

Working Through Conflict

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No financial disclosures to share

We will be engaging in discussion

Many thanks to Kurt O'Brien

Many thanks to Lisa Pierce



Statement Honoring the Land on which the University of Washington Stands

UW Medicine acknowledges the land we occupy today as the traditional home of the Tulalip, Muckleshoot, Duwamish and Suquamish tribal nations. Without them we would not have access to this healing, working, teaching and learning environment. We humbly take the opportunity to thank the original caretakers of this land who are still here.

Our Plan for Today



- Who's in the room?
- Your approach to conflict
- Working a case
- Step-by-step process
- Choosing your words

Who is in the room?

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Where do you work?

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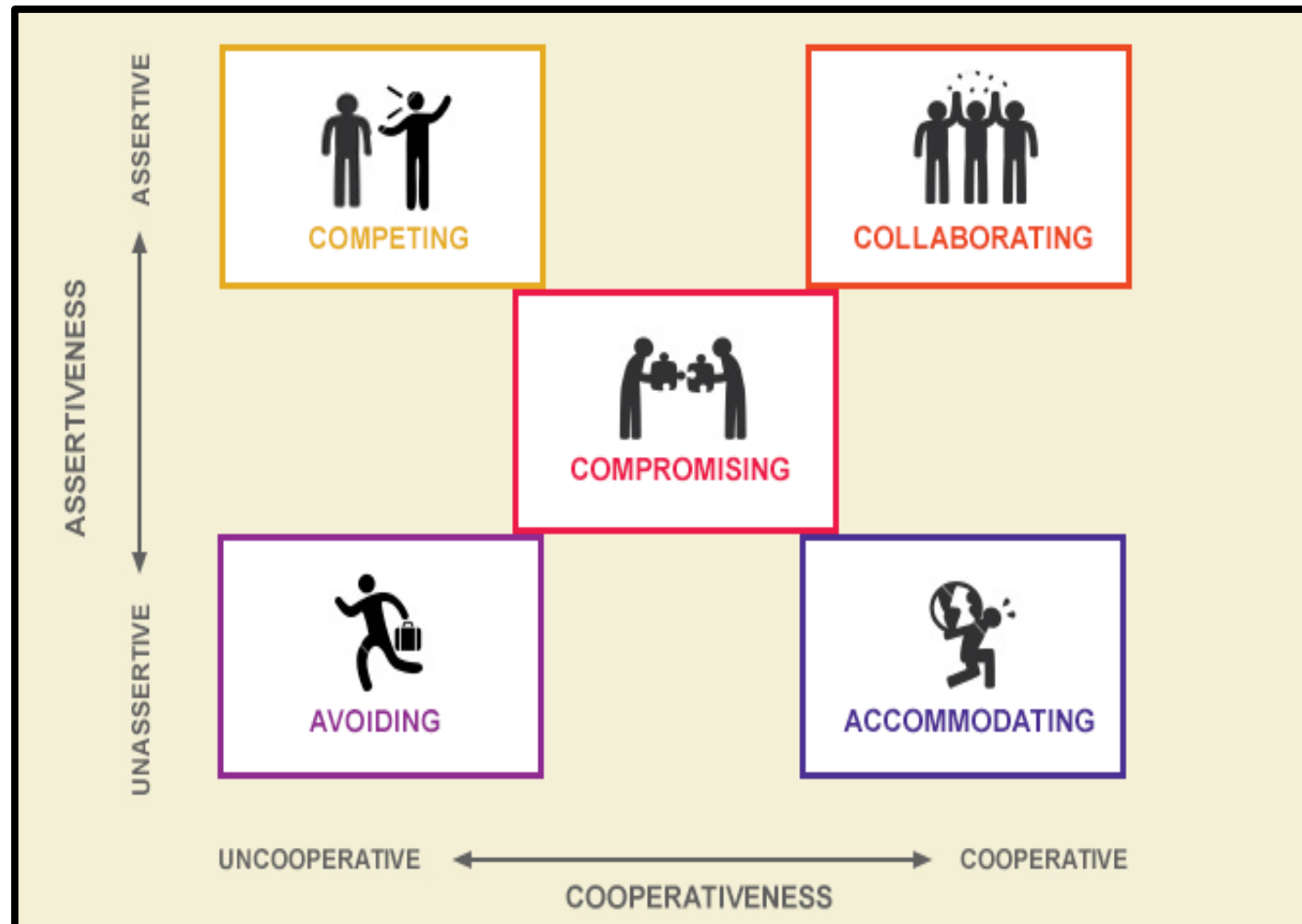


What do you do?

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Approaches to Conflict

How Do I Handle Conflict?



Source: <https://www.cpp.com/products/tki/index.aspx>

How Do I Handle Conflict?

Style	Observable Behaviors	Locus of Concern
Competing	Assertive, Uncooperative, Out there to win, Exert power, authority	ME > YOU
Accommodating	Unassertive, Cooperative, Yielding to Other's Will (against own will)	ME < YOU
Avoiding	Unassertive, Uncooperative, Sidestepping/Postponing Issues, Withdraws from Threatening Situation	ME YOU
Collaborating	Assertive & Cooperative, Explore Disagreement and Seek Insight, Concerned about Underlying Needs	ME = YOU
Compromising	Mildly Assertive & Cooperative, Can be Transaction Driven, Preferring Middle Ground, Expedient Solution	ME YOU

A moment for reflection

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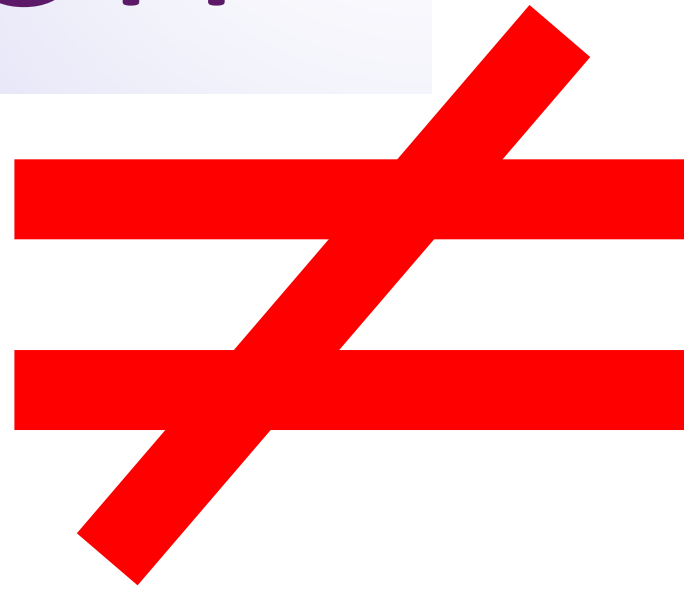


What style best describes how you commonly approach conflict?

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What Is the Emotion Underlying the Conflict?

Emotion



Noise

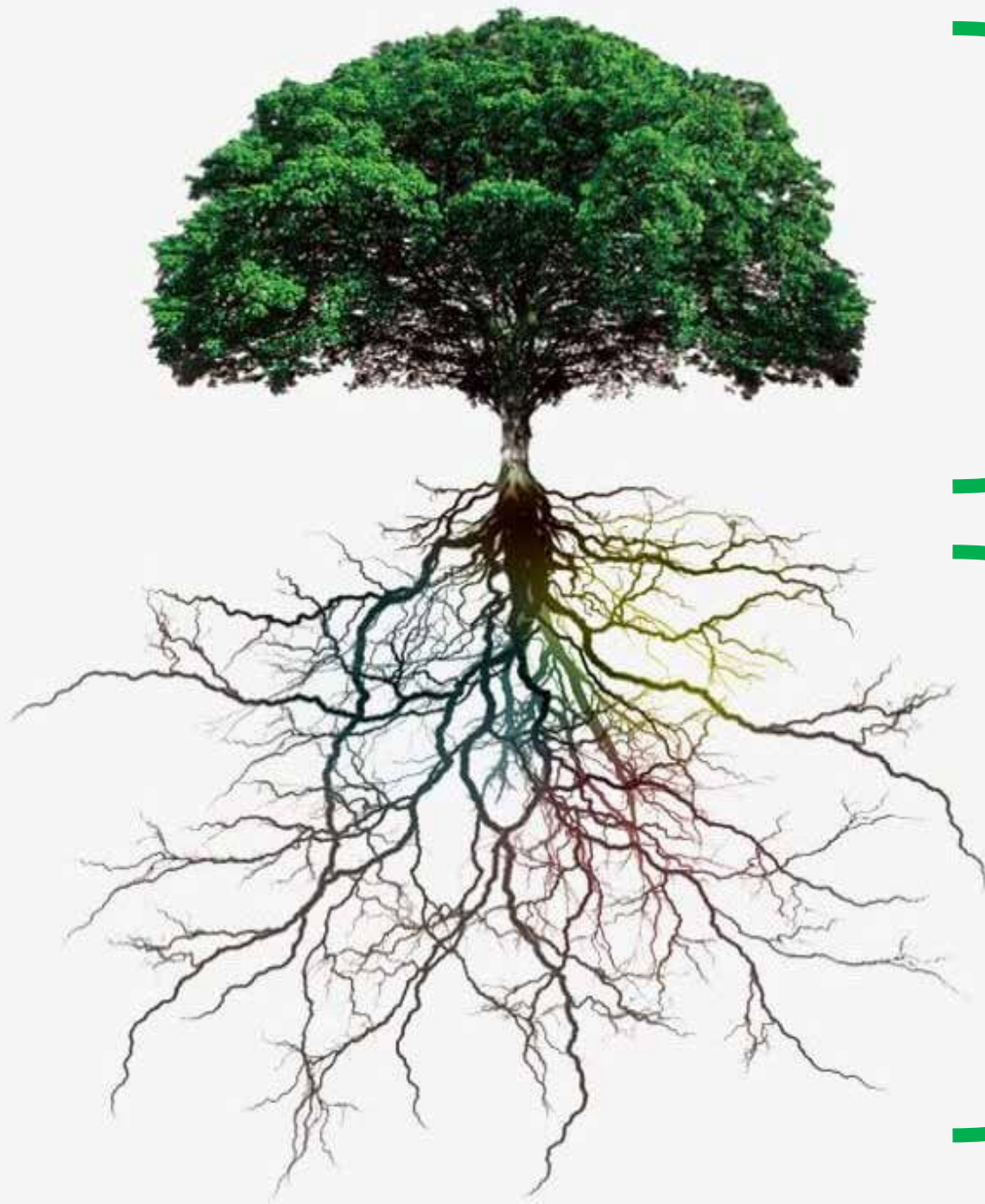
What Is the Emotion Underlying the Conflict?

Emotion



Data

Story



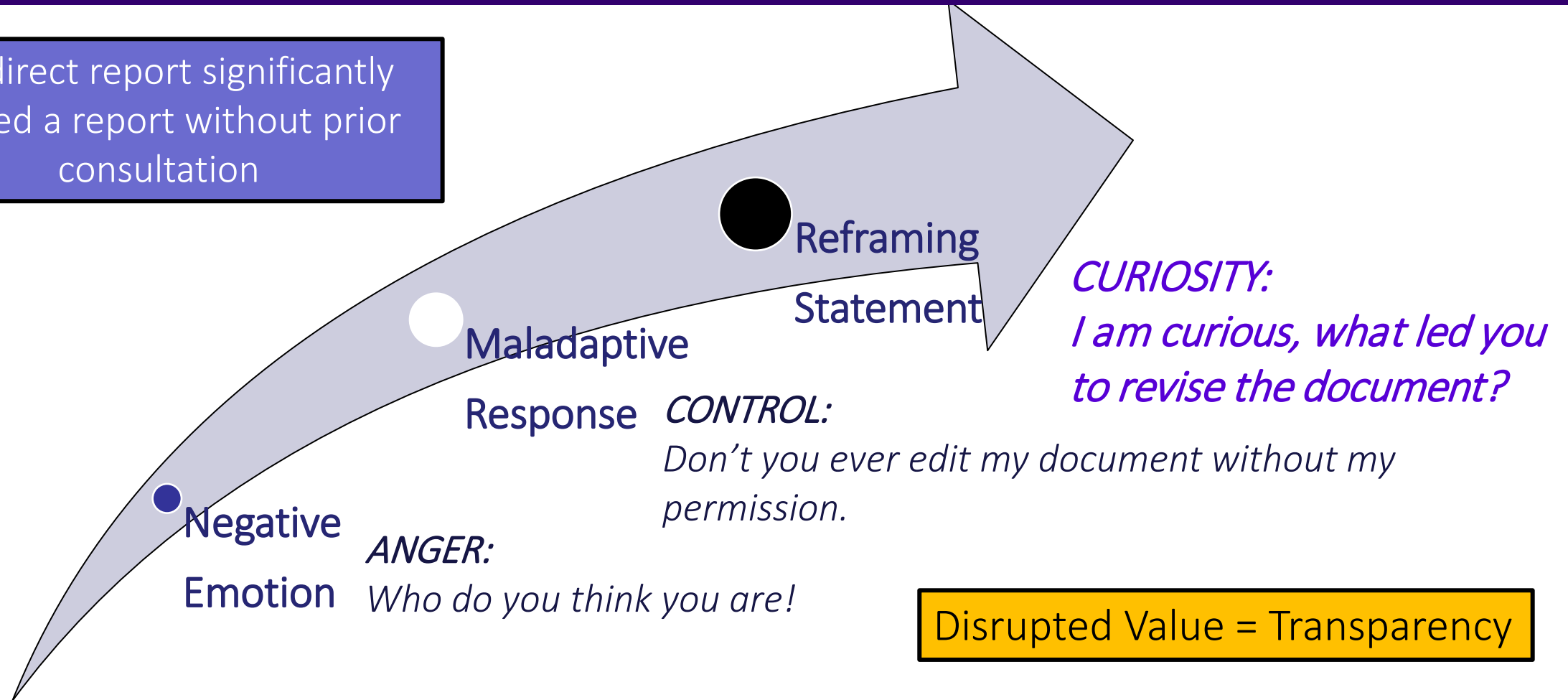
Emotion

Value =

Honesty
Justice
Growth

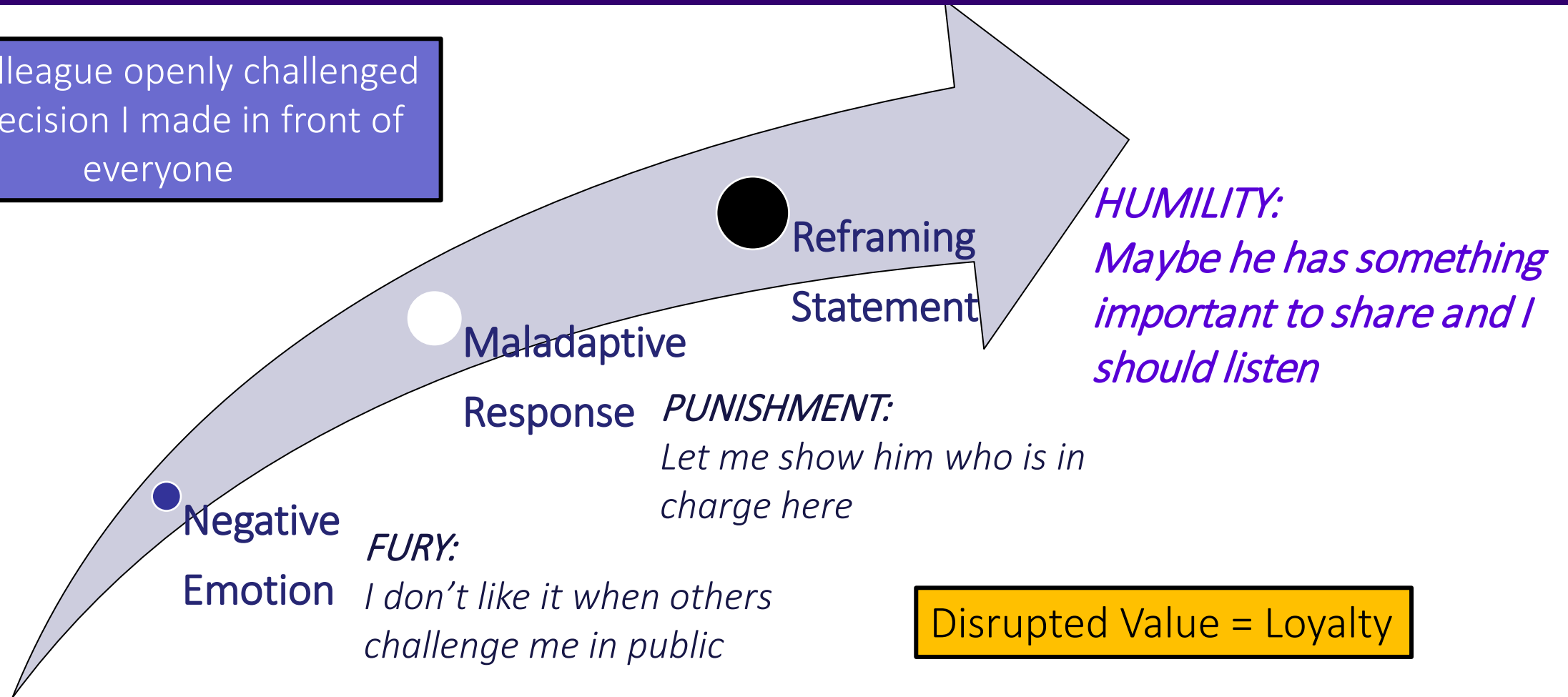
What Is the Emotion Underlying the Conflict?

My direct report significantly revised a report without prior consultation



What Is the Emotion Underlying the Conflict?

My colleague openly challenged the decision I made in front of everyone



How Do I Keep My Bias In Check?



“Automatic associations, of which we may not be aware, that are difficult to control and may conflict with our professed beliefs and values.”

Holroyd J, Scaife R, Stafford T. Responsibility for implicit bias. Philosophy Compass. 2017 Mar;12(3):e12410.

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Ladder of Inference

This guy deserves a stinging rebuke

He is lazy, unprofessional, because...

There is a pattern of failings

I only focus on the missed deadlines

A staff member misses a deadline

I believe I am right

I draw a conclusion from the assumption

I make an assumption about the information

I assign meaning to the information

I filter information

I observe someone, something

A Case for Discussion

A Case for Discussion

- You are leading a team meeting
- You have delegated the work on a specific project to “J”
- J is presenting to the group and walking through next steps
- During a pause, K says that it still feels like things need to slow down and a smaller group needs to dig into the details on one aspect of the work more before moving forward
- J says that while this may be helpful, it is now time to move forward
- K responds that this is another example of not being heard and not being valued
- K abruptly leaves the meeting

Discuss as a Group

Introduce yourselves to each other

Determine a scribe and a reporter

Note your thoughts on the google doc

Understand Your Personal Perspective

What is your reaction to the conflict?

How do you begin to approach this conflict?

Immediate response? Longer term steps?

Discussion

Immediate response

in the
moment...

- Acknowledge what just happened
- Check-in with yourself → attend to your emotions
- Check-in with folks in the room
- Suspend judgment on events and people
- Decide on whether to continue or pause the meeting
- Follow-up with K (and tell group you will do so)

A Step-by-Step Approach

Step 1 – Gather Data

Hear all voices

Get a 3rd party perspective

Seek advice from others



Step 2 – Engage Folks in Pre-Work

Inquiry

- What do you **appreciate** about the other person?
- What do you share in common? What is your **mutual purpose**?
- What does your team need from both of you?



Step 2 – Engage Folks in Pre-Work

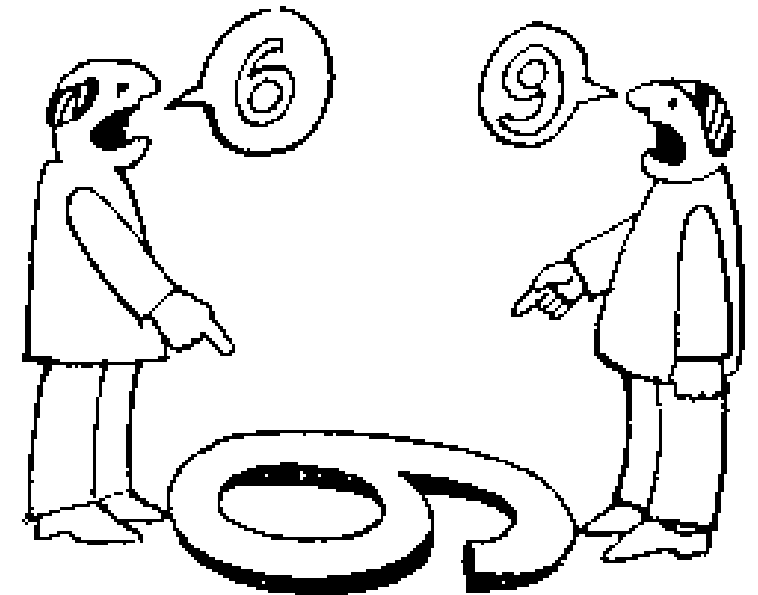
Review the Event

- Describe the events and **specific behaviors** that you find concerning or objectionable
 - Be specific
 - Focus on behaviors
- State how you are **feeling** after experiencing this behavior
 - Use actual feelings
 - Avoid judgment or analysis

Step 2 – Engage Folks in Pre-Work

Interpretation

- Reflect on how you are interpreting the other person's *intent*
- Are there **other possible explanations** (positive explanations) that would help explain why the other person behaved the way they did?
- Move towards **attributing positive intent**



Step 2 – Engage Folks in Pre-Work

Perspective Taking

- Describe *your role* in this situation.
 - What have you contributed to make the situation what it is?
 - What have you done to make life more difficult for them?
- What is it like to be in the other person's shoes?
- What are their stressors, constraints, concerns, challenges, fears?

Step 2 – Engage Folks in Pre-Work

Moving Forward

- State what is it that you need from the other person
- State what you want to have happen in the future

These steps can guide your discussion

Step 3 – Bring People Together

1

Assume positive intent

2

Suspend assumptions

3

Listen, don't reload

4

Balance advocacy with inquiry

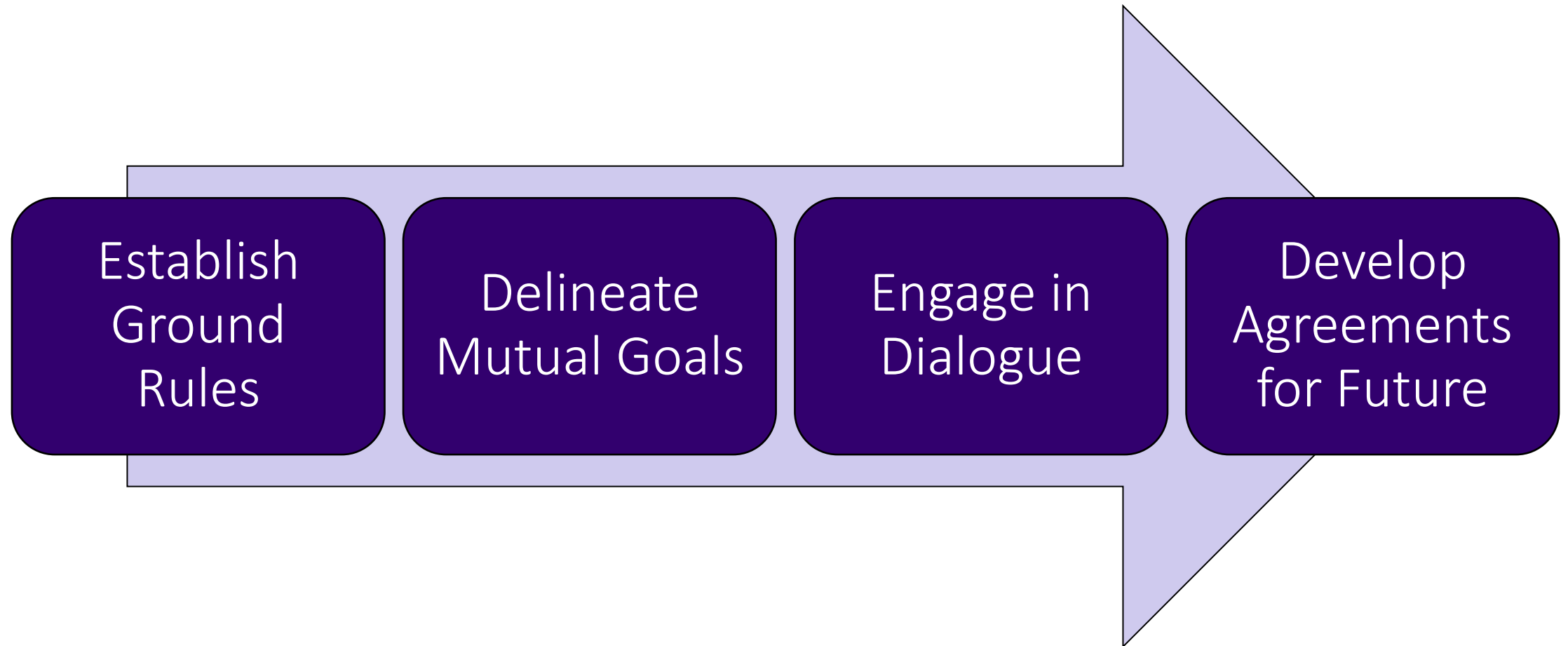
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What other ground rules do you use?

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Step 3 – Bring People Together



Step 4 – Check Back In

Debrief after the initial discussion

Check back in after a bit of time

Consider tweaking agreements as needed

What Are the Words?

“Wants” by Grace Paley

He had had a habit throughout the twenty-seven years of making a narrow remark, which, like a plumber's snake, could work its way through the ear down the throat, halfway to my heart.

Dialogue Skills for Handling Challenging Interpersonal Conflict

Empathy



Listen



Reflect



Reframe



Ask
Questions

Listen



The hallmark of good listening is judged by the first few words we say to the speaker

- **Express Gratitude** → I appreciated hearing your perspective.
- **Suspend Judgment** → I can see how you experienced the situation.
- **Acknowledgment** → It must have been difficult to bring this issue up with me. Thank you for stepping forward.

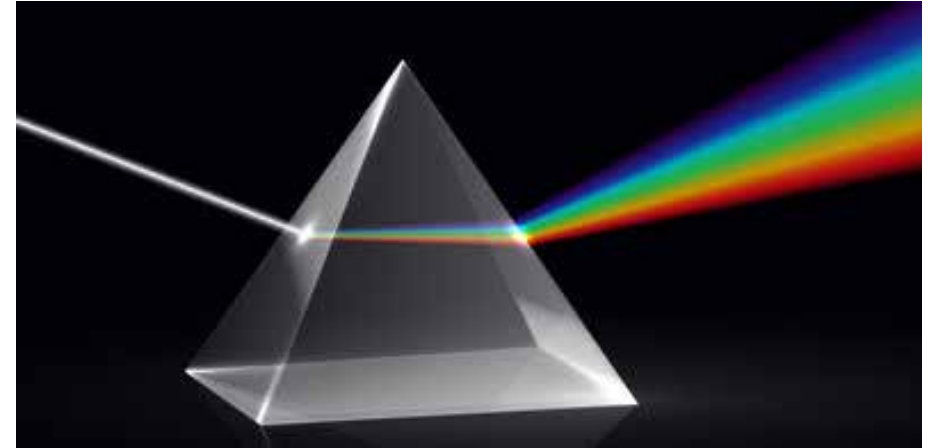
Reflect



Speak to the emotions and feelings

- That must be frustrating.
- I hear how upset you are.
- I am sorry this is so tough on you.
- It must be disappointing to ...
- It's been a hard day.
- You seem to have a strong opinion on the issue.

Reframe



The Purpose of Reframing



- Shift negative perception to positive outlook
- Re-direct past into the future
- Channel emotional responses into problem-solving thinking or action steps

Speak to the person's
underlying values

Reframing Phrases



This is hopeless. I don't want to waste my energy.



Please tell me...is there anything that is going well?

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No one appreciates me here.

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I don't care. Just get it done fast.

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Ask Questions



- Avoid leading with *Why*
- Open questions with:
 - *What*
 - *How*
 - *To What Degree*
 - *In What Way*
- Replace statements with questions to demonstrate curiosity and desire for partnership.

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Why did you miss the deadline?

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Why are you making things difficult?

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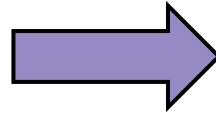
You are being a roadblock.

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Alternate Questions



Why did you miss the deadline?



What makes it difficult for you...
[Curiosity]

Why are you making things
difficult?



How do you see things differently?
[Perspective taking]

You are being a roadblock.



This is a difficult situation. What
can help move forward? [Empathy]

Another Case for Discussion

- You submitted a paper to a journal. Pat was your co-author.
- The journal sent to you (the first author) quite a bit of substantial comments from reviewers.
- You emailed Pat to ask how the revision should be tackled together. You don't hear back from Pat.
- Because of the tight timeline, you went ahead and revised the paper including doing additional data analyses.
- You send the revised paper to Pat before submitting it to the journal.
- Pat replied, "Looks good. Thanks."
- This is not sitting well with you. You ask to meet with Pat.
- Pat says: "Handling the revision is your responsibility as the first author."

How would you respond to Pat with a reframing statement?

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How would you respond to Pat with a reframing statement?

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Questions?

Take Homes

Navigating conflict requires understanding your default approach as well as the impact of emotion and bias

When mediating a conflict, focus on hearing all voices and giving the work back to folks

Ground rules for dialogue → assume positive intent, suspend assumptions, listen – don't reload, and balance advocacy with inquiry

When personally in moments of conflict tap into these skills → listen, reflect, reframe and ask questions

Thank you!

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Other Resources

Office of the Ombud

(<https://www.washington.edu/ombud/>)

UW Medicine Organization Development & Training

(<https://depts.washington.edu/uwmhrodt/>)

UW Professional & Organizational Development

(<https://hr.uw.edu/pod/>)

UW Carelink

(<https://hr.uw.edu/benefits/uw-carelink/>)