



Presentation for
Leagues Alive!

Resolving Interpersonal Conflict

Participant Manual

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many volunteer hours have gone into providing ideas and materials for the workshops that MRJC presents. The Mediation & Restorative Justice Centre is grateful to Catherine Bell, Wendy Hassen and Heather Ehlers for their work in planning and presenting the Communicating Through Conflict Workshop series. Thanks also to Linda Cameron, Linda Matwie, Joelle Chelkowski and Janice Picard for updating and adding to these materials. Finally, many thanks to Gary Harper for generously allowing MRJC to reference his book, The Joy of Conflict (2004).

The Mediation and Restorative Justice Centre receives the generous support of *Family Community and Support Services* (FCSS) to make its workshops available to community members.

For more information about MRJC and the services we can provide, please visit our website at www.mrjc.ca or call us at (780) 423-0896.



Welcome

The Mediation Restorative Justice Centre (MRJC) is a not-for-profit in the City of Edmonton that provides dispute resolution services to neighbors over the phone or through mediation as well as restorative justice for victims and offenders in families and communities. All services are free or at a nominal cost and are provided by a small staff and countless volunteers.

MRJC is available to provide services to your individual group and could provide customized workshops to meet your needs.

Icebreaker

Instructions for participants: Take the piece of paper in front of you and close your eyes and follow the verbal instructions to the best of your ability. There is no right or wrong, just follow along based on what you hear.

Email is a perfect example of what can happen when everyone is given the same information but can have a completely different reaction. It is all about history and experience, what information is actually there and what are we adding between the lines? What guesses are we making? How are we adding to our version of the “truth”? What data are we selectively focusing on? Do we have a past with the sender and did we have a reaction just seeing their name even before we opened the message?

Exercise 1

Who was I in conflict with? List all of the parties involved.

What **actions** did I take? What was said or done right before the conflict occurred? For example: : “I said... I moved... I called... I emailed...”.

What were the **intentions** or goals behind my actions? For example: “It was important because... I needed... I wanted to...” . If you are stuck with what your intentions were then think of how you would explain why your course of action seemed the most logical. What were you trying to clarify? What was the outcome you were hoping for? What solution were you suggesting and why?

Now think about what were **actions** taken by the other person, what did they say and do? Just the facts (what you could take a picture of or tape record).

Next, write down what the **impact** of their actions had on you. How did it make you feel? What guesses did you start to make about their motivation? Did you start to “fill in the blanks”? Did the feelings that the conflict stirred up affect how the conflict escalated? Did it get more heated or did you withdraw? Did others try to intervene, did it affect how you reacted to the other person the next time you saw them?

Actions, Intentions & Impacts

When we are in a conflict with someone else we perceive the situation and the actions that we take based on our intentions. What we are trying to accomplish makes perfect sense to us and we behave accordingly. When we reflect on the conflict later on our own or with others we justify our actions based on those intentions but when we talk about the other person's actions we describe the impact that it had on us.

I came prepared with a course of action that I'm sure would have solved all of our problems and I couldn't believe it when Joe tried to dismiss my suggestion without any consideration. I tried to ask for more time to explain my proposal and he just kept saying "it won't work". I shouldn't have been surprised, he's always so aggressive with his opinions. And to top it off, after shutting me down over and over again and basically saying my idea was bad he had the nerve to tell me to stop trying to "bully" everyone into doing things my way. Can you believe it, I'm the bully?!?

What you know:

What you were thinking and feeling

What your intentions were

What actions you chose based on those intentions

The impact the other person's actions had on you

What you don't know:

What the other person was thinking and feeling

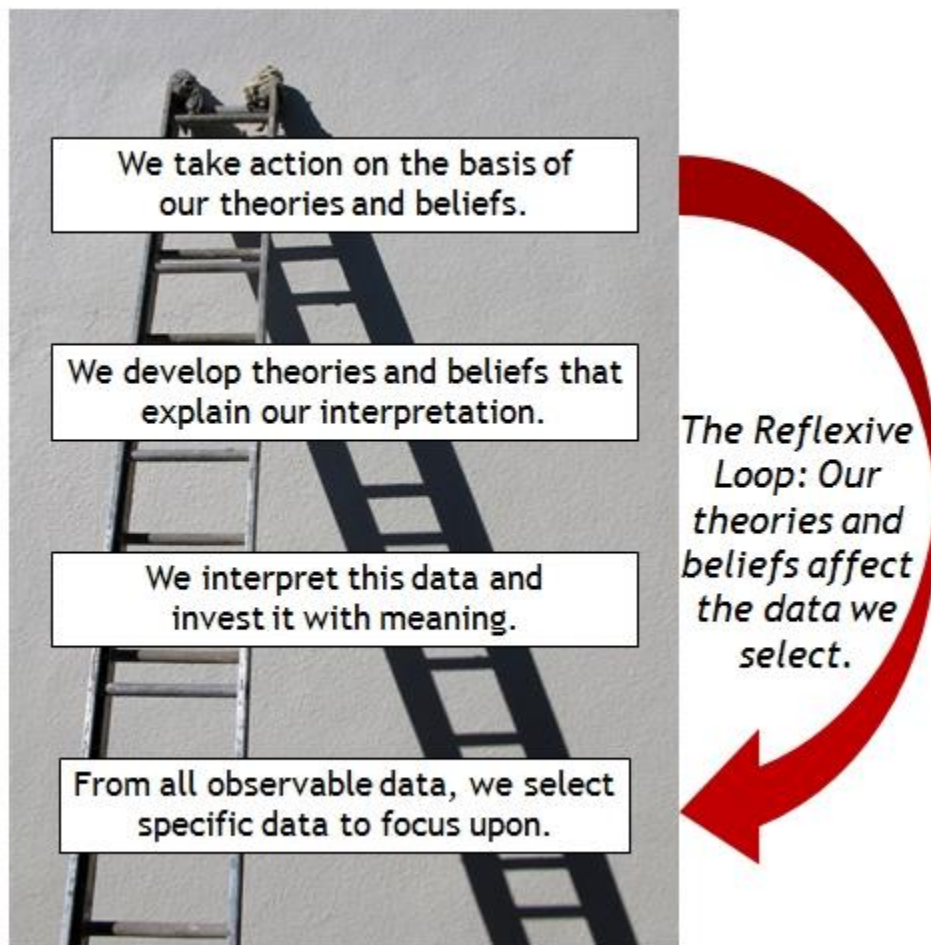
What their intentions were

Why they chose the actions they chose

What was the impact of your actions on them

Ladder of Inference

One of the best explanations for our counterproductive behavior is provided by the *Ladder of Inference*. This elegant model was first developed by Chris Argyris, building on the work of S.I. Hayakawa and Alford Korzybski, and articulated further by William Isaacs and Rick Ross. Start at the bottom and work your way up:



(image and definition credited to www.Edbatista.com)

Reflect on your conflict story. What information did you focus on? What information did you ignore? Did you only focus on the information that supported your “story”? Are you caught in a Reflexive Loop with anyone else? Are there people in your life that you find yourself “bracing for”? Do you practice conversations in your head, or out loud while driving?

Exercise 2

Take a guess at what the other person's **intentions** might have been?

What questions could you have asked to get a better understanding? How could you have shared your **intentions** with them? What could you have said? What **impact** do you think your **actions** might had? How might you interpret an unexpected reaction?

Think of the Reflexive Loop, what story did you tell yourself? What did you "know"?

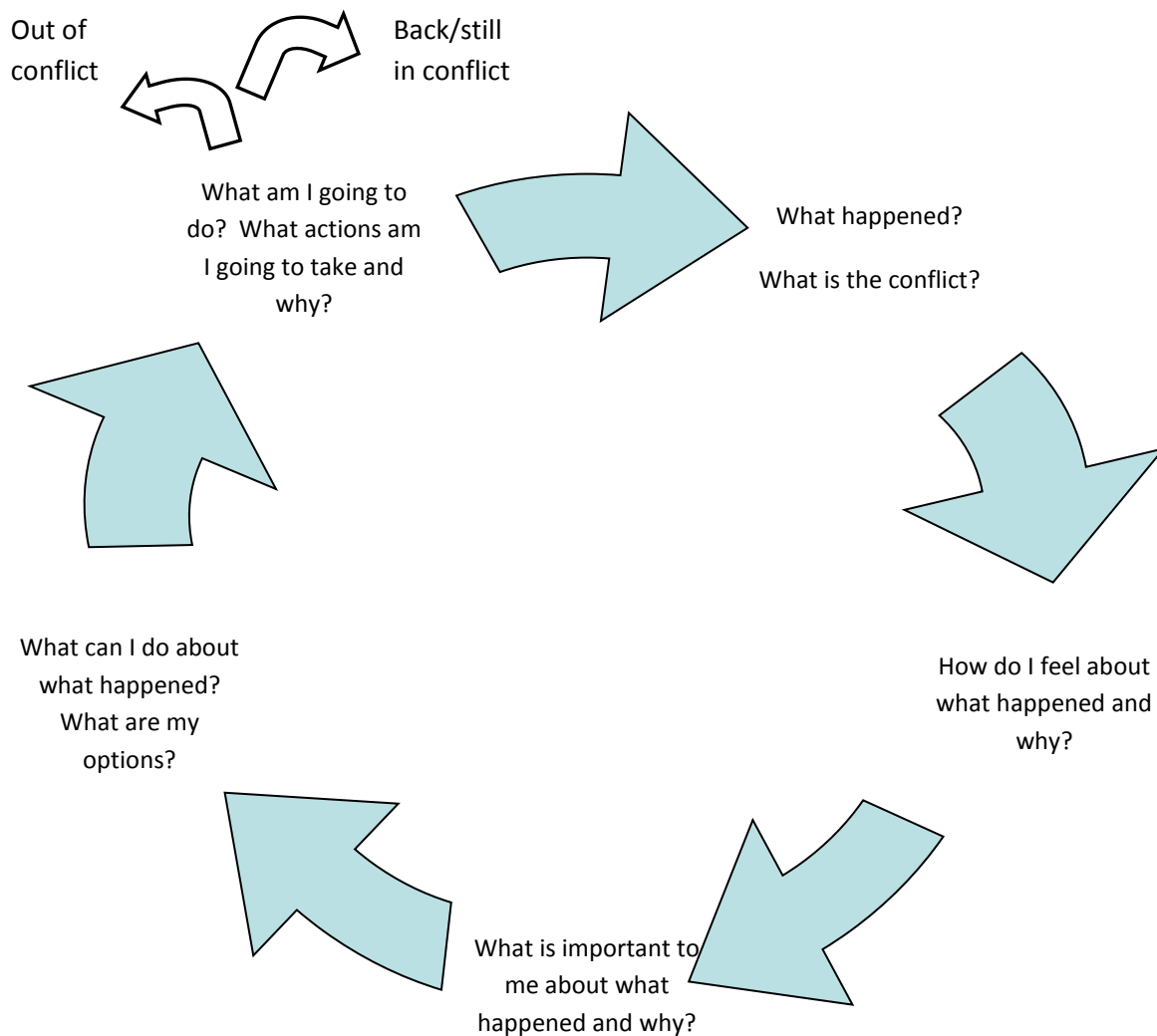
What data did you ignore? What else might have been going on? Even if you have to make something up, what else could have been happening?

The only thing you have control over is your own actions and reactions. If you want to break out of a Reflexive Loop or change your conflict cycle, then you will have to be more mindful of what you are bringing to the table.

Always be asking yourself “What am I responsible for? Am I looking to hear and understand or do I only want to be heard and understood?”

Reflection Wheel

The reflection wheel demonstrates a way to help you pause and think about a situation, your thoughts, feelings around it and options on how to move forward.



Interpersonal Conflict Questions

When faced with a conflict, go through the following questions to help clarify your needs, goals, what is at stake and how to move forward.

Step 1: Identify your most pressing issue.

The issue that I most need to resolve is:

Step 2: Clarify the issue.

What is going on?

How long has it been going on?

How bad are things?

Step 3: Determine the current impact.

How is this issue currently impacting me?

How is this issue currently impacting others?

When I consider the impact on myself and others, what are my emotions?

Step 4: Determine the future implications.

If nothing changes, what's likely to happen?

What's at stake for me relative to this issue?

What's at stake for others?

When I consider these possible outcomes, what are my emotions?

Step 5: Examine your personal contribution to this issue.

What is my contribution to this issue? (How have I contributed to the problem?)

Step 6: Describe the ideal outcome.

When this issue is resolved, what difference will it make?

What results will I enjoy?

When this issue is resolved, what results will others enjoy?

When I imagine this resolution, what are my emotions?

Step 7: Commit to action.

What is the most potent step that I can take to move this issue to resolution?

What is going to attempt to get in my way and how will I get past it?

When will I take this step?

Adapted from Susan Scott *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work & in Life, One Conversation at a Time* (2002, New York, NY The Berkley Publishing Group, page 49)

Thank you for participating!