



Conflict Resolution Center of Iowa

--helping people solve the problems that keep them apart

RESPECT

Recognizing Everyone's Strengths by Peacebuilding,
Empathizing, Communicating
And Trustbuilding

2008

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The Conflict Resolution Center of Iowa

The Conflict Resolution Center of Iowa, LLC (CRCI), formerly the Iowa Peace Institute, exists to help people learn more productive patterns of communication and approaches to conflict in order to improve their professional and personal relationships. The CRCI mission is to reduce the social and economic costs of conflict and help people solve the problems that keep them apart. CRCI fosters appropriate and peaceful resolution of conflict by providing education and training, mediation, and facilitation services. The Conflict Resolution Center provides its services statewide, and its headquarters is in Grinnell.

CRCI provides the following services:

- Training in negotiation skills, mediation, resolution facilitation, and conflict resolution;
- Facilitation of problem-solving meetings and difficult conversations;
- Assistance in encouraging disputing parties to use methods of dispute resolution appropriate to their situation;
- Mediation and facilitation services;
- Assistance in preparing for mediation and/or negotiation;
- Conflict analysis and fact-finding;
- Assistance in the design and implementation of dispute resolution systems and procedures; and
- Information and consultation on dispute resolution options and resources.

Acknowledgments

The materials in this training packet were collaboratively developed by Greg Buntz and Val Vetter when they were on the staff of the Iowa Peace Institute, and by Leslee Sandberg and Geri Pettitt of Grant Wood AEA. The RESPECT training program was first presented for Grant Wood in the fall of 2003. All four wish to express their appreciation to Pam Schultz then of the Iowa Peace Institute for her invaluable assistance in the layout and design of the packet. Jule Reynolds and Lori Moore of the Parent Training and Information Center of Iowa, Dedie Thompson of AEA 8, Linda Appleby of AEA 12, and Bonnie Buntz of the conflict resolution Center of Iowa helped us further strengthen the materials in 2005 and 2006. We also wish to thank Dee Ann Wilson of the Iowa Department of Education for her leadership and support in the development of the RESPECT program.

Trainers

Bonnie Buntz is a mediator and trainer with CRCI. She was formerly a mediator trainer and consultant for special projects at the Iowa Peace Institute assisting in program design, proposal writing, and grant management. Ms. Buntz holds a Master's Degree in Sociology from the University of the Pacific and attended the University of Iowa as an undergraduate. Prior to her involvement at IPI she developed and coordinated a comprehensive program of health and social services for women and children and a culturally sensitive health outreach project for Southeast Asians in Stockton, California.

Greg Buntz is president of the Conflict Resolution Center of Iowa, LLC, (formerly the Iowa Peace Institute) and president emeritus of the Iowa Peace Institute (IPI). Dr. Buntz went to IPI in 1994 after a 22-year career as a college professor having taught at the University of Arizona and the University of the Pacific. With Bonnie Buntz he formed CRCI in January 2004 when IPI ceased operations. He is a native of Shenandoah, Iowa and received his undergraduate and master's degrees in business from the University of Iowa and his Ph.D. from The Ohio State University in public policy and management.

Geri Pettitt has been the Parent Coordinator for The Parent Educator Partnership (PEP) Program at Grant Wood AEA for the past 18 years. She came to this position as the parent of a daughter with special needs. Having a background in elementary education, Geri brings both the parent and the educator hat to her work with families and professionals. While PEP staff serve as liaisons between home and school, Geri says her biases are with families who need support in getting their voices heard. She believes that happens best when the focus is on working together. She and her husband, Jim, have four daughters and have lived in Cedar Rapids for 35 years. Geri has taken Grant Wood's Resolution Facilitator Training provided by the IPI.

Leslee Sandberg is Regional Administrator at Grant Wood Area Education Agency. She provides IEP training for teachers, AEA staff and parents. In addition Leslee coordinates the Resolution Facilitator services through GWAEA. Resolution Facilitators have received over 60 hours of training in conflict resolution from the Iowa Peace Institute. They are assigned to teams upon request to facilitate resolution of conflict.

RESPECT

Recognizing Everyone's Strengths by Peacebuilding, Empathizing, Communicating and Trustbuilding

Goals:

1. To enhance learning for students receiving special education services by respectfully and creatively building and growing relationships between educator and family members of IEP teams.
2. To help IEP team members meaningfully resolve differences as early as possible in order to reduce the need for preappeals, mediations and due process hearings.

Objectives:

By completing this training program, IEP team members should know how to:

1. Address and resolve differences that arise in team meetings in a way that improves, or at least doesn't further damage, relationships among team members.
2. Engage with each other constructively and from the heart so that differences and/or problems can be addressed and meaningfully resolved.
3. Move beyond the traditional approaches to conflict resolution (that are centered in problem solving and in improving the techniques of communication) in order to achieve fundamental change in working relationships.
4. Think and act like facilitators or coaches even though that may not be their formal role in a given IEP meeting.

Agenda

Day One: Tuesday September 19, 2006

The Relational Context of Conflict

8:00 - 9:50	Making connections and establishing relationships in Circle
9:50 - 10:25	Introduction to the relational context of conflict
10:25 - 10:45	Images of conflict
10:45 - 11:55	Addressing differences in IEP meetings with deep listening
11:55 - 12:15	Welcoming “heart” into processes: developing and articulating an ethic of care
12:15 - 1:00	Lunch
1:00 - 1:15	Untying the knot of conflict
1:15 - 2:30	The relational context of conflict: parent panel
2:30 - 3:40	Building relationships: educators-parents and parents-educators
3:40 - 3:50	The first assignment: the relational context of conflict
3:50 - 4:05	Reflective writing/journaling
4:05 - 4:15	Assessing the day and closing

Day Two: Thursday October 12, 2006

Risk Taking in Conflict Resolution: Achieving Deep and Lasting Change

8:00 - 8:40	Reconnecting in Circle
8:40 - 10:10	Reflections on the first assignment
10:10 - 10:20	Review day one and preview day two
10:20 - 11:10	New and “dangerous” definitions of conflict resolution
11:10 - 12:00	New and “dangerous” definitions of conflict
12:00 - 12:45	Working lunch: everyday creativity video
12:45 - 1:40	Beyond active listening: resolving conflict “dangerously”
1:40 - 3:35	Experiencing “dangerous” conflict resolution role-plays
3:35 - 3:50	The second assignment: risk taking in conflict resolution.
3:50 - 4:05	Reflective writing/journaling
4:05 - 4:15	Assessing the day and closing

Agenda (continued)

Day Three: Monday November 20, 2006

Thinking Like A Third Party: Facilitating and Coaching As An IEP Team Member

8:00 - 8:30	Reconnecting in Circle
8:30 - 9:40	Reflections on the second assignment
9:55 - 10:10	Review days one and two and preview day three
10:10 - 11:10	De-escalating conflict from the point of view of the “third side”: a demonstration role-play
11:10 - 11:30	Debriefing the demonstration role-play
11:30 - 12:00	The role of a facilitative participant in the IEP setting
12:00 - 12:45	Lunch
12:45 - 1:40	The challenge of being on the third side
1:40 - 3:35	Being the third side in an IEP: role-play
3:35 - 3:50	The final assignment: reflections on the simultaneous pursuit of individual and group goals from the point of view of the third side
3:50 - 4:05	Reflective writing/journaling
4:05 - 4:15	Assessing the day and closing

Day Four: Wednesday December 13, 2006

Bridging Troubled Waters With RESPECT

8:00 - 8:40	Reconnecting in Circle
8:40 - 10:00	Reflections on the third assignment
10:00 - 10:10	Review days one - three and preview day four
10:10 - 11:25	Practicing de-escalating conflict from the third side
11:25 - 12:00	Addressing challenges to being on the third side
12:00 - 12:45	Lunch
12:45 - 1:50	Enlightened self-interest and holonomy on the third side
1:50 - 3:00	Third side role-play
3:00 - 3:10	Reflecting and journaling
3:10 - 3:25	Training evaluation
3:25 - 4:15	Closing Circle

Making Connections

Overview

Conflict is just relationship on a bumpy road. There is almost always good in any relationship that can help us make it through the bumps. In fact, when things get complicated, the only way through is by building and growing relationships — we can rely on them when the going gets tough.

This opening activity prepares the ground for collaboration throughout the training by emphasizing identity and relationship. Identifying connections should help you to begin to build and then nurture relationships with other training participants.

The Activity

We will sit in circle and begin with a brief period of silence so that we can clear our minds of clutter and prepare to listen deeply to each other. See the circle values and guidelines on the following pages.

After the period of silence we will make three passes of a talking piece. On the first pass say your name, where you live and in a very few words describe the work you do. On the second pass, say something about the history and meaning of your name. On the third pass comment on the connections among group members that you observe.

Discussion Questions

1. What connections exist in this group?
2. How can these connections be used to build relationships?
3. If this were an IEP meeting, how might you use these connections to build and nurture relationships throughout the meeting?
4. What energy and resources exist in this group? If we were in an IEP meeting, how might this energy and these resources be used to address conflicts that could arise?
5. This activity focuses on just one aspect of identity: your name. In reality, identity is multifaceted and it's easy, when in the throes of conflict, (when one's identity is threatened) to become defensive. How might we use relationships as resources to help people deal effectively with identity conflicts that could arise in IEP meetings?

Circle Values

Safety

Creating safe time and space for authentic conversation is a prime foundation for circle work. It means that all who come to the circle can feel safe that they will be listened to and treated with respect. It also means that people can feel free to say what they need to say without fear that it will be held against them later on.

Equality

There is no head, top, or bottom in a circle. Every voice is important. Equality means acknowledging that the wisdom needed to respond to problems we face is found within the people present in the circle.

Heart-centered

All people have a need to be heard, accepted, and respected. To do this we must move away from perceiving the world solely with our brains, and toward sharing and listening from the heart.

Gratitude

Being in circle is an opportunity and a privilege. The value “gratitude” acknowledges this and says we are particularly grateful for all who sit and share with us.

Circle Guidelines

- ♦ Listen Respectfully
 - With empathy, attentiveness and an open mind

- ♦ Honor the Talking Piece
 - Speak only when you have it

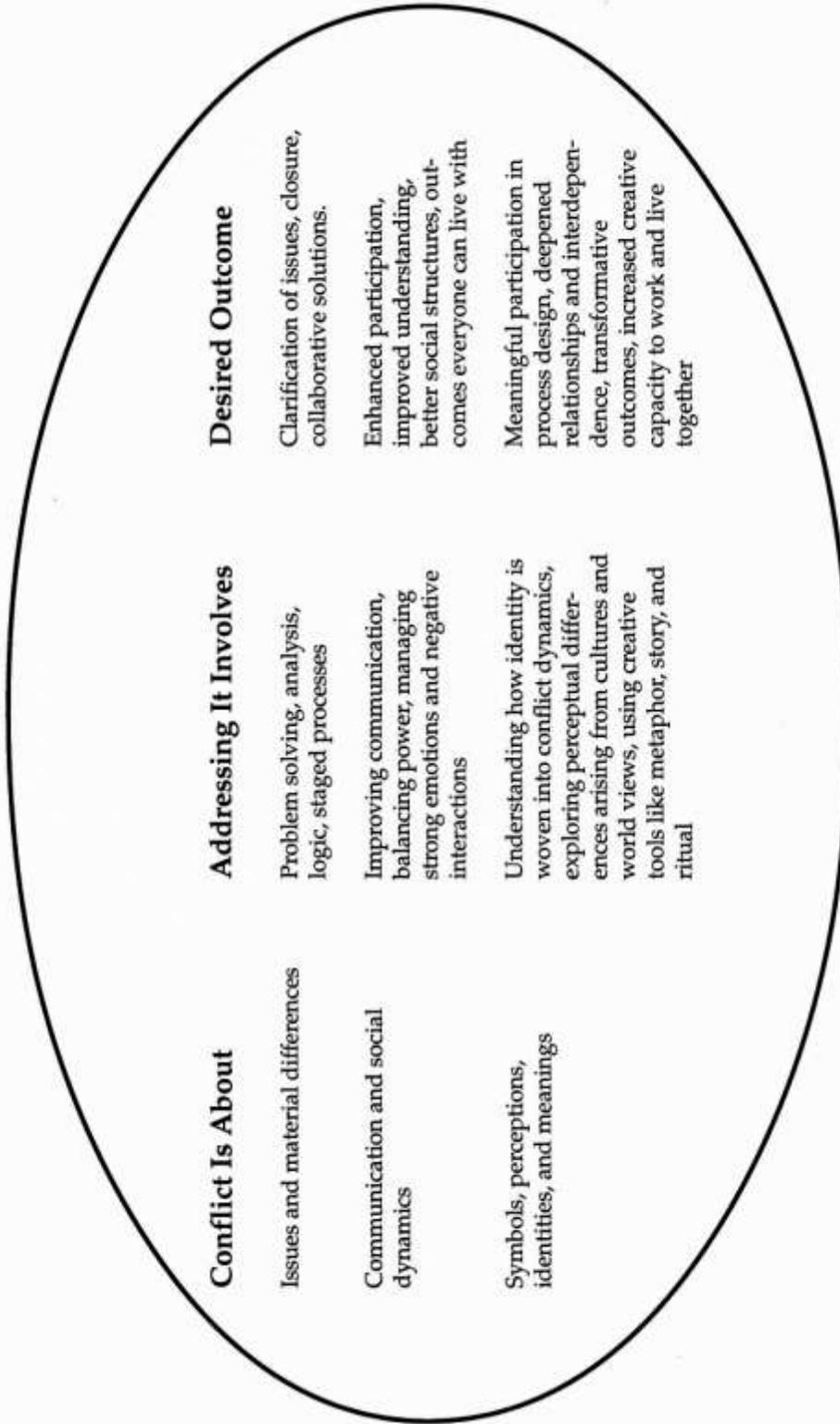
 - It's okay to pass

- ♦ Speak Respectfully
 - Speak honestly and from the heart

 - Use respectful words that do not hurt

Levels of Conflict and Conflict Strategies*

All conflict begins, unfolds, and is addressed in relationship.



- Relational Context -

*LeBaron, Michelle, *Bridging Troubled Waters*. pg. 9

Images of Conflict in Metaphors*

Metaphors promote collaboration or competition (strengthen or weaken relationships) depending on how they are used. For example, when we speak of conflict or disagreement as war, that leads to competitive actions and a weakening of relationships.

Conflict as war:

- Your claims are *indefensible*.
- She attacked every weak point in my argument.
- His criticisms were right *on target*.
- I *demolished* his argument.
- I've never *won* an argument with her.
- You disagree? Okay, *shoot!*
- If you use that *strategy*, he'll *wipe you out*.
- She *shot down* all of my arguments.

When we use the war metaphor, we don't just *talk* about conflicts as war, many of the things we *do* in arguing are, at least, partially structured by the concept of war – we attack, defend, counterattack, and attempt to win at the expense of the other.

What if conflict is viewed as a dance, where the participants are seen as performers and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way? How would we do conflict then?

Metaphors can help in the process of understanding and addressing differences. Attending to metaphors another uses in expressing thoughts and feelings about conflict can help to:

1. Build Safe Spaces for Effective Dialogue and Meaningful Conflict Resolution.

The use of metaphors in processes can help:

- **Enhance Relationships Through Acceptance and Empathy for Others' Experiences.**

Another: "I feel like I'm *walking a tightrope*."

You: "Is there a safety net?"

"What supports could you use to help maintain your balance?"

"What do you need from the process to help you across?"

Asking questions to uncover the meaning behind a metaphor shows: empathy, you're listening and that you care. Expanding on the metaphor to take it one step further does the same.

* See LeBaron (2002) and Lakoff and Johnson (1980)

- **Depersonalize Conflict or Deflect Blame Away From Individuals.**

Facilitator: “This conflict seems to have *taken on a life of it’s own* and it is causing the discomfort in the room.”

This helps normalize discomfort with disagreement and moves the conversation toward constructive communication—steps the groups could take together to reduce the discomfort.

2. Promote Constructive Communication and Conflict Resolution

The use of metaphors in processes can help:

- **Set a Positive Tone.**

Facilitator: “Writing an IEP is like working together to create a work of art.”

This is a metaphor that suggests a similarity between producing a collaborative IEP and producing a collaborative work of art. Both require people to work together and negotiate differences to achieve shared goals.

- **Communicate Meaning**

Another: “If we keep going the way we’re going, we’ll *hit the wall*.”

To uncover the meaning underlying this metaphor you might ask:

“What would hitting the wall look like?”

“When might we hit it?”

“Could we avoid hitting it, and if so, how?”

- **Clarify Communication.** One has to take care and be sensitive to the need for translation or explanation of culturally bound metaphors in order to turn a confusing metaphor into an opportunity for learning and clarification.

Another: “Trying to process this amount of information is *like trying to sip from a fire hydrant*.”

You: “Does it seem like an impossible task to you? If so, what could we do to make it more manageable?”

Listening Deeply to Encourage

Speaking from the Heart

We listen deeply in order to encourage others to speak from the heart. Deep listening is a way of being and doing that helps the listener truly understand the speaker – a prerequisite to the listener being understood. Deep listening by all parties to a conflict should help them arrive at the kind of understanding they need to meaningfully resolve their differences.

Deep Listening Defined

Michele LeBaron (2002) reminds us that relationships are resources in conflict resolution. Relationships are the places where conflict begins, she says, and conflict can't be resolved without the energy and the resources of the people who created them. The question becomes, then, how do people engage each other constructively so that conflicts can be meaningfully resolved? A key element of the answer to that question is: listen deeply.

Deep listening is a way of being and a way of connecting with another. It is much more than active listening: it is much more than a mere technique. To put it simply:

A person listens deeply when she connects with a speaker on an emotional level. When she is receptive to the emotions being expressed with both her heart and her brain, and when she is appropriately responsive to the feelings in, and behind the words being said, a person is listening deeply.

What Does Being a Deep Listener and Doing Deep Listening Mean?

Drawing on both Ken Cloke (2001) and Michelle LeBaron (2002), deep listening involves listening:

1. With every fiber of our being.

We let the words touch us – we *experience and feel* them as we hear them. We listen to be of service and our response is an authentic expression of who we are. We are *being* listeners rather than just *doing* listening.

2. By blocking everything else out and being totally attentive to the speaker.

We have “tunnel listening.” If face-to-face, and if culturally appropriate, we would lean in toward the speaker and make eye contact. If not face-to-face, we would visualize being in very close contact with nothing else around to distract us.

Meaning of deep listening (continued)

3. For connection, not agreement.

We listen to bond with the speaker in a way that we feel the energy between us. We don't listen just for things we agree with. We listen to connect with the speaker in the moment.

4. With compassion.

To have compassion means to suffer with. When we listen with compassion we try as best we can to feel the same emotion that the speaker is feeling in the story she is telling us. We do this so that we can help ease the pain of conflict through our listening and by the way we respond.

5. For the human qualities behind the words.

We listen so that we can see with the mind's eye the qualities or characteristics that all human beings have, for example a need for respect, as well as the distinctive qualities of the particular speaker. We would be listening for the expression of basic human needs: i.e. for a request that underlies the speaker's words, such as "I want to be respected and appreciated."

6. Without ego and without judging.

We listen to fully *understand* the speaker's story. We do not listen to judge or to compare what is said with what we think ought to be said.

7. With appreciation and respect for the speaker.

We would do all the things above and respond with words of appreciation for what has been said or perhaps for the risk the speaker has taken in telling us his story. We would act in a considerate and thoughtful way toward the speaker as we listen.

8. Inside our hearts as well as with our heads.

We listen with our feeling self and our thinking self. When we listen with our hearts, we listen in a way that shows we sincerely care about the speaker. Imagine that your heart has ears and the words being said go straight to your heart so that you are *feeling and experiencing what is being expressed* rather than just hearing it. When we do this we can't help but be authentic in our response.

We also listen for intellectual understanding as a *committed listener* as though our lives, or perhaps more importantly another's life, depended on understanding what was being said.

Deep Listening Checklist

- ☑ *Be a listener.* Experience and feel the words. Respond authentically in a way that reveals what you are feeling and that shows the speaker you “get it.”
- ☑ *Tunnel listening.* Be totally attentive to the speaker and respond in terms of one or more of the other characteristics of deep listening.
- ☑ *Listen to connect and bond.* Hear everything not just those things you agree with. Respond by connecting with the speaker.
- ☑ *Listen with compassion.* Feel what the speaker has endured because of this conflict. Respond with words that will ease the pain of the conflict.
- ☑ *See the human qualities.* Listen for the request behind the speaker’s words: what basic human need is she expressing? Respond in a way that shows you heard that request.
- ☑ *Put your own ego aside.* Listen to understand not to judge. Respond in a non-judgmental way: perhaps by acknowledging or validating what the speaker said.
- ☑ *Show appreciation and respect.* Be considerate and thoughtful in responding directly to what the speaker said.
- ☑ *Listen with your heart as well as with your brain.* In your response, show that you honestly care and that you are committed to a solution that is best for the student and that improves the situation for everyone involved.
- ☑ *Do more than simply hearing and responding with a technique.* Strive to understand and focus on giving an authentic response that helps the speaker create his or her own ideas for changing the situation.
- ☑ *Do not focus on how to respond and with what technique.* Focusing on how to respond might cause you to slip into the role of fixer or problem solver

Deep Listening Activity

Step One: Review the definition of deep listening (pg. 12) and what it looks like when one is doing when listening deeply (pp. 12-13)

Step Two: Form groups of three. Each small group member will in turn play the role of speaker, listener and observer as follows:

1. The **speaker's** role is to describe very briefly in two or three minutes an incident in his or her life from which he or she learned a very important lesson.
2. The **listener's** role is to:
 - Listen deeply being mindful that deep listening is a way of being—it is heartfelt listening—and it is a way of connecting to the speaker , and then
 - Ask one or two questions that encourage the speaker to go further into the story and really speak from the heart. Something along the lines of: (1) What makes this lesson so important to you? (2) If you had 20/20 hindsight what would you do differently? (3) What would you like the other person involved to acknowledge you for?

This should take another two or three minutes.

3. The **observer's** role is to observe silently, paying attention to how:
 - The listener shows that he or she is listening deeply; and
 - The speaker is affected by the listener's attentiveness.

Step Three: After the listener's one or two questions are answered, the observer reports on what he or she observed in terms of how both the speaker and listener experienced deep listening.

Step Four: Rotate roles and do steps two and three two more times so that each member of the triad has the opportunity to be speaker, listener and observer.

Welcoming Heart into Our Processes*

Addressing and resolving conflict from the heart means, approaching conflict with:

- Compassion—a desire to help people work through any suffering associated with conflict.
- A sense of caring for everyone involved – being “omni-partial.”
- An ethic of *caring* as opposed to an ethic of “fixing” the person or the problem.
- Authenticity – acknowledging our biases and connections, seeking always to be fair and seeking to be emotionally attuned to self and others with understanding.
- A sense of what conflict resolution *really* means:
 - Having intimacy with our relationships. That is, recognizing our interconnectedness (as opposed to disconnection and competition) and relating to others on a person-to-person basis *especially* when we are in the facilitator’s role.
 - Given that interconnectedness, seeking to understand without condoning, empathize without agreeing, and seeking mutual respect and ways to coexist.
 - Recognizing that conflict resolution has a higher purpose than just resolving material issues – i.e., facilitating understanding and the positive fundamental change in relationships that could result from new understandings.

To extensively paraphrase Carl Rogers, a person who brings heart into the process:

- Would enter into a genuine relationship with others rather than maintain the facade of a disinterested neutral third party.
- Is comfortable in entering into this relationship, exploring “dangerous” feelings or territory without knowing where this will lead.
- Recognizes that to resolve differences, people must trust that what will happen if they get into this dangerous area is better than what would happen if they don’t.
- Unconditionally accepts the others as persons worth dealing with no matter what their attitudes, beliefs or behaviors.
- Is genuine and unafraid to express the feelings which he or she is experiencing.
- In a facilitator’s role is satisfied with just providing a safe environment where others will be free to express themselves, as opposed to providing problem-solving.

* See Cloke (2001), Dalai Lama (1999), Glazer (1999), LeBaron (2002), and Rogers (1961).

Educators and Parents Working Collaboratively

*Some Thoughts and Questions re Building Trusting Relationships**

- **Trust is an attitude** that allows one to rely on, have confidence in and feel sure about others
- **Trust is also the essential currency in relationships.** Without it, relationships between educators and parents are unlikely to produce good results for students. In fact, without trust there may be no relationship.
- **Must trust be earned?** When people meet as a team for the first time does one assume that others are trustworthy, or do team members have to earn the trust of other members?
- **A high level of distrust both creates problems and makes them difficult to solve.** If parents distrust educators, or vice versa, they may not want to deal with each other at all. Why would they try to reach agreement on an IEP if they can't trust each other to carry it out?
- **If the "trust account" has a zero balance** when a team meets for the first time, what can persons do to add currency to the account? In other words, what can they do to create a trusting environment?
- **Damaged trust is difficult to rebuild** because in part distrust is dependent on what goes on in one's head independent of another's conduct. The key is to give people a reason to trust you by:
 - Being authentic and behaving consistently.
 - Communicating clearly, carefully and from the heart.
 - Keeping promises.
 - Being reliable.
 - Maintaining confidentiality.
 - Being approachable and accessible.
 - Revealing feelings.
 - Sharing personal information as appropriate.
 - Expressing personal interest in others.
 - Showing that you care.
 - Listening and acting without judgment.
 - Admitting mistakes.
 - Being respectful.
 - Practicing RESPECT.

*See Costa and Garmston (1994), pg. 36 and Fisher and Brown, Getting Together, pp. 109-14.

Educators and Parents Working Collaboratively*

Some Thoughts on Working Together and Expressing Concerns Constructively:

- **Parents, students (when age appropriate) and educators are a team.** An effective partnership based in a trusting relationship can help keep the differences that will inevitably arise from escalating unnecessarily.
- **Set the tone by sharing positives about students.** Parents say that one of the hardest things about IFSP and IEP meetings is all the negatives they hear about their children and the few positives.
- **Accept that conflict just is.** Differences arise in every relationship. It's hard, but if you can regard conflict as neither good nor bad, just as a part of life, then dealing with those with whom you disagree becomes easier. Just remember that each person on the team is there to help meet the child's needs.
- **Avoid blame or anything that could be construed as blame.** Emphasize: "We're in this together." In the heat of emotion, words may sound accusatory, demeaning, or demanding and create defensiveness and resistance rather than cooperation and collaboration.
- **Be attuned to team members' emotions.** Parents often experience an emotional roller coaster that comes with the sense of loss and change in coping with disability. Educators too can face frustration and other emotional challenges in working with special needs students.
- **Show empathy** – people often don't remember what was said or what was done in a particular interaction; they remember how they felt. "People don't care what you know until they know that you care" is more than a popular adage.
- **Be flexible.** It's important to change your approach if things aren't working. Because each child is unique, strategies and rewards need to be individualized and reviewed regularly. If you find yourselves in a hole, don't keep digging!
- **Use the word "try"** when it seems you're getting nowhere with a strategy, accommodation, or suggestion. "Could we just try this? If it hasn't made a difference in three weeks, I'll know you were right to be skeptical about it." This sounds reasonable and helps everyone know this approach won't be forever.
- **A little laughter can ease tension.** A sense of humor and giving another person the benefit of the doubt can go a long way!

*This and the following two pages are drawn from IEP training materials prepared by Grant Wood AEA and from Schwablearning.org, "A Fresh Start: Partnering with the Teacher."

Some Ideas for Educators on Building Relationships with Parents

Show That You Care:

- **Get to know parents beyond labels** such as Susie's mom or dad. Knowing parents as people makes it easier to understand situations from their perspective.
- **Remind parents they are experts about their children.** They have information you need that is helpful for their child's success at school.
- **Express appreciation** on a regular basis for the things parents do at home to help their children learn when they get to school.
- **Create opportunities to interact** – partnership moments. A call or a note; a parking lot hello; a request for input; a strength pointed out; invitations to visit.
- **Invite input** – over and over again. If you aren't getting it, something's not working. See if you can figure out what isn't working. Try something different – a home visit, meeting for a cup of coffee.
- **If families don't respond right away**, consider that they are likely fearful and/or uncomfortable – scarred from their own school experiences, afraid they are being blamed for their child's negative interactions, afraid you will say you can't fix it and then what will they do?!?!
- **Remember a parent feeling “overwhelmed”** can look like he or she is “disinterested” and/or “doesn't care.” Be careful not to label too quickly

Keep in Regular Contact:

- **Initiate face-to-face meetings** beyond IFSP and IEP meetings. Invite parents in to see student work or to discuss their concerns. Catch the moments in the hallway or parking lot.
- **Follow-up with parents, not just at progress report times:** in particular take the time to call or email after a long or challenging conference — “How'd it go?” “Do you have any additional information or questions?” “I know we covered a lot; how are you feeling about all that?”
- **Utilize voice mail and email** as a supplement to face-to-face contact to keep families informed. Share good news and positively share not so good news. Use words like “I have a concern” rather than “There's a problem with your child's behavior.”

Some Ideas for Parents on Building Relationships with Educators

Show That You Care:

- **Get to know teachers and administrators beyond labels** such as Susie’s teacher or Susie’s principal. Knowing educators as people makes it easier to understand situations from their perspective.
- **Give positive feedback to the educators who work with your child in addition to expressing concerns.** Sharing positives is a way to establish a positive mindset in the educator’s mind about your next communication with him or her.
- **Express appreciation on a regular basis.** When people are treated well they will be more apt to go the extra mile for your child and work harder to respond to your requests.
- **Create opportunities to interact** – partnership moments. A call or a note; a parking lot hello; a request for a advice; a strength pointed out; an acknowledgment of progress.
- **Give input as often as you can.** You are the expert on your child. You can share what his or her strengths and hobbies are, her preferred ways of learning, what his personality is like or past issues that could affect the current school year.
- **If educators don’t respond to calls or notes right away** remember that they are responsible for many children and may need some time to get back to you. Follow-up and be “positively persistent.”
- **Remember a teacher feeling “overwhelmed”** can look like he or she is “disinterested” and/or “doesn’t care.” Be careful not to label too quickly

Keep in Regular Contact

- **Initiate face-to-face meetings.** Contact your child’s teachers before the year begins, especially if they are new to the school. Try to meet with each teacher in person: face-to-face meetings are helpful to getting to know one another and to building a trusting relationship. Since the beginning of the year can be hectic, assure the teacher you need just a few minutes.
- **Communication among all parties throughout the year is key.** Develop a plan with the teachers for how everyone can stay connected then stick with it! If it’s available, utilize email and/or voice mail to supplement face-to-face meetings. Use words like “I have a concern” rather than “There’s a problem with your teaching methods.”

Building Relationships Activity: Parents and Educators as Partners

Step One:

Form small groups. Ideally, each group will have at least one parent and one educator.

Step Two:

Appoint a facilitator and a recorder. The facilitator helps you have a conversation about the challenges you believe parents and educators face as you each try to build a relationship with the other. Take into account what you heard during the parent panel.

The recorder should make a list the challenges your group identifies for reporting to the large group.

Step Three:

Read pp. 17-20 in light of the challenges you've identified and in light of what you've heard during the parent panel. Discuss:

1. The two or three things on these pages that resonate the most with you – that you think are the most helpful given the challenges to relationship building that exist.
2. Is there anything on these pages that is not workable from your perspective?
3. What's not on the lists of relationship building ideas (pp. 19-20) that ought to be there?

The recorder should capture the essence of this discussion for reporting to the large group.

Step Four:

Each small group recorder will share his or her group's lists of challenges and the key points from the "step three" discussion above.

First Assignment (for graduate credit) The Importance of Relationships

This assignment will give you the opportunity to increase your understanding of the importance of relationships to the prevention or resolution of differences that arise in the context of IEPs.* The assignment includes field experience, reflection and writing. You are asked to interview people who have participated in IEP meetings then write a three to five page *analytical* paper, double spaced, on the interviews and your reflections on what you learned from them: and from day one of the training. Focus specifically on the role of relationships in either preventing or addressing and resolving differences. Note: a “difference” doesn’t have to be a heated conflict. It can be a misunderstanding generated by ineffective communication, an emotion like sadness or grief, time constraints, or a momentary failure to see common ground.

Interview three people who have experienced an IEP meeting at some time in the fairly recent past. (Three educators if you are a parent participant in this training, three parents if you are an educator participant) These should be people whom you do not know well. Talk with those you interview about such things as:

1. The climate of the IEP meeting (positive or negative) and how relationships contributed most to that climate.
2. The characteristics of the relationship between themselves and others in the meeting before, during and after.
3. Their concerns, needs, wants, hopes and/or fears as they approached the meeting.
4. Differences that might have arisen before, during or after the meeting and how they were handled. If no differences arose, what do they see as key to preventing that?
5. If differences did arise and weren’t handled particularly well, what could have been done differently to improve the way people worked together in the meeting?

Then:

6. As you reflect on the answers to these or similar questions and on day one of the RESPECT training, ask yourself, what you have learned about how a person’s desire to seek connection through relationships can be central to either preventing conflict, resolving it, or both. What will you do differently (or more of) in your next IEP meeting as a result of what you’ve learned? Include some discussion of this in your paper.

Due Date: Please email a copy as an MS Word document before October 12, 2006 to Greg Buntz buntz@iowatelecom.net If you use a word processing program other than MS Word, please just paste your paper into an email message rather than attaching it. If email is not possible, please bring a hard copy of your paper to the second RESPECT session – October 12, 2006.

*These could be IFSP or CST meetings that involve both educators and families rather than or in addition to IEPs.

First Assignment (not graduate credit)

The Importance of Relationships

This assignment will give you the opportunity to increase your understanding of the importance of relationships to the prevention or resolution of differences that arise in the context of IEPs.* The assignment includes field experience, reflection and writing. You are asked to interview people who have participated in IEP meetings then write a three to five page *analytical* paper, double spaced, on the interviews and your reflections on what you learned from them: and from day one of the training. Focus specifically on the role of relationships in either preventing or addressing and resolving differences. Note: a “difference” doesn’t have to be a heated conflict. It can be a misunderstanding generated by ineffective communication, an emotion like sadness or grief, time constraints, or a momentary failure to see common ground.

Interview at least two people who have experienced an IEP meeting at some time in the fairly recent past. (Educators if you are a parent participant in this training, parents if you are an educator participant) These should be people whom you do not know well. Talk with those you interview about such things as:

1. The climate of the IEP meeting (positive or negative) and how relationships contributed most to that climate.
2. The characteristics of the relationship between themselves and others in the meeting before, during and after.
3. Their concerns, needs, wants, hopes and/or fears as they approached the meeting.
4. Differences that might have arisen before, during or after the meeting and how they were handled. If no differences arose, what do they see as key to preventing that?
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Conflict Milling

Overview

Ordinarily, in any group of people one will find several different ways of handling conflict. This is a reflection of the fact that the way one handles conflict is highly personalized: there is no “one best way” nor does “one size fit all.” We each have to develop the approach that works best for us.

The Activity:

1. On a sheet of paper, draw or spell out your preferred conflict handling style.
2. Tape your style on the front of your shirt.
3. Mill about the room for about five minutes and notice others’ conflict handling styles. Ask questions for clarification about others’ styles — avoid making judgments just strive to understand.
4. After sufficient time for observing and asking about others’ styles return to your seats with your style depiction still taped to your shirts.

Discussion Questions

1. Explain your own style and why you choose that approach.
2. How does this style work for you?
3. Is there anything about it that doesn’t work so well?
4. Is there anything you’d like to work on to improve the way you handle conflict?
5. What does your preferred style say about what you think of conflict?
6. Do you notice any consistencies or inconsistencies between the conflict handling styles present in the room and the conversation about metaphors for conflict that we had on the first day of training?

Alternative Definitions of Conflict Resolution*

Conflict Resolution is not:

- Trying so hard to put an end to conflict that one compromises or gives in just to make conflict disappear.
- Being silent or neutral and negotiating or accepting settlements that result in a surrender of important values, a loss of integrity, a continuation of coercion, or a discounting of deeper underlying issues.
- Trading justice for harmony, i.e., promoting a perfunctory peace at any price.
- Avoidance, minimization or suppression of conflict and expressions of anger and confrontation.

Conflict Resolution is:

- Recognition of the inevitability of conflict and its potential to generate positive outcomes.
- Negotiating collaboratively** while still advocating for what one values (one's interests).
- Negotiating collaboratively while maintaining principled opposition to suggestions that important values be compromised.
- Negotiating collaboratively while resisting solutions that fail to address underlying issues.
- A search for results that produce fundamental change through improved relationships.
- About fixing systems, not fixing people.
- Helping people to actively and effectively express disputes as well as ending them.
- Combining opposites to produce synergy. Like the marriage of the nut and the bolt it creates a third alternative that is neither: it is both and it goes beyond both.

*Cloke, *Mediating Dangerously*, pp. 15-24.

**Collaborative negotiation assumes equal negotiating power and sometimes requires the assistance of a third party to neutralize power imbalances.

Alternative Definitions of Conflict and Related Nonjudgmental Probes*

1. Conflict arises when there is a failure of connection, collaboration or community, i.e. an inability to understand that we are interconnected and interdependent.
 - As I hear you talk about this very difficult time in your life, I'm wondering if you see the parents involved as your rivals. Could this be contributing to the conflict between you?
2. Conflict is a lack of acceptance of ourselves that we have projected onto others: a way of blaming others for what we perceive as failures in our own lives. It reveals a need to hide behind roles or masks that blur our authentic feelings so that we can divert attention from our mistakes.
 - Do you think that if you cut yourself some slack you wouldn't be as hard on others?
3. Conflict represents a lack of skill or experience at being able to handle a certain kind of behavior.
 - What might you do differently to keep from being drawn into this type of conflict?
4. Conflict is often simply the continued pursuit of our own false expectations, the desire to hold on to our unrealistic fantasies.
 - What do you think would happen if you just let Jim be Jim?
5. Conflict represents a lack of listening, a failure to appreciate the subtlety in what someone else is saying.
 - It's normal to want to defend yourself. I'm just wondering whether that gets in the way of you hearing what Sally is really saying.
6. Conflict represents a lack of skill, effectiveness or clarity in saying what we feel, think or want.
 - I'm hearing that it is very difficult for you to tell Anita what you really need. Would you be able to get your needs met without conflict if you did express those needs to her?

* The Definitions are from Cloke, *Mediating Dangerously*, pp. 6-8.

Alternative Definitions of Conflict (Continued)

7. Conflict is the representation of the points of weakness in a system, i.e. it is possible that policies or common practices could have the unintended consequences of causing conflict.
 - What if the policies you put in place to address this issue are the problem?
8. Conflict arises because a system or a set of procedures has outlived its usefulness and people demand change.
 - Change is scary, isn't it? Could this conflict be about your fear of the unknown? What if you tried just one of the suggestions Ben is making for a short time?
9. Conflict is often a fearful interpretation of difference, diversity, and opposition: a clash of world views, attitudes or beliefs.
 - Maybe you could look at the differences between you and Adam's teacher as a source of strength for Adam. Each of you has quite a bit to offer. What would happen if you pooled your resources?
10. Conflict is a result of our inability to learn from our past mistakes, our failure to recognize them as opportunities for growth, learning, and improved understanding.
 - So your relationship with Sonny's principal has been going down hill for a long time and you've tried over and over to convince her to change her ways. Can you think of anything you did that encourages her to treat you badly? What could you do in the future that might encourage her to act differently?

What is common to all these alternative definitions is that they focus on our own role in bringing conflict to a relationship, and they remind us that the systems we create, or at least tacitly support by operating within them, far too often provide the environment for conflict to arise. By implication then, each person in a relationship ought to take personal responsibility for his or her role in a conflict rather than assigning blame elsewhere. It does indeed take two to tango even if one of the two is doing most of the stepping on the other's toes. Additionally, when people are in the same boat it doesn't make sense for one to say to others "your end of the boat is sinking."

Listening Back-to-Back

Overview:

This is a deep listening exercise that you can use to experience listening without ego: listening to make connections, not for evaluation or comparison. You sit back-to-back with a partner, thus you'll lack nonverbal cues as to whether you are being listened to. Additionally, because it involves sitting back-to-back rather than face-to-face, this activity involves taking some risks to engage in authentic communication.

The Activity:

1. Form pairs and sit back-to-back with your partner. Picture yourselves on the phone with each other.
2. One person tells a short, true story to the other about a conflict that happened in his or her life since day one of the training. In telling your story, be as open, honest and vulnerable as you can. Take about three or four minutes for this.
3. The listener is to ask questions for clarification if necessary. When the speaker has concluded the story the listener is to:
 - a. Summarize the speaker's story and how the speaker is feeling about the conflict, and
 - b. With empathy and without judgment, ask some questions that will encourage the speaker to say more about the conflict and how it has affected him or her. Invite more discussion by saying things like: "say more about how you felt when 'A' said _____," "what was your thinking when you did 'X'," and "what could you do differently in the future?"

Part #3 should take another seven or eight minutes or so.

4. Reverse the process and the listener becomes the storyteller.
5. Repeat steps two and three then face each other and discuss the questions below.

Discussion Questions:

1. What, if anything, did you do as either speaker or as listener to compensate for not having any visual cues?
2. What if any risks did you take as either listener or speaker? If you took risks, what did that feel like?" What was the result?
3. What frustrations and surprises did you experience?
4. As listener, were you able to communicate empathy? How so?
5. As speaker, were you able to be open, honest and vulnerable? What facilitated that?

Everyday Creativity: Nine Key Concepts

1. Creativity is the ability to look at the ordinary and see the extraordinary.
2. Every act can be a creative one.
3. Creativity is a matter of perspective.
4. There's always more than one right answer.
5. Reframe problems into opportunities.
6. Don't be afraid to make mistakes.
7. Break the pattern.
8. Train your technique.
9. You've got to really care.

Resolving Conflict Dangerously*

“Considering how dangerous everything is, nothing is frightening.”

Gertrude Stein

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Every honest communication poses a risk that we will hear something that could challenge or change us. There is some risk, therefore, involved in inviting honest communication because we do not, and cannot, fully understand where it will lead. Opening up the possibility for significant change can be scary. Yet there is also risk in trying to hold on to the status quo. One could argue that the rationale for sticking with the safety of old ways of doing things, “*because we’ve always done it that way*”, is just as dangerous as an invitation to authentic dialogue.

To resolve any conflict requires authentic communication and every authentic communication demands openness, honesty and vulnerability to others. If we want to meaningfully resolve conflicts we have to be willing to bring a high level of honesty and empathy to the conflict resolution process. We need to resolve conflicts, not merely suppress, silence or settle them. Acquiescence is not the object. Getting to the bottom of what is not working in a relationship and producing change that improves the relationship is.

To resolve any conflict, we need to trust that what will happen if we discuss it is better than what will happen if we do not. This inevitably means opening Pandora’s Box and not really knowing what will fly out. And while we cannot know for sure what will fly out of the box, we have to be confident that no one (including ourselves) will be harmed or victimized by opening it. Having a degree of trust in the others involved, and in our own ability to handle the truth, is what allows us to engage in “dangerous” conflict resolution.

The outcome of any authentic communication is unpredictable and risky, and the only way to escape unnecessary conflict is by honestly confronting the reasons we got into it and that kept us in it. When we realize what we have gained and lost by engaging in a conflict, and what will happen if we remain trapped in it, we quickly discover where the greater danger lies.

Taking risks to resolve conflict meaningfully, then, means inviting and engaging in conversation about our differences that is authentic, unpredictable and possibly even scary: a conversation, however, that enhances the possibility of fundamental change.

* See Cloke, Mediating Dangerously, pp. 4-5.

Asking “Dangerous” Questions*

What is a dangerous question?

By definition, a question is dangerous when the answer is unpredictable and when there is a good chance we will hear an answer that challenges us, and/or that is emotionally hard to take. As the example on the following page suggests, in a one-one dialogue dangerous questions are asked in a “developmental” sequence. Specifically, a dangerous question: (1) puts the focus on the asker; (2) then puts the focus on how the other experienced something the asker may have done or said; (3) puts the asker in a vulnerable position; (4) encourages a non-defensive response; (5) is often followed up by higher risk questions; (6) encourages joint responsibility and action for change; and (7) allows the asker to model a willingness to change.

Why do we ask dangerous questions?

We ask dangerous questions to get to the heart of what is not working in a relationship and to facilitate change for the better.

How do we ask dangerous questions?

Deeply honest, dangerous questions need to be asked gently with empathy. When you use them, make sure each one is asked as though you were the one being asked to answer it. Remember also, they are dangerous as defined above. They are not intended to be self-destructive. There is, therefore, a calculated risk involved in asking them.

Who asks dangerous questions?

Parties directly involved in a conflict, facilitative participants in a meeting, or third party mediators or facilitators can ask dangerous questions. Of these, it is most challenging for those directly involved to ask them.

How do we set the stage for asking dangerous questions?

Before asking dangerous questions it is best to create a safe environment that accepts all answers, including “I don’t know” or “I don’t want to say,” without judgment. You might begin by asking permission to pose some questions that might be difficult to answer. You will then have the consent necessary to start the process and can continue moving to deeper levels of honesty until you encounter resistance.

* Cloke, Mediating Dangerously, pp. 37-8.

Asking Deeply Honest Dangerous Questions – An Example:

Here's an example of how dangerous questions could be asked by an educator (E). The situation is this: the conversation has been going on for a while and becomes heated. 'P' has already said that she has been intimidated or bullied by 'E' over accommodations that she believes are necessary for her child and then really becomes angry.

P: "Look, I'm getting a little tired of this baloney from you. I know my child and what she needs to help her learn. Every time I make a suggestion you throw your credentials and the fact that you're the professional in my face and try to bully me into keeping quiet."

E: [after a brief pause] Asks permission to pose some hard questions. "That's certainly not my intention. I'd like to try and understand how I'm giving you that impression. Let me ask you some questions about that – if that's OK. Some may be hard to answer."

P: [with some exasperation] "Sure, ask away."

The following are some examples of dangerous questions that E could ask. They get progressively more dangerous as the conversation goes on, thus they are asked in a developmental sequence:

Mildly Dangerous

1. Putting the focus on ones' self. "What specifically did I do that you experienced as bullying?"
2. Focusing on what the other experienced. "Could you say more about how you felt when I did that?"
3. Being vulnerable and encouraging a non-defensive response. "What would you have liked me to have done or said instead?"

More High Risk

4. Being even more vulnerable. "Is there anything else I might do differently?"
5. Putting the focus on joint responsibility for change.
 - a. "Do you think we both share in the responsibility for the way our conversation has gone today?"
 - b. "How could we each have handled things differently?"
 - c. "Where do we go from here?"
6. Modeling willingness to change.
 - a. "I apologize for _____. I wish we hadn't gotten off track. I really do think we need to work together to create the best program possible for your daughter. Do you agree?"
 - b. Maybe we should have some ground rules about listening to each other and being respectful. What do you think?
 - c. What if we agree to ...?

Three Keys to Asking Dangerous Questions

The First Key: Dangerous questions are not intended to be self-destructive. They are to be asked intentionally, thoughtfully, and with care. Don't ask a dangerous question that would put either yourself or another at risk of being harmed or victimized in some way.

The Second Key: In the context of conflict resolution, a question is dangerous only in the sense that it will expose what is hidden, what is not being talked about -- the elephant in the room -- and what must be talked about (in the asker's carefully considered judgment) if there is to be open dialogue that will help people in conflict move forward.

The Third Key: Dangerous questions are to be asked mindfully, i.e., the asker is mindful that the conversation that follows is going to be difficult. The asker is not sticking his or her head in the lion's mouth. Rather the asker is willing to take a calculated and reasonable risk to enhance the possibility of fundamental change for the better.

Something Else to Consider: In a team meeting when a person who is not directly involved in a conflict that has arisen asks a dangerous question, the developmental sequence described on the preceding page is slightly different. For example, in the conflict between the Educator and the Parent a third member of the team might ask dangerous questions that don't necessarily put the focus on herself and that don't necessarily make her vulnerable. In such a case the third person would begin by getting permission to ask a tough question, then the questions could go something like this:

Third person (TP): "P, could you say some more about what you experienced as bullying?"

P: "E always uses a lot of jargon, he drops names -- like I should know who Ross Green is!"

TP: So, how do you feel when that happens?

P: "Like an idiot!"

TP: "E, how are you affected by hearing that?"

E: "I'm not trying to make her feel like an idiot."

TP: "I understand, and when P says she feels like an idiot what are you feeling?"

E: "Uncomfortable -- misjudged too!"

TP: "So what is your intention in using technical language and in citing the research on ODD?"

E: "To let P know that I know what her child needs too. In fact I think we've gotten off track and should get back to that. We've got an IEP to write.

TP: "Maybe before we get back to the IEP, we should have a conversation about the best way to have these conversations so that we can all be heard and so that we can all feel more comfortable about contributing our ideas. What do you think P and E?"

Opportunity: Deeply Honest Dangerous Questions Ahead

This is an opportunity to practice working on relationship issues that must be addressed with a dangerous question or two before more tangible, substantive matters can be dealt with. In the scenarios that follow, you will have the opportunity to have conversations about relationship matters. The scenarios give you a context within which interpersonal conflict has arisen. Caution: work on the relationship before attempting to address the substance.

The Activity

Form groups of three and play out the three scenarios on the following pages involving conflict between two persons. One of you will be an observer who will provide feedback, the other two will be role players. Rotate with each scenario so that (a) each of you is an observer for one of the scenarios, and (b) each of you asks dangerous questions for one of the scenarios. The observer's role is to make note of the dangerous questions that are asked and assess the impact of these questions and their answers on the situation. Then the observer provides feedback to the role players on what worked and what might have been done differently.

- (1) In your small group decide who will be 'a', who will be 'b' and who will be the observer for the first scenario then read the first scenario.
- (2) Take about 15 minutes to role play the first scenario, focusing on relationships, and about 5 minutes for the observer's feedback session.
- (3) We will debrief the first role-play then go on to the second and third scenarios.

Deeply Honest Dangerous Questions Scenario One: Anderson, Romero and the Zoning Issue

Roles: Anderson (Takes risk to ask dangerous questions)

Romero

Setting: Romero's front porch

Anderson needs neighbor Romero's consent to obtain an expedited zoning variance for an addition to the Anderson home. Without Romero's consent, approval will take over a year. Their relationship has been mostly cordial but cool in the five years that they have been neighbors. Anderson knows that it will be difficult to get Romero to agree to the expedited variance and senses that there is something going on that Romero has never expressed.

Romero is reluctant to agree to the variance and sees no personal benefit to doing so. Romero is put off by the fact that Anderson is not very neighborly—Anderson never comes over unless he or she needs something. The Romero's have never been invited to a social event at the Anderson's. In fact, the Romeros have not invited the Anderson's over since an invitation was declined nearly five years ago. In addition, Anderson's kids always play basketball in the driveway when Romero is trying to take his afternoon nap and it is annoying.

After some small talk, Anderson broaches the subject of the variance. Romero is standoffish and says he (or she) doesn't think agreement is possible.

Anderson: "I'd like to understand why you object. Let me ask you a question that may be hard for each of us to deal with if I may.

Romero: I guess so.

Anderson: "It seems like I've offended you in some way. What have I done or said that ticked you off?"

Romero: Answers cautiously with something like "It's not a big deal."

The conversation goes from there with Anderson asking additional dangerous questions.

Deeply Honest Dangerous Questions Scenario Two: The Illegal Suspension

Roles: Joyce Tyler - Joshua's mother

Ron Rivers - Superintendent (takes risk to ask some dangerous questions.

Setting: Superintendent's office where Ms. Tyler has come to discuss a potential due process hearing regarding Joshua.

The elementary school principal recommended to the school board that Joshua be suspended after his third incident of disruptive behavior this semester. The school board knows that Joshua is a special education student. Despite that knowledge, the board accepted the principal's recommendation, suspended Joshua, and required that Ms. Tyler obtain a psychiatric evaluation for Joshua before they would consider reinstating him.

The superintendent, Ron Rivers, knows that what the principal and the board did is in violation of IDEA. Joyce has also recently learned that, and is meeting with the superintendent to discuss her intention to ask for a due process hearing. Things are tense even though Ms. Tyler and superintendent Rivers have had a good working relationship in the past.

The superintendent wants to make sure to do everything by the book legally from now on and he wants to repair the damage done to the good working relationship he and Joyce have enjoyed up to now.

He recalls from his RESPECT training that silencing this conflict by placating Ms. Tyler is not the answer. Doing things right in the future, and getting to the bottom of what is not working in the relationship between Joyce and himself is.

To do this he gets permission to ask some tough questions. Then he asks some mildly dangerous questions followed by some that are more high risk.

Deeply Honest Dangerous Questions Scenario Three: Harassment

Roles: Parent - feels son is being harassed

Principal - takes a risk to ask some dangerous questions

Setting: Principal's office

There is a conflict over parents' belief that their son, a high school senior eligible for special education services, is being denied a free appropriate public education because his peers are constantly harassing him. According to his parents the principal is doing nothing to stop it. As a result, their son has lost his motivation to come to school and is falling further and further behind in his work. They fear he won't graduate with his class. The harassment is over the fact that he looks and acts differently than other kids and that he has mannerisms that make him appear to be gay.

The conflict heats up because the parents accuse the principal of not doing her job. They want the harassment to stop and they want the perpetrators punished for violating the school's good conduct policy.

The principal believes the school district's harassment policy is being followed and that she is doing all she can to enforce that policy.

The principal says: "I'd like to ask you something that's kind of hard for me to ask: You say I'm not doing my job. Can you give me some specifics of where you think I've done the wrong thing?"

The conversation goes from there with the principal asking progressively deeper (higher risk) questions.

Second Assignment (for graduate credit)

Taking Risks to Meaningfully Resolve Conflict

During the interim between training days two and three you will have the opportunity to increase your understanding of how to achieve deep and lasting change in relationships where conflict is causing difficulties. This interim period will also give you the time and opportunity to reflect on your experiences with day two of the training and to utilize skills and concepts taught so far.

This assignment involves you observing an IEP, IFSP or CST meeting then writing a three to five page analysis of what you observed. Include your personal reflections on what you learned by observing this meeting. In your paper connect what you experienced as an observer to concepts from both days one and two of the training with an emphasis on day two.

Focus on differences that arose between educators and parents. Differences don't have to be heated conflicts. See assignment one on this point. Address the following questions:

1. Characterize the conflict in terms of one or more of the definitions of conflict on pages 26-27 of the training packet.
2. Write about what people in the meeting did to resolve or manage the conflict. Did you observe them practicing what conflict resolution is or what it is not? (See page 25)
3. How did conflicts and attempts at conflict resolution affect relationships among family members and educators? How would you characterize the quality of the relationships as the meeting began and as it ended? Were they strengthened or weakened? How so?
4. Did you observe anyone asking dangerous questions (as defined on pp. 30-31)? What were they. What resulted from them being asked?
5. If there were no dangerous questions were asked, comment on opportunities that were missed and on how things might have changed if risks had been taken.

Then:

6. As you reflect on your observations and on the first two days of the RESPECT training, ask yourself, what you have learned about how taking a deeply honest dangerous approach to conflict resolution can have a positive effect on relationships between parents and educators. What will you do differently the next time differences arise in an IEP meeting as a result of what you've learned? Include some discussion of this in your paper.

Please email a copy as an MS Word document before November 20, 2006 to Greg Buntz buntz@iowatelecom.net If you use a word processing program other than MS Word, please just paste your paper into an email message rather than attaching it. If email is not possible, please bring a hard copy of your paper to the third RESPECT session – November 20, 2006.

Second Assignment (not for graduate credit)

Taking Risks to Meaningfully Resolve Conflict

During the interim between training days two and three you will have the opportunity to increase your understanding of how to achieve deep and lasting change in relationships where conflict is causing difficulties. This interim period will also give you the time and opportunity to reflect on your experiences with day two of the training and to utilize skills and concepts taught so far.

This assignment involves you observing an IEP, IFSP or CST meeting then writing a brief analysis of what you observed. Include your personal reflections on what you learned by observing this meeting. In your paper connect what you experienced as an observer to concepts from both days one and two of the training with an emphasis on day two.

Part I

Prior to observing, reflect on the second day of the training and then complete the following statement. "In my experience if people were to take risks and ask deeply honest questions when conflicts arise between parents and educators in IEP meetings the result would be _____." Add your reflections and the completion of the statement to your journal. Differences don't have to be heated conflicts. See assignment one on this point.

Part II

Observe an IEP, IFSP or CST meeting and ask yourself:

1. What were the relationships between parents and educators like when they walked in the door?
2. When differences were expressed in the meeting how was that handled? How did their relationships change as a result?
3. What dangerous questions were asked? With what result?
4. If there were no dangerous questions were asked when conflict arose, comment on the missed opportunities and on how things might have changed if risks had been taken.
5. Given what you've experienced so far with this training, what might you have done differently? What do you think the results would have been?

Part III

As you reflect on your observations and on the first two days of the RESPECT training, ask yourself, what you have learned about how taking a deeply honest, dangerous approach to conflict resolution can have a positive effect on relationships between parents and educators. What will you do differently the next time differences arise in an IEP meeting as a result of what you've learned? Include some discussion of this in your paper.

Due Date: If at all possible, please email a copy as an MS Word document prior to 11/20/06 to Greg Buntz: <buntz@iowatelecom.net>. If not possible please bring a hard copy of your paper to the third RESPECT session on 11/20/06.

Second Assignment (noncredit)

Taking Risks to Meaningfully Resolve Conflict

The Absolutely No Conflict Alternative Assignment

If the team meeting you observed lasted at least one hour, absolutely no differences of any sort arose, and there is no need for anything to change about any of the working relationships among team members as far as you know, congratulations, you and the team members have attained enlightenment. Your enlightened assignment is as follows:

Consider the following three ideas and write a reflective essay of at least two pages in which you further develop them. You might be able to use the team meeting you observed as a backdrop to your essay.

1. The ideas expressed in the two quotes at the top of RESPECT page 30.
2. The idea that there is real danger in too little conflict within a group.
3. The idea that acquiescence is potentially more dangerous to a group than is raising up important issues over which there will be disagreement.

Reflect on: (a) what you've learned in RESPECT so far in terms of how taking a deeply honest, "dangerous" approach to conflict and conflict resolution could improve working relationships between members of IEP, IFSP or CST teams; and (b) how you would know that there is too little conflict in a team meeting you are a part of; and (c) your alternatives for dealing with that eventuality.

Conclude your essay with those reflections.

Due Date: If at all possible, please email a copy as an MS Word document prior to 11/20/06 to Greg Buntz: <buntz@iowatelecom.net>. If not possible please bring a hard copy of your paper to the third RESPECT session on 11/20/06.

Second Assignment (credit)

Taking Risks to Meaningfully Resolve Conflict

The Absolutely No Conflict Alternative Assignment

Write a three-five paper on the same content as above and add some commentary to the reflections section on which of your alternatives (as in 'c' of the reflections section above) you'd be willing to try the next time you perceive too little conflict in a team meeting.

Transforming Conflict by Being the “Third Side”*

Being the “Third Side” is very similar to the Garmston and Wellman notion of being a facilitative participant in a meeting and also Ken Cloke’s notion of a third party mediator really being “omni-partial” as opposed to simply being impartial.

Being “omni-partial.” A person who is the third side in a conflict is omni-partial in that she does not take the side of either person A (side 1) to the detriment of person B (side 2) or person B to the detriment of person A. She is on the side of both parties at the same time (side 3). She is also on the side of fairness in terms of the conflict resolution process. Finally, she pursues her own substantive interests in an open-minded and collaborative manner. Thus being the third side means having the ability to hear all sides, and having the skills to express and pursue one’s own interests in a collaborative manner.

Being a facilitative participant. A facilitative participant in a meeting is an interested party – has a stake in the outcome – yet is able to rise above the fray and think and act like an omni-partial third party. A facilitative participant avoids defensive reactions in difficult conversations thus is able to model and facilitate authentic dialogue and cooperative behavior.

Being the third side on a team means recognizing that you and every other team member has legitimate interests, insuring that every team member’s input is valued (including your own), insuring that the decision making process is fair, and working to make it as easy as possible for each member of the team to engage in open dialogue and cooperative behavior.

The steps involved. Persons who take the perspective of the third side act like coaches or facilitators even though they may not be formally assigned that role. The steps involved in being the third side are:

1. “Re-imagine” conflict as three-sided rather than simply as two-sided ;
2. Avoid reacting defensively to challenges or comments that are difficult or unpleasant to hear—go to the balcony;^{**}
3. Build bridges across lines of conflict by:
 - a. Being omni-partial
 - b. Fostering genuine dialogue with deep listening
 - c. Searching for, then facilitating movement to, common ground
 - d. Asking effective questions to get to the heart of the matter rather than questions that would put others on the defensive
4. Gently use open-ended probes and ask open-ended questions, including dangerous ones, that encourage people to say more about their concerns;
5. Suggest some approaches for addressing those concerns; and
6. Repair injured relationships.

* In this section we draw heavily on Costa and Garmston (1994 and 1999, Garmston and Wellman (1998) and Ury (1991 and 1999).

** The idea of going to the balcony to achieve these two goals is based on Ross Green’s notion of separating emotion from thinking. See Green, 2005, pg.31.

To Be on The Third Side:

1. Re-imagine conflict as three-sided

Conflict is conventionally thought of as two-sided: them and us – husbands and wives, parents and educators, administrators and teachers. The truth is, however, every conflict has the potential to have a “third-side”.

In IEP settings the two sides might be seen as parents and educators. However, the IEP team is made up of individuals who are interdependent: they form a community of sorts. Individual members of that community can choose to work to transform conflict from behavior that is destructive of relationships to behavior that is cooperative and supportive of relationships: behavior that will lead to addressing differences and resolving them meaningfully.

To re-imagine conflict as three-sided, think in terms of shifting your view of an IEP meeting from a conference table setting where parents and educators are on opposite sides of the table. Instead visualize it as a circle where parents and educators - the team - sit together as community members and their connections are intentionally recognized and openly valued. It is the community, the team of interdependent persons who have a common goal that is the third-side.

2. Avoid reaction by “going to the balcony”

Reacting, acting without thinking, is the most natural thing to do when confronted with a difficult situation. We tend to react in three primary ways: (1) we “fight fire with fire,” (2) we give in to make the conflict go away (maybe to cut our losses), or (3) we break off the relationship: a parent pulls her child out of school for example. In reacting we lose sight of our underlying interests – we dig our heels in and become quite positional.

To be on the third side, to act intentionally rather than without thinking, requires that we distance ourselves from our natural impulses and manage our emotions. We must, as Ury (1991) suggests, choose not to react and instead “go to the balcony.” This is a metaphor for a mental attitude of detachment. It’s also a metaphor for the skill of separation of affect from thinking. Going to the balcony means we step back, collect our wits, and look at the situation objectively. From our perspective in the balcony, where we temporarily store our emotions, we can look down and calmly and rationally evaluate the conflict from the point of view of the third side. We can therefore respond to conflict with more thought and less emotion. We can hear all sides. We can think constructively for all sides. We will have a better chance of finding a collaborative, mutually beneficial way of meaningfully resolving the conflict from this third side perch because when we look at the situation objectively, we have a better chance of understanding each of the perspectives in the room.

Ideally, we would go to the balcony in order to prepare even before a difficult meeting or conversation ever begins. We would also go to the balcony at every possible opportunity throughout the meeting. Finally, going to the balcony should be intentional, purposeful and directed toward two goals. The second is, think clearly in the midst of conflict. The first goal is stay calm enough to achieve goal number two.*

What, then, is the path to addressing each of these goals? Simply stated, when you strongly disagree with others try thinking like an impartial third party and listen for the merit in another's position or point of view. A facilitator (or a mediator) works to understand each person's perspective and to look for the value in it. In this role you refrain from judging which of the two sides is right or wrong. Instead you try to see the merit in each side's perspective.

3. Build bridges across lines of conflict by being omni-partial

When parents and educators build trusting relationships, and when they don't try to "win" at the expense of another, they establish natural avenues for communication. Good relationships also act like savings accounts; whenever an issue arises the parties can dip into their account of goodwill to help deal with it.

Forging relationships ought to begin before the first IEP meeting as a way to prevent the escalation of unproductive conflict. (See RESPECT pp. 15-18)

When conflicts arise during meetings, in addition to dipping into the goodwill account, third side bridge builders can work to foster genuine dialogue over the issue: dialogue not debate. Fostering dialogue involves: (a) deep listening, (b) being grounded in the common ground (interests), and (c) the generous use of open-ended questions that invite elaboration. It also involves thinking broadly about conflict and conflict resolution, addressing and resolving conflict from the heart, and taking the risk to ask dangerous questions. (see RESPECT pp. 24-29)

a. Building bridges by fostering genuine dialogue with deep listening

Genuine dialogue aims not to convert others or simply to reach agreement on the issues (agreement will come later), rather it aims to promote mutual understanding and strengthen relationships in order to prevent escalation of conflict unnecessarily. Likewise, deep listening involves listening for connections, not for agreement or for evaluation. Deep listeners listen to gain insight into the beliefs and concerns of others. Questions are asked from a position of curiosity, not from a competitive position where one is trying to win at the expense of the other.*

- Genuine dialogue is collaborative. We rely on everyone's knowledge and experiences and include them in making decisions about process.
- Genuine dialogue is conducted in a safe environment. We propose and get agreement on clear ground rules to enhance safety and promote respectful exchange. We expect team members to call each other on the ground rules.
- Genuine dialogue is preventative. Team members agree in advance to set aside accusation and argument and avoid any communication patterns that may have impaired their previous communications.
- Genuine dialogue is fair. We encourage open-mindedness and equal opportunity for airtime

Fostering Dialogue (continued)

- Genuine dialogue is hopeful and is focused on the future. We elicit participants' dreams and wishes for the future and highlight the emergence of promising new interactions among them.
- Genuine dialogue is dialogue from the heart. We discourage depersonalized debate and invite team members to share experiences and concerns with authenticity and from a position of caring about the others.
- Genuine dialogue is inquiring. We encourage participants to ask instead of assuming or advocating. We invite team members to be open-minded with themselves as well as others.
- Genuine dialogue is expansive. Our questions are designed to stimulate reflection as well as conversations that generate diverse ideas.

b. Building bridges to common ground

What is the common ground that all IEP team members can occupy? Sometimes that's not easy to answer. The key is to focus on satisfying underlying interests to the extent possible rather than focusing on obtaining positions. Shared interests may be what is best for the child, or a positive working relationship among family members and educators. "I want my child to be taught reading using a particular methodology" is a specific *position*.

"I'm afraid that my child is falling further and further behind academically and he needs to improve his reading skills" is a specific *interest*.

When interests can be identified, alternative ways of satisfying them can be brainstormed and the search for common ground will be more fruitful.

Persons on the third side can identify interests by asking the question "why", with respect to a position one is taking, in a non-defensive way. "Michelle, would you please say some more about the thinking behind your desire for the Orton-Gillingham approach? "Why Orton-Gillingham Michelle?" might do, but be aware that some regard a 'bare why' as accusatory.

c. Building bridges with open-ended questions

Open-ended questions or probes encourage deeper thinking and reflection. Close-ended questions are more for the purpose of interrogation or fact-finding. Some examples of "reflective" open-ended questions or probes are:

- Tell me a little about the reasoning behind that decision.
- What are you seeing that indicates you are getting the results you expected?

Building bridges with open-ended questions (continued)

- Which part of the new accommodation seems to be the most challenging for Lucas' teachers?
- I'm not real clear on how you came to that conclusion. Could you help me understand that?
- Could you say which of these approaches is most important to you? ... Why is that?
- What is it about this approach that concerns you?
- What other possibilities might there be to produce different results next time?
- What kind of help would be useful to you?
- What would you see and hear in Jane's behavior if she were less oppositional?
- What caused her to respond that way?

4. *Asking gentle open-ended probes or questions*

A person on the third side uses open-ended probes or questions to bridge differences as above. Other open-ended probes or inquiries include the following:

- Please say more ...
- I'm curious about...
- I'd like to hear more about...
- Then are you saying...?
- What would happen if you ...?
- What would happen if you didn't ...?
- What do you think about that idea?
- What can you add to what Phyllis just said?
- Here's one area you might help us think through ...
- Do you see it differently

5. Suggesting some approaches for addressing concerns

A person on the third side helps participants in a meeting where differences have arisen generate creative options for agreement. She can advance the conflict resolution process by proposing solutions for the parties to consider: from the point of view of a third party. That is to say, by using conciliatory or “what if” language rather than advocacy language. The goal is a mutually satisfactory agreement that satisfies underlying interests to the maximum extent possible.

To generate creative options, a person on the third side would:

- Probe for each side’s interests.
- Facilitate brainstorming the means to satisfy those interests.
- Advance the process of negotiation by saying things such as:
 - √ We all seem to want _____. What if we tried to make that happen?
 - √ Mr. Jefferson is out on family leave and so far he’s the only one who’s provided that service. I wonder, has anyone thought about Mrs. Washington as a resource here?
 - √ Which do you think might be more effective – X, Y or Z?
 - √ How else might you...?
 - √ There are many ways to do that. Here’s one idea.... What do you think?

6. *Repairing injured relationships*

If relationships have been harmed in the course of making decisions, for example in an IEP meeting, a person on the third side can play the role of healer. Injuries to relationships may run deep: even after a meeting that produces mutually beneficial results, i.e. where conflict has been addressed in a way that satisfactorily resolves everyone's interests to the maximum extent possible. Wounds may remain and, with them, the danger that the conflict may recur. Therefore, a conflict cannot be considered fully resolved until the injured relationships have substantially healed. Any participant in a process can play the role of healer by doing the following:

a. Create the right climate

Ideally healing will begin at the very start of a process, not just at the conclusion. Set the right climate. Consider using a circle process for your team meetings. At the very least think about incorporating circle values and guidelines into the process you do use.

b. Listen deeply and acknowledge and validate

One of the most powerful methods for healing a relationship is also the simplest. It is to listen deeply for as long as the person who has been harmed has something to say. (See RESPECT pg. 12)

Acknowledgment reinforces the effect of listening and shows that you are paying attention. Validation, without taking sides, also reinforces the effect of listening and shows that you understand what is being said.

To acknowledge and validate a teacher who has expressed frustration one might say: "I can see that you feel very strongly about this issue and that you're frustrated about the way the meeting is going."

c. Encourage apology

A sincere apology, when warranted, shows that you care. It can play a vital role in helping emotional wounds heal and restoring injured relationships. A first or second party might need the encouragement of a person on the third side in order to offer an apology. One might say something along these lines: "Do you think it would be possible for the two of you to forgive each other?"

Encouraging Apology (continued)

When relationships have been harmed, the goal should be reconciliation. Consider this quote from Ury (1999, pp. 167-8):

‘Is there going to be a war?’ my sons, aged nine and eleven, asked. I had been invited in the autumn of 1998 to facilitate a meeting of a group of community activists who had fallen out with one another. ‘I don’t know.’ I replied. As it turned out, each person spoke about his or her pain, about feeling disrespected or unappreciated by the others. Each person struggled to listen to the others, to acknowledge mistakes, to apologize, and to forgive. I did very little but listen. Later the boys asked me how the war went. ‘It went pretty well,’ I was able to say. ‘Each fought for their own truth in the best way possible – through dialogue and forgiveness.’

A Third Side Case Example

“The Heated Coffee Stains”

The Participants: The Church Custodian who is not a member of this congregation (Wendy Sailor), Membership Development Chairperson (Hank Sharp), Facilities Chairperson (Sofia Frantz), and the Worship Hour Coordinator (Martha Stuemart), have agreed to a request by the Church Council to have a conversation regarding a dispute over taking beverages and food into the sanctuary during worship.

Background Information: The First Congregational Church of Heaven’s Grace, Iowa has been working hard to attract and retain new members. As part of that they have been serving gourmet coffee (sold by Fair Exchange Coffee) with locally baked pastries and breads prior to and after worship each Sunday. People have responded very positively and with other efforts, membership has continued to climb slowly over the last year. However, with the wonderful coffee and pastries more and more people have been taking their food and beverages into the sanctuary in violation of a long-standing church policy against it. About three months ago the custodian, Wendy Sailor, reported that due to spills etc. she was spending more and more time and money trying to remove stains from the carpet. The Facilities Committee authorized her to put up signs outside the sanctuary stating: “PLEASE DO NOT TAKE COFFEE, TEA, SODA OR FOOD INTO THE SANCTUARY.” After a few weeks the custodian reported that someone was taking the signs down as fast as she could put them up. After several more weeks it was discovered that Hank Sharp, Membership Development Committee Chairperson, was taking them down because he believed they were very inhospitable in a community that is trying so hard to be welcoming.

The Role Players:

Geri Pettit.....	Custodian Wendy Sailor
Greg Buntz.....	Membership Development Chairperson Hank Sharp
Leslee Sandberg.....	Facilities Chairperson Sofia Frantz
Bonnie Buntz.....	Worship Hour Coordinator Martha Stuemart

Third Assignment (Graduate credit) Taking the Third Side

Having looked at the relational context of conflict, the importance of risk-taking to effect meaningful change, and taking on the role of the “third side”, you will have a chance to put all this into practice in your third assignment.

Between now and the next RESPECT session, take advantage of an opportunity to intentionally become the third side in some difficult conversation or meeting you are part of in either your personal or professional life. This conversation should be difficult in the sense that: (1) there are some disagreements among the participants that must be resolved; (2) you are one of the participants and you have a stake in the outcome of the conversation; and (3) you are not formally designated as facilitator of the meeting or conversation. Become the third side by:

- (1) Distancing yourself from your natural impulses to react defensively in the face of conflict by “going to the balcony.”
- (2) Building bridges and fostering dialogue among the participants by being omni-partial and by:
 - a. Engaging in deep listening
 - b. Being grounded in common interests
 - c. Using open-ended questions that invite elaboration
 - d. Asking “dangerous” questions
- (3) Helping to generate options using “what if” questions.

Reflect on your experience being the third side, and on the questions below, as you write a 3 -5 page *reflective and analytical* paper (double spaced) describing your experience:

- (1) How did it feel to “go to the balcony”? Was it difficult or easy? What made it difficult or easy? Did your relationship with others change when you “went to the balcony”?
- (2) How did you try to identify common interests and focus the conversation on them? What kinds of challenges did you face trying to do this?
- (3) Did you have any opportunities to ask dangerous questions or take risks? Did you act on these opportunities? Why or why not?
- (4) How did you facilitate generating options?
- (5) What impact did your approach have on the conversation?
- (6) How will you incorporate this approach in future difficult conversations - particularly those that involve team meetings such as IEP conferences.

Due Date: If at all possible, please email a copy as an MS Word document prior to 12/13/06 to Greg Buntz: <buntz@iowatelecom.net>. If not possible please bring a hard copy of your paper to the fourth RESPECT session on 12/13/06.

Third Assignment (Not for graduate credit)

Taking the Third Side

Having looked at the relational context of conflict, the importance of risk-taking to effect meaningful change, and taking on the role of the third side, you will have a chance to put all this into practice in your third assignment.

Between the third and fourth RESPECT sessions, take advantage of an opportunity to intentionally become the third side in some difficult conversation you are part of in either your personal or professional life. This conversation should be difficult in the sense that:

- 1) There are some disagreements among the participants that must be resolved;
- 2) You are one of the participants and you have a stake in the outcome of the conversation; and
- 3) You are not formally designated as facilitator of the meeting or conversation. Become the third side by:
 - a. Distancing yourself from your natural impulses to react defensively in the face of conflict and “go to the balcony.”
 - b. Building bridges and fostering dialogue with everyone by being omni-partial and by:
 - i. Engaging in deep listening
 - ii. Being grounded in common interests
 - iii. Using open-ended questions that invite elaboration
 - iv. Asking “dangerous” questions
 - c. Helping to generate options using “what if” questions.

Reflect on your experience of being the third side. Write a short *reflective and analytical* paper describing what taking the third side involved, what happened as a result of you taking the third side and what it felt like to take the third side. Include some discussion relating your experience to RESPECT training concepts from days one and day two. Conclude by discussing how you could incorporate this approach in future difficult conversations - particularly those that involve team meetings such as IEP conferences.

Due Date: If at all possible, please email a copy as an MS Word document prior to 12/13/06 to Greg Buntz: <buntz@iowatelecom.net>. If not possible please bring a hard copy of your paper to the fourth RESPECT session on 12/13/06.

A Teacher-Parent Conflict Lily O'Brien Role-Play Summary

General Information

It is near the end of the school year. Lily O'Brien has come home from school and told her parent she is failing Lucas' Social Studies class. Parent O'Brien calls teacher Lucas. A heated discussion takes place, however, both agree to meet the following day to have a conversation about Lily's class performance and grade. They also agree to invite Guidance Counselor Green to attend since she has met with Lily several times and may be able to shed some light on what is going on with Lily.

Parent O'Brien

You want Lily's grade changed from an 'F' to at least a 'D', and believe Teacher Lucas should have contacted you earlier to let you know Lily was having trouble in Social Studies. You thought Lily was doing fine and were shocked to hear she was failing. You feel Lucas has not been supportive of Lily and you don't trust Lucas to do the right thing for Lily.

You recently separated from your spouse, who was always the one to go to school functions. You feel guilty about not being more involved (you do have to work overtime to support you and your daughter). You are concerned about the stress the separation has had on Lily (and yourself), and want to be recognized as being a good parent. You want to shelter Lily from further emotional trauma.

Social Studies Teacher Lucas

You believe that an 'F' is an 'F', and that's what Lily earned according to the syllabus. You want an apology for being bullied on the phone by Parent O'Brien and you want to know if s/he is neglecting Lily in some way since Lily has been exhibiting disruptive behavior in your class recently; behavior you've never seen before. Parent O'Brien has never attended any parent-school events, including conferences, nor has O'Brien made an effort to find out about Lily's progress. You don't much trust this parent to do what's best for Lily.

You want to be recognized for legitimate and fair grading standards, to be treated with respect by Parent O'Brien, and to help Lily, without coddling her, since Lily needs to be prepared for 7th grade next year where she will have to take more responsibility.

Counselor Green

You have known Lily all through elementary school and are concerned that she is not the confident, sunny child you knew, and that her grades are down from As and Bs to a C average (except for Social Studies). Up to now, you are the only person Lily has confided in about her parents separating; but Lily has given permission to you to reveal this to her teachers. This is the first time you will be seeing Parent O'Brien since it was Lily's "other parent" that used to come to school functions.

You want to see Lily improve her grades and behavior and feel better about herself. You believe that O'Brien and Lucas need a fresh start and that they need to learn to trust each others and work together in Lily's best interests. You believe you have a three-fold role: (1) an advocate for Lily; (2) an omni-partial peacekeeper; and (3) one who creates an environment of trust.

A Teacher-Parent Conflict Parent O'Brien's Information

General Information

It is near the end of the school year. Lily O'Brien has come home from school and told her parent she is failing Lucas' Social Studies class. Parent O'Brien calls teacher Lucas. A heated discussion takes place, however, both agree to meet the following day to have a conversation about Lily's class performance and grade. They also agree to invite Guidance Counselor Green to attend since she has met with Lily several times and may be able to shed some light on what is going on with Lily.

Parent O'Brien

- You work full time, often overtime, in an effort to support yourself and your daughter. You are a bit perturbed that you have to take time off work for this meeting,
- You have recently separated from your spouse. The transition has been very stressful. It used to be your spouse who came to school functions. You don't really know any of these educators and because of your own experiences in school don't trust them. You particularly don't think you can rely on Lucas to do a good job for Lily.
- You feel guilty about not being there enough for Lily.
- You realize that you are "down" a lot, and sometimes can't help yelling at people when you're mad.
- All year you thought that Lily was doing fine at school. You were shocked to learn that she was failing Social Studies class.
- You believe that in 6th grade it is the teacher's responsibility to inform you of any problems at school early on: not to wait until there is no opportunity to correct a situation. You've heard something about school being information on a web site, but don't have time for surfing the web!
- You're disappointed that Lucas has been so callous toward Lily - particularly since your separation. You're sure the separation has taken a toll on Lily.
- Lily is doing well enough otherwise (a low 'C' average. Down from As and Bs, but not failing). You believe Lucas must dislike Lily – another reason not to trust Lucas.

Your position is that you want to know how Lily is being graded, and on what basis she is given a failing grade. You want it changed into at least a 'D,' and you want Lucas to admit s/he should have called earlier to let you know Lily was having trouble in Social Studies class. You also want Lily to see you "standing up" for her.

Your interests include sheltering Lily from further emotional trauma, helping her do well in school, and being recognized as a good parent facing a tough situation.

A Teacher-Parent Conflict

Social Studies Teacher Lucas' Information

General Information

It is near the end of the school year. Lily O'Brien has come home from school and told her parent she is failing Lucas' Social Studies class. Parent O'Brien calls teacher Lucas. A heated exchange takes place, however, both agree to meet the following day to try to settle the matter. They also agree to invite Guidance Counselor Green to attend since she has met with Lily several times and may be able to shed some light on what is going on.

Teacher Lucas

- You've agreed to meet with O'Brien so long as Green, Lily's counselor attends and participates in the conversation as well. Green knows Lily and you think Green can back you up on the non-academic reasons that Lily is failing. In addition, you just don't trust O'Brien.
- Lily has failed to turn in 7 of 14 assignments. Two of the ones she did get in were two days late. As your syllabus states, it is your policy to give a zero for work turned in more than one day late. Assignments that are turned in up to and including a day late are docked 50%. You're very consistent about applying this policy to all your students.
- Lily has been exhibiting disruptive behavior in your class recently, behavior you've never before seen in her.
- You tried to contact O'Brien once by phone, but s/he never returned your call – another reason not to trust this parent.
- Other parents have taken time to check with you on their children's progress during the year. You post a class newsletter on the school's web site, and have a syllabus with class expectations and grade requirements clearly stated there as well.
- O'Brien never attended any of the parent-school events, including the open house, a night set aside for teachers to meet and talk with the students' parents. You expect parents to know how their sons or daughters are doing in school, and to know if their children are doing their homework.
- You do NOT appreciate being yelled at over the phone by Mr/s. O'Brien yesterday and suspect that O'Brien has some serious problems that are affecting Lily. You've told Counselor Green that you suspect O'Brien has an alcohol problem.
- Students in 6th grade are old enough to take responsibility for their own learning. They will definitely not be coddled in 7th grade. You would not be doing them a favor by checking up on them, as teachers do in the lower elementary grades.

Your position is that an "F" is an "F," and that's what Lily earned, not what you "gave" her. You want an apology for being bullied by Parent O'Brien over the phone, and you also want to know if s/he is neglecting Lily in some way.

Your interests include having your grading standards recognized as legitimate, being treated with respect by O'Brien, and helping Lily while not coddling her.

A Teacher-Parent Conflict Counselor Green's Information

General Information

It is near the end of the school year. Lily O'Brien has come home from school and told her parent she is failing Lucas' Social Studies class. Parent O'Brien calls teacher Lucas. A heated exchange takes place, however, both agree to meet the following day to try to settle the matter. They also agree to invite Guidance Counselor Green to attend since she has met with Lily several times and may be able to shed some light on what is going on.

Counselor Green

- You have agreed to be part of a conversation between Lucas and Lily O'Brien's parent. You think maybe you can shed some light on why Lily is having academic problems. You see your role in this session as being an advocate for Lily, a peacemaker who can see all sides, and you think it's important to try and establish an environment of trust.
- Lily is doing well enough otherwise (a 'C' average. Down from As and Bs, but not failing). You wonder if something is going on between Lucas and Lily.
- Lily recently came to see you. She told you that her parents had just separated. Until recently Lily hadn't wanted you to share this information with school staff or students, because she was embarrassed by it. Word has gotten around some now so Lily has given you permission to share that with her teachers. She still thinks maybe her parents might get back together.
- You have watched Lily grow up through elementary school. When she came to see you, you were surprised she was having problems with her grades. Until recently she has been a very confident, sunny child. You are concerned that she's lost that "spark" she used to have and think this is due to some problems at home.
- You used to see Lily's "other" parent at school functions often, but haven't lately. This is the first time you've met this parent O'Brien.
- Teacher Lucas has told you he or she suspects there is alcohol abuse going on at Lily's home. You have no direct information to support this suspicion, but are concerned that problems at home are making it hard for Lily to focus on school work.
- You have Lily's permission to tell her parent that she has come to see you to talk about the separation and how it is affecting her.
- **Your interest** is in seeing that Lily improves her grades and her behavior. You also want her to feel better about herself. You believe that O'Brien and Lucas need a fresh start and they need to learn to trust each other and work together in Lily's best interests.
- You decide going in to this conversation that you are going to take the risk to be on the third side – you've been fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to take RESPECT training from CRCI and your AEA. Review RESPECT pp. 41 – 48 on what it means to take the third side, pg. 17 on trust, then build some bridges to trust.

Some Additional Thoughts on Deep Listening

The Difference Between Active Listening and Deep Listening

Focus: With active listening the focus is on how to respond.

Focus: With deep listening the focus is on experiencing and feeling what is heard.

Responding: With active listening one responds with a technique.

Responding: With deep listening one empathizes by responding authentically and with feeling.

Intent: With active listening one's intent is to show the speaker he or she was heard.

Intent: With deep listening one's intent is to show the speaker he or she is understood: the listener "got it - the speaker's concern is something that the listener cares about."

Effect: With active listening the effect may well be that the listener slips into the role of the one who solves the problem.

Effect: With deep listening the effect may well be that the speaker decides change is needed and the two can then solve the problem collaboratively.

Visual image: With active listening the image is that of the listener's brain hearing and responding with a series of techniques and with ideas about solutions to the problem being presented.

Visual image: With deep listening the image is that of the listener's heart having ears. The speaker's words go straight to the heart. Again, the listener experiences and feels that which is being expressed. The response he or she gives can't help but be authentic and empathetic.

What other differences might there be?

Journeys into the Heart of Conflict Resolution: Questions to Help People Speak and Listen From the Heart

Heart Space

When you can *feel* with any of your senses what it is people want you to hear, something Ken Cloke* calls a “heart space” opens in the conversation. When you feel the emotion in another’s story, when the heart space opens, it is time to ask questions that will invite him to speak (and others to listen) from the heart.

Here are five key questions or phrases to help people begin to speak and listen from the heart (in no particular order):

1. Maybe we could all talk about why we’re here today and why we care about the issues we’re here to talk about.
2. I’m wondering what kind of relationship we want to have with each other.
3. This conversation doesn’t seem to be working for me. Is it working for you? What could we do to make it work better?
4. _____, what would you like _____ to say to you right now?
5. What if we talked about some things each of us would like to be acknowledged for, and some things we are willing to acknowledge each other for?

When heart space has opened in the conversation, if there is a need to go deeper, questions like the following could help.

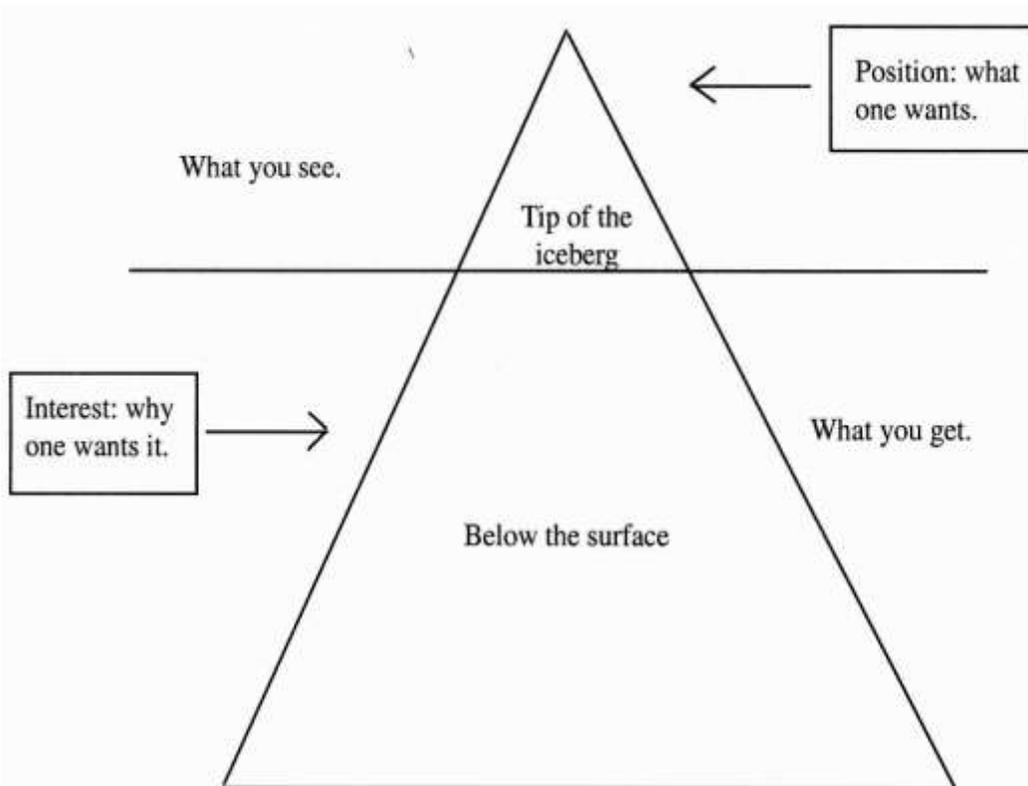
1. Should just be quiet for a moment so we can think about that?
2. Is there anything any of us would like to apologize for?
3. What’s this conflict costing us? How much longer are we willing to keep paying that price?
4. _____, what would it take for you to give that up, or let go of what happened, and move forward?
5. If this were the last conversation we were ever going to have with each other, what would we say

* Kenneth Cloke, “Listening to the Heart of the Story” in Journey into the Heart of Conflict (prepublication draft), 2004. Presented at an Iowa Peace Institute and Iowa Mediation Service cosponsored advanced seminar for mediators. February 4 - 5, 2004, Des Moines, Iowa.

Journeys into the Heart of Conflict Resolution: Questions to Help People Get Beyond Positions And Identify Interests

Five key facilitative or coach-like questions or question stems to allow people to speak about their underlying interests:

1. What concerns you about _____?
2. What's the thinking behind your request?
3. What would having _____ do for you?
4. What are you trying to achieve in _____?
6. What other ways are there to _____?



Challenges to Being on the Third Side*

There are significant challenges involved in taking on the role of a facilitative participant. Among them are the following:

1. Finding the courage, and the right approach to being the third side: there is the potential for one's motives to be misunderstood.
2. Separating one's self from the situation while avoiding pulling too far back: being too much removed or too detached from what's going on.
3. Giving equal attention to each side's point of view: it's difficult to see both sides.
4. Building trust and having everyone feel supported. How does one:
 - Come up with effective questions?
 - Help speakers know that the other(s) really hear what they are saying?
 - Be transparent - letting others know what one is doing by taking the third side and why?
 - Keep an open mind to all ideas?
5. If parents and/or educators perceive you as being on their side at the outset, and you shift to the third side, will you damage the relationships you have previously established?
6. The converse of number five is, overcoming predetermined labels or roles (or "sides"), i.e., being a representative of a particular side at the outset.
7. One might be put in the position of having to challenge or question a person in authority, a person taking an authoritative position or even district policy: that's scary.
8. Confusing being on the third side with being a referee or a mediator - you're not neutral.
9. Some in the room may not want to be collaborative or their ability to be collaborative may be affected by "outside" influences that we have no knowledge of.
10. Lacking third-side standing, credentials or credibility: will I be listened to?
11. Time pressures and a general unwillingness to invest the time needed to work on meaningfully resolving differences - pressure to get on with the paper work and stay away from what some see as "baggage" or "old wounds."

*Participants in previous RESPECT classes generated this list.

Challenges to Building Relationships Among Families and Educators*

Families and educators face several challenges as they try to build relationships before, during and after team meetings. Among them are the following.

- 1. Communication.**
 - a. There is not enough communication (especially before meetings) and there are often misunderstandings (before and during meetings). If someone has to leave a meeting early, for instance, it would be considerate to tell the others ahead of time, so there are no surprises and the others don't feel disrespected.
 - b. Not enough time is spent on positive comments about the student, parents, or educators.
 - c. Special education terms and acronyms are daunting and overwhelming.
 - d. The student's input is not solicited.
 - e. Room setup is often not conducive to effective communication.
 - f. Listening with the heart AND with the head are each necessary.
 - g. Being open and honest might hurt another's feelings.
- 2. Availability/Scheduling.** Having the right people in the room for the right amount of time to hear everything they need to hear or to give needed input.
- 3. Grief.** Parents have to make decisions while they are still grieving, still accepting the special needs their children face. It is also difficult for educators to work with parents who are still grieving.
- 4. Distrust.** Families don't trust that educators will be able to meet family's needs and/or don't trust that promises will be kept.
- 5. Lack of time, knowledge and other resources.** This affects the quality of the outcome. Not enough time, for instance, for meetings.
- 6. Prior relationships affect interactions at meetings.**
 - a. An educator who usually interacts as a colleague with other educators could be in the role of a parent in a given team meeting.
 - b. A parent was once the student of one or more of the educators.
 - c. On the other hand, it is helpful when relationships have been built from early intervention programs. This makes it easier to work together.
- 7. Dealing with change.** Inability to accept a situation that can't be changed, and go on to what can be changed.
- 8. Assumptions and prior views.** People are not always unbiased and open-minded. Rather they let assumptions and prior views, affect their participation.

*This is a composite of lists of challenges generated by participants in several RESPECT classes.

Putting It All Together

Thinking like a facilitator or a mediator – being the third side – when one is a team member with a stake in the outcome of a team meeting requires a different way of thinking than we’re used to. It does not require that one give up his or her own truth nor that one subordinate him or her self to others. It does not require that one sell out one’s values. The different way of thinking that is required can be termed *enlightened self-interest*, or what Costa and Garmston (1994) call *holonomy*.

Enlightened Self-Interest

Throughout the RESPECT training program we have emphasized relationship and interdependence. When people are interdependent, as IEP team members certainly are, the pursuit of one’s own interests necessarily involves taking into account the interests of others on the team. While the overarching interest may be the needs of the student for whom a plan is being developed or revised, the individual interests of parents and educators as to how best to meet those needs are also in play.

The concept of enlightened self-interest holds that it is appropriate for one to advocate for one’s own interests as long as one makes it possible for others to gain something as well. The theory is: one can do as well for himself as he can if he makes it possible for others to gain as well. Thus, in the case where people are interdependent, each person on a team needs to help the others do well in pursuit of their interests in order to do well him or her self. This is the foundation for collaborative negotiation/collaborative problem solving.

Holonomy

Teams are composed of interdependent persons who are also autonomous individuals. They must cooperate by offering their own ideas and inviting ideas from others in order to move forward. According to Costa and Garmston these autonomous individuals, “... operate in the best interests of the whole while simultaneously attending to their own goals. In other words they are both independent and interdependent – holonomous.” (1994, pg. 129)

This holonomous person, this team member who is enlightened with regard to self-interest, is also what Garmston and Wellman (1998, pg. 70) term an *engaged [facilitative] participant* – among other things, one who:

- √ Is collaborative
- √ Opens the door for others to speak
- √ Tests consensus
- √ Listens deeply

Putting It All Together (continued)

This person may or may not be in the formal role of facilitator or coach, but she takes on many of the attributes of that role in any case. The facilitative participant occupies the third side. She:

- Visualizes conflict as three-sided
- Is intentional – avoids reacting without thinking
- Builds bridges by fostering dialogue with deep listening, by keeping her eye on the common ground, and by encouraging deeper thinking and reflection
- Gently uses open-ended probes or questions to bridge differences
- Suggests some mutual-gain approaches for addressing concerns or differences, and invites suggestions from others
- Works to repair injured relationships

In Conclusion

All conflict begins, unfolds, and is addressed in relationships. To be sure, conflict is also about issues and material differences as well as poor communication and social dynamics. Addressing conflict in its relational context means inviting heart into the process by developing and articulating an ethic of caring.

Inviting heart into the process of meaningful conflict resolution means communicating authentically with openness, honesty and vulnerability. It means taking some risks in our interactions: trusting that what will happen if we have authentic communication about our differences is better than what will happen if we don't.

Conflict can have positive consequences. Meaningful conflict resolution does not mean suppressing conflict or making it go away. Rather it means seeking transformational results, or fundamental change, from conflict. Meaningful conflict resolution requires being engaged and authentic.

Any team member can be the third side: think and behave like a facilitator or coach in order to get differences meaningfully resolved early on and strengthen working relationships between families and schools. To do so requires a new way of thinking – thinking in terms of enlightened self-interest or as an engaged, facilitative participant.

The primary goal of this training program has been to enhance learning for students receiving special education services by respectfully and creatively building and growing relationships between educator and family members of special education teams. That goal is based on the theory that the power of a team to produce results that will meet student, educator and family needs is rooted in the quality of the relationships among team members. We have attempted to demonstrate that everyone on the team has strengths, and that those strengths can be recognized and utilized through peacebuilding, empathizing, communicating and trustbuilding.

Articulating RESPECT Throughout the RESPECT Training

Recognizing everyone's strengths by peacebuilding, empathizing, communicating and trustbuilding. Relationships are at the center of things as far as conflict and meaningful conflict resolution go. All conflict begins, unfolds and is addressed in the context of relationships. The strengths people bring to relationships, and the work they do to build, strengthen and maintain them are resources for meaningful conflict resolution. Recognizing this and then inviting all team members to contribute their strengths to the best interests of the whole is the first step to being RESPECTable.

Recognizing everyone's strengths by peacebuilding, empathizing, communicating and trustbuilding. Interpersonal peace is not merely the absence of conflict. Indeed the very idea of taking risks to ask "dangerous" heartfelt questions suggests that conflict suppression is not the path to peaceful and productive relationships. Peacebuilding in the context of RESPECT means taking risks to achieve meaningful conflict resolution: resolution that results in fundamental change in the situation that gave rise to the conflict in the first place. This is the second step to being RESPECTable.

Recognizing everyone's strengths by peacebuilding, empathizing, communicating and trustbuilding. To have empathy for another is to share that person's emotional response. Thus we have to search deep inside ourselves to imagine what it must be like for others to be in a particular conflict in order to understand what might cause them to feel and act as they are. Empathizing is one path to facilitating or coaching from the heart. It is the third step to being RESPECTable.

Recognizing everyone's strengths by peacebuilding, empathizing, communicating and trustbuilding. Meaningfully resolving conflict requires authentic communication. Authentic communication demands openness, honesty, and vulnerability to others. Communicating authentically is the fourth step to being RESPECTable.

Recognizing everyone's strengths by peacebuilding, empathizing, communicating and trustbuilding. Trust is the essential currency in relationships. If it has never existed or has been lost in a relationship then it can be established through such means as deep and empathetic listening, heartfelt questioning, and ultimately doing what you say you'll do. When engaging in third-side behaviors, being transparent and letting people in the room know what you are trying to do and why, is one way to address challenges to trust that could arise from people who think you should be on their side. This is the fifth and final step to being RESPECTable.

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On Reflection and Journaling

To reflect means to think deeply about. When you are asked to reflect on the day, and write your thoughts in a journal at the end of each RESPECT training day, you are being asked to do two things:

1. Take a step back step back and think about what went on in class today. Ask yourself:
 - a. Do I think differently about conflict and/or conflict resolution after today's class? Why?
 - b. What new understandings do I have about conflict resolution and: relationships; and/or risk taking; and/or the "third side."
 - c. How might I use what I've learned today as a foundation for authentically addressing and meaningfully resolving differences?
2. Write some thoughts on the above questions on the following notes pages. Keep them as your reflective journal on RESPECT.

The aim of this type of reflection is to review the value of each RESPECT class to your work, and to come up with some things that you might do to make RESPECT even more valuable to you.

When you are asked to reflect on certain things in the "between class period assignments", you are being asked to step back from the experience of interviewing, observing, or practicing to gain some perspective, thus better understanding of the experience.

In addition, reflection on the assignments and at the end of each training day could involve some or all of the following:

1. Making sense of, or finding the meaning in, experience so that we learn from it.
2. Repetition: or going over something more than once in order to get a broad view and make sure nothing is missed.
3. Deeper honesty or "striving after truth." We might even find that we can acknowledge things about ourselves that we would otherwise find it difficult to admit.
4. Reaching into our "higher self" to make as objective judgments as we can.
5. Achieving greater clarity.
6. Learning and understanding on a deeper level.
7. Drawing conclusions in order to improve, in the case of RESPECT content, your own performance in teams, and your own ability to address and resolve differences meaningfully.

