BRIDGING DIVIDES

Having a Better Dialogue on Tough Subjects

AMC Fall District Meetings

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First, a little background on conflict
Things to always remember...

• People just want to be heard. **LISTEN!** And remember to: Listen to **LEARN**, not to **RESPOND**

• Even when people are in disagreement, there are often underlying values that are agreed upon (such as public service, a desire to do good work, etc.)

• We need to appreciate the other person’s perspective, and

• To better understand the role you may be playing in the dispute

• ‘Tell Me More’
Understanding Conflict

What you see or hear:
• The conflict situation

What lies underneath:
• Human Needs
• Underlying Emotions
• World View
• Past experiences
Conflict wreaks havoc on our brains

• Your brain senses a threat / conflict and floods our system with stress hormones (adrenaline, cortisol)
  • Increased heart rate; shallow and rapid breathing; sweaty palms, etc.
  • As heart rate increases, we get tunnel vision as our attention narrows; we lose the ability to solve problems; and rather than understand multiple perspectives we get trapped in one perspective: ‘I am right and you’re wrong’
• You are in the grip of an automatic fight or flight reaction!
So what can you do?

- You can’t stop this from happening, but you can manage it:
  - Recognize what is happening – pay attention to your body and mind during tough situations.
  - Remind yourself to relax
  - Remind yourself to not be judgmental
  - Take a few deep breaths to help bring down your heart rate
- Practice your plan regularly to build your capacity to respond better when a tough situation happens; to become a problem solver!
Perspective – what do you see (two things here...)
Perspective – what do you see (two things here...)

Perspective

This is very important...

Being able to see someone else’s perspective doesn’t mean that they are right or that you agree with them.

It simply means that you are willing to acknowledge that it is the experience of the other person, and therefore true for her.
You can develop a *Problem Solving Mindset*

Steps to becoming a problem solver:

- Focus on the problem, not the person
- Listen better and authentically
- Get curious
- Question some of your assumptions
- Seek to understand their story
- Identify mutual contribution
Interest Based Problem Solving

Issue

• The topics or areas of disagreement that people wish to discuss in the process.

Positions

• One group’s proposed solution to resolve the issue.
Interest Based Problem Solving

**Interests**

• The needs underlying the position that the stakeholders wish to see satisfied in the process.

• The real ‘why’ the issue is being raised.
Interests: Identify what people need

Identifying the underlying interests that are driving the person gives you a great opportunity to figure out

- what they need in order to move forward
- and for them to better understand what you need.
Issues, Positions, Interests

ISSUE

Position

Interest

Interest

Interest

Interest

Interest

Interest

Interest

Interest
An Example of Interest Based Problem Solving

• Issue

A new manufacturing facility is proposed to be built on the edge of town. The only access is by a county road that goes through a neighborhood and by an elementary school. There are two positions: ‘Yes - Build It’ or ‘No – Don’t Build It’.

• What are the perspectives / what do people ‘see’

• What are the underlying interests of each side?

(don’t rush to Options! We will do options next)
Options

**OPTIONS**

Possible, *not fixed*, solutions that satisfy one or more of the stakeholder’s *interests*.

To reach a resolution you will need to identify options that meet some of each stakeholder’s interests.
Options

Only

Proposals

That

Include

Others

Needs

Succeed
Option examples for our manufacturing plant scenario

• (for example, lower speed limit by schools, start a crossing guard activity, extra police presence during school start and end times, etc.)

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The Goal

Integrative Problem Solving that addresses some of the interests of both ‘sides’

Integrative Problem Solving

Domination  Compromise  Integration
Interest Based Problem Solving: Summary

• Remember ‘the brain during conflict’ challenges and be prepared to manage it the best you can.

• Get yourself into a ‘problem solving mindset’ where you focus on the problem; question assumptions; get curious.

• Identify the underlying **interests** by asking questions and listening carefully, seeking to understand their story (‘tell me more’)

• Identify **OPTIONS** that meet some of everyone’s most important needs
Only Proposals That Include Others Needs Succeed