropriate behaviour by setting limits and asserting your needs

### Personal Learning Objective for the day

What type of situation do you want to learn to deal with more effectively?

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**Learning and Application as a result of completing the course  
(to be done at the end of the workshop)**

What will you do differently to improve how you deal with those situations?

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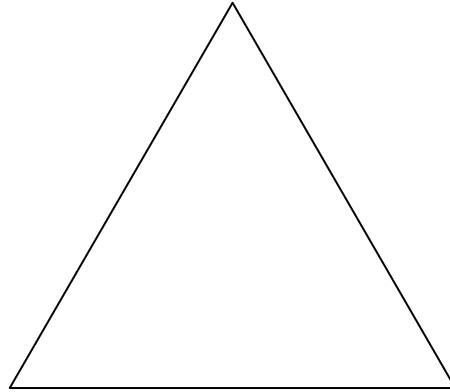
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# YOUR CONFLICT STORY

Write a half-page summary of a situation , preferably in a sports context, (past or present) in which you were personally involved and that was not resolved to your satisfaction.

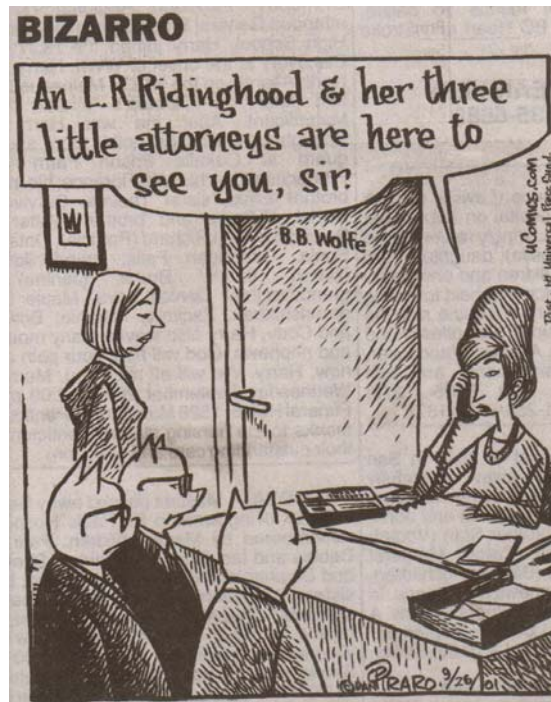
# BASIC ARCHETYPES

VICTIM



HERO

VILLAIN



## *Conflict Styles Profile*

Read each opening statement and the 5 options that follow it. Rank each of the 5 options from 1 to 5, where 5 most closely describes your typical behaviour and 1 least describes your typical behaviour. You can only use each number once for each question. When you are done each question will look something like this:

When examining the following statements, I .....

- \_\_\_ a found that this somewhat described me.
- \_\_\_ b found that this one described me best of all.
- \_\_\_ c found that this one didn't describe me at all.
- \_\_\_ d found that this one wasn't very much like me.
- \_\_\_ e found that this one described me fairly well.

To confirm that you are ranking the statements correctly, add up the numbers you have assigned – the total of each question should be 15.

Ready?? Set?? GO!

1. When discussing ideas with others, I ....
  - \_\_\_ a try to convince the of the logic of my idea.
  - \_\_\_ b accept some points made by others, provided they accept some of mine.
  - \_\_\_ c share my views and ask others to share theirs.
  - \_\_\_ d give in to the views of others to protect our feelings.
  - \_\_\_ e avoid putting my views forward if they are different or controversial.
  
2. If it looks like an issue is going to be difficult, I ....
  - \_\_\_ a immediately propose a middle ground.
  - \_\_\_ b press to get my point across.
  - \_\_\_ c tend to let others resolve the issue.
  - \_\_\_ d try to promote a direct discussion of the problem.
  - \_\_\_ e set aside my wishes in favour of the other person.
  
3. When I feel I'm not being heard, I ...
  - \_\_\_ a remove myself from the situation.
  - \_\_\_ b tend to stay quiet, since others views seem so important to them.
  - \_\_\_ c interrupt and put out my opinion.
  - \_\_\_ d am happy if I can get some of my points on the table.
  - \_\_\_ e acknowledge the concerns of others, and then ask them to consider my views.
  
4. If I disagree with someone's point of view, I ...
  - \_\_\_ a look for a compromise solution.
  - \_\_\_ b attempt to work through our differences.
  - \_\_\_ c do what I can to minimize the tensions between us.
  - \_\_\_ d let them have their way, if it makes them happy.
  - \_\_\_ e try to show them that my position makes sense.
  
5. When misunderstandings occur, I ...
  - \_\_\_ a work with the other person to examine the issue from both perspectives.

- b hope that the problem will work itself out
  - c assume that I'm in error and move on.
  - d encourage give and take on both sides of the issue.
  - e restate my point more clearly.
6. When I negotiate with someone, I ...
- a stress the points on which we both agree.
  - b do what I can to win my point.
  - c give up some things in exchange for others.
  - d do what it takes to end the discussion as soon as possible.
  - e look for ways in which all of our needs can be met.
7. When my views are different that someone else's, I ...
- a look at ways to solve the problem that respects both our points of view.
  - b postpone the discussion until I have more information.
  - c try not to hurt their feelings.
  - d help them understand my point of view.
  - e point out the positives and negatives of both views.
8. Typically, in conflict situations, I ...
- a make an effort to assert my needs.
  - b encourage a compromise to make sure everyone gets something.
  - c don't see my differences with others as that important.
  - d involve the other person in working out the solution.
  - e give way to the other side rather than argue.
9. When opinions are different on a particular subject, I ...
- a see the likelihood of the other side and thus set my own aside.
  - b back up my own opinion with whatever facts and figures I can find.
  - c can give a little, as long as I get a little in return.
  - d attempt to get all points of view out on the table.
  - e change the subject.
10. When it's important that we reach agreement on something important, I ...
- a identify a mid-point we can all agree on quickly.
  - b work harder to make sure my point of view is heard.
  - c am especially concerned with meeting all our needs.
  - d withdraw from the discussion to allow others to get the job done.
  - e give in to the views of others so we can get on with it.

After you have ranked the responses for all ten questions, follow the instructions on the scoring sheet to learn more about your dominant tendencies in dealing with conflict situations.

## Conflict Style Scoring Sheet

To score yourself, carefully transfer your rankings from the answer sheets to the table below. Using the example from page one of the questionnaire, the table would be completed like this:

Question	My Way		Our Way		Your Way		Half Way		No Way	
	Response	Rank	Response	Rank	Response	Rank	Response	Rank	Response	Rank

Question	My Way		Our Way		Your Way		Half Way		No Way	
	Response	Rank	Response	Rank	Response	Rank	Response	Rank	Response	Rank
1	a		c		d		b		e	
2	b		d		e		a		c	
3	c		e		b		d		a	
4	e		b		d		a		c	
5	e		a		c		d		b	
6	b		e		a		c		d	
7	d		a		c		e		b	
8	a		d		e		b		c	
9	b		d		a		c		e	
10	b		c		e		a		d	
Total										

To ensure that you have scored correctly, add up the 5 totals above – the grand total should be 150. If not, then total across each question – the total score for each question should be 15. Identify those questions that do not add up to 15, check your answer sheet for a copying or ranking error and correct accordingly.

**Now complete the following statements using the scores from the tables above:**

I am most likely to approach conflict using a \_\_\_\_\_ style (highest score)

I also tend to approach conflict using a \_\_\_\_\_ style (second highest score)

I am unlikely to approach conflict using a \_\_\_\_\_ style (lowest score)

# The three legs” of a Discussion

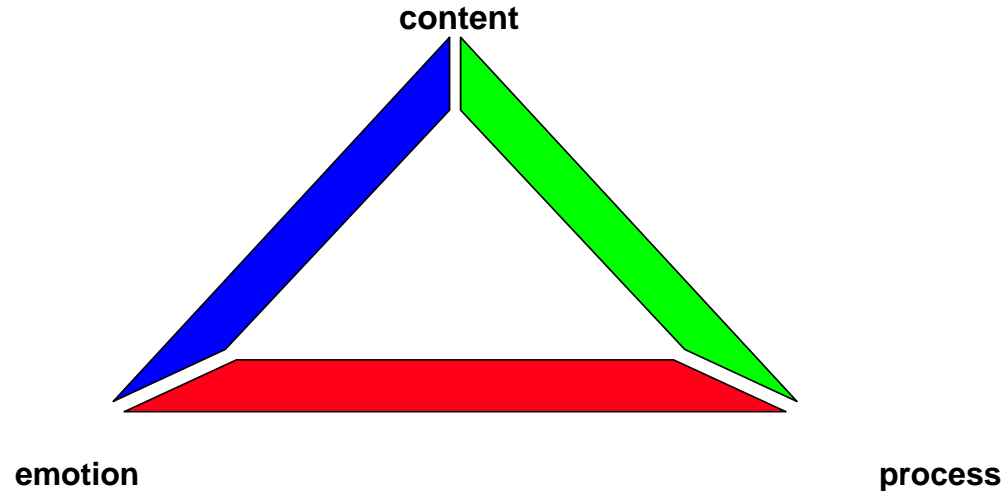
	Characteristics	Motivators	Appropriate uses	Language
<b>My Way</b> Fight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competitive or adversarial approach</li> <li>Tends to polarize the parties</li> <li>Often escalates the conflict</li> <li>Tends to rights based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fear of being wrong</li> <li>Desire for control</li> <li>Need to win</li> <li>Strongly held values</li> <li>Conditioning/History</li> <li>Poor communication skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Issues of safety</li> <li>Competitive situation</li> <li>Criminal Law</li> <li>Bullying or fear based for power imbalance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't you think that ...?</li> <li>Wouldn't you agree that ...?</li> <li>Yes, but my idea is ...?</li> <li>I have a right to ...?</li> <li>I can't agree that ...?</li> </ul>
<b>No Way</b> Flight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conflict not resolved</li> <li>Neither person is satisfied</li> <li>Often results in damage to the relationship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fear of conflict</li> <li>vulnerability</li> <li>lack of information</li> <li>emotionally charged situation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>no interest in the issue</li> <li>allow times for parties to calm down</li> <li>buy time to get more information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That's not my problem ...?</li> <li>Can we discuss this some other time ...?</li> <li>I'm not prepared to discuss this right now ...!</li> </ul>
<b>Your Way</b> Surrender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The other parties needs are more important</li> <li>Don't want to risk the relationship</li> <li>You may resent what has been given up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fear of conflict</li> <li>Possible loss of this relationship</li> <li>It's easier</li> <li>Intimidation</li> <li>You know that you are wrong</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your safety is at risk</li> <li>Accommodate and deal with it later</li> <li>The 'give' is not that important to you</li> <li>This is significantly more important to the other person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whatever you say.</li> <li>I'll take care of that for you.</li> <li>How can I make this problem go away for you ...?</li> </ul>
<b>Half Way</b> Middle Ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A compromise is reached</li> <li>Both parties lose and may resent what they have given up</li> <li>This is a faster way to getting agreement</li> <li>Underlying issues still remain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>impasse</li> <li>mutually exclusive positions</li> <li>time pressures</li> <li>unwilling to explore underlying issues</li> <li>short term gain for long term pain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>always an option, but not as the first choice because everyone loses something</li> <li>as a temporary measure on the way to a more collaborative agreement</li> <li>when the deadline for resolution is more important than the quality of the agreement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can we meet somewhere in the middle ...?</li> <li>Is there some give and take here ...?</li> <li>Let's cut to the bottom line ...!</li> </ul>
<b>Our Way</b> Common Ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A truly collaborative approach</li> <li>Underlying issues of both parties explored</li> <li>Solutions meet the needs of both to the highest possible degree</li> <li>Relationships are preserved</li> <li>Requires an investment of time and good listening skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desire to find the best solution for both</li> <li>Principled approach</li> <li>Need to build consensus or create a buy-in</li> <li>Solution is being blocked by some history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationship is worth keeping</li> <li>In-depth exploration of the issues</li> <li>Opportunities for mutual benefit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can we work together to resolve this?</li> <li>I'd like to understand how this affects you?</li> <li>Let's look at options that will work for both of us.</li> </ul>

To fully understand mental abilities, we must consider three aspects of it: content, process, and emotions.

**Content:** *the "meat and potatoes" of the issue; the substance of the dispute*

**Process:** *how we talk to and treat each other*

**Emotion:** *how we feel*



Often, people:

- ✎ focus so much on the "problem" (or content) they lose sight of other roadblock (process and emotion)
- ✎ will refuse to accept even the best solution if they feel it has been forced upon them
- ✎ are so emotionally aroused they are unable to focus on either the process or the content.

“ It is like trying to sit on a two-legged stool if you do not address all components listed above using the appropriate skills”

# Separating the Person from the Problem

What two words do you associate with your difficult person?

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

If we see the problem as . . . then the solution is . . .

the **person** \_\_\_\_\_

their **personality** \_\_\_\_\_

their **behaviour** \_\_\_\_\_

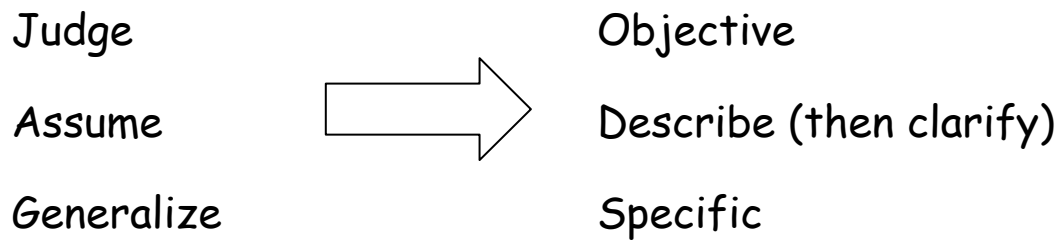
**my** reaction \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(List your two words below and then describe the actual factual behaviour as noted)

LABEL	BEHAVIOUR	PREFERRED BEHAVIOUR
Rude	Finger in my face, swearing at me	Give me some room and tell me what's bugging you without the swearing

# Describing Behaviour Objectively



## Examples

From	To
"You're always late." "You don't care about the team."	"Our practises start at 9:00. You've arrived at 9:15 for the last three."
"You always interrupt me."	"You start talking before I've finished what I have to say."
"You're unreliable."	"The training was to be done outside of practises. It does not look like you are fit!"
"Your performance is sub-par." "You're not doing the job." "You're not very good."	"Your job requires . . . and that hasn't been getting done." "We had to cover for you at the last game because . . ."

# Anger Arousal Cycle

1	2	3	4	5
Trigger	Escalation	Crisis	Recovery	Depression

Adrenaline/heart rate

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Quality of judgement  
Ability to communicate/reason

## Stages of the Arousal Cycle

- 1. The Trigger**
  - a perceived threat or attack (physical or psychological)
  - may be external (being sworn at) or internal (remembering a past situation)
  - initiates the arousal cycle - body gears up for "fight or flight"
- 2. Escalation**
  - body "ramps up" - releasing adrenaline and other energizers into the blood
  - rapid breathing
  - pounding heart (and increased blood pressure)
  - muscle tension (jaw, neck, shoulders, hands)
  - raised voice and altered pitch
- 3. Crisis**
  - body is fully prepared to "fight" or "flight" - impulse is to act
  - little, if any, ability to think, reason, and communicate
  - physiologically unable to hear
- 4. Recovery**
  - adrenaline dissipates over time
  - the quality of judgement returns - coherence begins to return
- 5. Post-Crisis/Depression**
  - heart rate drops below normal
  - return of reasoning process often leads to guilt remorse or depression

## Self-management

- (1) **STOP** (our impulses are seldom helpful)
- (2) **RELAX** and breathe
- (3) **REASSURE** yourself
- (4) **REFOCUS** on the issue

Choose some productive talk from the list on the right to replace your unproductive thoughts.

## UNPRODUCTIVE

- "get me out of here"
- "help!"
- "how dare they!"
- "this isn't fair"
- "why bother?"
- "here it goes again"
- "what a &#\$%% @#!"
- "it's probably my fault"
- "maybe I screwed up"
- "this isn't worth the hassle"
- "I might as well give in, I'll lose anyway"
- "I better make them happy"
- "what if they don't like me?"
- "I would never do something like that"
- "I don't have to take this!"

## PRODUCTIVE

- "I can handle this"
- "I'm safe"
- "what's causing them to do that?"
- "I wonder what their point of view is?"
- "this isn't life-threatening"
- "I have a choice in this"
- "all behaviour makes sense"
- "I'm okay"
- "I don't need to be perfect to be okay"
- "this can be sorted out"
- "they're yelling at [the organization], not at me"
- "it's okay if they don't like me for a little while"
- "I'm not responsible for their feelings"
- "we all make mistakes"
- "this is worth sorting out"

# Toolbox For Defusing Anger

TECHNIQUE	EXAMPLE
<b>SILENCE/NON VERBALS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• allow and encourage them to talk</li> <li>• open body position</li> <li>• eye contact, nod</li> </ul>
<b>RESTATEMENT</b> (one word replies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• restate their name or a single word</li> <li>• stay "in touch" with them and bring them down</li> </ul>
<b>EMPATHIC RESPONSE</b> (acknowledgement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acknowledge their feelings <i>"You're really upset about this . . ."</i> <i>"You're frustrated by . . ."</i></li> </ul>
<b>VALIDATE</b> (normalize their experience)	<p><i>" This is tough on everybody involved!"</i> <i>"It's frustrating to be asked all these questions when you're so tired."</i></p>
<b>PARAPHRASE</b> (summarize)	<p><i>" So you were out at friend's house and you forgot about practise?."</i></p>
<b>OPEN QUESTIONS</b>	<p><i>" What's unfair about this . . ."</i> <i>" What's the problem?"</i></p>

## Some Reminders

- Use your intuition and instincts - don't go by a predetermined "script".
- Be prepared to repeat yourself - the adrenaline in the blood does not dissipate immediately.
- Be prepared to try several tools in combination.
- Match their intensity and gradually lower your voice to bring them down with you.

# Listening:

## Defensive vs. Acknowledging

1. Hear them out.
2. Confirm you understand (tell them what you heard or understand).
3. Offer your perspective only after you're sure you understand - when you've 'won a hearing'.

**"Seek first to understand so that I can be understood".**

If you prove that you heard what someone says by paraphrasing then they will likely pay attention to what you have to say. Remember that paraphrasing does not mean that you agree rather that you understood. No judging or solutions yet. This is a fundamental of active listening and must be practiced in order to use a collaborative model.

### **Defensive:**

**Deny:** "You never told me practice was at 9:00."

**Deflect:** "It's those other guys that are the problem, not me."

**Justify:** "Look, I'm so busy I don't have time to tell you every time some little thing changes."

**Blame:** "Well if you had come to some of the practises, you would have known that!"

**Band aid the problem:**

"Okay already. I'll copy you on emails from now on."

# Acknowledging

## 1. **Words** (paraphrase)

*"so you're saying you tried to call, but couldn't reach me"*

*"sounds like you're really busy right now"*

*"for you, the coaches aren't very responsive"*

*"from your perspective, I haven't done what I said on this one"*

## 2. **Feelings** (empathy)

*"you sound really upset about the new schedule"*

*"that wait must have been frustrating for you"*

*"you seem disappointed in your playing time on this team"*

## 3. **Unstated needs** (reframe what lies unsaid and beneath the surface)

*"So you need to be in the loop on future decisions" or*

*"You want your opinions to be respected"*

*"Being able to use the facilities is important to you"*

## Tips:

- ☺ focus on the speaker's experience
- ☺ be concise - capture the essence of their communication, not every word
- ☺ be natural - avoid "pat" phrases,

***EVERYONE NEEDS THEIR  
"ONE MINUTE"***

# Choosing Your Response

1. As part of a new program for the recreation program, you require assistance and information from a number of participants. You feel your request is reasonable in that you are always helpful. You approach them and let them know this is urgent - you've been asked to have your recommendations for a meeting today. The students are clearly irritated and say:

"You think everything revolves around you. You are not my parent! Besides everything in this place is always 'urgent'. I would rather just do the excercises"

Your response?

**Impulsive/defensive response:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Acknowledge:**

**Words** [*paraphrase*]: (So you're saying . . . , from you perspective . . . )

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Feelings** [*empathy*]: (You sound . . . , this is . . . for you)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Root need** [*reframe*]: (So . . . is important for you, you need . . . )

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Assertiveness

Assertion involves standing up for yourself and your rights in a way which respects the basic rights of another person. It is a direct, honest, and appropriate expression of your feelings, opinions, or wishes.

## Passive Behaviour (You're important, I'm not)

- takes more than fair share of responsibility
- allows rights to be violated by others
- lessens self-esteem
- assumes powerless, victim role
- often emotionally dishonest, leading to resentment/revenge
- **ignores own needs**

## Aggressive behaviour (I'm important, you're not)

- priority in control
- achieves own purposes at expense of other person
- tends to humiliate, control, punish or put down the other person
- may intimidate, threaten or name-call to achieve ends
- focuses on **positions**

## Assertive behaviour (Respect for both of us)

- is direct
- respects yourself and the other person
- uses "I" messages to express feelings and impact of situation
- describes behaviour objectively
- takes responsibility for meeting own needs
- allows other to assert their interests and opinions
- works to equalize the balance of power in relationships
- focuses on **needs**

# Short Form of Assertion

When the other person acts in a way that impedes balanced and respectful communication, you can use assertion to simply and directly ask for what you need from them.

In it's "short form", assertion involves identifying the behaviours (Describe), telling the other person how those behaviours affect you (Effect), and asking for what you need from them (Specify).

Though the following elements are set out as a "script", it's important to be flexible. You may find it more natural and appropriate to use the elements in a different order. In some cases, it may not be necessary to all of them.

<b>Describe</b> Describe the situation objectively and specifically - avoid judgements, assumptions, and generalizations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• what you see or hear</li></ul>	<i>"When I get sworn at . . .</i>
<b>Express</b> Use "I" messages to let the other person know the effect their actions or the situation is having on you. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• how you feel or are impacted</li></ul>	<i>. . . I shut down."</i>
<b>Specify</b> Assert your needs (not your position) and ask for what you want. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• what you need</li></ul>	<i>"Tell me your concerns without the swearing."</i>

# Long Form of Assertion

In some cases, you may need to engage more extensively with a person who's behaviour is impeding productive communication.

The "long form" of assertion involves empathy (Acknowledgement) for their situation and your Commitment to work with them.

It also outlines the benefits for them of working cooperatively with you (Consequence).

<b>Acknowledge</b> The other person's emotion and perspective.	<i>"I understand how frustrating this delay must be for you."</i>
<b>Commit</b> To working cooperatively with them.	<i>"I want to help you sort this out." . . .</i>
<b>Describe</b> Describe the situation objectively and specifically - avoid judgements, assumptions, and generalizations.	<i>"When I get sworn at . . .</i>
<b>Express</b> Use "I" messages to let the other person know the effect their actions or the situation is having on you.	<i>. . . I have trouble staying focused."</i>
<b>Specify</b> Assert your needs (not your position) and ask for what you want.	<i>"Tell me your concerns without the swearing."</i>
<b>Consequence</b> Let them know what's in it for them to cooperate.	<i>"So we can get this sorted out as soon as possible."</i>

# Basic Problem-solving Process

When confronted with a "problem", most of us feel an overwhelming urge to "solve it" or "fix it" as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, people often become wedded to their particular solution and argument or debate takes the place of real listening and creative discussion.

You will reach more creative and lasting solutions by **slowing down**:

- ✓ Define the problem
- ✓ Understand the problem
- ✓ Explore options

## 1. Determine the issue or topic:

- State the topic/issue in neutral terms
- Invite open discussion
- Avoid digging in or arguing over any one solution

## 2. Explore interests and needs:

- Ask yourself "what's important to me about this, and why".
- Ask others what they see as the ingredients of a "successful solution" for them.
- Probe their "position" to uncover their interests, needs, and reasons.

## 3. Generate and evaluate options:

- Summarize the interests and needs uncovered in Stage 2
- Encourage a variety of options
- Assess the options against the interests and needs
- When you reach a decision, clarify - who will do what by when - and ensure follow-up.

Shift your judgement to curiosity.  
Be quick to listen and slow to speak

## Related Reading

Bramson, R. M., *Coping With Difficult People*

Carson, Richard, *Taming Your Gremlin: A Guide to Enjoying Yourself*

Covey, S. R., *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* [particularly Habits 4 & 5]

Crum, Thomas, *The Magic of Conflict*

Fisher, R. and Ury, W., *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*

Parry, Danaan, *Warriors of the Heart* [www.earthstewards.org or (206)-322-6442]

Harper, Gary *The joy of Conflict*

Scott, Susan, *Fierce Conversations*

Ury, W., *Getting Past No: Negotiating With Difficult People*

### Anger

Lerner, H. G., *The Dance of Anger*

Tavris, Carol, *Anger, The Misunderstood Emotion*

### Gender Communications

Tanenbaum, Joe, *Male and Female Realities*

Tannen, Deborah, *You Just Don't Understand - Women and Men in Conversation*

### Children and Parenting

Faber, A. and Mazlish, E. *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk*

### Customer Service

Myers, Pennie and Nance, Don, *The Upset Book*

### "Managing Up"

Fisher, Roger, and Sharp, Alan, *Getting It Done: How to Lead When You're Not in Charge*