Reaching Higher Ground

A guide for preventing, preparing for, and transforming conflict for tobacco control coalitions

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Tobacco Technical Assistance Consortium

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Effective coalitions are able to use differences in ways that strengthen rather than divide. A *higher ground* approach to conflict ensures principled and productive use of conflict to build healthy relationships and a healthy coalition. Your coalition should prepare for conflict in three ways:

1. *Preventing unnecessary conflict* - by building strong relationships within and outside of the coalition, based upon clear and shared understanding of roles, purposes, and meeting processes, so that destructive conflict is less likely to occur;

2. *Preparing for conflict* - by anticipating that differences will occur, and devising legitimate ground rules and processes for handling such differences when they come up; and,

3. *Transforming conflict* - by developing the capacity (shared knowledge, skills, and commitment) to resolve conflict as it occurs.

As a coalition member, you share responsibility for your coalition's well-being with other members and with your coalition leadership. The following pages will offer you a number of ideas to build upon your coalition's differences to develop a stronger coalition.

Preventing Unnecessary Conflict

Four elements are fundamental for collaboration and building consensus within your coalition.

1. Develop clear purposes and goals;

2. Ensure appropriate representation and understanding of roles;

3. Design and conduct effective meetings; and,

4. Build consensus for coalition decisions and coalition work.

Preparing for Conflict

Healthy coalitions prepare in advance the ways in which they will address conflict. Taking time to develop shared expectations for ways in which you will make conflict productive will ensure that you are not wasting time fighting one another rather than the tobacco industry. The key steps in developing a *covenant* (a statement of your group's aspirations and ground rules) follow:

1. Establish the need;

2. Educate and inspire;

3. Begin with a vision;

4. Promote full participation;

5. Be accountable;

6. Evaluate and revise.

Transforming conflict

By effectively addressing emotions and engaging in *principled* negotiation, your coalition will be able to make conflict productive rather than destructive. Principled negotiation includes the following components:

1. Focus on interests, not positions;

2. Separate people from the problem;

3. Invent options for mutual gain;

4. Develop objective criteria.

While conflict can be hard, *everyone* can improve their ability to handle conflict. Ways that you and other coalition members can develop your own skills include:

➢ Come to coalition meetings prepared to listen and learn;

➢ Take training in conflict mediation;

➢ Bring in an outside facilitator to train the coalition;

➢ Ask for opportunities to observe a mediator or facilitator at work;

➢ Take the Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory and map your style, then discuss what the presence of different conflict styles means to the coalition;

➢ Look through the resources at the end of this Guide and select from the material what appeals most to your needs and interests.

Much important tobacco control work is accomplished in coalitions[1]. Tobacco control advocates have learned the hard way that working apart from one another is rarely productive. As the tobacco control movement has matured, many coalitions have become quite sophisticated in their abilities to plan and conduct educational and policy campaigns and to generate support for their work.

Failure to work well together can be costly. The less positive side of tobacco control history shows legislators bewildered by competing policy requests, public relations disasters, and advocacy organizations competing with one another.

Failure to work well together can be costly.

We all want the kind of coalitions where relationships are characterized by honesty, by a willingness to listen and to learn, by mutual appreciation of one another's values and needs, by trust, and by high achievement. The dilemma is that, since our coalitions are sometimes not that way, we may feel compelled to act otherwise ourselves. Too many people think: "So they believe that they can silence me? I'll silence them. They don't respect me? I won't respect them. They're not listening to me? I won't listen to them. They don't trust me? Fine - then I don't need to be trustworthy." And when we behave that way, we often become part of the problem and the cycle of escalating, unproductive conflict continues.

Too often, the only alternative we see to such behavior is avoiding conflict or backing down to another's demands. But that can be costly for personal and coalition goals. So the question then becomes, how do I (or my organization) get what I need - legitimate interests and rights - while not being part of the problem? And how do I do my part to create the type of coalition that does work well?

This Guide is intended to help leaders and potential leaders of tobacco control coalitions, coalition members who are concerned with their roles, and people who are facilitating coalition meetings to address conflict in ways that produce strong relationships, effective and powerful coalitions, and creative solutions. This higher ground approach emphasizes high aspirations and principled behavior to help you address differences and conflict in ways that bring people together rather than tear them apart.

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[1] *Some groups use the term "partnership" rather than coalition. For purposes of this document, "coalition" means any type of tobacco control work performed on an ongoing basis with people and groups outside of your own organization.*

The Role of Conflict

How important is conflict in your tobacco control work?

If you work in coalitions– and most of us do – it is safe to say that your coalition has faced, currently faces, or at some time in the future will face challenges due to conflict.

Here are some common conflictual situations faced by tobacco control coalitions around the country:

> **Policy.** Determining priorities over tobacco control tools, such as preemption, excise tax increases, or clean air laws, frequently leads to division.

> **Strategy and tactics.** Many coalitions find that even when agreement exists about policy, differences over strategies, leadership and recognition engender conflict.

> **Integrating new partners.** For many if not most issues, effective tobacco control demands collaboration. Yet at local, state and national levels, there are organizations that have traditionally maintained power over particular aspects of the movement. Other organizations or coalitions may have difficulty breaking into networks with established coalitions.

> **Personality.** A few individuals can monopolize discussions or generate controversy for no apparent reason and hijack the coalition agenda for relatively minor issues.

> **Volunteer/Professional roles and relationships.** Staff time spent on conflict often is significant, particularly in newer coalitions where the trust hasn't been developed among the partners.

> **Funding allocation.** When budgets are shrinking, allocation of assets can generate significant competition. This competition often goes beyond tobacco control circles into other competing programs that are vying for the same pool of resources

Spiral of conflict

Conflict can take up a lot of time and drain personal and institutional resources. Left alone, conflict behavior can become destructive, and destructive behavior can be self-reinforcing and self-escalating. In a matter of minutes it can destroy trust that may have taken months and years to develop. Differences can become intensely personal, and coalitions can fragment and splinter in ways that may take years to remedy.

Conflict in and of itself is neither bad nor good. It is a natural, inevitable part of human interactions. Conflict may be helpful as a revealing expression of

injustices or problems that demand attention. The most obvious example of a necessary conflict is the fight to stop the tobacco industry from addicting young and old in the deadly practices of tobacco use.

Conflict within your tobacco control coalition can be productive if handled well – indeed, it may even be necessary, to "shake dust off of old things," to bring attention to issues that have been ignored, to create energy and commitment, to clarify what really matters. Differences can promote new learning, new ideas, and new involvement.

Potential benefits of conflict include...

✓ Identifying problems and injustices that otherwise might remain hidden;

✓ Improving understanding of the issues that prompted the conflict;

✓ Creating innovative solutions by forcing new ways of conducting business;

✓ Strengthening relationships by demanding long-term engagement;

✓ Improving standards, regulations, and policies by pointing to weaknesses;

✓ Engaging interested parties who may formerly not have been involved;

✓ Building improved coalition capacity to appreciate and deal with differences.

There are some people who believe that collaborative approaches to conflict de-legitimize difference, and that we ought to just let conflict play itself out, or rely upon more formal, rule-based methods of conflict resolution such as arbitration or law. Competitive and adversarial thinking and behavior shape much of our daily life and interaction. From sports, to politics, to law, to traffic we often find ourselves engaging one another as adversaries. Sometimes that is appropriate; again, the conflict with the tobacco industry is the best example. But adversarial procedures within a coalition can create or make worse a number of problems:

➢ There is a win/lose mentality that is blind to possibilities of mutual gain;

➢ Effort is put into beating the opponent instead of getting what is needed;

➢ The focus is on the personalities of opponents rather than important issues;

➢ The more a position is defended, or attacked, the more hardened it becomes, and the less open parties are to exploring other options;

➢ Misunderstanding and miscommunication, problems even in relatively harmless issues, become worse.

But just as adversarial processes can have negative consequences, a half-hearted approach to conflict can mask rather than address differences. Groups ignore or try to conceal conflict at their own risk. Coalition processes must accept the reality of conflict, address rather than deny the initial biases and skepticism of the players, and find realistic ways to overcome barriers and resistance to change. The best coalitions surface the real sources of conflicts so that these can be understood and openly addressed.

Your Task: Preventing, Preparing For, and Transforming Harmful Conflict

When it comes to conflict, as with other matters, leadership makes a difference. Conflict does not need to be allowed to spiral out of control.

Leaders of coalitions should prepare for conflict in three ways:

1. *Preventing unnecessary conflict* - by building strong relationships within and outside of the coalition, based upon clear and shared understanding of roles, purposes, and meeting processes, so that destructive conflict is less likely to occur;

2. *Preparing for conflict* - by anticipating that differences will occur, and devising legitimate ground rules and processes for addressing such differences when they come up; and,

3. *Transforming conflict* - by developing the capacity (shared knowledge, skills, and commitment) to resolve conflict as it occurs.

The Guide is organized in three sections consistent with the three needs above. Following this introduction, Section One contains a description of the types of roles, responsibilities, and basic meeting processes that a coalition might use to ensure a collaboration that avoids unnecessary conflict. Section Two focuses on how groups can develop high aspirations for their behavior and shared expectations for ways of addressing differences when they occur – in other words, how to prepare to handle conflict effectively. Because conflict is inevitable and can be difficult, Section Three describes productive ways of transforming harmful conflicts as they occur.

These sections introduce the basic concepts for each task. A Tools section includes more in-depth explanation of many of these concepts as well as handouts and practical tools. At the end of the Guide you will find a glossary of terms and references and readings for those who might seek additional information or outside expertise.

What Is a Higher Ground Approach?

Reading the title of this Guide – "Reaching Higher Ground: A guide for preventing, preparing for, and transforming conflict for tobacco control coalitions" – you might ask about the meaning of "higher ground." Common

ground" refers to that arena where my self-interest overlaps your self-interest. Finding common ground is often quite useful, and may even be necessary, but it also is often insufficient. Conflicts involve more than clashes of self-interest. Conflicts are also struggles for identity, recognition, power, and status. Most coalitions need to find ways to address conflicts that move beyond finding where participants' self-interests happen to coincide, and which allow those needs to be met as well.

Higher ground is a metaphor for behavior that allows us to bring community out of conflict. It is a place where people treat each other as they themselves wish to be treated, and in so doing, come to new understandings about their shared work, their relationships, and their collective potential. Reaching higher ground[2], then, means developing the strategies, skills and stamina for the journey, and exercising the leadership necessary to guide others to this principled and promising place.
The dimensions of higher ground include:

➢ *Principled ground* - deep commitments to civil behavior that both demonstrate and invite respect, trust, recognition, and relatedness, and that lead to sustainable relationships (relationships not maintained either by coercion or by over-dependence upon rigid rules).

➢ *A refuge* - a safe haven from the personal attacks and discomfort that too often accompany difference.

➢ *New ground* - the discovery of what is yet to be imagined.

➢ *A new and enlarged perspective* - a new view of the whole picture and of how each individual fits within that picture.

➢ *A shared journey* - one that does not leave you alone on the summit looking down on your colleagues, but that is taken with them.

➢ *A challenge* - reaching high is ambitious and a task not to be taken lightly.

➢ *A beacon* - a model and even inspiration for others to follow.

Despite the importance of conflict in tobacco control work, most coalition leaders and members believe that they have insufficient capability to address conflict effectively. That belief is only partially correct. Yes, most of us have experienced situations where conflict derailed plans, hurt feelings, and disrupted or even broke apart coalitions. But any coalition (and any organization) can draw upon the skills and commitment of its members and of outside resources to do better. Read this material, copy it, mark it up, adapt it for your own situation – you can make a difference.

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[2] *Based on* Reaching for Higher Ground in Conflict Resolution, *by E. Franklin Dukes, Marina Piscolish, John Stephens. Jossey-Bass, 2000.*

SECTION ONE Preventing Conflict: The "A-B-C's" of Good Process

It may appear to be a cliché, but group process – the ways that members share information, plan, and make decisions - matters. Coalition success depends upon many factors, and good process cannot guarantee achievement. But bad process – key parties not participating, conflicting purposes and goals, inadequate preparation, ineffective meeting facilitation - almost always guarantees bad outcomes. Worse, bad process erodes confidence in a group and in its leadership. In terms of conflict prevention, fundamental principles of good process such as inclusion, openness, and clarity not only prevent unnecessary conflict but help your coalition begin to build strong relationships and legitimacy.

> Group process - the ways that members share information, plan, and make decisions - matters.

Other resources are available to assist your coalition in developing its institutional mission, by-laws, rules of membership, leadership and committee structure, and so on. These will not be covered here. The focus here is on four elements that are fundamental for preventing conflict and for building consensus within your coalition.

1. Develop clear purposes and goals;

2. Ensure appropriate representation and understanding of roles;

3. Design and conduct effective meetings; and,

4. Build consensus for coalition decisions and coalition work.
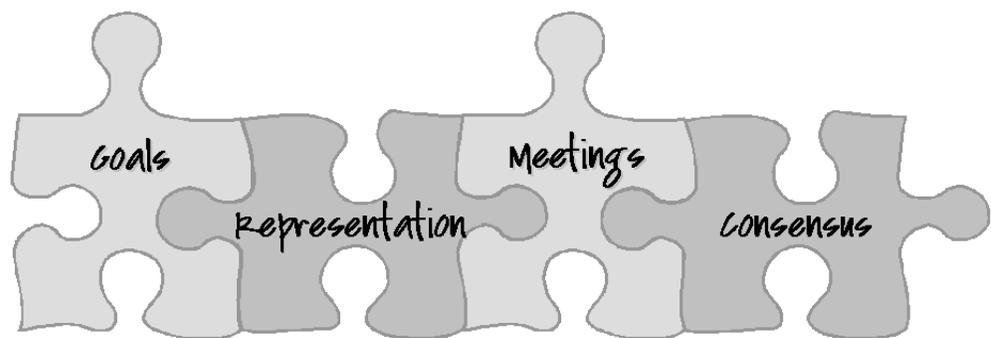
Even in circumstances that seem promising for coalition work, it is common to find difficulties and failures.

Significant problems sometimes found in tobacco control coalitions include...

✓ Insufficient representation of key interests;

✓ Inadequate communication between coalition members and groups they represent;

✓ Lack of clear agreements about coalition membership and roles;

✓ Inadequate funding to provide technical or facilitation assistance;

✓ Lack of preparation and/or process knowledge by the leadership;

✓ Lack of clarity or agreement over purpose and goals for the coalition;

✓ Failure to clarify up front what constitutes agreement among coalition members;

✓ Poor or inconsistent meeting management or facilitation (for instance, allowing one or more loud people to dominate discussion and possibly intimidate others, insufficient knowledge of the topic, bias, inexperience, or lack of competence);

✓ Ambiguous commitment from members to make use of the decisions of the coalition;

✓ Inadequate attention to logistics, such as convenient meeting times and locations.

Many of these problems can be prevented if the coalition follows an essential rule of thumb: begin with the end in mind. What do you want to achieve? How will you determine and measure success? Who needs to be involved, and in what ways, for success to occur? What is needed to give the coalition the best chance for success?

A coalition that takes time to set a clear purpose, shared goals, and strategies to achieve those goals will work more effectively than a coalition that drifts (or, more likely, drags) from issue to issue without any clear direction.

Process elements critical to success

There are several process elements critical to success in collaborative groups that hold for all participants. One researcher has found that the groups are the most successful (defined by qualities such as overall participant satisfaction, perceived legitimacy of any agreements, and implementation of decisions) generally share a significant number of the following characteristics:

✓ They include representatives of all relevant and significantly different interests;

✓ They provide opportunities for participation for all interested parties (urban and rural, people who work during day/night, people with children/parents requiring care, people who don't drive cars, etc.);

✓ They are driven by a purpose that is real, practical, and shared by the group;

✓ They are self-organizing, that is, participants are involved in determining key components of the process;

✓ They follow principles of civil discourse – despite conflict, parties generally are focusing on the problem and not what is wrong with one another;

✓ They adapt and incorporate high quality information as determined at least in part by the participants;

✓ They encourage challenges to assumptions;

✓ They engage participants, keeping them at the table, interested and learning;

✓ They seek consensus only after discussions have fully explored the issues and interests and only after significant effort has been made to find creative responses to differences. (from Judith Innes, 1999)

A successful coalition does not just happen! It takes planning, preparation, commitment, and hard work.

Ensure Diverse Coalition Representation with Clear Membership Roles

Even in non-voting situations, such as might be found in certain advisory or consensus processes, the number and type of representatives makes a difference. That difference can be seen in the types of issues raised, the amount of time spent considering various issues, the weight given particular options, and other group dynamics, as well as the end result. Again, keep the end in mind – if you have a coalition of like-minded people, at best you will miss out on opportunities, and at worst you will generate opposition with other groups.

Balanced and inclusive representation is important for many reasons:

➢ Legitimacy - a coalition that is viewed as representative will have legitimacy that a group that is seen as excluding interests will not have, and coalition decisions less likely to be attacked;

➢ Equity - balanced and diverse representation is inherently fair independent of any practical reasons attached to that representation;

➢ Diversity of interests and ideas - diversity of representation can bring broader knowledge and new ideas and innovation, even if such diversity sometimes makes group functions more difficult;

➢ Accountability – the ability to confer with, and report concerns of, a variety of organizations and constituencies is important for implementation of decisions; and,

➢ Group dynamics - too many like-minded people can cause many problems, including an "us vs. them" attitude and insular thinking.

For a description of important coalition roles and responsibilities, see page A-1, *Coalition Representation, Coalition Roles, and Member Responsibilities*. Also, for those of you working in areas that include tribes, turn to page B-1, *Working With Tribes*, for advice.

Your coalition members should also establish lines of communication with interested groups outside of the coalition. These communications at a minimum will inform these groups about your participation. They could also be something more - a means for outside parties to have input into the process and the actions of those working from the inside. In addition to maintaining good relationships within the tobacco control community, this may reduce the possibility that decisions will be attacked by non-participants: if their interests are known, those interests might be able to be accommodated even though that group is not at the table. Make sure that communication works both ways – members should report back to the coalition results from contacts with potential allies.

CASE EXAMPLE

A local coalition was in the heat of city council meetings and debate over a youth access ordinance. A subcommittee met unsuccessfully several times seeking common ground between the coalition and tobacco retailers who opposed the ordinance. One tobacco retailer approached a coalition leader in private and indicated willingness to work out an agreement for an effective ordinance. The coalition had an Executive Committee that gave permission to visit with the retailer individually. They worked out an agreement and arranged for two coalition members and two retailers to meet at a local park to sign the agreement. They presented it to the city council standing side-by-side. The ordinance passed with the council making one change in the agreed upon document, actually making it a stronger ordinance than anticipated.

Design and Run Effective Coalition Meetings

A cartoon by Pizarro shows an empty auditorium with the meeting chair standing at a podium and a secretary writing notes. The chair is stating, "There has been a motion to study why we have such poor attendance. Do we have a second? Is there any discussion? Can we table this motion to allow for further discussion?" And on and on.

The point of the cartoon is that meetings can become so consumed by over-attention to protocol that they can destroy participation. But meetings can also be made unproductive by an unclear purpose, by insufficient planning and preparation, by poor meeting facilitation, and other deficiencies that we may recognize when it's too late – like in the middle of a meeting!

Whether a three-person coalition committee, a study group, a fifteen-person coalition steering committee meeting, or a session with many dozens or even hundreds of people, there are common principles for developing effective meetings. In order to maximize effectiveness, meeting participants must understand the basis for the meeting and for each portion of the meeting:

➢ What is the purpose of this activity?

➢ What will we be doing?

➢ How much time do we have to do this?

➢ What is my role in this?

Effective meetings incorporate planning, preparation, well facilitated discussion, and follow up. A worksheet outlining the key elements of meeting preparation – planning, pre-meeting arrangements, beginning a meeting, developing ground rules, and more, can be found on page C-1, *Worksheet for Planning and Conducting Effective Meetings* in the Tools section. Information about facilitating and recording a meeting can be found beginning on page D-1, *Coalition Meeting Facilitation*, and E-1, *The Role of "Recorder"*. For coalitions that can afford to do so (and if you are struggling, you need to find the resources!) using an outside facilitator can be helpful; see page D-3, for a set of criteria for when you might go outside the coalition for facilitation services.

Coalitions should allow for periodic evaluation of their work (see page F-1, *General Meeting/Event Evaluation*, for a sample evaluation form for meetings and coalition activity), including an opportunity to raise concerns.

Build Consensus for Important Decisions

Most tobacco control coalitions use parliamentary procedure or some form of it to make decisions. The advantages of such procedures, which typically rely upon Roberts Rules of Order, are shared familiarity with the process, the perception of procedural fairness, and respect for the democratic process.

Majority-minority voting may not be suitable for all decisions.

However, majority-minority voting may not be suitable for all decisions. Significant policy direction, grant proposals, expenditure of funds, hiring staff, and other important decisions may require substantial support (and investment in financial and human resources) by more than a simple majority of coalition members.

People often refer to building consensus as a process of developing sufficient support among competing interests to pass a piece of legislation, to create a new program, or otherwise make a decision or change that is seen as legitimate and able to be implemented successfully.

A more narrow definition of "consensus" that is common to collaborative groups is that of a decision that has been developed in ways that seek to meet the needs and interests of all the group's members. Groups that operate by consensus for major decisions need support from all members for agreement. More importantly, they make a commitment to listen to one another and, by implication, to care for one another. This can make for an incredibly powerful group. However, consensus processes may not be appropriate for all coalitions or for all decisions. See page H-1, *Making Consensus Decisions*, for more information about consensus.

One description of consensus for groups that decide to use consensus decision-making follows:

✓ The agreements meet everyone's key interests in ways better than they can expect from other processes;

✓ Everyone can live with the final agreements without compromising issues of fundamental importance;

✓ Individual portions of the agreement may be less than ideal for some members, but the overall package is worthy of support; and

✓ Individuals will work to support the full agreement and not just the parts they like the best.

Your coalition may choose another way of defining consensus consistent with your own needs.

Consensus decision processes may not work for all coalitions or all situations. Potential disadvantages of consensus processes include:

➢ They may require significant commitment of time and energy;

➢ Decision-making may be much slower;

➢ Peer pressure can develop that results in less than optimal decisions that otherwise would not have occurred; and

➢ A small minority may block decisions that otherwise have significant support.

Note that provisions for decision-making should come before difficult choices are made; otherwise, changes will cause hard feelings and distrust or will simply reflect prevailing power (im)balances. Making these arrangements takes time, but it can be time well spent.

CASE EXAMPLE

One statewide coalition decided that they needed to ensure that attention was being paid to each member's needs and that important decisions had strong levels of support. They arranged a time for a retreat and hired a mediator/facilitator to conduct a training on making decisions by consensus. The concluding exercise allowed them to practice their new decision making skills and methods on a real issue of concern with this experienced facilitator as a resource.

SECTION TWO Preparing for Difference and Conflict: Building Shared Expectations for Higher Ground

Tobacco control coalitions vary in their purposes and duration. They may be permanent groups, such as local and state coalitions that have formal leadership structures, by-laws, and a history that may date back many years. Or they may be informal partnerships drawn together to work on a particular issue (e.g., a tax campaign) for a discrete period of time.

Whichever type of coalition you are involved in, and no matter how well organized and well run your coalition (and meetings) may be, it is important to remember that conflict will occur. Normal and often healthy differences in goals, experience, and commitment can be magnified and result in unproductive conflict by factors such as time pressure, the significance of the issue at stake, or sheer numbers of member organizations.

While conflict is inevitable, you do have choices in how you handle conflict. Unfortunately, many of us wait until choice is limited or until conflict has grown to the point where resolution may be impossible. Smart coalitions will discuss and prepare in advance the ways in which they will address conflict.

Creating Shared Expectations for Addressing Conflict - A Story

One evening after dinner, my nine year-old daughter was struggling with her piano lessons. "Daddy, I NEED you!" she exclaimed. Thrilled to be invited to help my increasingly independent youngest child, I nestled onto the bench next to her ready to impart my wisdom. And five minutes later, my daughter near tears and my blood pressure rising, I rose from the bench in order to give both of us a "time out" from our battle.

What happened?

What happened was the same thing that had happened too frequently the previous few times that I "helped" her with her piano lesson. It was the same thing which happens all too often in coalitions when well-intentioned people find themselves struggling with difficult and contentious issues: we don't have the right rules of engagement - the "ground rules" - to work out our differences. And even when we do work out our differences, too often the ways in which we do so leave us frustrated, alienated from one another, resentful, and in dread of our next confrontation.

It doesn't have to be this way.

This time, after my daughter and I had cooled off for a few minutes, I rejoined her and asked if she would work with me to figure out what we wanted to do. Five minutes later, we had created a set of expectations - our ground rules - about how we would work together on her piano lessons, and we spent the next twenty minutes working together happily and productively.

What mattered for us was less the ground rules we chose than the fact that we created and agreed upon new expectations for how we would treat each other. What did we aspire to in our relationship, and what guidelines would we create that would help us achieve those aspirations? Basically, we decided that when she invites me to help her she will listen to my advice and practice the parts which I suggest she practice; and when she has a complaint or even just a comment, I will listen carefully and not interrupt. Hardly an earthshaking agreement! But powerful enough nonetheless to turn a frustrating experience into a positive one.

Relationships among coalition members are not the same as those between fathers and daughters. But the relationships do matter, and they may matter a lot. Read on for a way of creating these shared expectations in your coalition.

Develop Shared Expectations for Higher Ground

In our book *Reaching for Higher Ground in Conflict Resolution: Tools for Powerful Groups and Communities,* my colleagues John Stephens, Marina Piscolish and I offer an approach to creating shared expectations for principled and productive behavior in groups. The level of effort you need to make in developing these expectations – what are sometimes called *ground rules* or *group covenants*[3] – will depend upon the characteristics of your coalition. For a survey tool that can help you understand your coalition's needs, see page I-1, *Group Characteristics and Level of Effort to Build Shared Expectations for Higher Ground*. Then read on to determine *how* you can create these expectations – guidelines for how you will work together – in partnership with one another. And please note – if your coalition does NOT have significant diversity, or you think the task will be short-term and simple, or your aspirations are low – you most likely need to do this work anyway!

All entities adopt ground rules for member behavior.

All entities adopt ground rules for member behavior. Such ground rules may be explicit, as is the case when a parent tells a child not to interrupt. Or as we have seen, they may be implicit, as in the expectation that you generally will not confront your supervisor directly in front of outsiders. Sometimes these rules are not very productive; sometimes they are downright harmful (see page J-1, *The Unspoken "Rules" of Groups*, for examples of some common implicit, but harmful, ground rules). If you can create explicit,

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[3] *As used here, a covenant refers to a set of promises among coalition members that includes both aspirations and values as well as specific behavioral ground rules for how the group will work together.*

shared agreement about what your expectations are for dealing with differences, and if you can build into those agreements those practices which help you create higher ground, you will find in your differences opportunities for growth, learning, and reinforcement of the bonds which tie you together.

So how do you develop these expectations?

While all coalitions are different and have differing needs, some element of these components likely will be required:

1. Establish the Need
2. Educate And Inspire
3. Begin With A Vision
4. Promote Full Participation
5. Be Accountable
6. Evaluate And Revise

Let's look at each of these components.

1. Establish the Need: Seek understanding and agreement about the need for shared expectations.

The first step you can take is to begin by taking the pulse of your coalition. How do members and allies view your coalition's willingness and ability to work together, to be inclusive, or to address conflict? There are many ways of doing this, ranging from discussion during coalition meetings to confidential telephone interviews. Two tools that can be used to understand how coalition members and other participants view the coalition, *What's Your Coalition's "Participant Involvement Score"?* and the *Conflict Resolution Capacity Inventory* are in the Tools section on page and K-1 and L-1.

2. Educate and Inspire: Offer Time For Reflection And Discussion, Illustrations Of Other Covenants and Ground rules, And Indications Of Commitment From Group Leadership.

If you just sit down together and begin talking without any preparation, you may miss out on ideas that don't get through the filter of group talk. Instead, you might ask people to bring a sheet with four or five ideas already written down, in order to help get discussion started and to begin getting the investment needed to make this work. Or you can bring information from other groups that you work with to share with one another. One basic covenant from an actual group may be found in the Tools section on page M-1, *Sample Group Covenant*; however, be aware that the process of discussing group member's aspirations and needs itself creates bonds that cannot be developed by simply adopting another group's ground rules.

3. Begin With A Vision: Begin By Envisioning The Desired Outcomes For Your Group, Then Develop The Specific Ground rules That Will Allow You To Reach Those Outcomes.

Rules such as "one person speaks at a time" reflect certain values and principles. It is helpful to spell out what those values are so that the rules are, and are seen as, an extension of those values. For example, one value or principle might be "we all have the same right to have their needs and concerns heard and respected"; another might be "managers have final responsibility for decisions affecting safety"; others might consider qualities such as honesty, integrity, and trust.

Consider using the *Worksheet – Aspirations and Ground Rules* in the Tools section on page N-1 or modify it for your own use to help your coalition formulate a set of value-based expectations for how you will work together. Ask people to be as concrete as possible about ways they do and do not like how the coalition works and specific behaviors to help them achieve principled and productive behavior. If this is a new group, invite members to consider their experience in other groups as they describe effective and ineffective groups.

4. Promote Full Participation: Work Actively To Give Each Group Member A Voice In Developing The Ground rules.

Inclusion is a matter both of fairness and practicality. People have different needs, and what is important for one person may not be appropriate for someone else. Individuals who have invested their own ideas and thought in such rules, and who see their investment acknowledged in those rules, are more likely to see value in following those rules. When possible, use the language your group members suggest.

5. Be Accountable: Honor the Agreements You Have Made

Insist on adhering to the principles and rules that you've agreed to, but don't make the rules a weapon! The best way to destroy the effectiveness of your covenant is to use the ground rules as another means of wielding power. Keep the focus on rules as something good for everybody ("Let's see how we can do this the way we agreed to," vs. "You've got to use the rules, dummy!"). Some groups hand out their covenant or ground rules to all new coalition members as part of their membership packet. Others post them along the wall at each meeting.

6. Evaluate and Revise Periodically.

Relationships, concerns, and needs change over time! Be sure to evaluate, modify and recommit as appropriate. Many groups build in a structured evaluation at every meeting (see page F-1, *General Meeting/Event Evaluation*, for an example, which you can modify for your own coalition needs).

SECTION THREE Transforming Conflict When It Occurs

There comes a time when, despite strong planning and your best preparation, good intentions, and commitment, serious differences threaten to harm a meeting, an initiative, or even the existence of the coalition itself.

Different types of responses are appropriate depending upon whether a dispute involves an immediate confrontation or actual direct encounter among disputants is deferred until some other time. The first part of this section addresses the first circumstance. When confronted with a highly emotional conflict, you may not have the luxury of planning how you will resolve the conflict, or developing ground rules. The first thing you need to do is to address the emotions of the moment. Only then can you address the substantive differences (such as policy or budget issues) by what is often called principled negotiation.

> conflict can be hard, but everyone can improve their ability to handle conflict.

The second part of this section describes a range of approaches for transforming conflict when time for planning and preparation is available. The most effective coalitions have a system of conflict resolution processes that provide backup when one approach fails.

This section concludes with some direction about dealing with difficult people, along with a caution that many people who are labeled 'difficult' have useful ideas and other strengths that make them worthy of consideration.

Some people seem to be born with an ability to work through conflict; others want only to avoid any controversy, or feel as though they get stuck in a mess with no way out. Conflict can be hard, but everyone can improve their ability to handle conflict. Ways that you and other coalition members can develop your own skills include:

➢ Come to coalition meetings prepared to listen and learn;

➢ Take training in conflict mediation;

➢ Bring in an outside facilitator to train the coalition;

➢ Ask for opportunities to observe a mediator or facilitator at work;

➢ Distribute the Kraybill Personal Conflict Style Inventory (on page O-4) and have coalition members map their styles, then discuss what the presence of different conflict styles means to the coalition;

➢ Look through the resources at the end of this Guide and select from the material what appeals most to your needs and interests.

Respond to Intense Emotions

Conflict by its nature often brings with it intense emotions, including sadness, hostility, frustration, and fear. But conflict and strong emotions are a normal part of being human, and you need not and should not attempt to avoid intense emotions. On the other hand, you are not offering coalition members therapy, and you do not want to allow your coalition goals to be overwhelmed by emotional barriers.

You will usually find that continuing active listening will allow a healthy expression of emotions.

You will usually find that continuing active listening (see page P-1, *Active Listening and Paraphrasing: Reflecting Facts & Feelings*) will allow a healthy expression of emotions. This expression contributes to an honest portrayal of any differences and may even offer opportunities for progress. But there may be times when you find an escalation of emotional intensity which threatens the process or even risks becoming physical confrontation.

There are strategies that help protect against such harmful escalation of emotions. Strategies for handling intense emotions include:

➢ **Acknowledge the emotion** - A simple statement such as "this is hard for you" affirms that the feeling is understood and accepted. When conflict occurs and emotions get heated, *never* simply move on to another topic without some acknowledgment of what people are saying and feeling, no matter how uncomfortable you or others may be or how much you may wish to avoid intense emotions.

➢ **Allow venting** - If one or more parties is obviously upset, an opportunity to vent may be appropriate and necessary. If other participants appear restless, you may make a quiet comment along the lines of "This is important, let's listen carefully before anyone responds."

➢ **Allow silence** - Similarly, you should not rush to fill an "empty" space. An individual may benefit from the opportunity for a time of silence, to regain composure, to collect thoughts, or for other purposes.

➢ **Call attention to the emotional intensity**, and explore whether the behavior that arouses these emotions is an issue that participants need to address - In some circumstances, the way certain individuals interact with one another may be a key or even the key issue for them. In such cases, a demonstration of how these emotions are aroused - the "buttons" that get pushed - can provide an opportunity to address their interaction.

➢ **Remind participants of their agreement to follow the ground rules** - When appropriate, such as when parties are interrupting one another, or using abusive language, or engaging in other behavior that violates agreed ground rules, a firm reminder

that the parties agreed to behave differently is often effective.

➢ **"Launder" inflammatory and provocative language** - Accusations, sarcasm, put downs, and other inflammatory verbal tactics or "dead end" language that doesn't necessarily constitute a violation of the ground rules may nonetheless get out of hand. While you do not want to put words in anyone's mouth, you can choose to focus on the concerns and interests underlying such language in situations such as these.

➢ **Call a "time out" to allow for emotions to cool down** - If you or someone you notice is having a hard time dealing with the emotions that are surfacing you may want just to take a break. Be sensitive to the needs of the participants; you might ask if they would like to break, or remind them that they can break at any time.

➢ **Call a caucus** (a break to meet privately with an individual or small group) - It may help you deal with the emotions of one or more individuals separately and in private.

Engage In Principled Negotiation

Along with acknowledging and addressing emotions, you need to be able to address the substantive issues involved in the conflict. Principled negotiation refers to an alternative to forcing or just giving in that seeks gains for all parties involved.

> Principled negotiation allows an individual to confront both hard and soft bargainers...

Roger Fisher and William Ury in *Getting to Yes* (1981) observed that most people adopt one of two negotiating strategies when confronting a conflict: hard or soft. Hard bargainers see other participants as adversaries. Tactics include demands for concessions, application of pressure, and concealment or even deception about one's own interests and concerns. Soft bargainers, on the other hand, will accept unfavorable agreements as a necessary price for keeping a relationship or avoiding open conflict.

Fisher and Ury propose an alternative to the bargaining used in both strategies: principled negotiation. Principled negotiation allows an individual to confront both hard and soft bargainers in ways that protect one's own interests while understanding, and attempting to meet, the interests of others. The key elements of principled negotiation follow:

Pursue interests

Avoid getting stuck on stated positions, demands, or premature solutions. Explore the underlying interests of each party. Do not assume that each party's interests are known and understood.

> **CASE EXAMPLE**
>
> *Two organizations were arguing over who would conduct a press conference to announce a new excise tax campaign. Their positions were incompatible – each wanted to make the announcement. But further discussion that focused upon their actual interests revealed that one group was most interested in offering their new director, who had been recently criticized in the news media, some favorable publicity. The other group wanted to make sure that the coalition as a whole received credit for the campaign. Knowing their true interests, the coalition was able to make an arrangement that satisfied both sets of interests.*

Focus on relationships

Distinguish individuals from problems; disagreement does not have to become a sign of animosity. Some people term this "Be soft on people, hard on the problem". Acknowledge the meaning individuals attach to their concerns.

> **CASE EXAMPLE**
>
> *One coalition member had a reputation for being difficult. The new coalition executive director made a practice of inviting this member to explain her views and always to offer respectful consideration of those views, including an explanation whenever they disagreed. They were able to keep a cordial relationship and the director's approach served as a model for other members to deal with this individual.*

Invent options for mutual gain

Separate decision making from idea generation. The former requires objective criteria; the latter, creativity unfettered by constraints.

> **CASE EXAMPLE**
>
> *A meeting between public health professionals and tobacco farm leaders included a brainstorming session about ways to cooperate. After the group appeared to be out of ideas, the facilitator asked them individually to write down additional ideas. Their final agreement included three or four of those last set of ideas.*

Develop objective criteria

Pursue agreement about principles, procedures, and standards, and then seek solutions that meet those criteria.

> **CASE EXAMPLE**
>
> *Representatives from a group of several states with low excise taxes were determining a regional goal for a tax campaign. They were able to secure a figure for the national average for state cigarette excise taxes. They agreed that this figure would serve as a minimum target for each state.*

Provide a Range of Conflict Resolution Options

If you have some time to address an ongoing conflict, it is helpful to have developed what conflict analysts call conflict resolution systems. Such a system is nothing more than a range of methods and processes for addressing conflicts as they get progressively more harmful, more complex, or as they spiral more out of control. Such a system can be a tool for helping members understand that there are ways of resolving conflict, that conflict is taken seriously, and that your coalition has a set of procedures in place for doing this equitably.

The SmokeLessStates program requires its grant recipients to develop a plan for addressing conflicts. That's smart!

The following continuum of conflict resolution approaches is typical of what a coalition might develop for its conflict resolution system. You may wish to see page Q-1, *A Continuum of Approaches to Conflict,* for a more complete description of these various system components.

➢ Conflict Prevention refers to effective governance and meeting procedures, as described in Section One.

➢ Face-to-Face Discussion (Positive Confrontation) requires a norm that direct communication is normal and positive and the commitment to confront one another with respect.

➢ Informal Conciliation can be used when one or more members of the coalition offers to serve as a go-between when differences become personal.

➢ Third-Party Mediation may be necessary when conflict is significant and when coalition members might be seen as partial or having too much at stake in the issues.

➢ Voluntary Arbitration refers to the use of an independent third-party to make a decision. It would only be useful for issues where all parties agree that a decision is necessary and that they are willing to live with whatever is decided.

➢ Enforcement (legal or legislative) of bylaws through penalties may need to be used as a last resort. However, having clear consequences spelled out (for instance, when members might need to be replaced for missing a certain number of coalition meetings) can help avoid conflict over what is fair and what is not.

Deal With Difficult People And Situations

Be wary when you hear complaints about how "difficult" individuals are. One person's definition of "difficult" may be another's definition of "principled." And that person may be you!

Any coalition needs to develop "mediative leadership" to be successful. These leaders begin with credibility within their own constituency because of their long-time dedication to a particular cause. That credibility may have cost them a label as "troublemaker" or worse within their adversaries' camp. But they may well be the person or persons on the "other side" whom you most need to engage. Mediative leaders are open-minded enough to be willing to listen to people with other views and have sufficient status to encourage others within their own camp to do the same. People in this role offer solutions that meet their own and other participants' needs.

Of course, there may well be times during a coalition process when you must deal with individuals who are belligerent for the sake of their own ego, or who are deceptive, or who are otherwise unprincipled. The best way of dealing with those individuals is to ensure that group norms support more positive types of behavior. A group that develops and practices norms of inclusivity and openness, of high quality scientific or technical information, of effective and balanced representation, of challenges to unproven assumptions, of recognition of a public good, and of integrity, can and does isolate those who control or seek to control by exclusion, secrecy, and assertions of ideology in order to pursue their own interests.

Avoid inflammatory and self-serving behaviors such as labeling, name calling, blanket generalizations, and other behaviors that bother you when they are done to you. Tit for tat is juvenile and counterproductive. Conversely, ignoring remarks or avoiding a conflict is only appropriate in rare circumstances, because it can set off a round of dysfunction and behind-the-back (mis)communication.

Instead, encourage positive confrontation and, when conflict occurs, principled negotiation. Return explicitly to your ground rules, engage people with respect, and encourage others to do the same. Work to rebuild trust. You may not be able to resolve all conflicts but your efforts will eventually bear fruit.

Actions that generate trust include:

✓ Make only those promises that you know you can keep (such as providing certain kinds of information, or offering a certain level of participation), and then keep those promises;

✓ Demonstrate through authentic listening that you are interested in meeting others' needs and concerns as well as your own;

✓ Assert consistently and openly your own values and goals and why you hold them;

✓ Raise the question of trust and explain its meaning and importance to you when you perceive violations of good faith;

✓ Be willing to admit when you are wrong;

✓ When faced with serious differences, focus on "doable" issues (such as joint field trips, review of existing information about key issues, or developing a plan for a non-controversial policy) and don't bite off more than you or the coalition can chew;

✓ Contribute in a variety of ways to the coalition, whether through information, stories, meeting space, or refreshments; and

✓ Develop and live by realistic and principled ground rules.

Higher Ground Tools

This section includes more in-depth explanations of many of the Higher Ground concepts as well as handouts and practical tools.

Feel free to copy and distribute these tools as you see fit. Note that I-1, M-1, and N-1 are copyrighted materials reprinted with the publisher's permission and copyright laws apply to those materials.

Coalition Representation, Coalition Roles, and Member Responsibilities

Coalitions may decide to have different types of representation. These include:

➢ A full or *voting* member (even though some coalitions may work by *consensus*) is a participant who will be directly involved in making decisions as part of the coalition.

➢ A *resource* member would typically be someone who participates regularly to provide some sort of expertise. Resource members would not vote or, in the case of consensus processes, participate in consensus decisions.

➢ A *convenor* is responsible for bringing together the participants and may have responsibility for implementing any decision. Depending upon circumstances, convenors may also serve as voting members or resource members.

➢ An *alternate* member would be one who can take part in decisions when the regular member is absent, and may attend meetings regularly as well.

➢ A *facilitator* advocates for a fair and effective process but takes no stand on any substantive decisions. The facilitator may also serve as a *recorder* for taking meeting notes or another individual may assume that role.

➢ An *observer* would be a representative from a constituency that either has decided not to participate or that was not invited, but wants to monitor the process.

Your group may need other categories - be inventive but be clear. Put together written descriptions for these categories so that people are not confused and the rules are clear to all.

It is also important that each coalition representative understands membership duties and roles. Basic duties (and advice) for members include the following:

➢ Take adequate time to invest in developing ground rules for behavior in the group;

➢ Report progress of discussions to the organizations you represent, and ensure that others are doing the same;

➢ Share fully the concerns and ideas of your organization with the coalition;

➢ Be prepared for difficulties with repeated cycles of ups and downs and even apparent impasse – coalition work can be hard!;

➢ Be candid and assertive in sharing your interests and concerns, but make sure that you invite others do the same;

➢ Ensure that others are listening to, and understand, your views;

➢ Ensure that you listen, and fully understand, the views of others;

➢ A sense of humor helps you and others work through difficulties;

➢ Prepare between meetings – don't just show up.

Your coalition may have other specific needs for roles and responsibilities. Again, be clear, be consistent, and be flexible.

Reaching Higher Ground: A guide for preventing, preparing for, and transforming conflict for tobacco control coalitions

A-1

Working With Tribes

For areas of the country where tribal interests are an issue, special preparation needs to be made. Recognize that tribes have sovereign governmental status, and many policy decisions are shaped by treaty and federal and tribal policy. Participation in a coalition process raises questions of how sovereignty might be affected.

New Mexican mediator Lucy Moore offers the following advice concerning tribal engagement in collaborative processes:

➢ Approach the tribe with respect. Remember that tribes and their traditions differ, and be prepared for different encounters and experiences.

➢ Understand that tribal governments may have very different operating principles and structures from those we are used to. You will need to understand the nature of the government, and its accountability to its members, in order to work together successfully.

➢ Clarify. If you are confused or don't understand, say so. Don't be shy. Make sure you leave understanding what the tribe needs, and that they understand what you need.

➢ Be prepared to make a mistake. We inevitably make mistakes with each other. If you are willing to listen and learn from them, chances are you will be easily forgiven.

➢ Be patient. Keep pursuing a better understanding, a better relationship.

➢ Understand the stress on modern tribes. They are pulled in many directions at once, and the leadership has enormous demands placed on them. Where we may wear one or two hats in our work life, a tribal leader may wear five or six.

➢ Adjust your process in ways that accommodate tribal needs and customs.

Recognize also that most tribes have histories of broken promises and treaties from the United States. It is inevitable that these experiences - even if all participants are long gone - will have some impact on the incentive of the tribal community to participate, and on their approach to the process or other parties. As is true of any group unfamiliar to you, the best way to understand their concerns, values, and needs is to speak with, listen to, and learn directly from tribal representatives themselves.

Worksheet for Planning and Conducting Effective Meetings

NOTE: These are items to consider; not all elements may need to be included for every meeting. Adjust and adapt this to your coalition needs as appropriate.

1) Planning

☐ Clear purpose and goals shared by group members
☐ Relevant meeting agenda
☐ Sufficient attendance and participant involvement

2) Pre-meeting arrangements

☐ Meeting announcement(s) and/or invitations with directions prepared and distributed
☐ Pre-meeting and meeting handouts prepared
☐ Location and setting secured with considerations such as:
    ☐ Access
    ☐ Parking
    ☐ Safety
    ☐ Sound system
    ☐ Seating (equal opportunity to speak and be heard, comfort)
    ☐ Refreshments
    ☐ Displays and/or presentation technology (video, powerpoint, overhead)
    ☐ Recording (flip chart, computer, tape)
    ☐ Sign-in list
    ☐ Media presence
    ☐ Participant information

3) Beginning the meeting

☐ Means of identification (nametags, place names)
☐ Clarifying purpose and goals
☐ Icebreakers (e.g., good thing which happened today, earliest memory, introduce each other in teams).

4) Ground rules

☐ Meeting behavior (e.g., avoid personal attacks, listen)
☐ Behavior outside of meeting (e.g., dealing with news media)
☐ Attendance/absence
☐ Means of decision-making (e.g., consensus, majority vote).

5) Agenda

☐ Appropriate consultation to develop the agenda
☐ Opportunity during meeting to consider and alter a proposed agenda
☐ Time allocation for various items
☐ Amount of flexibility (permission to change items)
☐ Visual display of agenda (handouts, flip chart)

6) Key components of meeting facilitation

- ☐ Determining meeting roles
  - ☐ Facilitator
  - ☐ Recorder
  - ☐ Process Observer
  - ☐ Timekeeper
  - ☐ Other
- ☐ Focusing discussion
- ☐ Encouraging participation
- ☐ Providing recognition and legitimacy (record comments)
- ☐ Active listening
- ☐ Clarifying
- ☐ Summarizing
- ☐ Problem solving (identify problem, generate options, make choice)

7) Evaluation *(See sample evaluation worksheet on page F-1)*

- ☐ Evaluation format (written, oral)
- ☐ Evaluation focus (substance, process, personal behavior)
- ☐ Sequence (what worked, what didn't, what could be changed).

8) Closing

- ☐ Opportunity for final member comments
- ☐ Opportunity for public (non-member) comments
- ☐ Brief summary of discussion
- ☐ Summarize follow-up duties
- ☐ Thank-you's
- ☐ Closing rituals.

9) Follow-up

- ☐ Preparation and distribution of a meeting summary
- ☐ Follow-up reminders

Coalition Meeting Facilitation

Planning and running effective meetings is a critical element of effective coalition work. Surprisingly, many coalitions give insufficient thought to how meetings are run. Many coalitions have chairs who assume meeting facilitation duties whether or not they have any interest or skills in those directions.

Give this issue some attention! Most members understand the difference between a poor meeting and one that accomplishes coalition goals efficiently and effectively.

Below you will find a description of facilitator duties, ways to determine whether you need an independent facilitator, and ideas for choosing a facilitator from inside or outside the coalition.

Facilitator Duties

General facilitator duties include the following:

➢ Ensuring a common understanding of the goals of the meeting;

➢ Keeping discussion focused upon the intended subject;

➢ Maintaining a productive, safe climate for contributions by all members, including protecting group members from personal attack;

➢ Honoring the agenda by calling attention to any deviations in previously agreed time frames or subjects for discussion;

➢ Encouraging participation by less vocal members;

➢ Ensuring that participants understand the discussion, and seeking clarification where they do not;

➢ Uncovering hidden or unpopular issues;

➢ Ensuring that all assignments, deadlines, and other agreed expectations are understood by those with responsibility.

Suggestions for the facilitator include:

➢ Occasionally check with the group about how the meeting is going;

➢ Summarize the results periodically;

➢ If one portion of the meeting is running longer than planned, note this discrepancy to the group. They can decide the value of taking more time for this portion or moving along;

➢ Ask for an evaluation of the process (and your facilitation skills, if you desire) at the end of the meeting, if appropriate;

➢ Launder offensive language (i.e., in response to a comment such as "you jerk" directed from one group member to another, you might interrupt by asking "You have some problems with X; perhaps you could explain them in a way which we all can understand";

➢ Creating a safe climate does not mean squelching differences

➢ Give preference to people who have spoken little or not at all;

➢ Do not let any one individual or clique dominate the meeting;

➢ If the group is stuck, you can always table a subject and move on.

Do We Need an Outside Facilitator?

Not every coalition (or coalition meeting) will require a professional outside facilitator. Coalitions where conflict is relatively low and the meeting process is not terribly demanding can be managed capably by a group chair or one or more group members. Where resources are tight, a coalition may not have the option of bringing in an outside facilitator.

Unlike a group or committee chair, who is responsible for the meeting process but who also might interject opinion, recommendations, or motions for a vote, a facilitator focuses only on keeping the process on track. In any project where a controversy may arise, it is worth considering whether an independent facilitator might help the group to be more effective.

Using an independent facilitator allows all of the group's members to be actively engaged in issues without having to be concerned with running meetings. The role of chair is a leadership role, and the exercise of authority is not always consistent with the need to ensure full participation or fully consider a range of options. Even a talented individual, who by virtue of background and ability can "wear two hats," may not be perceived as fair by other coalition members.

There are a number of advantages to having a facilitator from outside the group guide the group process. These include:

➢ Bringing out ideas from people who may otherwise stifle them out of fear of rejection by the leadership;

➢ Allowing a chair to devote full attention to the substance of the meeting, rather than to the process of running it;

➢ Address and deal with emotional issues as an independent and impartial participant rather than a member.

Facilitation duties vary depending upon the kind of meeting. For instance, in some cases the coalition will determine the design of the agenda at the beginning of the meeting itself, while in other circumstances the agenda will be set beforehand. Some meetings will require active intervention, such as ensuring that one or more members do not dominate discussion at the expense of others' participation, while others will not. A facilitator and the group should have a shared understanding going into a meeting about what is expected; if not, the first task (and preferably before the meeting begins) is to get agreement on these expectations.

 In your coalition, the facilitator may need to work closely with coalition leadership in many ways, such as helping identify possible representatives, setting an initial agenda for meetings, finding meeting space, and so on. However, they should not be letting anyone from that leadership control the process through them. Facilitators should not be promoting a particular outcome or advocating for any particular parties. Nor should they be promoting any particular member's agenda. Rather, they should be advocates for a fair and effective *process*.

When do you need to go outside of our coalition for facilitation support?

✓ When you do not have an individual or individuals with the skills and experience to run your meetings effectively and impartially.

✓ When all coalition members need to participate actively in coalition discussions and decision-making.

✓ When difficult issues are anticipated and facilitation skills may be necessary to work through the issues.

✓ When conflict beyond ordinary differences of opinions has been experienced or is anticipated.

Facilitators have a duty to:

➢ Advocate for principles of collaboration, including fair representation;

➢ Protect the confidentiality of private communications;

➢ Develop ground rules supported by all participants, and enforce them impartially;

➢ Address actions of bad faith or perceived bad faith;

➢ Advise the parties when the process is not meeting its objectives;

➢ Disclose any continuing or frequent contractual relationships with any of the participants;

➢ Withdraw if the group no longer supports their role; and

➢ Withdraw if the sponsor persists in controlling the process.

They should not:

➢ Participate in processes that are intended to circumvent legal requirements or whose purpose has been misrepresented;

➢ Advocate for any participant's position;

➢ Allow the sponsor or funder to control the process through them.

Using an Internal Facilitator

What about the case where the coalition lacks the desire or resources to hire a facilitator but still wants someone from outside the coalition for that role?

One option is to seek volunteer facilitators from civic organizations or a local college not directly involved in the issues under discussion. Many communities have community mediation centers who can provide assistance for little or no cost.

Another option is to have a staff person from a coalition member or ally to serve as facilitator. While involvement with an organization or issue does not mean that an individual cannot be impartial, staff may also have a professional, emotional, or legal stake in an issue

that needs to be fully explored before that staff person assumes the facilitator role. The key is that the facilitator and the group clarify their expectations about what their roles will be.

If you need to use facilitation from coalition members, these tips might be helpful:

➢ Choose a facilitator who can be impartial for the project or issue at hand;

➢ Rotate facilitation duties among participants (while recognizing that people have different skills, and not all people are suited for facilitation);

➢ Ensure that the facilitator has sufficient training and knowledge;

➢ Articulate clearly which duties are the responsibility of the facilitator and which are not;

➢ Take time during or at the end of meetings to debrief the facilitation process;

➢ Consider co-chairs or co-facilitators of the coalition, with one representative from each of two major competing interests;

➢ Have another individual handle recording duties for when you are using a flip chart;

➢ Have a backup facilitator in case volunteer facilitators need to recuse themselves.

In general, if a facilitator is fair, good-natured, and non-judgmental, people will welcome a certain amount of facilitation leadership. And remember: if you are facilitating, it is not your role to criticize ideas, to vote with group members, or to make any unilateral decisions. If you must do so, you need to make clear that you are stepping outside of our facilitation role either for a certain period of time or, if necessary, for the rest of the meeting.

Facilitators are human and make mistakes; the best ones work to create a climate of openness where the parties feel free to make suggestions, critique the process, and otherwise assume increasing responsibility for the direction of the group.

The Role of "Recorder"

The recorder is an individual who is responsible for maintaining a record of a meeting. There are two kinds of recorders, serving two different functions. The typical recorder takes notes and writes a report after the meeting. This report is then distributed to participants and other interested parties as minutes or as a "sense of the meeting." The recorder may be the secretary of the group, a group member, or an assistant of some sort. Depending upon who is recording, this recorder may or may not contribute to the substance of the meeting.

The second kind of recorder is used to keep the "group memory." The group memory is a visual record of the meeting, continually displayed (usually on flip charts) for the group as the meeting unfolds. While aiding the group during the meeting, this record may also be used when writing up the meeting summary. Sometimes a member of the group, or even the facilitator, acts as recorder; however, it is usually more effective to have as recorder someone not actively involved in the work of the group.

There are many advantages to keeping a visible group memory. Some of these are:

➢ The group memory is subject to group review, unlike individual notes, and is therefore more accurate and less subject to individual quirks of memory or interest;

➢ It guarantees as much as is possible that participants share a common understanding of what is happening;

➢ It provides an easy means of tracking how decisions were made;

➢ It accounts for decisions, plans, tasks, and responsibilities;

➢ It provides a physical focus for attention;

➢ The visual display allows ideas to be represented graphically;

➢ Since all contributions are recorded, participants are given a sense of being heard;

➢ Participants can pay more attention to the meeting since they are not preoccupied with writing their own notes;

➢ The immediate, visible record can be referred to later in the meeting;

➢ It is a useful reference for writing minutes.

The recorder's duties will vary, depending upon the type of meeting. Some discretion is necessary. For instance, when a group is setting expectations for a meeting, it is certainly appropriate to include the name of each individual next to their expectations. On the other hand, there are many times when there is no need to identify individual contributors, for instance, during a fast-moving brainstorming session.

In general, the following are considered functions of the recorder:

➢ Writing main points of the discussion in plain view of the group;

➢ Keeping a sequential record of the discussion;

➢ Ensuring that all decisions--agreements, plans, and tasks--are accurately recorded;

➢ When necessary, recording who made particular contributions;

➤ When using newsprint (as opposed to overhead projectors or computer-generated video), placing filled sheets within view, accessible for review.

Suggestions for the recorder:

➤ Write legibly, in large letters;

➤ Whenever possible, write down ideas or comments in participants' own words;

➤ Number each sheet;

➤ If uncertain about what you have heard, or about the meaning of a term or phrase, ask for clarification;

➤ If you get too far behind, ask for a break to catch up;

➤ Highlight key areas, such as assignments (star, circle, underline, use different colored markers);

➤ Pay special attention to the assignments, i.e., who is to do what, by which date;

➤ Remember: you are not there to evaluate! You are there to assist the group.

General Meeting/Event Evaluation

Circle one number that best reflects your experience.

		strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	in-between	somewhat agree	strongly agree
1.	We had sufficient preparation for this meeting. *Comments:*	1	2	3	4	5
2.	We addressed the agenda. *Comments:*	1	2	3	4	5
3.	We worked for clear and productive outcomes. *Comments:*	1	2	3	4	5
4.	We honored our group covenant. *Comments:*	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Participants were respectful of cultural differences. *Comments:*	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The coalition managed differences productively. *Comments:*	1	2	3	4	5

Comments and suggestions:

Coalition/Campaign Evaluation

Please circle the number that best matches your level of agreement with each statement.

The Outcome	strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	in-between	somewhat agree	strongly agree
I support the project's final recommendations.	1	2	3	4	5
The final recommendations address all key issues.	1	2	3	4	5

Working Relationships	strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	in-between	somewhat agree	strongly agree
The process improved communication among key parties.	1	2	3	4	5
The process helped build trust among participants.	1	2	3	4	5
I improved my understanding about the issues and others' views and values.	1	2	3	4	5

Quality of the Process	strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	in-between	somewhat agree	strongly agree
Everyone who wanted to participate had a fair chance to do so.	1	2	3	4	5
Everyone had access to the information needed to make good decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
Participants had a say in how the process was run.	1	2	3	4	5
Stakeholders were able to review and comment on the process and outcome.	1	2	3	4	5
The process was efficient. It was time and money well spent.	1	2	3	4	5

Quality of the Participants	strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	in-between	somewhat agree	strongly agree
The Coalition staff provided adequate support.	1	2	3	4	5
The facilitation team provided sufficient support.	1	2	3	4	5
Coalition members participated effectively.	1	2	3	4	5

Additional Comments and Suggestions

1. What were the best parts of the Coalition's process?

2. What were the worst/most difficult parts of this Coalition work?

3. How could this Coalition work be improved?

Making Consensus Decisions

The most common argument for consensus processes is that they can moderate the majority/minority dynamic that develops in voting groups. Consensus requires meeting the needs of each member of the group, a requirement that forces groups to seek creative solutions that might not occur otherwise. Consensus processes not only change how a group makes a decision; they change how groups approach problems.

Consensus processes can be powerful, but they are useful only to the extent that participants fully understand and value the requirements of the process. Reasons for the use of consensus decision processes include:

➢ Participants who will have some responsibility for implementing agreements need a say in decisions;

➢ It is important to get all parties to the table, and individual participants who might be skeptical of working with opponents or those they don't know are reassured by having effective veto power over any decisions;

➢ Group members know that they need to attempt to satisfy the needs of all participants;

➢ Minority views which may have been summarily dismissed need to be given real consideration;

➢ A norm of responsibility for the group may be enhanced; and

➢ As a practical matter, decisions with broad-based support are more likely to be implemented.

Consensus decision processes require:

➢ Time, stamina, and sufficient resources to provide high-quality information;

➢ Active participation and commitment of group members to the process;

➢ Willingness to resolve conflicts by all participants;

➢ Communication skills: listening, conflict resolution, discussion facilitation; and

➢ Creative thinking and open-mindedness.

Consensus groups may find members being pressured to "go along to get along" when doing so would be counter to their interests. Ways of responding to pressure for consensus include the following:

➢ Allow (and require) each participant to provide a clear explanation of their experience and concerns;

➢ Acknowledge the distinction between obstinacy and opposition. *Obstinacy* is an unwillingness to listen to other views and consider other options. That is very different from *principled opposition*, which is an unwillingness to compromise fundamental values and goals;

➢ Request the facilitator or another respected group member for assistance in addressing any pressures.

> **Even groups that work primarily by consensus may find situations that are best handled through other forms of decision-making. Some options include:**
>
> ➢ Use a "must persuade one other" rule: in order to "block" a decision that has been discussed sufficiently, you must persuade one other group member to join in a dissent;
>
> ➢ Use a "super-majority" of some pre-determined figure (60, 70, 80%) to make decisions (but beware that you don't set up a particular set of interests to be outvoted time and again);
>
> ➢ Allow for voting on certain measures that are less significant and full consensus (full group approval) on others;
>
> ➢ Allow consensus recommendations to be broken down by level of agreement, i.e., denote in an overall agreement any portions that are not acceptable by certain individuals.

Behaviors to Build Consensus *versus Creating Opposition*

Many coalitions develop problems despite their best intentions. Following is a set of principles that can help build legitimacy and support for the coalition. These are counter-posed against typical behaviors that leaders of organizations may undertake with the best of intentions, but which often generate opposition instead of support. These general principles are followed by a set of specific behaviors during meetings that also represent best practices counter-posed against common flawed behaviors.

1. Offer Access to Information *vs. Limit Flow of Information*
When information is limited or slow to be revealed, the assumption of stakeholders is not that leaders know best, but that they are hiding something they don't want others to know. Constraints on information create confusion, contribute to uncertainty, and exacerbate any previous suspicion and antagonism individuals or groups might have about the coalition. Coalition leadership that becomes known for prompt responses to requests for information and for encouragement of access to its records and meetings will have a reserve of legitimacy when it makes mistakes or deals with sensitive issues.

It is particularly important to clarify how decisions get made - who is doing what, how issues will be addressed, what opportunities for involvement exist, and when decisions will be made and implemented.

2. Involve Immediately, Offer Adequate Time vs. Delay and Impose Unjustified Deadlines
Too often coalitions wishing to avoid controversy delay opportunities for involving members or allies until those affected by proposed plans have no recourse other than protest or disengagement. Certainly, decisions often need to made quickly, not only to meet legislative, administrative, funding, or other deadlines, but to address problems promptly and to deal with issues when people and organizations are most willing to be engaged. But early deadlines and time limits can heighten uncertainty and increase suspicion about the

motivations of parties responsible for those time constraints. Such suspicion is heightened when an issue is controversial and/or the coalition has a reputation for imposing unreasonable time pressures.

When deadlines are necessary they should be announced and publicized as far in advance as possible, and at any rate as soon as they are decided. The reasons for those deadlines should be made clear. Concerns about timing should not be dismissed out of hand, and when possible they should be addressed in ways responsive to the concerned parties.

3. Begin With Needs, Encourage Options vs. Begin With a Solution, Limit Options

Leaders often will propose a plan of action or a limited number of options in order to get discussion started. But stakeholders presented with a single solution or a limited range of options often assume that their input is not wanted or valued. By beginning with a statement of need and encouraging the generation of options, issues are less likely to become polarized into "yes/no, either/or" situations.

4. Be Inclusive Vs. Limit Participation and Exclude

Exclusion of individuals or groups from decision-making processes not only gives an impression of secrecy and fosters a sense of victimization, it wastes the potential ideas and support those excluded might bring. And inclusivity means more than merely having open meetings; it may mean targeting special groups for mailings or other forms of publicity, bringing meetings to where interested parties are, and repeated efforts to encourage involvement despite obstacles.

5. Focus on Issues and Respect Dignity vs. (De)-Personalize Opposition

The standard response to criticism is to characterize it as obstructionist and blame it on the personal failings of those voicing concern. And all too often the next step down the path to an all-out conflict is to demonize all opposition.

One can acknowledge the meaning and importance of an issue to individuals or groups who voice concern without agreeing with those concerns. Seeking to clarify and understand the sources of concern may well uncover a basis for new learning and agreement. At worst, treating both critics and supporters with courtesy will model and encourage appropriate behavior for both groups. At best, it will earn respect and trust for you and your organization.

6. Accept Responsibility vs. Blame Others for Troubles

While common excuses for the weaknesses or failures of plans and programs may have elements of truth, they do not lead to improved performance and they create a perception of weakness and immaturity. Accepting responsibility does not have to mean that you are to blame, but that you will do what is necessary to get the job done.

7. Create Culture of Openness, Inclusion, Creativity, Respect vs. Make This Business as Usual

The best way to destroy personal and institutional legitimacy is to practice consistently these arts of secrecy, defensiveness, rationalization, deception and animosity. The best, and only, way to develop trust is to be trustworthy – it sounds trite, but say what you will do and then do what you say.

Meeting Conduct To Build Consensus *Versus* Creating Opposition

1. Listen Carefully vs. Be Inattentive
There are two problems with people who make a habit out of not paying attention to others. The first problem is that they risk not learning what it is someone else has to offer. The second problem is that they convey a message either of disrespect or disinterest (or both!).

Active listening - checking to make sure that you are understanding what is intended - prevents both problems. Not only will you (and others) hear things you might not expect and learn things you may not know, you also convey to the speaker that you value their participation, whether you agree or not. When you let others know that you listen, people talk.

Common listening problems: interrupting; poor body language; offering unwanted advice; reading minds; turning the discussion to your own situation; belittling others' concerns (or comparing them unfavorably to your own).

2. Seek and Acknowledge Source of Concerns vs. Seek Hidden Agenda
Yes, people sometimes are motivated by considerations other than those they claim. But habitually expecting and attacking such perceived motivations is shortsighted and dangerous. Again, those who engage in these attacks risk creating misunderstanding and unnecessary enmity. An accurate understanding of others' concerns will assist you, whether those concerns are justified or not. And you can acknowledge the meaning these concerns hold for others without necessarily agreeing with their point of view.

Typical examples: "They're just in it for the money"; "They oppose any action anywhere"; "You [local / state / national groups] always [say that / do that / cheat / lie / don't care]".

3. Speak to be Understood vs. Use Jargon
The greatest cultural barriers for many coalitions may not be racial or ethnic (but pay attention to those, too!), but official and technical. This is particularly evident during larger meetings, when "insider" language can bewilder outsiders. Such language can communicate elitism, intimidation, and indifference, whether such a message is intended or not. Speaking to be understood does not mean talking down to others; it does mean being prepared to provide a variety of means of communicating a message.

Common problems: Overuse of acronyms; use of "insider language" of the movement; overly technical presentations; assumptions that everyone shares an understanding of the substantive and procedural issues.

4. Commit to Answer Questions vs. Avoid Controversy
There can be few experiences more frustrating than attending a meeting where the leaders are not fully informed or refuse to share what they know about the issues. Insult is added to injury when they don't know where needed information can be located and make no offer to find out. And the culminating insult is when promised information is never delivered.

Common blunders: send an unprepared person to the meeting; leave important information out of handouts; forget to bring important materials; withhold information without good reason.

5. Be Prepared vs. Just Show Up

How meetings are organized and run conveys a message. Inadequate preparation calls into question the organizer's capability and may be taken as a sign of disrespect or indifference. Preparation that anticipates the needs of participants demonstrates respect and competence.

Common problems: inadequate publicity; unresponsive agenda; difficult location; starting late; inaudible speakers; unbearable temperature; invisible graphics; inadequate seating; inadequate opportunity to speak.

Tools to "Test For Consensus"

To obtain the "sense of the group," it is often useful to conduct what in some circles is known as a "straw poll." This is not a final vote! It is simply a way to see where the group actually is at any given point in a discussion. It is a way to move the group forward, if it is ready.

Sometimes groups are unaware that they have actually achieved consensus until they actually test for it. It is not unusual, for example, that a member may argue a particular point and therefore appear to be in opposition, but actually may be willing to live with the suggested outcome.

If consensus is found to be present through a straw poll, the group may choose to move on in its discussion. If consensus is not present, further discussion needs to occur.

Some groups may choose not to use mechanisms for polling, as it may be construed as forcing or pressuring decisions. While this often depends on the way in which polling is conducted, and the attitude of the group facilitator, small groups are less likely to either need or desire these kinds of mechanisms.

Small Groups: Ways to Test for Consensus

Small groups can be more informal in their methods of achieving consensus, but they must be no less vigilant that all participants are truly given an opportunity to express their concerns, hesitations, or reservations.

The "go-around": Each person is asked, in turn, and given an opportunity to voice views, suggestions, and proposals.

Any participant asks, Do we all agree? Does anyone have concerns? Is there anyone who cannot live with this? Careful attention needs to be given to checking in with each person, and not allowing group pressures to go unchecked.

Large Groups: Ways to Test for Consensus

In discussions governed by consensus, the word "vote" is out of place. Rather, a group may wish to "test for consensus" as a way of quickly determining the extent and degrees of support or opposition to a particular proposal under discussion. Testing for consensus also helps a group avoid the trap of false consensus.

The "test" allows a group to move forward, if consensus is achieved. If consensus is not present, the very first action taken by the group is to ask the persons who could not support the proposal, "What would it take for you to be able to live with the proposal, or to not oppose the proposal?" This allows a large group to readily identify the issues and interests

that need further attention and discussion, and to craft a better decision that will meet everyone's concerns. This action is key to consensus building; it differs from voting in that deliberate and focused attention is given to addressing a dissenter's concerns.

➢ A member (or facilitator) proposes to "test for consensus" or asks for "straw poll."

➢ The member (or facilitator) specifies exactly what proposal or statement or questions is being "tested."

➢ Others may wish to further clarify the proposal or statement.

➢ Participants indicate on a pre-defined scale and by a pre-determined method (colored cards, number of fingers, body placement, etc.) their level of agreement and support for the proposal or statement.

➢ A simple "thumbs-up/ thumbs-down" is NOT a test for consensus and should never be confused with one; it is a vote, which does not allow people to express their gradients of agreement.

➢ If consensus is not present, the group's discussion continues and the group works to satisfy the interests and needs of those who were not able to support proposal or statement. If a group wants to achieve the highest consensus possible, it will also hear and attempt to address the concerns of those who may be able to live with the proposal, but who nevertheless expressed reservations.

➢ It is helpful to post the scale, or "gradients of agreement," in a prominent location before the meeting begins.

Scales for "Gradients of Agreement"

3-level Scale

3 I support the proposal

2 I have reservations about the proposal, but will not oppose the decision. I can live with it, and will support it.

1 I think there are major problems with the decision and am unable to live with it or support it. More work is needed.

4-Level Scale

4 I fully agree with and support the proposal.

3 I can live with the decision. It's okay and I can support it.

2 I have reservations but will not oppose the decision.

1 I think there are major problems with the decision and am unable to live with it or support it. More work is needed.

Implementing the Scales

Number of fingers - The number of fingers indicates one's level of support (e.g., five fingers equals unqualified support).

Three thumbs - Thumbs up would be the equivalent of unqualified support; thumb to the side indicates concerns; and thumb down indicates an inability to support the decision.

Colors - Green indicates support; yellow indicates concerns; and red indicates an inability to support the decision.

Body position - Standing up with hands by side indicates unqualified support; standing up with arms crossed indicates concerns; sitting down indicates an inability to support the decision. (This can be helpful if a group has been sitting for a long time, as it allows people to move and stand.)

Making Decisions Last

How can your coalition make sure that group decisions – even those that apparently reflect a strong consensus - are implemented? The best way to hold everyone accountable for commitments is to prepare beforehand to make these commitments genuine and doable. At the end of a long meeting the last thing people want to do is to discuss what happens if someone can't or won't live up to their promise. But the preparation you make up front can pay dividends in the long run. Specific ideas for ensuring accountability include:

➢ Put agreements in writing and make agreement language clear and explicit;

➢ Think through "what if" contingencies before they happen and emotions get high;

➢ Consider third-party support (from a trusted organization not involved directly in the issues) for monitoring and evaluating decisions;

➢ Consider building into the agreement a clear process for revision and modification; and

➢ Plan follow-up sessions whose agenda includes an accounting of how decisions have been implemented and a process for revising them if they have not had intended results.

If a violation of the agreement occurs or appears to occur, first speak directly to the offending party to clarify what has happened and what is going to happen. Describe your concerns as specifically as you can, including the impact non-compliance will have on trust and relationships you might have developed. Enlist allies or partners of the offending party in helping you ensure a return to compliance. You may need to reconvene the coalition to address the violation as a group.

Group Characteristics and Level of Effort to Build Shared Expectations for Higher Ground[4]

Some groups may need little time discussing how they will work with one another. However, groups made up of diverse interests who are working on challenging issues (which should describe your coalition!) most often need to create shared expectations for how they will address differences.

The following table will allow you to determine how much effort your coalition needs to invest in building these shared expectations. A score from 8 to 12 means that you likely need little more than a clear set of ground rules; from 13 – 19 means that you need to make some investment; and from 20 and higher means that you ought to make a significant effort to prepare.

Group Characteristics	Low Effort	Medium Effort	High Effort
Group Diversity	Homogenous 1	Some mix 2	Highly diverse 3
Duration of Group	Short-term 1	Longer 2	Lasting 3
Complexity of Task	Simple, clear task 1	Medium complexity 2	Very complex 3
Group Size	Small 1	Medium 2	Large 3
Significance of Issue(s)	Low 1	Fairly significant 2	Great significance 3
Levels of Trust	High 1	Mixed 2	Substantial distrust 3
Power Distribution	Equal 1	Somewhat uneven 2	Highly unbalanced 3
Level of Aspirations	Low 1	Medium 2	High 3

Total: _____

---

[4] *Based upon Table 7.1 in Reaching for Higher Ground in Conflict Resolution, by E. Franklin Dukes, Marina Piscolish, John Stephens. Jossey-Bass, 2000. ©2000. This material is used by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.*

The Unspoken "Rules" of Groups[5]

Group behavior typically follows predictable, even highly ritualized, patterns of behavior. These patterns of behavior too often reflect unspoken rules of engagement – expectations that have never truly been agreed to or considered, but are honored in practice every bit as much as a set of written ground rules.

These unspoken "rules" can be helpful, as when there is an implicit understanding that work is to be shared evenly or that everyone should be given an opportunity to speak. More frequently, however, such unspoken rules are unproductive and even harmful.

Many tobacco control coalitions operate without explicit agreements about how members will prevent and address differences. Unfortunately, when we operate without explicit agreements, we often fall back upon ways of interacting that are counterproductive and harmful to one another. Seven such common ways – what may be called "unspoken rules" - follow.

Unspoken Rule #1: If Dissent Isn't Spoken, It Must Not Exist

This rule must be engraved somewhere in the (unwritten - but very popular!) "guide for unsuccessful group leadership"! How many times have you seen groups where the leadership races through an agenda without any apparent opposition, only to have problems emerge later? Or even worse, where the question "Anybody opposed?" actually means, "I'm ready to move on, and no one had better slow us down!"

The conflict that emerges later invariably has broadened to include the motivations of those who raise differences: "they should have said something earlier." In fact, conflict that is hidden or suppressed inevitably surfaces later. Yet the art of surfacing different opinions is little respected and rarely practiced. For if one surfaces conflicts, one must deal with them - and that's a violation of unspoken rule number two ...

Unspoken Rule #2: Conflict Is Bad, And Conflict Or Even Differences Are Therefore To Be Avoided

We are continually bombarded with messages that, however well intentioned, reinforce the message that "conflict is bad." For example: "if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all." "There's no point in saying anything. You'll only make matters worse." "Just learn to keep your mouth shut and you'll be better off."

On the personal level, many individuals believe that conflict is bad because conflict produces strong emotions, and they get upset or afraid when they see strong feelings. Who wants to deal with a coalition member who may yell, or cry, or be resentful, if we can avoid that by avoiding the conflict?

Some groups avoid conflict because certain members use confrontation to intimidate those who fear conflict. Other groups may avoid conflict because of what is at stake: the more that one has at risk, the more likely that difference will be seen as a threat.

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[5] *Based on* Reaching for Higher Ground in Conflict Resolution, *by E. Franklin Dukes, Marina Piscolish, John Stephens. Jossey-Bass, 2000.*

One variety on this theme appears in groups whose shared understanding is that conflict represents a form of moral deficiency. Groups who aspire to some type of social action – tobacco control coalition, for instance - are particularly vulnerable to this problem. Their reasoning goes something like this:

1. We are gathered to do good;

2. People who do good don't have the problems that others do, such as competition for resources, turf issues, status concerns, and the need for recognition;

3. If we do have conflict it must mean that we are not doing good;

4. Therefore we don't have (or can't admit) problems and conflicts.

This problem is endemic not just in churches, but in schools, social service agencies, and non-profit Boards.

Of course, when you combine an ordinary conflict with the guilt of broken aspirations, you reach unspoken rule number three…

Unspoken Rule #3: Anyone Whose Views Differ From Mine Must Be Deficient Or Misguided

Few of us have experience in settings where different views are encouraged or even celebrated. What a liberating experience that is! One of the characteristics of successful collaborations among diverse interests is a freedom to challenge assumptions. Yet far too often, the unspoken rule is that disagreement and difference are indicators of personal deficiencies.

Suzette Elgin in How to Turn the Other Cheek and Still Survive in Today's World suggests that in order to truly understand others, we must assume that they have a legitimate basis for their views and attempt to ascertain what that basis is. Unspoken Rule #3 invokes the converse: we misunderstand what others mean because we disagree with what they are saying. We then try to imagine what's wrong with the individuals who said it. Those who practice this behavior will claim that their opponents' motives are suspect, that their opponents are unreliable, that they will engage in behavior that a decent person would never do, and so forth.

If opponents are deficient or misguided, then how do you deal with them? The logical consequence of unspoken rule three is rule number four…

Unspoken Rule #4: Since My Opponents Are Deficient Or Misguided, It Is All Right - Even Necessary - To Ignore Their Needs and Demonize And Dehumanize Them

We have all seen meetings fouled by personal attack. Labels substitute for dialogue and name-calling for decision-making. All too quickly, someone's different view is labeled as wrongheaded or bizarre.

An affiliate of rule #4 is that much of this talk reaches one's opponents indirectly. This common approach to conflict is expressed in another common unspoken rule, rule number five…

Unspoken Rule #5: Tell Everyone I Know About What's Wrong With My Opponent

Do you like feeling righteous? Do you want to ensure the continued growth of your conflict? Would you like to see the development of sharply divided cliques? Then follow Rule #5 closely! If you do, that also allows you to maintain rule number six...

Unspoken Rule #6: Since We Don't Truly Know Them, We're Not Responsible For the Impacts Of Our Behavior Upon Them

When we think that people we disagree with are not like us, we believe that their concerns, feelings, needs, and values are somehow less important than our own.

The corollary to this rule is that we are better off not knowing our presumed opponents - because if we do learn about them, and understand their needs and concerns, we might have to confront our responsibility to them as we realize how our behavior affects those needs and concerns.

Finally, perhaps the most familiar of all these unspoken rules - and you may well have others unique to your own experiences - is unspoken rule 7...

Unspoken Rule #7: Conflict Represents A Win/Lose Battle, So I Had Better Win Before I Lose

Most of us believe that we seek "win-win" solutions to conflict. But few of us, when faced with a conflict where we have a lot at stake, are able to keep faith with our intentions. For every message we remember that evokes a positive response to difference ("Blessed are the peacemakers," "treat others as you would be treated") we can recall four or five messages reinforcing our instinct to protect our concerns ("All is fair in love and war", "the ends justify the means," "hit first before they hit you," "winning isn't everything, it's the only thing.")

For some individuals facing the possibility of intense conflict, this rule drives them out of the game - they withdraw from any effort to address differences, or they give in just to avoid trouble. For others, this rule brings out their adversarial nature and they enter the conflict like gangbusters - at least until they end up on the losing side or in winning destroy their organization.

When Unspoken Rules Clash

When group members bring competing understandings of how differences should be handled, these understandings vie for dominance. This creates a whole other set of challenges as individuals experience others as "breaking the rules" even though those rules were never spoken or agreed upon.

Common implicit ground rules that are often not shared, particularly when not articulated and enforced, include:

➢ Talking about problems only makes matters worse vs. We'll never solve this unless we talk it out.

➢ Freely expressing strong emotions (crying, yelling, cursing) is healthy and inevitable vs. I won't participate if you can't control your emotions.

➢ Participation should be voluntary vs. Everybody must speak their mind.

➢ My discussion with you is confidential vs. What you say I can share with others.

➢ I come to the table with the goal of claiming what is mine by right vs. I come to the table to create what will work best for all of us.

➢ I need to get to know you before I can talk about our real differences vs. I want to lay my cards out there on the table right away.

Some of these clashes result from different preferences of how conflict should be handled and often those preferences are based upon our earliest experiences of conflict, during formative years and experiences. Thomas-Kilmann have identified five styles or preferences for addressing conflict (see "Resources" section). Most individuals have a favored style, although some individuals are able to draw from a range of styles better than others, and preference may vary depending on the context as well. These preferences are avoidance, accommodation, compromise, competition, and collaboration. The problem is not that any particular style is bad: each of these styles may be appropriate or inappropriate depending upon the circumstance. As in highway traffic, where it is speed differential rather than outright speed that is the greater predictor of accidents, it is the clash of styles that can make conflict between individuals so difficult to address.

Implicit and unshared expectations about "the way things should be done" can be the source of endless struggle and conflict in a group. We practice - even if we would say that we believe otherwise - that the "right" answer is self-evident. When implicit and unshared expectations about group behavior in general clash and produce conflict in the group, then implicit and unshared expectations about how to handle conflict itself come into play. Conflict born of conflict is a messy situation.

So what can be done to prevent or to break the cycle of conflict and distrust that implicit rules bring? The key is to take time to prepare for conflict by building shared expectations for principled and productive behavior.

What's Your Coalition's "Participant Involvement Score"?

How do (or would) members and other participants respond?

		Always/ Definitely/ Strongly Agree	Usually/ Probably/ Agree	Generally/ Maybe/ Neutral	Sometimes/ Rarely/ Disagree	Almost never/ We have a big problem/ Strongly disagree
1.	All members have a fair say in decisions about the coalition's actions that affect their interests.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	There is a commitment by the coalition's leadership that participants' contributions will influence the decision.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The coalition's leadership seeks out and facilitates the involvement of participants and others who are potentially affected.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The coalition's governing process involves members in defining how they participate.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	The coalition's leadership communicates to participants how their input was, or was not, utilized.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The coalition's leadership provides participants with the information needed to participate in a meaningful way.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	The coalition leadership gives consideration to the various ways of engaging participants and uses processes that are suited to the issues and participant interests.	1	2	3	4	5

TOTAL SCORE: _____

Evaluating The "Participant Involvement Scorecard"

How Did Your Coalition Do?

7-12   CONGRATULATIONS! Your coalition is on the cutting edge of effective shared decision making. You have probably made your way to this level through some hard-earned lessons. You may want to offer assistance to other coalitions.

13-18   You're doing a lot right! Give yourself some well-deserved credit, and realize the only way you can improve is through awareness and continued work. To keep improving, consider finding an advisor who can help you work through your coalition issues.

19-23   You're on the right track but may need help.   It may be that the will is there, but the know-how is weak. Or it may be that the knowledge is fine, but the will is weak. Depending on which you think is holding you back, you may want to seek an advisor or you may wish to seek special training for your coalition.

24-28   Your coalition has a shaky grasp of participant involvement and leadership and needs a major transformation in its approach.

Above   Major culture or attitude issues need to be addressed before any coalition work is
28   attempted.

Conflict Resolution Capacity Inventory

If astute observers of your coalition were to evaluate you, how would they respond?

		Always/ Definitely/ Strongly Agree	Usually/ Probably/ Agree	Generally/ Maybe/ Neutral	Sometimes/ Rarely/ Disagree	Almost never/ We have a big problem/ Strongly disagree
1.	My coalition handles conflict effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Differences are viewed – and used – as an opportunity to learn and grow.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	My coalition provides support for resolving conflict when it escalates in a harmful way.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Minority opinions that challenge the leadership or mainstream ideas are sought out and encouraged.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Conflict in my coalition is handled directly and face-to-face without people going behind one another's backs.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	My coalition has developed an effective system for addressing conflict productively.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Participants in the coalition have sufficient skills and knowledge to address conflict productively.	1	2	3	4	5

TOTAL SCORE: _____

Evaluating the Conflict Resolution Capacity Inventory

How Did Your Coalition Do?

7-12   CONGRATULATIONS! Your coalition is very effective at preventing and transforming conflict. Keep up the good work! You may want to offer assistance to other coalitions.

13-18   You're doing pretty well! Give yourself some well-deserved credit, and realize the only way for you to improve is through continued work. To keep improving, consider finding an advisor who can help you work through your coalition issues.

19-23   You're on the right track but may need some more attention. It may be that the will is there, but the know-how is weak. Or it may be that the knowledge is fine, but the will is weak. Depending on which you think is holding you back, you may want to seek an advisor or you may wish to seek special training for your coalition.

24-28   Your coalition has a shaky grasp of conflict prevention and resolution and needs a major transformation in its approach.

Above   Major culture or attitude issues need to be addressed before any coalition work is
28   attempted.

Sample Group Covenant[6]

Group Values (that Guide our Approach to our Work)

Synergy – Recognize that no one can do alone, what we can do together.
Positive thinking – practice a "Can Do" attitude.
Democracy – practice full participation, self-determination & shared responsibility.
Community – nurture relationships and work to keep everyone "at the table."
Honesty – help others to understand you and work to understand others.
Creativity – innovate, stimulate.
Flexibility – don't be a slave to the schedule or the routines.
Efficiency – people's time is precious, treat it with respect.
Acceptance -- trust that each will do their best and still mistakes may be made.

Group Guidelines (that Help Us to Live-out Our Group Values)

✓ Meet regularly and communicate routinely.

✓ Call-in and communicate-out meeting agenda items in advance of meeting.

✓ Start meetings on time.

✓ Record and capture the group's work -- Use colorful recording.

✓ Use a facilitator that can respond to the needs in the group.

✓ Be relevant -- Stay on the subject.

✓ Invite everyone into the conversation -- Take turns talking.

✓ Express concerns. Be real, authentic and say what needs to be said.

✓ Disagree with ideas, not with people.

✓ Build on others ideas.

✓ Assume there are no fixed ideas or un-discussibles.

✓ Invite laughter and creativity.

✓ Value lively debate. It can promote quality.

✓ Work for consensus. Decision Rule: 85% support 4's and 5's with <u>no</u> 1's.

    5   I whole heartedly agree
    4   I agree, it's OK
    3   I'm neutral
    2   I disagree, but will go along
    1   I <u>hate</u> this and will work to stop it

✓ Use an arbitrator (Project Coordinator) when consensus has been tried & failed.

✓ Reach closure on each item and summarize conclusions at end of meetings.

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[6] *Based on* Reaching for Higher Ground in Conflict Resolution, *by E. Franklin Dukes, Marina Piscolish, John Stephens. Jossey-Bass, 2000. ©2000. This material is used by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.*

Worksheet – Aspirations and Ground Rules[7]

➢ When we operate at our worst, we (look like… feel… sound like…)…

➢ When we operate at our best, I (see… feel… hear…)…

➢ When I envision how we should best work together, my highest aspirations are that we…

➢ In order to make these aspirations come alive, the principles and behaviors (as specific as possible) we must follow are…

Categories to Consider	
✓ Participation	✓ Use of time
✓ Use of information	✓ Roles in coalition
✓ Decision-making	✓ Other?
✓ Confidentiality	

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[7] *Based on Reaching for Higher Ground in Conflict Resolution, by E. Franklin Dukes, Marina Piscolish, John Stephens. Jossey-Bass, 2000. ©2000. This material is used by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.*

Understanding Conflict Styles

Most conflict analysts believe that people have preferred ways of dealing with conflict based upon some combination of personality and experience. A number of people have asserted five prevalent styles[8], which can be represented as points in a graph defined by concern for self on one axis and concern for the other (or sometimes, "concern for the relationship") on the other. These five are labeled as Competing, Collaborating, Compromising, Avoiding, and Accommodating.

Competing behavior represents high concern for one's self and low concern for another, while accommodating represents low concern for one's self and high concern for another. Compromising behavior attempts to balance concern for self and other, while collaborating behavior signifies high concern for self and other. Avoiding behavior represents neither interest.

Confusing? Basically, there are three key lessons about individual conflict styles:

1. Other people may respond to conflict very differently than you do.

2. Different styles all have strengths and weaknesses, and are appropriate or inappropriate depending upon particular circumstances.

3. With awareness and practice, you can gain the ability to choose how you respond to conflict.

1) Other people may respond to conflict very differently than you do.

Such differences are fraught with potential meaning and risk. For example, if you are typically aggressive or quick to confront, you may cause people who are less comfortable with conflict to shut down. Or you might provoke more assertive people to dig their heels in. Either way, you risk missing opportunities for understanding and resolution.

Similarly, if you typically avoid conflict and controversy, you may be unable to explain (or even to determine for yourself) your true goals and needs. Or you may reach compromise so quickly that you miss opportunities for mutual gain.

You may need to explore what a person's behavior means before you misinterpret that behavior. For instance, a highly aggressive style may be just that – a style – and may not reflect dislike or even significant attachment to a particular outcome. A passive style, on the other hand, may not reflect the real value that someone places upon an issue.

2) Different styles all have strengths and weaknesses, and are appropriate or inappropriate depending upon particular circumstances.

Competing behavior may be particularly appropriate in emergencies or in situations where principle and right are at stake. It may be inappropriate when it hurts relationships, when cooperation from others is important.

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[8] *The conception of five styles is generally credited to R. R. Blake and J. S. Mouton in* The Managerial Grid, *1964.*

Accommodating behavior may be particularly appropriate when the issue is of little importance to you, or when your concern for the other or for the relationship is high. It is less appropriate when used habitually as a way of pleasing people and is likely to foster resentment or lack of self-respect, or when collaboration might have been possible and even desirable.

Compromising can be appropriate when time is limited and the need for a fair resolution is important, or when finding some solution is better than a stalemate. It is less appropriate when a more creative solution is missed by a rush to give in, and not appropriate when important principles are at stake.

Collaborating may appear the most desirable style of behavior, and it is true that collaborating behavior can result in creative decisions that are legitimate as well as stronger relationships. But it may also be inappropriate when there is limited time or an unfavorable imbalance of power, or when questions of right and wrong need to be determined, or when resources do not permit a true collaborative effort.

Finally, **avoiding** behavior is often inappropriate when your views might make a difference in a resolution, or when you do care about the relationship and issues. But it can be appropriate in situations where you fear real physical or emotional harm, or the issue means nothing to you.

3) With awareness and practice, you can gain the ability to choose how you respond to conflict.

For some people, this is an astonishing and welcome lesson. Rather than allowing the presence of conflict to determine your behavior – whether it be shutting down, giving in, or erupting in anger – you can *choose* your responses based upon what is appropriate for the situation and your goals.

The key to building your capacity to address conflict is awareness and intention. If you can become aware of how you approach conflict then you can deliberately choose conduct consistent with your preferred behavior.

A word of caution: the *Conflict Styles Inventory* (and other similar questionnaires) can best serve as a way of gaining insight into how you (and others) approach conflict. You should not take the results as gospel or accept the results if they seem inconsistent with your own judgment of your preferences.

Nor should you give absolute credit to style and personality as causes of or contributors to conflict.

Certainly, there are people who consistently avoid conflict of any kind, just as there are those who thrive upon (and perhaps instigate and perpetuate) confrontation.

However, it is also true that many people respond to conflict differently depending upon circumstance. A dispute with a family member or a close friend, or a dispute within a group that has been together a long time, may evoke a different response than one involving a relative stranger or a new group.

Responses also may differ depending upon the intensity or timing of the dispute. Some people (and some groups as well) are better able to work their way through conflict when there is little anger or there is sufficient time to prepare an effective approach.

Personal Style Inventory[9]

By Ron Kraybill

Instructions: Complete the following questionnaire <u>twice</u>. First, think about a situation in which your wishes differ from those of another person with whom you have a close, personal or intimate relationship. (For example, visualize this situation in your family, your marriage, or among your closest friends.) Complete the form with this scenario in mind. Second, using a different color pen or pencil, complete the form a second time while thinking about a situation in which your wishes differ from those of another person in a more public, less personal setting. (For example, visualize this situation in your work place or your community.)

Note that statements A-J deal with your **initial** response to disagreement; statements K-T deal with your response **after the disagreement has gotten stronger.**

Please Note: *The reflection this inventory can create is more important – and more reliable – than the numbers the tally sheet yields. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, nor has this instrument been "standardized". Some takers agree with the results; others disagree. Whether you like the results or not, you should rely on them for an accurate picture of yourself only after further self-scrutiny and discussion with others. The inventory is merely a tool to enable these larger tasks.*

When I first discover that differences exist . . .	Not at all characteristic					Very characteristic
A I make sure that all views are out in the open and treated with equal consideration, even if there seems to be substantial disagreement.	1	2	3	4	5	6
B I devote more attention to making sure others understand the logic and benefits of my position than I do to pleasing them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
C I make my needs known, but I tone them down a bit and look for solutions somewhere in the middle.	1	2	3	4	5	6
D I pull back from discussion for a time to avoid tension.	1	2	3	4	5	6
E I devote more attention to feelings of others than to my personal goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6
F I make sure my agenda doesn't get in the way of our relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	6
G I actively explain my views and needs and just as actively take steps to understand others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
H I am more concerned with goals I believe to be important than with how others feel about things.	1	2	3	4	5	6

I	I decide the differences aren't worth worrying about.	1	2	3	4	5	6
J	I give up some points in exchange for others.	1	2	3	4	5	6

If differences persist and feelings escalate . . .	Not at all characteristic				Very characteristic	
K	I enter more actively into discussion and hold out for ways to meet the needs of others as well as my own.	1	2	3	4	5	6
L	I put forth greater effort to make sure that the truth as I see it is recognized and less effort on pleasing others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
M	I try to be reasonable by not asking for my full preferences, but I make sure I get some of what I want.	1	2	3	4	5	6
N	I back off from the conversation and accept that nobody may get what we want.	1	2	3	4	5	6
O	I set aside my own preferences and focus on keeping the other person happy.	1	2	3	4	5	6
P	I interact less with others and look for ways to find a safe distance.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Q	I focus on the goals that matter to me and hope we can mend feelings later.	1	2	3	4	5	6
R	I do what is necessary to soothe the other's feelings and keep the relationship good.	1	2	3	4	5	6
S	I focus on mutual understanding, to make sure I understand why others are upset and they have equal understanding of why I am upset.	1	2	3	4	5	6
T	I plead for moderation and compromise so we can get on with things.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Style Inventory Tally Sheet

When you are finished, write the number from each item on the tally sheet. For example, on item B, if you selected number 1, write "1" on the line designated for B on the tally sheet. Then add the numbers. For example, **B _1_ + H _4_ = 5 Calm.** Write the number you circled for each situation beside the corresponding letter. Add each of the 10 columns of the tally sheet, writing the total of each entry in to the empty box just below the double line. Complete two tally sheets, one for intimate situations and one for public situations.

Intimate Settings

A ____	K ____	B ____	L ____	C ____	M ____	D ____	N ____	E ____	O ____
G ____	S ____	H ____	Q ____	J ____	T ____	I ____	P ____	F ____	R ____
Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm
Collaborating		Forcing		Compromising		Avoiding		Accommodating	

Now list your scores and the style names in order from highest score to lowest in both the calm and storm columns below.

Calm	Storm
Response when issues/conflicts first arise	Response after the issues/conflicts have been unresolved and may have grown in intensity

Score   Style _____   Score   Style _____

Score   Style _____   Score   Style _____

Score   Style _____   Score   Style _____

Score   Style _____   Score   Style _____

Score   Style _____   Score   Style _____

Public Settings

A ____	K ____	B ____	L ____	C ____	M ____	D ____	N ____	E ____	O ____
G ____	S ____	H ____	Q ____	J ____	T ____	I ____	P ____	F ____	R ____
Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm
Collaborating		**Forcing**		**Compromising**		**Avoiding**		**Accommodating**	

Now list your scores and the style names in order from highest score to lowest in both the calm and storm columns below.

Calm	**Storm**
Response when issues/conflicts first arise	Response after the issues/conflicts have been unresolved and may have grown in intensity

_____   _____
Score   Style   Score   Style

_____   _____
Score   Style   Score   Style

_____   _____
Score   Style   Score   Style

_____   _____
Score   Style   Score   Style

_____   _____
Score   Style   Score   Style

Interpreting the Scores

This exercise gives you two sets of scores for each of the five approaches to conflict. Calm scores apply to your response when disagreement first arises. Storm scores apply to your response if things are not easily resolves and emotions get stronger. The higher your score in a given style, the more likely you are to use this style in responding to conflict. The highest score in each of the columns indicates a "preferred" or primary style. If two or more styles have the same score, they are equally "preferred." The second highest score indicates one's "backup" style if the number is relatively close to the highest score. A fairly even score across all of the styles indicates a "flat profile." Persons with a flat profile are often flexible in their responses and tend to be able to choose easily among the various responses to conflict. At the same time, they may be experienced by others as unpredictable.

Understanding Differing Conflict Styles

Forcing
High assertiveness/Low affirmation
"We're doing it my way…"

➢ Strategies: Discourage disagreement, persuade, be firm, set limits and consequences, cite policy, insist, repeat, control, be inaccessible.

➢ Source of power: From position, role, control of resources.

➢ Benefits: Speed, decisiveness, protection of innocents, preservation of important values, stability.

➢ Costs when over-used: Destroyed or hierarchical relationships, loss of cooperation, atrophy of gifts in others, anger, depression, and diminished self-respect in others, stagnation.

Collaborating
High assertiveness/High affirmation
"My preference is… I am also interested in your views."

➢ Strategies: Asserts self while also inviting other views; welcomes differences; jointly lists strengths and weaknesses of all views; cooperates in seeking additional information.

➢ Source of power: From trust, skill ability, goodwill, creativity.

➢ Benefits: Trust and mutuality in relationships, high cooperation, creativity and growth, others blossom and develop new gifts, energy and joy.

➢ Costs when over-used: Fatigue and time loss, distraction from more important tasks, analysis paralysis.

Compromising
Medium assertiveness/Medium affirmation
"I'll meet you halfway…"

➢ Strategies: Urge moderation, bargain, split the difference, find a little something for everyone, meet them halfway.

➢ Source of power: From moderation and reasonableness.

- Benefits: Relatively fast, enables the show to go on, provides a way out of stalemate, readily understood by most people, builds atmosphere of calmness and reason.

- Costs when over-used: Mediocrity and blandness, possibly unprincipled agreements, likelihood of patching symptoms and ignoring causes.

Avoiding
Low assertiveness/Low affirmation
"Lets not make a big deal out of this."

- Strategies: Withdraw, delay or avoid response, divert attention, suppress personal emotions, be inaccessible, be inscrutable.

- Source of power: From calmness, silence, non-cooperation, being above-it-all.

- Benefits: Freedom from entanglement in trivial issues or insignificant relationships, stability, preservation of status quo, ability to influence others with out doing anything.

- Costs when over-used: Periodic explosions of pent-up anger, slow death of relationships, residue of negative feelings, stagnation and dullness, loss of accountability, sapped energy.
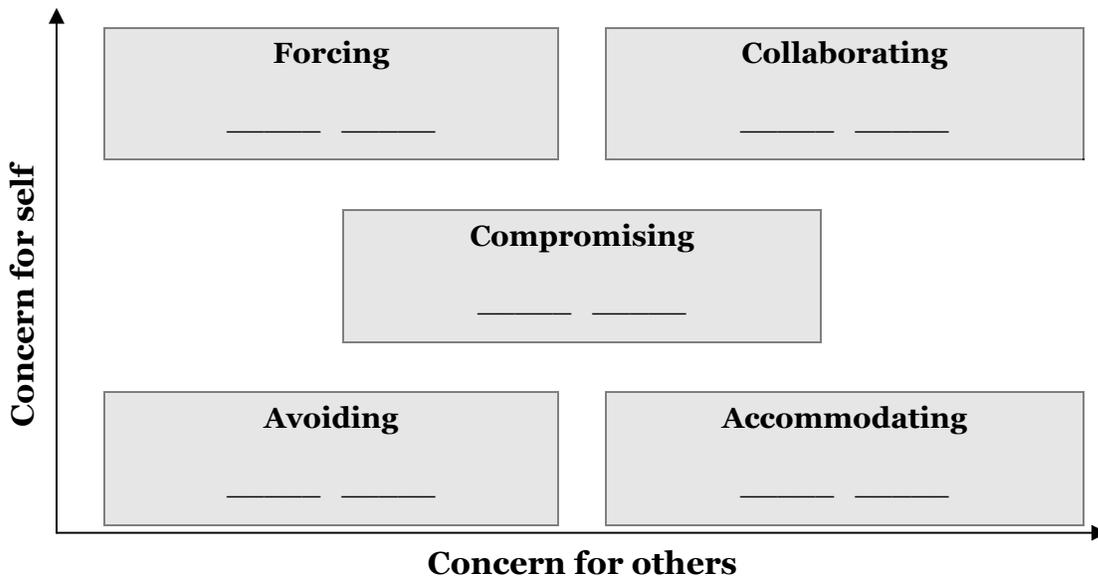
Accommodating
Low assertiveness/High affirmation
"OK, whatever you say..."

- Strategies: Agree, support, acknowledge error, give in, convince self it's no big deal, placate.

- Source of power: From relationships or approval of others.

- Benefits: Wins approval/appreciation of others, freedom from hassle (in the short run at least) self-discipline of ego.

- Costs when over-used: Frustration for others who wish to collaborate, resentment and depression, stunted growth of personal gifts, over-dependence on others, denies others benefit of healthy confrontation.

Conflict Styles Inventory

When is _Forcing_ appropriate? When is it inappropriate?

When is _Avoiding_ appropriate? When is it inappropriate?

When is _Accommodating_ appropriate? When is it inappropriate?

When is _Compromising_ appropriate? When is it inappropriate?

When is _Collaborating_ appropriate? When is it inappropriate?

Active Listening and Paraphrasing: Reflecting Facts & Feelings

One of the most difficult tasks in any conflictual situation is to *listen* well. Think of how easy it is for you to become distracted in everyday conversations, or how often you *think* that you and another individual (a colleague, a client, a friend, a parent) misunderstand one another. *Active listening* refers to the continuing cycle of listening, reflection, and feedback you offer throughout a process of conflict resolution.

Paraphrasing is summarizing in your own words what you understand another person to have said. The best paraphrasing summarizes the disputants' views in ways that allow *all* parties to hear them accurately and to consider them objectively, while at the same time not changing the meaning of what was said.

When practicing active listening, it is important that you listen for, and reflect back, both *facts* and *feelings.* The feelings may have been expressed explicitly (e.g., *I'm really angry about...)* or may have been implicit (*e.g. I can't be in the same room as him anymore.)*

Keys to active listening include:

➢ Capture the essence of what was said

➢ Be more brief than the speaker

➢ Summarize the facts and identify the emotions

> **Why bother? Isn't active listening silly and tedious?**
>
> No! If it's genuine and sincere, and is more than parroting back what a person said, it is effective and appreciated. People don't usually get that kind of attention. Moreover, people often aren't ready to move toward resolution until they have felt heard by someone.

Active listening serves many purposes. It can:

➢ Clarify what the person is saying.

➢ Affirm the validity of the person's feelings and meaning attached to the issues, and begin to identify the person's core interests.

➢ Verify that you understand and take seriously the person's concerns.

➢ Reduce tensions, fear or hostility.

➢ Help people be ready to move toward resolution; create movement.

➢ Help others hear what the person is saying.

Some effective beginnings for your paraphrase statements:

➢ "The way you see it is . . ."

➤ "So you're upset that . . ."

➤ "That's a lot for us all to take in. Let me summarize to see if we all understand what's at stake here. You..."

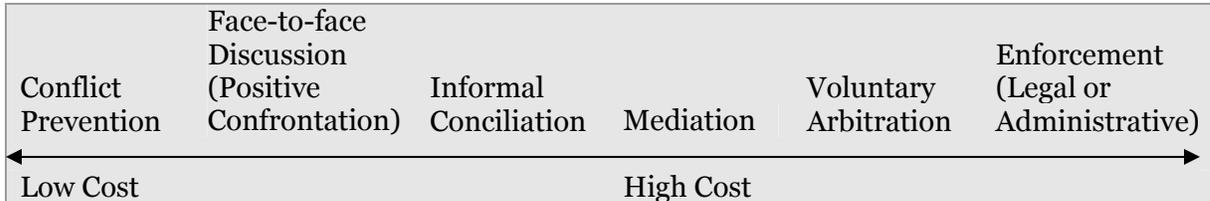➤ "Let me see if I understand you correctly. You . . ."

When paraphrasing, be sure to avoid the common traps:

➤ Reading more into what was said than was really said, including:
   a) Attributing emotions which are not present, or
   b) Premature conclusions about the person's concerns

➤ Offering judgment about what was said (e.g., "... but surely you must have known that your colleague would be upset if you did that!")

➤ Comparing their situation with your own (e.g., "... oh, yeah, I had a problem like that last year...")

➤ Telling them how they should feel (e.g., "... you shouldn't feel that way, everybody does that...")

➤ Offering advice

A Continuum of Approaches to Conflict

The following continuum of conflict resolution approaches is typical of what a coalition might develop for its conflict resolution system.

Conflict Prevention	Face-to-face Discussion (Positive Confrontation)	Informal Conciliation	Mediation	Voluntary Arbitration	Enforcement (Legal or Administrative)
Low Cost			High Cost		

Conflict Prevention

NEEDS:

➢ Legitimate, effective governance with support of substantial proportion of the coalition

➢ Sensible, understandable by-laws and rules

➢ Efficient, well-run and well-attended coalition meetings

➢ Decision-making by consensus for most important issues

Face-to-Face Discussion (Positive Confrontation)

NEEDS:

➢ Strong shared expectations (aspirations, principles and ground rules for behavior) within the coalition that direct communication is normal and positive

➢ Good communication skills and a commitment among participants to use them

➢ Good will ("social capital"), developed through a history of productive meetings and activities

Informal Conciliation

NEEDS:

➢ Shared expectations within the coalition that conciliation is normal and positive

➢ Board officer or selected volunteer with the time and skills to intercede

➢ Institutional support for the conciliation process

Third-Party Mediation

NEEDS:

➢ Positive expectations within the coalition that mediation is normal and useful
➢ Formal authority and specification for use of mediation within by-laws or other relevant rules
➢ Institutional support and (possibly) funding for the mediation process
➢ Access to mediators (professional mediators, or perhaps program of well-trained and experienced volunteers)

Voluntary Arbitration

NEEDS:

➢ Formal authority and specification for use of arbitration within by-laws or other relevant rules
➢ Institutional support and (likely) funding for the arbitration process
➢ Access to professional or (rare) volunteer arbitrator

Enforcement (legal or legislative)

NEEDS:

➢ Formal authority and specification for use
➢ Institutional support
➢ Financial and personnel resources

Arbitration

A private, relatively informal process in which an independent third party hears arguments and renders a decision based either upon the disputants' own criteria or applicable statutory provisions. Arbitration is commonly used for labor-management disputes, automobile warranty complaints, insurance problems, and international business disagreements. The arbitrator may be an individual or a panel.

There are many variations of arbitration. It can be *binding* or *non-binding* upon the parties. *High-low* arbitration limits the minimum and maximum amount of potential awards. In *final-offer* arbitration the arbitrator must select one of the final positions of the two sides. *Med-arb* is a recent innovation combining mediation with mandatory arbitration should mediation efforts fail.

Conciliation

Steps taken by a third party to reduce hostility, lower tension, correct misperceptions, improve communication, and create a favorable climate for negotiation. Often a figure of some stature recognized by the disputants uses good offices to begin the conciliation process. Conciliation is particularly associated with religious groups such as the Quakers and Mennonites.

Conflict Assessment

A conflict assessment is used to identify key concerns and interests of individuals and organizations engaged in conflict. An independent party interviews participants and prepares a report identifying the most important issues that need to be addressed. The report may also include recommendations about how to resolve a conflict.

Consensus

In group decision making, consensus refers to a decision that has been developed cooperatively, and that is acceptable enough that all group members can support it. In more general terms, consensus can mean that adequate support has been developed so that a decision has broad legitimacy.

Consensus Building

Developing agreement on issues where parties bring different perspectives and interests to the table but before the issues have crystallized into a dispute. Inclusive participation, full exploration of issues, and agreements based upon consensus decision-making are characteristics of consensus-building efforts.

Convening

A convenor helps bring people together to address a particular challenge or conflict. A convenor is typically an individual or an organization that has a good

reputation among all key parties but who may or may not have a stake in the issues under consideration.

Covenant

A set of promises among group members that includes both aspirations for their relationship and specific behavioral ground rules for how the group will meet those aspirations.

Dispute System Design

System design suggests that many of the costs associated with conflict can be avoided by preparing productive mechanisms appropriate for particular types of conflict. A dispute resolution system may offer opportunities for informal conciliation, formal conciliation, mediation, arbitration, and grievance hearings , depending upon the conflict.

Facilitation

The process direction given by an individual who helps design and run a meeting or other gathering. Facilitators encourage full analysis of issues, open expression of opinion, exploration of options, and informed choice of action.

Fact-Finding

The process by which the facts relevant to particular issues under contention are determined. A neutral fact-finder may be appointed to develop the necessary information, or the parties may engage in joint fact-finding.

Ground rules

A set of expectations for behavior intended to promote effective, health relationships.

Mediation

Mediation is the assistance of an impartial third party during negotiations. Such assistance may take many forms, including process advice, and is described by a variety of terms, including facilitation, consultation, and consensus building. Mediation excludes the imposition of a decision by the third party.

The term covers a very broad set of procedures. These range from the muscle mediation activities of a diplomat or a labor mediator, who often bring strong pressure to bear upon the disputants, to facilitative mediation, where parties are offered primarily a process of structured communication.

Negotiation

The process by which disputing parties directly and indirectly exchange ideas, promises, threats, or other information related to one or more issues. One common distinction is between *positional* negotiation, which involves little or no analysis of the wants and needs underlying a party's stated positions, and *interest-based* negotiation, which seeks out those underlying wants and needs.

Bargaining is sometimes identified as the subset of negotiation involving only trade-offs and compromise.

Ombudsman

A third party who investigates complaints and recommends or implements solutions on behalf of some authority.

Process Design

Consultation with the parties to a dispute or with an organization about the needs for handling a particular issue or project. The consultant does not actually serve as mediator or facilitator, but may offer training in negotiation or organizational development.

Third Party

The umbrella term for any of a number of roles of someone assisting disputants in settling a dispute, including arbitrator, facilitator, and mediator.

Visioning

A process whereby group members imagine their desired future and set goals for achieving that future. Visioning emphasizes active participation, long-term planning, imagination, a sense of possibility, and common ground.

Resources and Readings

Resources

International Association of Public Participation (800/ 644-4273): http://www.iap2.org/

Association for Conflict Resolution: acresolution.org

Community Building Institute: www.communitytools.net

Consensus Building Institute: www.CBI-WEB.ORG

EffectiveMeetings.com: http://www.effectivemeetings.com/features/index.html

Group Facilitation: http://uacsc2.albany.edu:80/~GRP-FACL/

Mediation Information and Resource Center: http://www.mediate.com/

Public Conversations Project Tool Box: http://www.publicconversations.org/Pages/f2.html

Useful Conflict Resolution Related Web Links:
http://members.aol.com/Ethesis/mw1/adr4/links.htm

Recommended Readings

E. F. Dukes, M. A. Piscolish and J. Stephens. Reaching for Higher Ground in Conflict Resolution: Tools for Powerful Groups and Communities. Jossey-Bass, 2000.

R. Fisher & W. Ury. Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In. Houghton Mifflin, 1981 (original edition).

P. B. Kritek. Negotiating at an Uneven Table: Developing Moral Courage in Resolving Our Conflicts. Jossey-Bass, 1994.

W. Ury, J. Brett, and S. Goldberg. Getting Disputes Resolved: Designing Systems to Cut the Costs of Conflict. Jossey-Bass, 1988.

Innes, Judith. "Evaluating Consensus Building," in Consensus Building Handbook, eds. L. Susskind, C. McKearnon, & S. Carpenter. Sage Press, 1999.

Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution [now the Association for Conflict Resolution]. Best Practices for Government Agencies: Guidelines for Using Collaborative Agreement-Seeking Processes. 1997.

As Director of the Institute for Environmental Negotiation (IEN), University of Virginia, Dr. Dukes designs dispute resolution and public participation processes, mediates and facilitates, teaches and trains, and conducts research. His book *Resolving Public Conflict: Transforming Community and Governance* describes how public conflict resolution procedures can assist in vitalizing democracy. He is also co-author of *Reaching for Higher Ground in Conflict Resolution,* which describes how diverse groups and communities can create expectations for addressing conflict with integrity, vision, and creativity. For seven years he mediated discussions involving tobacco farm and public health leaders, resulting in a series of agreements including over $2 billion in funding for tobacco farm regions and tobacco control efforts. He has worked closely with tobacco-control coalitions in several states promoting principled and effective ways of addressing conflict.

Madeleine Solomon is an independent consultant working primarily for the Advocacy Institute on developing leadership programs and the Tobacco Technical Assistance Consortium (TTAC) on strategic planning and developing and sustaining successful coalitions. She recently completed organizing a regional advocacy program entitled the "Southern Neighbors Collaborative" to raise the cigarette excise tax in seven southern states to at least the national average. For six years, Madeleine worked for the American Medical Association (AMA) as a grant liaison officer for The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's SmokeLess States National Program Office. There she provided technical assistance on coalition development and management, policy strategy and media advocacy to 24 state coalitions. Prior to working at the AMA, Madeleine was Director of Public Policy for the American Heart Association in Chicago, where she directed the SmokeLess States grant on behalf of the Illinois Coalition Against Tobacco.