THE EXCHANGE

CULTURE, COMMUNICATION, AND CONFLICT

Community Leaders

HHSA | LIVE WELL SAN DIEGO | NCRC NATIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION CENTER

COMPANION LEARNING GUIDE

BURST VIDEO: *The Exchange*

Steven P. Dinkin, NCRC President

REMEMBER: *This is the conflict scene from session one. We will now be learning the Exchange from this situation.*

REFLECT: *What stood out in the video for you?*

JOURNAL: *How is this approach relevant to being a more inclusive leader?*

CHAT WITH A TRUSTED COLLEAGUE: *In what types of situations might this strategy be useful?*

You may notice that this companion learning guide is different. Because the Exchange methodology is more complex, we needed more space to explain concepts, give examples, and help you learn the process. Enjoy!

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Welcome to the Exchange!

The National Conflict Resolution Center (NCRC) began in 1983 as a community mediation center. Our early workshops centered on teaching people how to be neutral mediators for all kinds of disputes. We began to receive requests from workplace and community leaders regarding their need for a process that considered the fact that they couldn't be neutral because they had a stake in the outcome. After conducting focus groups to understand the needs better, gathering input from business and community leaders, and rethinking our mediation strategy so that it could be adapted, we created the Exchange methodology. Our book, "The Exchange: A Bold and Proven Way to Resolve Workplace Disputes," outlines the methodology. We will include the essential information you need in this companion learning guide. You will find this guide to be informative about how to manage the process.

This innovative course adapts NCRC's time-proven conflict resolution skills and strategies to provide community leaders with:

- A structured, learnable process to address conflicts between collaborators;
- A reinforcement of the communication skills necessary for a human-centered orientation; and
- An approach to address non-conflict situations, in which individuals simply need to have a more collaborative approach in working with each other.

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Underlying Principles

NCRC's beliefs about conflict management are based on these three important principles:

- **Respect for the issue:** conflicts matter to the people who have them;
- **Respect for the person:** people have the resources to resolve their own conflicts; and
- **Respect for the process:** when people are involved in the process, they have a stake in the outcome.

The benefits of the Exchange to a community leader are many. The Exchange:

- Is an informal process;
- Provides a human-centered approach to managing conflicts;
- Is efficient and effective;
- Encourages joint problem-solving;
- Develops capacity for future interaction;
- Allows for creative solutions;
- Has a greater potential for mutual gain; and
- Provides individuals with an opportunity to express the impact the situation has had on them.

Criteria

The following guidelines may help in determining whether a particular conflict is suitable for the Exchange process:

- Individuals in conflict have a stake in resolving the matter;
- They trust your ability to manage the conflict;
- Individuals share some degree of responsibility for the conflict between them;
- Options exist for resolving the situation; and
- Individuals can communicate effectively at some level.

Types of Conflicts

There are as many types of conflicts as there are people in the community, but the following list highlights common issues:

- School-community issues;
- Issues between members of religious communities;
- Community projects;
- Neighborhood disputes;
- Volunteers who have trouble getting along; and
- Neighborhood council issues.

Managing Conflict

Obviously, part of the job of successful conflict resolution is to find ways to minimize escalating circumstances and to develop skills for handling situations that occur despite any precautions. Conflicts generally occur over three categories of issues: **resources, needs,** and **values**.

- **Resources** are tangible (projects, funding) or measurable (time, responsibilities).
- **Needs** include physical needs for safety; psychological needs for acceptance, privacy, belonging, and respect; and social needs for being treated fairly, having equal access to privileges, and opportunities to interact with others.
- **Values** represent an individual's personal sense of what is right or wrong.

There are three approaches to resolving community conflict. Overreliance on any one approach is problematic. The Exchange methodology recognizes that combining all three approaches creates the best outcome in resolving community conflict.

Authority-based conflict resolution is often expressed through the use of authority. Leaders are often expected to use their formal and informal authority to deal with some conflicts.

Rights-based conflict resolution is about the "rules," written or unwritten, by which we are expected to live and work in the community group.

Interest-based conflict resolution is oriented toward problem-solving by looking at the needs of those involved. Individuals work together to find joint resolutions to the question: Where can/should we go from here?

All methods—authority-based, rights-based, and interest-based—can be useful and necessary in a given community situation. The focus of the Exchange strategy is to manage an interest-based process, taking into account the interests of the participants and the interests of the community.

Interest-Based Conflict Resolution in the Community

In interest-based conflict resolution, the approach becomes more *__integrative__* rather than *__distributive__*. In *distributive negotiation*, there is a clear winner and there is competitive dialogue between participants, which leads to strained relations. In *integrative negotiation*, the interests of the individuals and the community leader are advanced and there is a collaborative conversation between the participants, which helps people in their ongoing community relationships. A human-centered approach in resolving conflicts uses an integrative approach.

When people are in conflict with one another, it isn't easy to use an *integrative* style of negotiation, so the community leader assists the individuals in moving from their complaints to understanding their own needs and interests as well as the needs and interests of the others involved in the conflict.

TYPICAL COMMUNITY NEEDS

- **SAFETY**
    - Fairness
    - Psychological Safety
    - Trust
    - Accountability

- **VALIDATION**
    - Support
    - Appreciation
    - Acknowledgment
    - Professionalism

- **UNDERSTANDING**
    - Empathy
    - Respect
    - Being Heard
    - Clear Communication

- **PRODUCTIVITY**
    - Self-Expression
    - Contributions
    - Input
    - Job Satisfaction

- **COMMUNITY**
    - Acceptance
    - Connection
    - Collaboration
    - Culturally Welcoming

- **AUTONOMY**
    - Choice
    - Independence
    - Reputation
    - Competence

The Exchange Overview: Goals

Stage I: Hold Private Meetings
- Gather enough information to identify key issues and concerns.
- Prepare individuals for joint meeting.

Stage II: Develop Agenda
- Develop the plan for the joint meeting.

Stage III: Conduct Joint Meeting
- Assist participants in developing an understanding of how the situation has impacted each person and the community.
- Clarify expectations of the leader.

Stage IV: Facilitate Problem-Solving
- Identify and determine possibilities for resolving the issues.
- Create action plan.

DOWNLOAD YOUR CHECKLIST

Stage I: Hold Private Meetings

About Stage I

Community members may have certain expectations about what will happen when they talk to you. You may have a reputation as a leader; as such, those who come to you with complaints may expect you to simply tell them what they should do. Whatever their expectations are, the Exchange process will give them a new idea about their own capabilities and the possibilities for moving forward. Your ability to engage people can set the tone to help them feel empowered to work through the issues.

Making use of the Exchange process in the community will mean being flexible and willing to recognize the need for it as you do your work. It may mean that you set it up if you are formally working with a group of people, or, more likely, you merely decide to utilize it in a given moment. Someone may come to you with a complaint about a situation and, hearing the information, you may decide that the Exchange process would be an appropriate tool to help. (This is what happened in our burst video.) Many times, informality will be key. Whether you initiate the process or it surfaces naturally, the manner in which you begin Stage I will influence how safe it is for those involved and, subsequently, how willing they are to participate in a meaningful way in resolving the issues.

Keep in mind that it is important to allow enough time for each person to express themselves without interruptions or challenges to how they see the situation. While listening, you can assess the key issues and concerns. Your goal, by the time you have met with each person, will be to make sure you fully understand each person's perspective (without seeming to take anyone's side).

Opening from the Burst Video

Note that Loretta and Angelica stopped by Randy's office, so they initiated the session. He was able to do Stage I, but not in the order he would have done it if he had initiated the session.

Randy: Please have a seat. Can I get you something to drink? Water? Coffee?

Loretta: I don't need any water, Randy, and I'm not sure I need Angelica to be part of your group anymore. What do you folks call it? Your collaborative?

Randy: Loretta, I can see that something happened that really upset you.

Loretta: Yes, I am upset. You know I stand for this community. Your daddy and I worked side by side giving people hope when there was nothing but hope possible. We came from different worlds—different religions, different countries—but we worked for our neighborhood together. We collaborated when we didn't even know that five-dollar word. I'm not seeing a lot of that collaboration nowadays. I'm not going to let this Mike fellow or your organization bully any agenda down people's throats.

Randy: Tell me what happened.

Loretta: Something's got to change, Randy. This Mike fellow is just too bullheaded. He thinks that the only thing that matters is how much people weigh. And he's pushing people away with that one-track mind. Is this what Healthy Futures is about? Only obesity?

Randy: So, there's a concern about Mike's ability to "share the stage," or work more cooperatively. To answer your question, yes, obesity is a major part of our efforts as well as the focus of our funders at Healthy Futures, but we have a collaborative for a reason, Loretta, and that is to make sure that all issues around health are embraced and improved.

Loretta: If that's the case, Angelica, you need to tell Randy about what's been going on.

Angelica: Well, it's just that he's lost all that weight and he really sees it as such an important issue. It is, but…I don't know.

Randy: Angelica, help me understand how this passion that Mike has plays out in your work together.

Angelica: OK, well, for example, today at the fair, he yelled at a resident about letting his son eat junk food, and then an African woman when she was clearly depressed. She didn't need to know how to cook healthy; she needed counseling. That is MY specialty, and that is where our organization comes in, Randy. Mike doesn't understand that.

Randy: It seems like the way he's communicating about his zeal for weight loss is of concern. You would like to be recognized for the expertise you have in immigrant mental health outreach and be able to do that when working with Mike.

Angelica: Yeah, it is about that. But also, I think the way he talks to people is disrespectful, including collaborative members…

Loretta: That's right. That's what I'm saying about pushing folks away. Angelica knows all about refugees and new immigrants and the stresses they're under. It's a different life here. That's why I started the Community Counseling Clinic. That and the fact that so many of my people couldn't get counseling for their stresses because they couldn't afford it.

Randy: Your will and determination got the clinic going to help our community. You may not be a counselor yourself, Loretta Brown, but you saw a need, got the right people involved, and continue to make a difference every day. Your clinic is such a part of this community; I would like to work this out, so Angelica and Community Clinic stay connected to Healthy Futures. As I mentioned, there is a lot of funding for issues around obesity, but the counseling piece is very important, and I want our organizations to be partners.

Loretta: I am not ready to agree to a thing yet because this is business, not just personal. There are other problems, Randy.

Randy: You are right. Loretta, we have to work these things out for sure. Angelica, what else is going on?

Angelica: Well, meetings tend to go on a LONG time because he won't stop talking. The other problem is that some committee members don't show up for several weeks, and then when they do show up, Mike will waste everyone's time going over everything with them in the meeting.

Randy: It sounds like the timing and management of the meetings is not going as well as it could. I heard from a collaborative member some concern about how the meetings are run, so we will need to look at that. You are co-chairs. How has he reacted when you talked to him about it, Angelica?

Angelica: I don't know how to bring it up with him.

Randy: Would you both be willing to meet with Mike and me to talk through these issues? I'd like to meet with him to find out his perspective then get the four of us together. Loretta, your community counseling clinic's participation in the collaborative is important for us. Residents trust what you have been doing in the last 25 years. Angelica, your rapport with our refugee and immigrant population is so valuable. If we are talking to residents about health, you definitely need to be included.

Angelica: You aren't going to tell Mike what I said, are you?
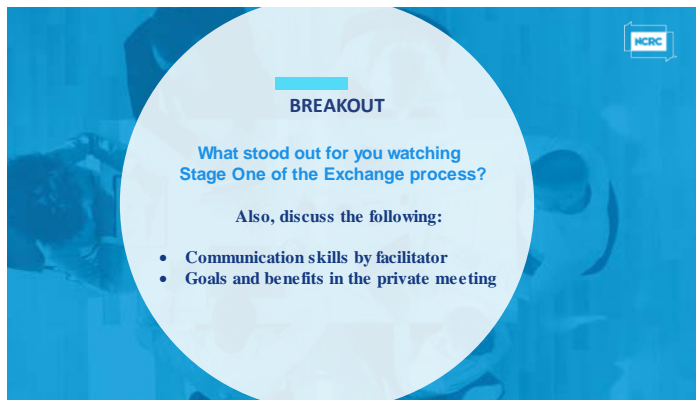
Randy: No, I wouldn't do that, Angelica. I will bring up the topics in our joint meeting, though. I will bring things up like communication, teamwork, how we do our outreach—things like that, without assigning your opinion to them. I would want you to do that, Angelica. I will

make it comfortable for everyone in the meeting so it's possible to have the conversation. One thing that is important to me and to Healthy Futures is that we learn and exhibit collaborative behavior. We don't just talk about it.

Loretta: You have convinced me, Randy. Lord willing, it will make a difference.

Randy: Before the meeting, I'd like the two of you to think about suggestions to improve the situation and to think about how Mike might be viewing the situation.

Loretta: We'll come prepared. That's how I roll. Have a blessed day!

BREAKOUT

What stood out for you watching Stage One of the Exchange process?

Also, discuss the following:

- **Communication skills by facilitator**
- **Goals and benefits in the private meeting**

You will be in a breakout to discuss the burst video, focusing on your thoughts about the structure, the communication skills used by the community leader, and what you believe the goals and benefits of the private meeting to be.

WATCH VIDEO OF STAGE I WITH MIKE

CHECKLIST Stage I
Welcome
Acknowledgment
Clarify Purpose of the Meeting
Confidentiality
Ask for Their Perspective on the Issues: Listen Effectively, Respond Respectfully, Ask Questions
Explain How the Process Works
Clarify Your Interests
Homework: Consider the Other Person's Perspective, Think About Possible Solutions

Exchange Techniques: Listen Effectively

Your ability to demonstrate that you are listening is extremely important when helping people resolve conflicts. When people feel they have truly been heard and understood, they are likely to feel accepted. They are willing to give more information that may be useful in resolving the conflict. Later, in Stage III, they are also more likely to hear what the other person has to say. On the other hand, if they feel no one is hearing what they have to say, they often become more rooted in their own view of the situation and in their perception that the other person is not only *wrong* but also a *rude, disrespectful,* or even *bad* person.

In considering how you demonstrate that you are listening in Stage I, most of us are aware that often it's the "how" rather than the "what" that makes an effort to communicate successful or not. Listening involves:

- Gestures
- Your face and posture
- Culturally appropriate eye contact
- Attentiveness

You will also need to pay attention to nonverbal behaviors on the part of the participants. We caution against drawing too many conclusions from behaviors. While nonverbal behaviors give insight, don't assume that the nonverbals always reflect the person's attitudes. For example, crossing one's arms may only mean that the person is cold, not hostile. Additionally, cultural background can play a role in nonverbal behaviors, and so being sensitive to cultural variation is important in not overinterpreting behaviors.

Exchange Techniques: Respond Respectfully

Note that examples are used here that vary from our case study to show how the process can be used. We will finish the case study in class.

Demonstrating Understanding. Like the description in The ARTful Conversation, demonstrating understanding is a useful tool. The leader does this directly in Stage I.
1. Speaker relates how the situation affected them.
2. Leader (facilitator) recaps the key concept in different words.
3. Facilitator checks for accuracy and clarifies what was understood.

Facilitator: *Can you tell me how the situation has affected you?*
Ximena: *She told others that I wasn't a good "fit" for the collaborative, which was very upsetting to me.*
Facilitator: *What I understand is that you found out that Catherine had said that you weren't a good fit for the collaborative, is that correct?*

Acknowledging. This is a technique that focuses on the emotional content of a statement or how the person was affected by what happened. Successful acknowledging statements are respectful validations of the emotional part of an incident. The value of acknowledging can't be overestimated. A great deal of the success of this technique depends on the tone you use.

Acknowledgment Example: *You sound disappointed and upset that anyone would say that.*

Identifying needs brings out the underlying need, motivation, or hope. Instead of responding, giving advice, or telling the speaker what they SHOULD have done, the listener reflects to the speaker what the speaker's needs were.

Identifying the unstated need: *Are you looking to understand the meaning of that statement?*
Explore what actions might have been successful: *Would you have wanted direct communication?*
Examine the speaker's expectations about the other person: *It seems you are hoping for respect and collaboration. Is that important to you?*

Identifying Needs Exercise

1. We tried something like that three years ago and it didn't work. Why doesn't he ask before initiating his ideas? Needs: _____Statement: _____
2. *I have emailed him about the project at least a dozen times in the last month. He just ignores me. I don't think I should be held accountable for the fact that he didn't prioritize this project.* Needs: _____Statement:_____ ____
3. He is constantly undercutting my authority and doesn't follow my instruction. Why don't I get more support from the collaborative? Needs:_____
Statement:_____

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Exchange Techniques: Ask Questions

How a question is asked (tone of voice is not to be underestimated!) is often more important than *what* (content) is asked. Some types of questions are particularly effective. Others will make progress more difficult. This requires the use of *humble inquiry,* being careful to ask the questions in a safe way so that it doesn't appear that you are taking sides or that you already know what the answer *should be.*

Open-Ended Questions

In Stage I, broad questions are very useful for finding out how the individuals see their situation. The rule of thumb is that open-ended questions cannot be answered with a simple yes or no response. They invite the person to share more information. Some examples of broad questions are:

- How do you see the situation?
- Would you tell me your point of view of what happened?
- What would you need to feel this session is a success?
- And then…? What else?

There are several advantages to open-ended questions. The person will:

- Feel more comfortable telling the story without interruptions, and this will help you to establish rapport.
- Provide context so you will hear the story from their viewpoint rather than your own.
- Speak more freely when following their own train of thought.

Clarifying Questions

Below are some questions that are useful when you are having difficulty recognizing what the participant is saying or when they would like you to learn more about their perspective. These questions, in particular, use a *humble inquiry* approach.

Help me understand more about…
Tell me more regarding…
Were you expecting…
It seems that you…
I get the impression that…

Avoid "Why" Questions Whenever Possible. They often sound accusatory and ask the listener to account for their behavior. The following are substitutions for "why" questions:

- *What was the reason that you were unable to finish the project?*
     Not: *Why didn't you finish the project?*
- *Were you aware that other people could hear music being played at your desk?*
     Not: *Why do you play your music so loud?*

Use Yes/No Questions Sparingly. A person is clearly limited in their response to yes/no questions. Such questions may cut off information that the person would otherwise offer and may encourage the person to guess which answer you want and make a response calculated to please you rather than to give a truthful response. However, sometimes yes/no questions can lead you to another type of question, or they can help you know which direction to go.

Using Questions to Encourage Reluctant Participants. The participants may have thought a lot about what their complaints are and what they want. Very often, they have not thought about what they will do or what you will do if the conflict continues. Reality testing is an opportunity to explore the whole picture and think about why this is so important and to plan for the consequences of not reaching an agreement. The more concrete the plan, the better it will be complied with afterward.

- What will it be like in the neighborhood when this conflict is over?
- What is the worst thing that could happen if you don't reach an agreement?
- What do you think they will do if we don't resolve it today?
- If we don't talk through this, you will both still be in the collaborative. How will that be?
- What are you going to do if we don't work through this issue?

Questions are an invaluable tool for facilitators. Keep them simple and nonthreatening in order to move the process forward.

Closing Stage I

In a final note to Stage I, keep in mind:
- **Refrain from agreeing or disagreeing with the individual.** Showing compassion for their experience without reinforcing their position is key. Starting your sentences with phrases such as "For you…," "From your point of view…," and "The way you see it…" helps this.
- **As much as possible, point out their needs in the situation.** By doing this, you are helping them move away from their positional thinking to what is most important to them. Framing their needs in a question helps them refine their thinking and become more oriented to problem-solving rather than just complaining.
- **Policy/Group Agreements.** If any policy issues or established group agreements arise, these private meetings are the time to talk about them and problem-solve with the individual if possible.

Stage II: Develop Agenda

About Stage II

After Stage I, take time to organize and structure an agenda based on the topics from the private sessions. This will be your guide for Stage III. Don't try to analyze the participants' underlying personality traits. Just focus on the topics that need to be covered. The agenda is a flexible plan that allows you to respond to the participants' needs, the community's interests, and any new information gained. It opens with an Icebreaker, then moves to the Impact of the situation on each person, and lastly covers the specific Issues in dispute. In working through developing their list, most facilitators prefer to first consider the Issues in dispute (those are the most important to resolve), then reflect on the Impact, and lastly develop an appropriate Icebreaker. Stage II takes facilitators five to 10 minutes.

Issues

The issues are concrete topics that the participants need to resolve: the substance.

Impact

The second type of discussion topic is how the conflict has affected each person and their reaction to the situation. If it is not acknowledged, it may block their willingness to listen to and understand the other's point of view. **The best way to frame this is to prepare a simple question:** *How has the situation impacted you?*

Icebreaker

Identify a topic that can open the conversation in a positive way. It should allow speakers an opportunity to express something important to them in their community work that is not an issue of dispute. It may point to a positive or neutral common ground between participants. The benefit of doing this is to set a conciliatory mood and build confidence that the situation can be resolved.

Examples of Discussion Topics

Issues
Examples might be *the project, communication,* or *roles and responsibilities.*

Impact
Typical concerns are *anger, frustration, disappointment,* and the *sense of being treated unfairly.* These are not issues to "fix" but simply to acknowledge as part of the conflict. Simply requesting each person discuss how the situation has impacted them is often the best way to approach these concerns. Many times, when they express this in Stage III, it will be the first time the other person has heard it.

Icebreaker
Topics might include the following: *What are two things that you like about this project? What do you enjoy about your community work? What is the best thing you have done here since you started? What are two skills you bring to the table?*

WATCH VIDEO OF RANDY DEVELOPING AGENDA FOR CASE STUDY

Developing the Agenda Example

EXAMPLE

Ximena and Catherine work in the same collaborative. Though they are supposed to work on a subcommittee together, they have stopped talking to each other. One of them requested that you help them talk through the issues.

Ximena's concerns are that Catherine created a nickname for her (Mena) that is not her own, and that Catherine doesn't try to understand her accent.

Ximena also is concerned that Catherine expressed to others that Ximena was not a good fit for the collaborative.

Catherine's concerns are that Ximena does not show respect for her long-term community knowledge nor ask for input. She has a hearing problem, which makes it difficult to understand Ximena.

ISSUES

Input
Communication
Styles
Working Relationship

IMPACT

How has this situation impacted each of you? How has it been?

ICEBREAKER

What are two skills that you bring to the collaborative?

Stage III: Conduct Joint Meeting

About Stage III

Stage III is the heart of the Exchange process. You will have met with each person separately, and you will have a good understanding of each perspective. Stage III is the time for you to help the participants do the same. After the preliminary welcome discussion, state your agenda. By stating the agenda first, you are reassuring the participants that their issues will be dealt with in the session. The agenda is a flexible guide to the discussion.

A strategic element of the structure, the **Icebreaker**, is an approach to open the conversation to help the employees speak to each other in a non-adversarial tone. It is also an important way to introduce new material that can serve to lower emotional barriers.

The **Impact** is addressed next, because if it is not addressed, it blocks movement. Issues rising to the level of conflict have emotional components to them that keep the participants attached to their positions. NCRC's model provides a structured way to discuss (not resolve) these emotional blocks in order to move past them.

After discussing the Impact, direct the participants to talk about the **Issues** in a structured way. Raise these issues one at a time. Develop each issue by asking each person to discuss their perspectives. The length of time varies more in Stage III and IV, because it depends on the people involved and the complexity of the issues. Most facilitators need 30 minutes to an hour for Stage III and Stage IV together.

WATCH VIDEO OF STAGES III AND IV CASE STUDY

Sample Opening Stage III

Note that the examples used here vary from our case study to show how the process can be used. We will finish the case study in class.

WELCOME AND ACKNOWLEDGE	Thank you, Ximena and Catherine, for agreeing to discuss this. Your work is very important to this collaborative, so I appreciate your desire to work through this.
EXPLAIN HOW PROCESS WORKS	I want to remind you that what we are going to do for the next 30 minutes or so is talk through the concerns that each of you has about working with the other.
CLARIFY PURPOSE OF MEETING **CLARIFY INTERESTS** **GIVE AGENDA. Briefly state the issues that will be addressed** **DISCUSS CONFIDENTIALITY**	My goal here is to help the two of you work through this so that the collaborative meetings are improved, you each get the respect that you deserve, and we can create an improved working relationship. This is a confidential meeting between the three of us, as I mentioned to you in our first meetings. However, I will keep a record of this meeting and any agreements we reach in my file for future reference in case we need to revisit the conversation. I will not share anything about this with others in the collaborative unless the two of you decide that would be helpful.
GROUND RULES	Specifically, we are going to talk about input, communication, your different styles, and your working relationship. I am going to ask that we all treat each other with respect and allow each person to finish before we speak. Agreed?

Exchange Techniques: Listen Effectively

Your role in managing the process is more active in Stage III. You will have two conflicting parties to manage in the joint meeting, so effectively listening also means managing the discussion well. Managing this conversation includes:

- The strategic ordering of the discussion (Icebreaker, Impact, and Issues);
- Listening carefully to the participants' responses;
- Asking appropriate follow-up questions;
- Ensuring that the participants have been heard in the way they want to be heard; and
- "Listening" to body language.

Exchange Techniques: Respond Respectfully

Demonstrating Understanding. It is especially useful to demonstrate understanding when the issue has emotional relevance for the participants. In Stage I, the facilitator demonstrates understanding directly, but in Stage III, the facilitator may ask the participants to do it after each person has discussed the **Impact** of the situation.

1. Individual relates how the situation has affected them.
2. Facilitator asks the other person to recap the key concept in different words.
3. Facilitator checks for accuracy with the speaker; if it's inaccurate, the listener is asked to try again.

Examples provided on this page are from a different case to show the variety of cases.

Facilitator: *John, can you tell us both how the situation has affected you? Suni, before he does that, I'm going to ask that you recap what you hear in a few minutes so that he is heard the way he wants to be heard.*

John: *She always wants me to focus on her projects. When I approach her with a concern about my projects, she always brushes me off. I am tired of it. I just feel disrespected.*

Facilitator: *What did you hear, Suni?*

Suni: *John wants me to pay attention to his projects, like he says he does for me. He says I don't respect him, but I have just been so busy…*

Facilitator*: We will get to your perspective in a few minutes, Suni. But for now, did Suni capture the essential piece of your concern, John?*

Acknowledging. This is a technique that focuses on the emotional content of a statement or how each person was affected by what happened. When both people are in the room, the facilitator can acknowledge that the situation has been difficult for both of them without taking one person's side.

Acknowledgment Example: *This has been extremely challenging for both of you.*

Identifying Interests brings out the underlying need, motivation, or hope. Instead of responding, giving advice, or telling the speakers what they SHOULD have done, the facilitator reflects what the speakers' interests were. Throughout the discussion, the facilitator points out the interests of the individuals as well as the community's interests.

Suni: *We tried something like that three years ago and it didn't work. Why doesn't he ask before initiating his ideas?*

Facilitator*: It sounds like it is important to you that you have input into the project, and that we look at the history of the community regarding that approach. Ultimately, you are looking for the success of the initiative, which is something you have also expressed, Suni. Is that correct?*

Exchange Techniques: Ask Questions

Questions are as important in Stage III as they are in Stage I. One important difference, however, is the type of question that is most appropriate in each part of the process. In Stage I, there is a good reason to ask open-ended questions. *How do you see the situation? What are the issues between you? Would you tell me your point of view of what happened?* These questions allow the participants to speak freely about their perspectives regarding the situation.

In Stage III, however, you **want to control the conversation so that participants speak** only about one issue at a time. The strategy of asking for the **Icebreaker**, **Impact**, and then the **Issues**, one at a time, is useful to frame the discussion. **By asking one clarifying question about each of these topics, you disaggregate the dispute into smaller, more manageable discussion topics.**

With the Icebreaker in the example below, the facilitator asks the participants to describe two skills that they bring to the project. Other possible questions could include two reasons why they chose to be involved in community work or an accomplishment they are particularly proud of in their community work. In each case, **the specificity of the question helps the participants stay on task with the Icebreaker**, rather than using a more general, open-ended question, which may lead to a rambling discussion, or worse, an opportunity to say something negative about the other person.

Facilitator sets out the Icebreaker	**Facilitator:** Let's start with something on a positive note—what are two skills that you have that you bring to the project that help you be successful? Sometimes it helps to start the discussion with our being heard about this.
After each person has spoken, the facilitator acknowledges the commonalities	**Facilitator:** So, you both bring something unique and needed to this collaborative, and you both mentioned that working well with others is an important contribution. What that tells us is that once we have greater understanding of each perspective and work through the differences, there is the potential for creating a more effective working relationship.

Note that the example used here varies from our case study to show how the process can be used. We will finish the case study in class.

When asking the participants to discuss the Impact, use a very simple question to initiate the discussion. *How has this situation impacted you? How has it been?* In this way, participants can speak at the level at which they are most comfortable. Listen carefully to the answers given here. If one person attacks the other, you can guide them to comment on how the situation has been for them instead of allowing the attack.

Facilitator transitions to Impact	**Facilitator:** Even though you are both highly respected by other collaborative members, one concern seems to be a lack of respect with how you treat each other. How has this been for you, Ximena?
Facilitator asks one person to discuss the Impact of the situation **Facilitator asks the other to demonstrate understanding**	**Ximena:** I feel disrespected, honestly. For example, I have explained how to say my name several times, yet Catherine doesn't try. She just calls me by her made-up nickname, Mena. It feels like a microaggression since my name is part of my cultural identity. **Facilitator:** Catherine, I would like you to say what you heard Ximena say. You don't have to agree with her. You'll get a chance to say how you have been impacted by the situation in a moment. What did you hear? **Catherine:** Well, the spelling of her name makes it hard for me to pronounce. What is wrong with calling her Mena? It's cute and easy. **Facilitator:** Excuse me. Let me just clarify what I had asked here. You will have a chance to tell your perspective in a few minutes, when we talk about communication. Could you please just recap how the situation has impacted Ximena? **Catherine:** Well, it wasn't my intent to upset her so… **Facilitator:** What was it that you heard? **Catherine:** OK, she feels disrespected, especially when I don't use her name correctly because it is important culturally for her. **Facilitator:** Thank you. I recognize it is challenging. The purpose is so that each of you is heard the way you want to be heard for this part. Ximena, did she capture what you wanted her to hear? (Ximena nods her head yes.) We will need to look at other aspects of what gets in the way of effective communication and what can be done about it soon.
For balance, the facilitator asks the other	**Facilitator:** What about for you, Catherine? How has it been for you? **Catherine:** I have worked in this community here a very long time; other people know and respect that. I'm hurt that Ximena doesn't consider that or ask for input.

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person the same question	**Facilitator:** OK, Ximena, what do you hear Catherine saying?
	Ximena: Um, well, Catherine believes that I don't respect her deep community knowledge and it upsets her?
	Facilitator: Catherine, is this correct?
	Catherine: Exactly!
	Ximena: Catherine, let me just tell you that I had no idea that you thought that. Also, that is the best you have ever pronounced my name, thank you.
	Facilitator: The value of this process is we will be able to clarify each of your perspectives and be heard by each other in new ways.

Sometimes **new information surfaces** so the facilitator may want to follow up with a question that was not on the agenda. In the above example, the facilitator listened carefully to Ximena's response. The critical new piece of information is that Ximena did not respond to Catherine's community knowledge the way Catherine *thought she should*. The facilitator can **follow up with additional questions to clarify** perspectives.

Facilitator follows up with a question that goes deeper into clarifying the meaning for each person	**Facilitator:** Let's talk about that a bit. What were your expectations when you first started working on this project together? Catherine, why don't you go first.
	Catherine: I expected Ximena to come to me to ask my opinions about how this community has been impacted and get some insights. Everyone else has done that when they started in the collaborative.
	Facilitator: Ximena, what about you?
Facilitator allows a dialogue between both because this is important new information	**Ximena:** Well, I might have done that, but I expected Catherine to do what others do with my name, to ask me how it is pronounced. When Catherine said, in front of everyone, that it was an impossible name, I didn't feel welcome. Then when Catherine also complained that I was hard to understand, it made it very uncomfortable to address her at all.
	Catherine: Oh, my, I never intended that at all. I am going to be honest here. I have a hearing problem, so it has been challenging to understand you. I guess I can see that I didn't make it easy for you to approach me.

Facilitator acknowledges both	**Facilitator:** It sounds like these initial interactions made a very uncomfortable situation for each of you. Each of you wanted to feel respected and valued, is that correct?

The **questions about the Issues can be straightforward and direct**.

| After the facilitator brings up an issue, sometimes additional clarification helps

Here, the facilitator clarifies the needs of both before asking what can be done

Both participants agree to do something to improve the situation | **Facilitator:** We are making progress. I appreciate both of you being willing to work through these issues. Catherine, when you say that your hearing problem makes it difficult to understand Ximena, can you tell us more about that? Since you brough up the concern, are you comfortable explaining it?

Catherine: Yes, I would feel better explaining it. It is complicated, but it is more of a processing issue. Especially with accents and people speaking quickly, I just can't process it well. It is related to hearing, but a bit more complex.

Ximena: Let me just say that I had no idea that was an issue for you. My father has tinnitus, which impacts him in a similar way.

Facilitator: What I am understanding is that it is important for you to be able to process, Catherine, and it is important to you to be heard respectfully, Ximena. What are some suggestions?

Ximena: I can slow down my speaking when I talk to Catherine.

Catherine: That will be great, I would appreciate that. I will let you know when I need things repeated without insulting you.

Facilitator: Again, this is making progress, so thank you both. I will take note of what you are each suggesting you can do here, so we can write that up. |
|---|---|

Notice below that the **facilitator simply raises the issue** in a non-escalating way, without asking a specific question. Here, there is no real discussion needed and the participants want to go directly to problem-solving.

| Facilitator brings up one of the issues in dispute

One participant goes to problem-solving | **Facilitator:** It seems that by clarifying expectations, we covered a bit about improving the communication between you.

Catherine: Actually, I would like to speak to that. I must admit that I have not communicated effectively since I felt disrespected. I can communicate directly to you if I have concerns, Ximena.

**Ximena:** I do appreciate that. I think that would work better. |
|---|---|

The facilitator sometimes **raises issues that are important to the community** or team. Additionally, the **facilitator may reject a solution—either because it does not meet the community's interests or it goes against the collaborative's group agreements/mission**. This interaction between the facilitator and the participants in the process is a realistic part of resolving issues: It is truly a three-way conversation, and the needs of the community are just as important as resolving the issues between the participants. The collaborative attitude of the facilitator helps retain the problem-solving tone of the process.

Facilitator acknowledges progress and transitions to the next issue **Here the situation could have escalated, so the facilitator interjects with clarification of the collaborative's culture and invites the participants to clarify each perspective**	**Facilitator:** Well, we have come a long way in a short time. We still need to cover input, styles, and developing a respectful working relationship. **Ximena:** I am not sure what input means. I did go to others when I first joined the collaborative. What does that mean here? **Catherine:** You have changed some protocols without talking to me about it at all. I understand now about your being uncomfortable, but that is how we do things here, people get to give input. **Facilitator:** Wait. Let's talk about that. The collaborative's approach is to get buy-in from people, but there is autonomy as well. What are areas that make the most sense to collaborate in, and what are areas that are within each of your own purviews? After several minutes of discussion, the facilitator summarizes where they want to come together to collaborate and where they are autonomous.

In the examples above, it is noted that the **facilitator moves from Stage III to Stage IV on each issue**. We find this to be a practical way to manage the process. The recommendation is that the facilitator should **follow the process in this way**:

ICEBREAKER	Stage III discussion, no Stage IV necessary. Purpose is to create a human-centered discussion.
IMPACT	Stage III discussion, no Stage IV necessary. Purpose is to create a human-centered discussion.
ISSUES	Move between Stage III and IV with each issue: **DEFINE.** Participants state their perspective on the issue. **DETERMINE.** Facilitator identifies needs and interests. **DEVELOP.** All explore possible solutions. **DECIDE.** All decide best options on the issue.

Stage IV: Facilitate Problem-Solving
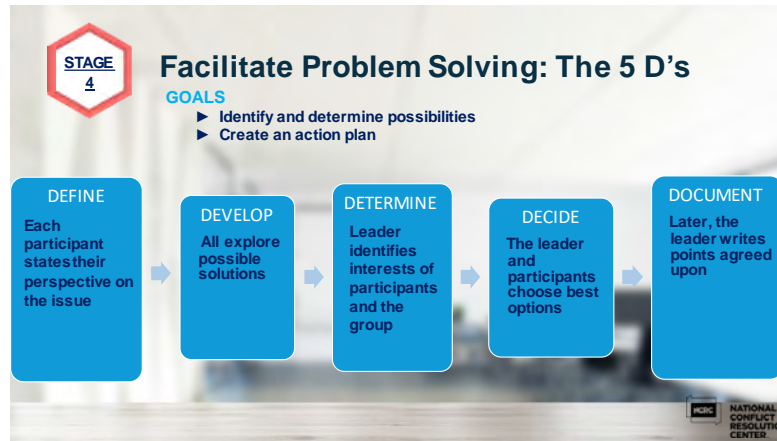
Tasks:
- Generate and discuss possibilities.
- Decide on next steps.
- Discuss disclosure to others.

Techniques:
- Encourage input.
- Use SMART criteria for the plan.

About Stage IV

We find that a clear Stage III discussion of the **Icebreaker** and how the situation has **Impact**ed the participants is critical before any meaningful conversation about problem-solving the **Issues** is possible. This also maintains a human-centered approach even in the problem-solving phase. There is no need for Stage IV for the icebreaker or impact questions. Problem-solving focuses on solutions for each of the issues, one at a time.

Stage IV involves examining expanded options and making agreements that are uniquely suited to the individuals participating in the process while still maintaining fairness to others involved in the community. Eventually, you and the participants will choose what to do. Those choices are better if they come from a thoughtful process rather than only the most obvious ideas.

As the facilitator, you help the participants assess what would meet their needs and what meets the interests of the community group. You will work with the participants to identify their interests and the standards/criteria by which the options can be measured. In this way, the participants will make better decisions about which options they can agree to, and they will be able to justify those decisions to themselves and others.

The facilitator's role in this stage is crucial. Unfocused or vague agreements are less likely to be carried out and may, in fact, lead to further conflict. Participants who are not clear about what they are agreeing to do may not follow through with their agreement, or worse,

may simply do nothing. You may want to include a provision for what happens if there is a problem keeping to the plan. Finally, you may want to have a discussion about how their agreement (and the session itself) can be discussed with each other or with others in the community. Others often know there has been a problem, so some planning on how to speak about the session can be helpful.

NCRC highly recommends the **SMART** test to evaluate options. Agreements should be focused on behaviors rather than platitudes or attitudes such as "*We agree to be nice* or *friendly.*" Instead, they should be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, and **T**imed. It should be very clear who is to do what, by when, and how. It should be possible to know when a task has been accomplished. People should agree to do only those things they are capable of doing and that they are likely to do. By making a **SMART** and balanced agreement, you make it easy for people to succeed.

Tips for Developing and Deciding Options for Best Outcomes

Looking at the recommendations from the previous section for managing the transition from Stage III to Stage IV of the Exchange process, *Defining* and *Determining* could be seen as elements of Stage III, while *Developing* and *Deciding* might be seen as elements of Stage IV.

ISSUES	Move between Stage III and IV with each issue:
Stage III:	**DEFINE.** Participants state their perspective on the issue. **DETERMINE.** Facilitator identifies interests.
Stage IV:	**DEVELOP.** All explore possible solutions. **DECIDE.** All decide best options on the issue.

When facilitators help the participants explore possible solutions, some questions that are helpful include:

- *Now that we have a clear understanding of each of your perspectives and interests on this issue, can we look at possible solutions that would work for you?*
- *What are you willing to do to improve the situation?*
- *That puts everything in a different light. What are we going to do about it?*

During the discussion, the facilitator ensures that BOTH participants are engaged and contributing to solution building. The focus should be on what participants WILL do, not what they WON'T do.

After all decisions are reached about the **Issues**, important elements of a successful closure include clear expectations of follow-up, clarification of what will be shared with others, and letting participants know that you appreciate their efforts in working through the issues.

Closing Thoughts

Conflicts, disagreements, and honest differences are a normal part of life. When they are ignored or dealt with in unproductive ways, they can escalate into more serious conflicts that take time, damage relationships, undermine effectiveness, and reduce feelings of community for people in conflict and those around them. The Exchange training gives you new tools for managing conflict so that creative resolutions can be reached that reenergize the sense of purpose and bring new ideas to old problems. The hope is that these tools will give you greater confidence in your ability to handle conflicts successfully. By working together to understand the facts, the feelings, and the potential solutions, the outcome can create a healthier and more inclusive environment for all.

REFLECT: What are the ways that the Exchange methodology blends a problem-solving approach and a human-centered approach?
How is a human-centered approach helpful for problem-solving?