



# THE ART OF INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

## AGENDA

Welcome and Introductions

People  
Principles

Overcoming the Impact of Bias in the Workplace

Unconscious Bias

Workplace Needs, Values and Styles

Understanding Needs and Interests  
Hammer Model

Managing Conflict around Differences

Strategy  
Difficult Situations

The Importance of Identity and Experience

Salient Identity

Putting It All Together

Treating Others with Dignity  
Closure and Evaluation





**NATIONAL  
CONFLICT  
RESOLUTION  
CENTER™**

Except as permitted under US Copyright Law, no part of this manual may be reprinted, reproduced, transmitted, or utilized in any form by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known, or hereafter invented, including photocopy, microfilming, and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without written permission from The National Conflict Resolution Center. The ART of Inclusive Communication Workplace Manual

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>BASIC CONCEPTS</b>	<b>1</b>
THE ART OF INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION	1
UNDERLYING CONCEPTS OF HEALTHY CONFLICT RESOLUTION	2
POWER DYNAMICS IN CONFLICT	3
THE CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF POWER	4
IMPLICIT BIAS	5
Realities of Communication	7
MANAGING CONFLICT	8
COMMUNICATION STYLE	9
ANGER	10
NATIONAL WORDS MATTER WEEK: INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IS STRATEGIC	11
INTEREST BASED CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE WORKPLACE	13
 <b>THE ART OF INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION</b>	 <b>14</b>
<b>Active Awareness</b>	<b>15</b>
ACTIVE AWARENESS AS IT RELATES TO BRAIN RESEARCH	16
THE AIKIDO OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION	17
CULTURAL HUMILITY AND EMPATHY	18
LISTENING AFFECTIVELY	19
<b>Respond Respectfully</b>	<b>20</b>
DEMONSTRATE UNDERSTANDING	20
ACKNOWLEDGE	20
IDENTIFY INTERESTS	21
QUIZ	21
QUESTIONS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION	22
ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY	23
<b>Troubleshoot Together</b>	<b>24</b>
TELLING YOUR PERSPECTIVE IN A NON-CONFRONTATIONAL WAY	24
TIPS FOR DEFUSING CONFLICT	25
THE ART OF COMMUNICATION: A CASE STUDY	26
 <b>CULTURE AND IDENTITY</b>	 <b>30</b>
SALIENT IDENTITY	30
WHAT IS CULTURE?	31
DIVERSITY ISSUES THAT MAY AFFECT COMMUNICATION	32
ASPECTS OF CULTURE THAT MAY AFFECT COMMUNICATION	33
STAGES OF INCLUSIVE AWARENESS	34
LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHERS	36
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	37
CONSIDERING DIGNITY IN OUR TREATMENT OF OTHERS	38

# Basic Concepts

---

## The ART of Inclusive Communication

The primary goal for the ART of Inclusive Communication is to create an environment of civility and respect in workplaces and communities. By learning the ART of Inclusive Communication, you will gain skills in communicating in intercultural settings and learn to build bridges with others. Additional goals include feeling empowered to manage conflict and to learning to deal with differences courteously. The types of situations that you can use the ART of Inclusive Communication strategy range from everyday encounters with people from various cultures and actual conflicts with co-workers and community members.

The skills learned in the ART of Inclusive Communication help you get what you want when you negotiate ~ because you learn how to respectfully disagree with others and state what is most important to you. If the skills learned are practiced and honed, you will be able to transform and improve your relationships with others.

Why the word *inclusive*? The Association of American Colleges and Universities defines inclusion as: *The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity*—in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect—in ways that *increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding* of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions.

The ART of Inclusive Communication will help you now and in your future endeavors. Relax, enjoy, and learn to become an ARTist.

## Learning Outcomes

By partaking in this training, participants will be able to:

- demonstrate practical skills, tools and strategies for enhancing respectful behavior;
- further develop a clear sense of their own identity (who they are and what they value);
- manage conflicts and cultural differences with those with different values; and,
- Identify personal and workplace benefits of acting with respect and embracing diversity.



## Underlying Concepts of Healthy Conflict Resolution

There is no greater challenge to the healthy interchange of ideas in a workplace than what happens when people have a non-productive conflict in which they feel disrespected by the other person. Professionals know that conflict is inevitable and actually can create better understanding and a better outcome. HOW we work through our differences is the key to ensuring productive results.

Respect for the issue: Disputes matter to the people who have them.

Respect for the person: People generally have the resources to resolve their own conflicts.

Respect for the process: When people are involved in the process, they have a stake in the outcome.

## Introduction to Conflict

Though conflict is inevitable, learning to **manage** conflict in a productive way takes effort.

Individuals deal with conflict in ways that reflect their own personal approach to life: their parents' methods of dealing with conflict, past experiences with handling conflict, and their relationship with the other person, among other factors.

Unmet expectations about another person's behavior are often the fuel that ignites conflicts among colleagues that work together. According to psychologist Morton Deutsch, conflict will predictably escalate under certain circumstances:

- if more than two people are present;
- if there is an increase in the perceived threat;
- if there is an increase in expressed or overt emotions (such behavior may be perceived as "losing face")
- if the relationship is either too close or too distant; and,
- if the parties lack adequate communication skills.

Many factors, both direct and indirect, influence how we manage conflict. Direct factors include points from Deutsch above, in addition to the person's cultural style and his/her personal history with conflict. Indirect factors include family, the economy, the environment, and the perception of relative power between the two people in conflict.

## Power Dynamics in Conflict

A formidable aspect of dealing with differences is the element of power. Many times, the reaction to the perceived power of each individual results in a power struggle. When this happens in conflict, one or both sides stop listening and become unwilling to allow the other to influence his/her thinking. In an article entitled *Power and Its Role in Conflict*, Breakthrough Consultancy Group writes: “constructive and non-oppressive use of power is becoming increasingly important in the world as individual independence and access to sources of power grow and the consequences of misuse or abuse of power become increasingly devastating. We need this constructive capability in our relationships and in society at large and nowhere does our inability appear more obvious than in how we deal with contention and conflict.”

Fisher and Ury, in their classic work on principled negotiation *Getting to Yes*, point out that trying to determine who has more power before one negotiates will only lead to problems. If one determines that s/he has more power than the other, s/he may not prepare sufficiently. On the other hand, if one determines that the other has the greater degree of power, s/he may not attempt to negotiate. Recognizing that there are many sources of power, going into the negotiation understanding your own sources of power, and recognizing the potential power in the other can help you prepare more effectively. Mary Parker Follett, who pioneered many of the negotiation concepts popular today in her widely acclaimed 1924 book entitled *Creative Experience*, emphasizes her belief of power with the other – not power over or under the other.

*It seems to me that whereas power usually means power-over, the power of some person or group over some other person or group, it is possible to develop the conception of power-with, a jointly developed power, a co-active, not a coercive power.*

- Mary Parker Follett

## The Constructive Use of Power

An article by Breakthrough Consultancy provides recommendations for the effective use of power. The article recommends that the exercise of power can be done in a constructive and relationship-enhancing manner during conflict by taking into account five critical foundations:

1. **Consciousness foundation:** This is the awareness of one's own bias, assumptions, and values; the discovery/acknowledgement of one's own powers and privileges – their use and impact; of differences and rank and their significance in the conflict context; of one's victim and persecutor tendencies, and gaps in self-awareness.

2. **Values foundation:** Values guide us as to what is a good use of power or what is worth using power for. Our thoughts, feelings, and actions can be guided by what is important rather than simply reacting to the hurt or immediate sense of threat we experience in the midst of conflict.

3. **Relationship foundation:** Relationships need to be robust to contain and transform friction and conflict. They need to build trust following a breakdown, find a way of equalizing power relations without denying the inequalities with regard to different kinds of power, enhance sensitivity to others through empathy and compassion, and seek out one's blind spots in awareness of others.

4. **Skills foundation:** This is how to de-escalate a conflict, to equalize power relations, to interrupt dependency, to share or distribute power, and to respond constructively to attack.

5. **Understanding of power and conflict dynamics:** This is to illuminate why the foundations above are important and guide us as to when to use them. For example: understanding that those who appear powerful are also weak with respect to other kinds of power, or that victims may have power and rank that they are unaware of and may use oppressively by occupying the high moral ground.

The foundations that Breakthrough Consultancy recommendations above provide thought-provoking ideas to reflect upon.

## Implicit Bias

Increasingly, attention is being brought forward regarding awareness about **implicit** or **unconscious bias**. According to the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, implicit bias is *the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control.*

Kirwan Institute research and studies at Harvard show that unconscious bias is pervasive and that these biases often do not match our stated beliefs about others. Because we are unaware of them, they are especially dangerous in affecting our behavior. It can affect our expectations of others, our willingness to engage with those who are different and even impact our hiring practices (e.g., *people like him aren't trustworthy so I can't hire him for this job*).

It is natural for the brain to sort information. This brain mapping happens all the time to all humans. Our brains are able to develop *schemas* for all kinds of categories. For example, we all know what a vehicle is, despite the different shapes, sizes, and makes of vehicles. These same schemas work when we categorize and form *prototypes* of people, such as juveniles, elderly, or different ethnic identities. Along with prototypes of people, we also develop stereotypes and attitudes, positive and negative, about various groups.

This is part of the adaptive unconscious of the brain. According to Timothy D. Wilson in his book *Strangers to Ourselves*, "The mind operates most efficiently by relegating a good deal of high-level, sophisticated thinking to the unconscious. The adaptive unconscious does an excellent job of sizing up the world, warning people of danger, setting goals in a sophisticated and efficient manner." In his bestselling book *blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, Malcolm Gladwell makes the argument that the unconscious thoughts that arise and impact our decision in snap judgments rely on the thinnest slices of experiences – "snap judgments and rapid cognitions take place behind a locked door," and that uncovering what is behind this door will help us make better decisions.

Unfortunately, higher education is not immune to the impact of implicit bias. Several studies by the Kirwan Institute and other researchers (for example, see the Journal on the Association of American Colleges and Universities) have shown that implicit bias can be seen on the institutional level, reinforcing the status quo in the way situations are handled as well as on the personal level, with faculty demonstrating implicit bias in their response to and grading of students.

Where does implicit bias come from? It comes from our personal experiences, media portrayals of groups, commonly held and expressed opinions of others around us, our own core beliefs about people; in other words, our environment.

It is the culmination of the direct and indirect messages we receive about groups of people. According to the Kirwan Institute, when there is a constant connection between characteristics and a group of people, we unconsciously associate them together, without that connection being based on actual fact. Bias is made up of all of this and our fears, assumptions, and positive or negative feelings that lie deep within our subconscious. Implicit bias can even be contrary to our stated beliefs about a group. You can check your own implicit bias by going to [www.implicit.harvard.edu](http://www.implicit.harvard.edu).

Although the insidious nature of implicit bias seems impossible to overcome, it is malleable. Malcom Gladwell, in *blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, points out that because our first impressions are generated by our experiences, we can change our bias by changing our conditions. This requires us to not just have a commitment to equality but to actively change our inputs about others by engaging with those who are different from ourselves. He states that taking rapid cognition seriously and recognizing how powerful it is means we have to take active steps to overcome it.

The Kirwan Institute's 2016 Report shows that there are things that can be done to decrease unconscious bias:

- Expose People to Counter-Stereotypic Individuals
- Intergroup Contact
- Educational Efforts to Raise Awareness of Implicit Bias
- A Willingness for People to Be Accountable
- Being Willing to Acknowledge the Perspective of Others
- Engaging in Deliberate Processes to Overcome Implicit Bias

## Realities of Communication

When human beings talk to each other, there is almost always some miscommunication and misunderstanding. In normal communication, people frequently misunderstand each other. This is especially true in multicultural environments. If the misunderstanding persists, it may escalate into conflict. Here are five basic realities:

- 1. Many times, others interpret something a person says or does, or fails to say or do, as a message when the person did not consciously intend it to be one.**
- 2. Meanings are in people, not in words.** People attach their own experiences, histories, and cultures to words. When the speaker and listener do not share the same background or professional training, words are inevitably used that mean different things.
- 3. Styles of communication are learned.** People develop styles that have proven useful to them at some point and often reflect the values of their culture.
- 4. The normal result of an attempt to communicate is a partial misunderstanding.** The great enemy of successful communication is a false sense of having achieved your goal. Watching body language and being willing to listen can make a big difference in clarifying this.
- 5. When communication breaks down, a normal response is to ask whose fault it is rather than search for ways to improve communication.** Many times, people want to place all the blame in the situation on the other person, rather than take responsibility for their part of the communication process.

## Managing Conflict

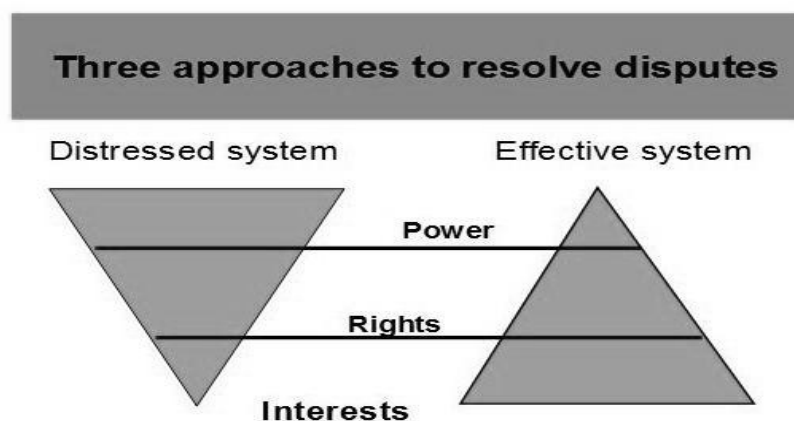
Part of successful conflict resolution is to find ways to minimize escalating circumstances and to develop skills for handling situations that occur despite any precautions. Conflicts generally occur over three general categories of issues: **resources**, **needs**, or **values**.

- **Resources** are tangible (money) or measurable (time, job responsibilities).
- **Needs** include physical needs for safety; psychological needs for acceptance, privacy, belonging, and respect; and social needs for being treated fairly, for having equal access to privileges, and for opportunities to interact with others.
- **Values** represent an individual's personal sense of what is right or wrong, good or bad.

According to William Ury, there are three major approaches to resolving conflict: **power**, **rights**, and **interests**.

- **Power** is often expressed through the use of authority. Workplaces often use this authority-based approach as the predominate method of managing conflict.
- **Rights-based** (or policy-based) approaches are the rules, written or unwritten, by which we are required to work.
- **Interest-based** approaches are oriented toward problem solving based on the needs of those involved. Individuals work together to find joint resolutions to the question: Where can/should we go from here?

Every system uses a combination of power, rights, and interests to resolve conflicts. As you can see below, an effective system relies more on the interests of the people involved in the conflict, while a distressed system relies on the use of power to resolve issues.



From Beyond Intractability <http://www.beyondintractability.org/>



## Communication Style

Dr. Mitchell Hammer has developed a useful model for looking at different behaviors that people demonstrate in conflict. There are two variables that he examines in his model: *Direct v. Indirect Communication* and *Emotionally Restrained v. Emotionally Expressive* conflict. Knowledge and consideration of these variables can be extremely important when we are in diverse environments.

**Direct v. Indirect Communication.** People who use a direct style of communication give their opinions explicitly. They clearly state their point of view. People that use an indirect style use ambiguous language as a way to save face for themselves and others. A key difference between Direct and Indirect Communicators is what they value most. Direct Communicators value the sharing of verbal information while Indirect Communicators value preserving the relationship and being careful not to hurt the feelings of others.

**Emotionally Restrained v. Emotionally Expressive.** People who value emotional restraint work to control their emotions. Credibility and trust are gained from someone being able to manage their emotions. Emotionally expressive people use their words and variation in their tone, volume, and body language to clearly express these emotions. Credibility is gained by genuinely displaying emotions rather than seeming indifferent.



**Source: Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory by Dr. Mitchell Hammer**

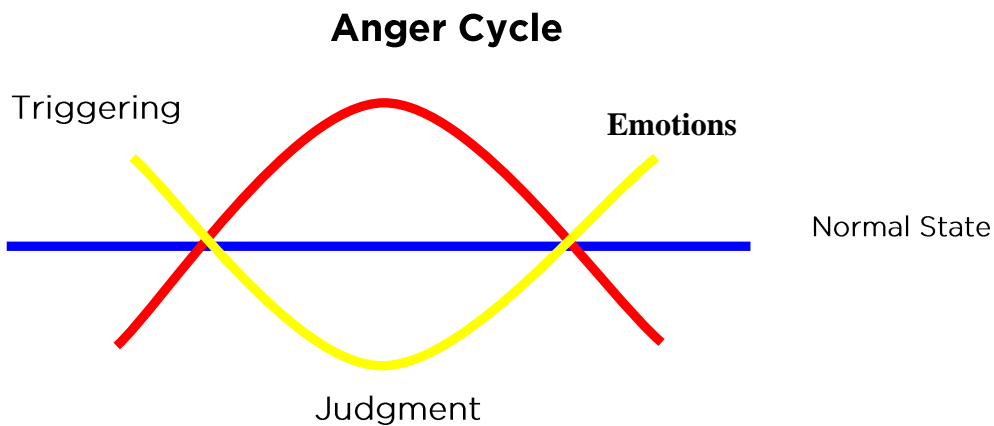
One can see that the interaction and expectations between people with different styles would highly influence their interpretation of the same event. Being self-aware and considering the conflict values along these two variables in the person with whom you have a conflict can help you resolve issues in a way that respectfully allows the expression or non-expression of emotions. Depending on the importance of the issue, accept that some indirectness may be culturally and/or personally appropriate for some. Reserving direct communication for issues that have specific job-related needs while allowing indirectness for non-critical issues can help build relationships.



## Anger

The expression of anger in conflict is often related to cultural expectations regarding appropriate emotional expression. According to Carol Taveris in her work on anger, in most situations, anger:

- is situational and the response is **culturally defined**
- is not in itself an aggressive act
- if properly understood can strengthen a relationship
- does not ordinarily lead to aggression
- is not the same thing as rage
- is often directed at someone known or familiar rather than at strangers



Some would say that “righteous anger” against unfair policies or injustice is important to show. This idea is especially relevant in the points below, from *Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion* by Carol Taveris. Though she is not looking at social justice issues, the relationship is evident here. This directed anger can lead to social change.

An angry individual typically feels:

- treated unfairly
- that the situation is not a reflection of the “natural order” but the result of a purposeful and blame-worthy action by someone who should know better
- that being angry can improve the situation in some way
- that the target of anger is not a social superior whose conduct could be justified by that status
- that he/she has no other effective sanctioning power that could rectify the situation.

## National Words Matter Week: Inclusive Language is Strategic

By Samara Hakim, Founder of The Culture Factor, LLC and Consultant Trainer with NCRC.

In a low-context communication culture, where we emphasize what is explicitly stated, going as far as celebrating “Words Matter Week,” it is paramount to be mindful of the response generated by our words. Using inclusive language in our communication can make the difference between someone disregarding our message completely or that person being fully engaged in what we are offering.

Inclusive language is not political correctness, it is strategic. Inclusive language is rooted in a consciousness of how people differ in their culture, their history, and their experiences. It is language that does not insinuate any prejudice, discrimination, or stereotype, and does not effectively exclude a group of people.

As Mark Twain said, “The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.” Depending on the context, words can strike like lightning or luminesce like fireflies. For example, while some people may use the term “queer” to claim their own identity, it can be offensive if used by someone outside the group. “Older” is relative and often offensive; if necessary to identify birth order, using “elder” denotes wisdom and experience.

Words like “Schizo” or “Psycho”, rooted in mental health diagnoses are in effect exclusionary, ridiculing serious mental illness. Words like “handicap” or “disabled parking spot” insinuate a kind of inferiority, when we mean to say “person with disability” or “accessible parking spot.”

Words like “sportsmanship,” “manning”, “man-made” and “chairman” insinuate a prejudice and stereotype that these roles are limited to men. Instead, one can say “fair play”, “staffing”, “artificial,” and “chair”. Using gender as synonymous with sex, and using the pronouns “he” and “she” as opposed to “they”; effectively limit gender expansiveness. Similarly, addressing “you guys” as opposed to “everyone” limits inclusion.

Using “illegal alien” to refer to “undocumented immigrant/worker” is non-inclusive. Similarly, using “Arab” to be synonymous with “Muslim” or terrorist, or to speak of someone’s race. A person can be Muslim but not necessarily an Arab or an Arabic-speaker, and vice versa. Many view the term “Arab” as rooted in the aftermath of colonialism to designate a pan-ethnicity, a simplified categorization of many cultures. Analogies would be “Asian American” or “European American” or “American Indian.”

People's identification and comfort with these terms varies. For example, there are "Arabs" everywhere in the sense that they may be able to genealogically trace their ancestry back to the Arabian Peninsula, or they grew up with Arabic as their first language. However, the original use of the word has dissipated over time. When discussing linguistic aspects of the term "Arab," it is more inclusive to use "Arabic speaker," and when discussing more cultural aspects of the term, it is more inclusive to use the nationality or group culture with which that person identifies.

Although it is impossible to always know what to say in each context, being conscious of the origin of a word, its historical and mainstream use, and its acceptability can help us avoid unintentionally offending someone. Whether or not a word is inclusive is more often about the effect that the word has on the reader or listener, as opposed to the intention behind the word choice itself.

Speaking someone's language is not merely about speaking a national language that a person understands. It is also about the strategic use of language: speaking in the communication style that resonates with that person; speaking to what they value, what they respect, and what they need. Only then, will our message not only be heard, but also accepted.

## Interest-Based Conflict Resolution in the Workplace

In interest-based conflict resolution, the approach becomes more *integrative* rather than *distributive*. In *distributive negotiation*, there is a clear winner and there is competitive dialogue between participants ~ which leads to strained relations. In *integrative negotiation*, the interests of the employees and the manager are advanced and there is a collaborative conversation between the participants ~ which helps people in their ongoing work relationships.

When people are in conflict with one another, it isn't easy to use an *integrative* style of negotiation, so the manager assists the employees to move from their complaints to understanding their own interests as well as the interests of the other employee.

Their complaints are often based on their position or perceived unfairness. They are often all-or-nothing statements ~ one person's solution to the problem. Interests, on the other hand, are the motivations that are often unspoken and based on personal values and experience. They are the reasons behind the complaint.

<b>Complaints</b> Open to challenge Implies one solution Implies a demand/threat Explains "what?" Points a finger Closes the dialogue Fight or flight	<b>Interests</b> Open to clarification Share a perception Share a need Explains "why?" Asks a question Open the dialogue Leads to rational problem solving
--	---

### Example of Workplace Interests

#### For the Employee

- **Respect:** being treated in a respectful manner
- **Acceptance:** by co-workers and supervisors
- **Fairness:** being treated fairly
- **Choices:** ability to give input that affects the job
- **Security:** having a job
- **Personal Satisfaction:** the job is meaningful
- **Competence:** ability to improve skills to do the job

#### For the Employer/Manager

- **Getting the Job Done Efficiently:** meeting deadlines
- **Teamwork:** employees and supervisors that work well together
- **Reputation:** respect from employees and other managers

# The ART of Inclusive Communication

---

## **Active Awareness**

- Recognize style differences
- Check your bias and your ego
- Process your perceptions

## **Respond Respectfully**

- Demonstrate understanding, Acknowledge, Identify interests
- Ask open ended questions
- Acknowledge your responsibility

## **Troubleshoot Together**

- Tell your perspective in a non-confrontational way
  - Ensure everyone's interests are met
  - End on a positive note
-

## Active Awareness

The first part of the ART strategy is to practice what we call *Active Awareness*. We believe that communicating effectively when we are in conflict takes ongoing efforts to not fall into believing our own biases, what our ego is telling us, and the assumptions we bring into the situation. Managing one's own emotional reactions during times of conflict requires our attention as well. It is for these reasons that we begin the strategy with the emphasis on dealing with the challenges in ourselves and what our hearts and minds are pushing us to think and do.

Our first reactions are often judging or thinking poorly of the other people's styles (such as what Hammer Model teaches us), so *recognizing style differences* helps us to remember that these differences are simply reality and not good or bad, just different. It can also cue us into adapting our style for a better outcome to the situation.

Often, our own biases and ego stand out as the greatest blocks to an open and accepting response to the issues in conflict. For this reason, consciousness about this requires a thoughtful, honest inner dialogue.

Having *Active Awareness* often requires us to be non-reactive. When the issue or the relationship is not extremely important to us, it can be easier to not take things personally and, thus, to not react. However, when the issue or the relationship matters deeply to us, even if we value the idea of being non-reactive, it may take much more effort to live up to this value. In these situations, we find it useful to process our perceptions.

Our perception leads to how we feel about the situation, which in turn leads to our actions. Our perceptions are made up with our beliefs about the situation, the assumptions we make about the other person or life in general, and our past experiences.

By processing our perceptions, we allow the feelings to exist without judgment. Then, when we are ready, we process what is going on with us and how we landed there as well as which assumptions and biases we may be holding. After that, we may question ourselves about alternative ways to see the situation or how we might respond in a way that is consistent with our values. Clearly, using this approach in some intense situations sometimes means holding off on the conversation to allow ourselves to process our perceptions more deeply.

The reality is that becoming actively aware has no shortcuts and takes exercising new ways of thinking and being in the world. Just as in physical exercise when our muscles take time to get accustomed to the exertions, the new neural pathways in the brain that are created by forcing oneself to be more mindful of biases, assumptions, and judgements take time to form.

## Active Awareness as It Relates to Brain Research

Active Awareness is an essential element of the ART of Inclusive Communication. Rather than taking the approach just to be nice, reviewing current brain research will help explain why it works. The following findings underscore the value of taking this approach: first, understanding the upset person by understanding the [corpus callosum](#); second, looking at the impact of [mirror neurons](#) on communication; and lastly, allowing the [pre-frontal cortex](#) to do its job. All three are briefly explained below.

William Eddy, founder of the High Conflict Institute and author of several books about working with high conflict people, has done extensive research on how the brain functions when people are upset. In his work, he points out the importance of the [corpus callosum](#), which is the main wiring between the [right and left hemispheres](#) of the [brain](#) that aids in the flow of information.

When some people are upset, they get stuck in the distressed emotions of the [right hemisphere](#) and can't access their [left hemisphere](#) to help resolve negative emotions. In that case, they have trouble managing their emotions. Our approach of *not reacting* plays an important role at this point. By responding calmly and respectfully, instead of reacting to their energy and anger, ART practitioners are able to remain rational and access the [left hemisphere](#) of their brains.

Moreover, scientists have discovered that we have “[mirror](#)” [neurons](#) hardwired in our brains, which means we reflect the emotion that we see in others. When we are able to keep calm and not react with our body language or our words, others will be more likely to mirror us rather than us mirroring their anger – which will help to reduce tension.

Finally, the ART approach is probably the last thing that you want to do in the moment. Eddy's brain research indicates that the natural instinct of reacting strongly when confronted by others is your [amygdalae](#) talking. Your [amygdalae](#) (one in each [hemisphere](#) of the brain; the right [amygdala](#) is more reactive to angry facial expressions whereas the [left amygdala](#) is more reactive to negative words) work to protect you from danger, so they are very sensitive to threats. Learning to manage the impulsive response of the [amygdalae](#) is an important task as we mature. We learn to override that reactionary response with a more rational analysis of the situation by using the [pre-frontal cortex](#). By using the ART approach, you are actually utilizing the [pre-frontal cortex](#) to manage your [amygdalae](#) ~ which will help the upset person manage theirs.



## The Aikido of Conflict Resolution

*Literally translated Aikido means:*

*the path, the way(do)      to harmony (ai)      with life-force, positive willpower (ki)*

The ART strategy and the lessons learned have been compared to Morihei Ueshiba's work in Aikido. His philosophy and marital art practice is unique in that there is no attack stance. Using an Aikido approach in conflict resolution means reading the opponent's energy and using it. In *The Art of Peace*, Ueshiba writes "To injure an opponent is to injure yourself. To control aggression without inflicting injury is the Art of Peace."

According to Ursula Monn, an Aikido practitioner and writer, *whenever there is a conflict, there must be a will to win over somebody, or to "be right" about something. In Aikido, you learn to respect someone else's will or opinion. This does not mean submission, however – nor does it mean trying to submit to you, which is manipulation. By respecting someone else's will (or opinion) and putting yourself in the other person's place, you then find co-existence and cooperation.* This is also critical in cultural encounters in which accepting others' style and values, without trying to change them.

While to most of us the moves may be a little counter-intuitive, they do work. And, of course, they take practice. Here are the steps that an aikidoist employs when involved in clashes, and how we think they apply to conflict resolution:

- *Center* – focus on what really matters.
- *Enter* – address the issue with whoever is really involved, when both are ready.
- *Blend*—use the other person's perspective as well as your own in analyzing the situation and in examining options. This requires you to empathize and work to understand what the situation might mean to them. Use all the available energy.
- *"Attack" Cleanly* -- be honest and as open as you can about what is at stake and what your motives are, in a respectful way.
- *Learn to Fall* – be ready to take some risks; you will be making mistakes but if you are ready to forgive yourself (after taking responsibility), the other person is likely to believe there is hope for resolution.

The connection between Aikido and the ART of Inclusive Communication is fundamental. The philosophy of the ART is that we can have power with someone; we don't allow the other person to dominate us, nor do we need to dominate them. By engaging in dialogue about our different views and feelings, we can create an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual respect.



## Cultural Humility

Cultural humility is the *life-long process of continuing to learn about, be open to, and respectful of the cultures and values of others: the recognition that your way of thinking is not the best or only way of thinking.*

There has been an increased awareness of the need for cultural humility as we interact with others. It began with social workers and medical service providers realizing that they have a responsibility to their clients/ patients to treat them and their cultural values with respect. It has now spread to the way to think about being inclusive. If one does not have cultural humility, how can one truly treat others with dignity? Cultural humility entails a combination of awareness, attitude, skills, practice, and last, embodiment. Taken from a culturally humble perspective, the ART of Inclusive Communication helps us to be more aware of our interactions with others, we build skills to communicate and listen better, and, with practice, we can embody cultural humility.

## Empathy

Research being done in the area of emotional intelligence shows that good leaders display empathy and that people who are empathetic tend to be more successful professionally and personally. The reason lies in the fact that being able to show empathy builds better relationships in which people can trust each other.

It is especially difficult to empathize when you have been in conflict with someone. According to Teresa Wiseman, in her work in empathy, there are four essential parts to empathy: to be able to see the world as others see it; to be non-judgmental; to understand another person's feelings, and to communicate your understanding of that person's feelings. Practicing these steps to empathy will help you gain needed skills in successfully practicing the ART of Communication.

## Listening Effectively

A key aspect of successful communication is understanding what the other person is saying or trying to say. Obviously, in order to understand, one must first be able to listen. It is challenging to listen when you are in conflict with someone or when they have a style that you are not familiar with. They may be saying something that you disagree with, think is completely wrong, or that hurts your feelings. Preparing to effectively listen means being willing to hold back on our reactions and defensive responses and truly listen (without judgment) to the speaker, even if we don't like what we are hearing.

When people feel they have truly been heard and understood, they are likely to feel accepted. They are willing to give more information that may be useful in resolving the conflict. They are also more likely to hear what you have to say. On the other hand, if they feel no one is hearing what they have to say, they often become more rooted in their own view of the situation and in their perception that you are not only *wrong* but also a *rude, disrespectful, or even bad* person.

In considering how you demonstrate that you are listening, most of us are aware that often it's the "how" rather than the "what" that makes an effort to communicate successful or not. Listening involves:

- Gestures
- Your face and posture
- Culturally appropriate eye contact
- Attentiveness

We caution against drawing many conclusions from the other person's behaviors. While paying attention to non-verbal behaviors gives insight, don't assume that the nonverbals always reflect the person's attitudes. Being sensitive to cultural variation in body language is important in not over-interpreting behaviors.

## Respond Respectfully

Attempts at communication solely on a rational level are bound to fail when the issues have personal relevance for the participants. Personal relevance connotes an affective dimension; people feel and value as well as think about the position they hold. Denying or ignoring the existence of feelings in communication is like building a house without a foundation.

~ George Isaac Brown *Human Teaching for Human Learning*

Being able to respond respectfully, despite not feeling respected ourselves, is a key part of the ART strategy. Responding respectfully has to do with the words we use to show the other person that we respect their point of view and feelings. Even in the worst case, when the other person's motives are not altruistic, the strategy of being non-reactive and the skill of withholding judgment are useful because they call a truce in an escalating war of words.

Additionally, it actually helps us listen better. The skills and attitudes conveyed (being nonjudgmental, employing neutral language, and utilizing de-escalating words) are powerful tools in creating civil interchange with people in one on one encounters. An important component of cultural competency is to be able to respond in a respectful way to others. Three specific techniques that can be used to respond respectfully are on the following page.

**Demonstrating Understanding.** The purpose is to let the other speaker know that they have been heard in the way they want to be heard (i.e. the message sent was the one received). It is especially useful to do this when the issue has emotional relevance for the other person. Demonstrating understanding can be done in different ways. The way that does NOT work is to simply say "I understand" because too often the speaker feels dismissed by this comment.

One approach has three distinct steps.

1. The other person relates how the situation affected him/her.
2. You recap the key concept in different words.
3. You check for accuracy and clarify what was understood.

**You:** Can you tell me how the situation has affected you?

**Co-worker:** You always want me to focus on your projects. When I approach you with a concern about my projects, you always brush me off. I am tired of it. *I just feel discounted.*

**You:** Your sense is that I don't attend to your concerns and projects, though you do for me. You don't feel that I treat you fairly. Is that right?

**Acknowledge.** This technique focuses on your ability to show empathy to the other person's feelings about the situation. It does not require you to AGREE with their reaction, but instead, to be able to simply state how you think that they might be feeling. You may not get it perfect so don't wait until you are 100% sure of their feelings. The other person will appreciate your efforts.

**Identify Interests.** Being able to hear the other person's underlying needs and interests instead of their complaints is an advanced listening skill that takes practice. Stating their needs or interests can be a very powerful response.

**You:** *You seem upset with me about the whole thing. (acknowledging)*

**Friend:** *No, it's not that I am upset or angry. I'm actually just disappointed.*

**You:** *You would have wanted to trust me. (identifying interests)*

## What Respectful Response is Being Used? A Quiz

Please write DU (Demonstrating Understanding), A (Acknowledging) or II (Identifying Interests) in the appropriate places.

1. I can't have people just walking in on me while I am running these numbers. It is so distracting and then I have to find my place again.

\_\_\_\_\_ a. *You seem frustrated.*  
\_\_\_\_\_ b. *You don't like to be interrupted while you are doing your spreadsheets.* \_\_\_\_\_ c. *You'd like me to respect your need to concentrate while doing accounting.*

2. You just don't understand the history of this company. You know we started in John's garage. You don't get how hard we worked to get to this point.

\_\_\_\_\_ a. *You would like me to acknowledge the dedication and contributions that you and the other founders made to this company.*  
\_\_\_\_\_ b. *So, your sense is that I completely don't get the history of the company or what it took to get to this point.*  
\_\_\_\_\_ c. *You seem disappointed that I haven't tried to find out more.*

3. You only focus on your own projects and you never offer to help when we have a tight deadline. Even when asked, you always have an excuse about why you can't help.

\_\_\_\_\_ a. *You're saying that I don't help out when you have pressures to get a project done, even when you ask me for help straight out.*  
\_\_\_\_\_ b. *I can see that this is really upsetting for you.*  
\_\_\_\_\_ c. *It seems like you're just asking for support and teamwork when you need help. Is that it?*

## Questions and Conflict Resolution

It is important to be careful about the way in which we ask questions when we encounter diverse styles and approaches. A curious approach also applies here; trying to understand and respect different approaches by asking open-ended questions comes across the most respectfully.

Many times in interpersonal conflict, it is challenging to ask questions that come from an open perspective. When we feel attacked, our questions often sound defensive, self-protective, and, at times, aggressive. These defensive questions are often used as attacks, as attempts to trap the other person, or are asked simply to prove that you are right. As much as possible, try to maintain a *curious stance* about the other person's perspective. In this way, your questions will reflect a genuine desire to gain an understanding of his/her perspective rather than as a series of questions that antagonize the other person. Watching the tone to remain respectful also makes a difference.

### Why do we ask questions?

- To get information (*What happened?*)
- To clarify something you don't understand (*Could you explain this for me?*)
- To confirm your own opinion (*Don't you agree?*)
- To learn more about someone else (*What do you do? What do you think?*)
- To get a new perspective (*How do you see it?*)
- To draw someone out (*What else can you tell us about your experience?*)
- To trap someone (*You knew that I'd get upset about the email, didn't you?*)
- To know the "truth" (*You never read anything about this history, did you?*)

### Examples of Questions

Defensive	Curious
<i>Why did you do that?</i>	<i>Tell me more about what happened.</i>
<i>What do you mean...?</i>	<i>I'm confused. Can you give me an example?</i>
<i>Why do you think I came to that conclusion?</i>	<i>I'm curious about how my perception got there.</i>

## Acknowledging Responsibility

Sometimes, something as simple as recognizing you made a cultural blunder makes all the difference in the world. When there has been a clash, the value of being able to recognize your part in any breakdown in communication with the other person is an important part of the ART of Inclusive Communication. Once you recognize it, conveying it to the other person can set a tone of reconciliation. This acknowledgement of your responsibility can help keep the problem from escalating by showing respect to the other person. Taking responsibility for your part of the breakdown of communication means being able to say that you made a mistake or assumed something incorrectly, or that you are sorry for what you did. Rather than making you look weaker or more vulnerable, it actually does more to set a tone of honesty and understanding. This will help the other person feel safe enough in looking at his/her responsibility and, often, to apologize for any missteps s/he may have taken as well. In the end, your ability to acknowledge your responsibility tends to strengthen the relationship

## Troubleshoot Together

### Tell Your Perspective in a Non-Confrontational Way

For people who want to be an ARTist in their communication with others, it is sometimes difficult for them to find a way to state their own perspective in ways that don't escalate the conflict. Rather than avoiding saying your point of view, we offer three approaches to framing your response. Each will give you new ways to respectfully point out your concerns. At first these expressions may feel artificial, but with practice and with efforts to use your own communication style, it will become natural.

A. Make I statements:

I FEEL \_\_\_\_\_ WHEN \_\_\_\_\_ BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_.

B. State your interests:

ONE THING THAT IS IMPORTANT TO ME IS.....

C. Use "WE" statements:

WE NEED TO ....

1. You never wash the coffee cups.
  - a. *I feel frustrated when the coffee cups piles up because it makes the work kitchen look untidy.*
  - b. *One thing that is important to me is that all of us take responsibility for the workplace chores.*
  - c. *We need to figure out a fair system for workplace chores.*
2. You didn't tell me what I was supposed to do to get people to come to the event.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
3. You didn't give me the date to attend the program so it's not my fault.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Iron Rules of Human Behavior

People will rarely make a decision if there is any way to avoid it.  
People do not like to be told what to do.  
People tend to carry out only those decisions they have helped to formulate.  
People are more important than their disputes. If they can agree to live peacefully without resolving who did what yesterday, then who did what yesterday is not important.  
No settlement is entered without doubt.

George Nicolau

**HANDLE CONFLICT** *LIKE A* **BOSS.**



## *10 Tips*

BE KIND INSTEAD OF TRYING TO BE RIGHT. YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO YOUR FEELINGS. **LET GO OF BELIEVING YOU OWN THE ONLY TRUTH.** **IGNORING OR ATTACKING RARELY GETS YOU WHAT YOU NEED.** REALLY LISTEN TO THE OTHER PERSON. THINK ABOUT HOW CAN YOU SAY WHAT YOU WANT IN A WAY THEY CAN HEAR IT.

**COMMUNICATE YOUR NEEDS NOT YOUR COMPLAINTS.** **ACKNOWLEDGE RESPONSIBILITY.** TAKE TIME BEFORE YOU TALK. ALWAYS COME FROM A PLACE OF RESPECT, UNDERSTANDING, AND HUMILITY.



## The ART of Communication: A Case Study

Healthy Futures is a community based organization that encourages healthy food choices, non-violence, and other healthy living. Healthy Futures supports a collaborative that includes community residents and agencies working together for all health promotion work in the community.



Randy

Program Manager at Healthy Futures. Randy is in charge of managing the collaborative.

In this script, his use of the ART skills is highlighted.

Ellen

Director of Butt Out, an anti-smoking campaign aimed at reducing smoking. She is a member of the Healthy Futures Collaborative.

Randy	Hi Ellen. How're you doing? How's the collaborative going?	
Ellen	Hey, Randy, I was just going to your office.  I'm sick of how those fools, Mike and Angelica, are running, I should say ruining everything. You have no control of this collaborative.	
Randy	Whoa. What happened?	Let go of ego
Ellen	You keep promising us at BUTT OUT that getting people to stop smoking is valuable for our community but you're just blowing smoke rings.	
Randy	Listen, Ellen, I want to hear what's going on and what's upsetting you. Do you have a minute? Can we sit down?	Prepare to listen effectively Non-reactive
Ellen	Sure, whatever.  You contacted me at the beginning of this whole thing. You told us how important our participation	

	would be. That's pure b.s.	
Randy	Seems like you feel that the involvement of Butt Out hasn't panned out the way you had hoped and you feel like I led you on.	Demonstrate Understanding  Let go of your ego
Ellen	No, it hasn't and it's your fault. I go to these meetings and then I get busy because we do the anti-smoking programs in the schools. I can't get to all the meetings. Period.	
Randy	Yeah, I know that you and your volunteers do those programs ~ and I hear from teachers that they really get the kids' attention.	Non-Reactive Acknowledge
Ellen	Nice to hear something positive for a change. We have to catch them early ~ before 5 <sup>th</sup> grade. And we have to be as entertaining as a video game.  But, anyway, so, when I miss a couple of meetings, Mike and Angelica make changes about our plans in Holistic Health and I think it hurts Butt Out. Are you just letting the animals run the zoo or what?	
Randy	Help me understand, Ellen. What change are you concerned about?	Ask Questions
Ellen	Okay, the fair that is going on right now. I was told two months ago that we would each get our own booth and there would be a sign that said BUTT OUT. I show up at the collaborative last week and I find out that we are just going to have one booth for all of the agencies involved in Holistic Health. How is Butt Out going to get attention with that?	
Randy	So, your hope was that the fair would give you good exposure so I can understand how frustrated you must have been to learn that your agency wouldn't get a booth.  Those changes came down a month or so ago and I know that they have been wrestling with that. Did anyone explain what happened?	Identify interests  Acknowledge  Ask questions
Ellen	Mike kind of did, but mostly he just lectured to me about what everyone had said at the previous meeting and what he was doing with Healthy Futures.	
Randy	Well, as you know, Mike is one of our volunteers so I talk to him a lot. He gives a lot of his time to this effort here. Perhaps he didn't explain the funding issue?	Ask questions
Ellen	He didn't say a thing about funding.	
Randy	I think it would give you some perspective to learn that. You know Healthy Futures funds a lot of the	Tell your perspective in

	work in the community but we also get funding from other donors. The major donor for our participation in that fair backed out because of some internal crisis they were having. That affected our ability to support the agencies in Healthy Futures to have their own booths, even though that is what we wanted to do. Since it wasn't our resource fair and we had to pay a lot for each booth, the collaborative decided to just go with one booth this time.	a non-confrontational way
Ellen	You shouldn't have promised things you couldn't deliver on.	
Randy	<p>You want me to always live up to my promises. You don't know how much I would like to be able to do that, Ellen.</p> <p>I should be more careful about what I say and I'm really sorry if it led you to believe it was 100%. I only wish I could be 110% with the money. Funding is always an issue.</p>	<p>Identify interests</p> <p>Acknowledge your responsibility</p> <p>Tell your perspective in a non-confrontational way</p>
Ellen	Speaking of funding, I want to know exactly how much everyone in Holistic Health Collaborative is getting from Healthy Futures. How does that compare with what we get? I thought you people were supposed to be so transparent.	
Randy	<p>I can see that you have real concerns about funding for Butt Out. You clearly want to make a difference in people's lives, which is awesome. And you want the funding to be fair for all collaborative partners. I get that.</p> <p>It's a policy issue from Healthy Futures not to share who gets funding and how much they get. You may not realize it but several of the collaborative members do not get any funding at all; they come because they see the collaborative as important for the health of our community and they have their own sources for funding.</p>	<p>Identify interests</p> <p>Tell your perspective in a non-confrontational way</p>
Ellen	Are you saying that I am lucky to get any funding at all?	
Randy	It's important to me that we all work together to learn how to partner and collaborate. You know for the health of our community. And I wish we had a bottomless pit of money but we don't you know. As a representative of Healthy Futures, I want you to know that I believe in the work that you're doing	Tell your perspective in a non-confrontational way

	and I also believe that it's important for you to be part of the collaborative. What I can't promise is that you will get as much of the funding as you would like to get. And I need to respect the confidentiality of the funding for other members.	Make sure everyone's needs are met
Ellen	That makes so much more sense, Randy. I just want to be in the loop. I feel so strongly about getting our youth to not smoke. I'm sorry I'm such a hothead.	
Randy	I'm really glad you brought it to my attention.  And I recognize that you can't make it to all of the meetings. What could be done so you can stay informed if you can't make it?	Let go of your ego  Make sure all interests are met
Ellen	Wow. You make it seem so logical. I guess I could have someone email me the notes or something?	
Randy	I want to make sure that your voice is being heard in the collaborative. And as much as possible for all the members to be involved in the decision making. I know that not always possible right? When your others can't be there perhaps your idea about the notes should be the protocol. That way everyone can stay informed, stay involved...	Make sure everyone's needs are met  End on a positive note

# Culture and Identity

---

## Salient Identity

Definition: sa·li·ent 'sālyənt,-lēənt/ most noticeable or important

Each of us has a number of identities or cultures with which we can feel a connection. These identities include (but are not limited to) **gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, education, regional or national background, physical and mental ability, political affiliation, age, family structure, and religion.** The concept of a *salient identity* recognizes that, in a given situation, we may tap into one of our many personal “cultures.” Our *sense of our own identity* can change, depending on the situation we are in. The dynamics of the circumstances, the social pressures we experience, our sense of feeling different, and our level of commitment to an identity all influence our recognition of the identity.

The more we share different aspects of our true identities, instead of just trying to fit in, the greater likelihood we will feel comfortable expressing that identity in front of others, making the identity become more **salient**. This is especially important in recognizing hidden identities, in which we may be able to “pass” as someone that we are not. Being able to claim our identity and connecting with others with that identity can empower us to feel a sense of belonging, security, and support. Recognizing others’ identities in a respectful way leads to better intercultural relationships.

## What Is Culture?

The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia defines culture as “the way of life of a given society, passed down from one generation to the next, through learning and experience.” Culture includes values, language, communication styles, patterns of thinking, and norms of behavior. Linguist Deborah Tannen describes culture as “simply a network of habits and patterns gleaned from past experience.”

We define culture more informally as a learned set of rules, written and unwritten, that instructs individuals on how to operate effectively with one another and with their environment. It not only defines ways to act but also ways to react; therefore, culture is an essential component of our capacity to live as human beings in a social context. In other words, “It’s the way we do things around here.” Because of this, we use the word culture in the broadest sense of the word, including far-reaching areas of our diverse world. Therefore, many aspects of our identity are included in our cultures and groups with which we identify.

“Diversity” is often used with respect to culture, but culture is only one component of diversity. Diversity currently refers to race, ethnicity, gender, age, lifestyle, sexual orientation, and contrasting abilities and skills. We believe that in order to respond respectfully, a good understanding of diversity helps.

## Universal Aspects of Culture

We hear a great deal about cultural differences. They exist. But we sometimes lose sight of the ways in which culture plays a role in our lives. Here are a few examples:

- From our earliest experiences and relationships, we learn values, beliefs, and attitudes that establish our sense of self and relationship to the group.
- Culture often determines our communication styles, and thus our styles of conflict resolution.
- We are all influenced by culturally imposed biases. These artificial hierarchies affect how we treat other people.
- Every culture has recognitions and rewards that reflect standards about what is worthy and acceptable, and what is disapproved of and unacceptable.

These similarities found in all cultures create cohesion within cultural groups, but at the same time they may become the basis of conflict across cultures. We encourage readers to use the recognition of similarities as bridges across which conflict resolution can occur.

## Diversity Issues That May Affect Communication\*

Incorrect Assumptions  
About Others

Expectations That  
Others Will  
Conform

Language/Dialect  
Issues

Biases Against  
The Unfamiliar



### Values in Conflict

The following issues most significantly affect the ability to communicate in diverse settings:

- Language issues leading to miscommunication and misinterpretation
- Incorrect assumptions about diverse cultures
- Expectations that others will conform to your values
- Biases against the unfamiliar
- Values in conflict

\* Adapted from *Conflict Across Cultures: From Talking it Out to Third Party Mediation* by Selma Myers and Barbara Filner.



## Aspects of Culture That May Affect Communication



**Individual:** The individual is valued; independence and decision making are important. Recognition for personal achievement is expected and honored.

**Informality:** Informality is the norm, almost everyone uses first names.

**Direct communication:** Each person is expected to have an opinion and express it freely; direct communication is expected; saying what's on your mind is important.

**Competition:** Competition and ambition encourage superior performance.

**Challenge authority:** Individuals have the right to challenge authority.

**Future orientation:** Emphasis is less on the past and more on the present and future. Focus is on youth.

**Time management:** Time is measured and structured. Punctuality is valued.

**Reputation:** People are measured by what they do.

**Materialism:** Materialism is paramount: power, money, and possessions are highly valued.

**Facts:** Conversations revolve around reporting the facts around an event.

**Group:** The group's interests are considered more important than the effort or recognition of the individual.

**Formal:** Formal relationships and titles are the norm.

**Indirect communication:** Deference is given to those in power or authority; directness and open criticism is seen as offensive.

**Harmony:** Harmony is valued and personal ambition frowned upon.

**Respect authority:** Respect is given to authority and rarely challenged.

**Reverence for past:** Age is respected.

**Time lived:** Promptness is not a concern; experience is valued.

**Reputation:** People are measured by family and origin.

**Spirituality:** Great emphasis is placed on spiritual issues and development.

**Feelings:** Conversations revolve around reporting how one felt about an event.



## Stages of Inclusive Awareness

Milton Bennett has developed a model of the development of cultural competency, in which people learn to value and respond respectfully to people of all cultures. The first three stages show a lack of knowledge, interest, or deep understanding of culture.

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE	MOVEMENT TO NEXT STAGE
1. DENIAL	Unaware of the existence of cultural differences.	<i>Someone who has never encountered someone from a different culture on a personal level.</i>	<i>From Denial to Defense:  Person learns of differences between cultures.</i>
2. DEFENSE	Acknowledge cultural differences but feel threatened by them. Methods used to defend against uncomfortable feelings are denigration, superiority or reversal (in which the negative evaluation is with one's own culture).	When confronted with a cultural difference asks:  <i>What's wrong with these people?</i>	<b>From Defense to Minimization:</b>  Negative judgments are depolarized, and the person begins to see similarities
3. MINIMIZATION	Minimize cultural differences in order to protect one's own cultural identity.	When people talk about cultural differences, states: <i>We are all just alike, all human beings.</i>	<b>From Minimization to Acceptance:</b> The person gets the importance of cultural differences.

## How to Increase Intercultural Awareness

Suggestions for strategies for moving from unawareness and/or minimization to the fundamental shifts necessary for acceptance and embracing intercultural relations (stages 4, 5, and 6 below) include:

- Postpone judgment
- Being willing to live with ambiguity
- Practicing empathy
- Understanding your own culture and its influence on us
- Listen ~ really listen, to words, meanings and feelings

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE	MOVEMENT TO NEXT STAGE
4. ACCEPTANCE	Recognize and value cultural differences without judging them as positive or negative.	When encountering a person from different culture, asks: <i>How do people in your culture do...?</i>	From Acceptance to Adaptation: Explores and other actively learns about other cultures.
5. ADAPTATION	Adapt cognitively and behaviorally to cultural differences; Operate successfully within another culture.	When encountering different cultures, the person watches what others do, listens carefully, and adapts willingly.	From Adaptation to Integration: person develops empathy towards other cultures.
6. INTEGRATION	Interact comfortably with a variety of cultures; integration of cultural awareness into everyday interactions.	The adaptation becomes second nature to the person.	

The ART of Inclusive Communication increases your ability to move forward because of its emphasis on postponing judgment, practicing empathy, and listening.

Adapted from: Bennett, M.J. (1993). Towards Ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In R.M. Paige (Ed.) *Education for the intercultural experience*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

## Learning More About the Experience of Others

In order to understand inclusive communication, it is helpful to look at some aspects of the dynamics that influence our view of society, ourselves, and our view of others. We all have our own lenses with which we view the world; naturally, we have our blinders. Our individual attitudes are affected by what we learned within our families and cultural milieu, our experiences with members of different groups, history, current media images, stereotypes, and, in some cases, exclusionary institutional practices that have favored certain groups over others in a systemic fashion.

Raising one's own awareness of these concepts is sometimes challenging because it takes some degree of questioning our own biases (which are always hard to admit) and looking at the possibility that there exists unfairness that affects some in a deeper, historical way. The six variables that are considered the most important factors from a systemic look at historical advantage in the United States include: **race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and abilities.** One doesn't have to look back very far in US history to see Jim Crow laws, institutionalization into insane asylums for gay men, unfair wages for women, and other systemic discrimination. Unfortunately, one doesn't have to study history to find these types of examples because similar systemic issues still exist to this day.

The typical discussion around these variables often leaves people angry, righteous, and alienated from others. One of the problems with these exchanges is the sense of blaming, attacking, and disrespectful behavior on each side of the divide. Instead of trying to understand the historical (and current) context of the situation, we tend to take it personally. For the person who asserts one of these identities and has suffered discrimination, anyone's lack of awareness can seem to be a personal affront. People who are confronted when they feel that they personally have not been guilty of racism, sexism, or other derogatory behavior often respond defensively because they feel that the conflict is not their fault and they didn't cause the problem, clearly personalizing the situation.

Rather than focusing on blaming the individual, denying history, or negotiating the reality of the status quo, recognition of each person's present reality and need to be heard is important. If we can acknowledge the opportunities and obstacles that different people face and recognize that none of us can control the past, we will go further in understanding one another through meaningful, respectful dialogue. Identifying and addressing discrimination issues within the system is work that needs to happen and is being done by some.

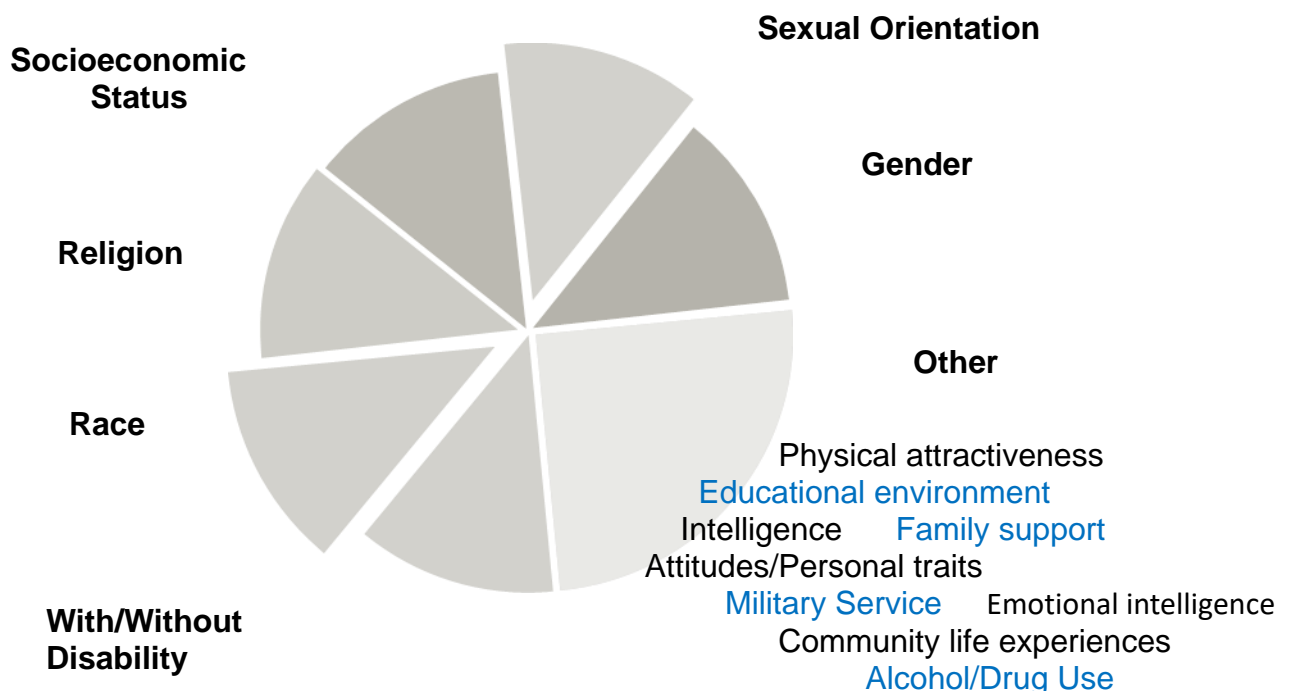
On a personal level, if I see your race, note your gender, learn of your sexual orientation, or in other ways note our differences and think that I know everything about who you are, I have failed to understand the complexity of human beings in general, and disrespected you in particular. If, instead, I learn from you about who you are based on your life experiences and treat you with respect and dignity, I know that I have made the effort to move forward together.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Each of us is born into certain opportunities and challenges. From a **societal** perspective, these opportunities and challenges are evaluated in the six variables listed below. Where you sit in regard to each of these variables has either given you a “green light,” making doors open more easily for you or given you a “yellow light,” giving you more obstacles to opportunity (proceed with caution). These six variables sometimes give people a “red (stop) light,” meaning entry is prohibited to opportunity.” Each of us are some combination of each of these six variables.

We are also much more than those six variables. Two more sections can be chosen from the other list below for you to consider as you fill in your **individual** circle with yellow, green, and red in each of the sections. How do these variables show up for you? Looking at this for ourselves and engaging in conversation about these topics, without defense or judgment, can lead to a greater understanding and empathy for the experience of others.

For some, whose circle is mostly “green,” and never having experienced a “yellow” or “red (stop) light,” there is sometimes a sense of shame or guilt when they learn of the experience of others. Your feelings are always valid, but letting this guilt immobilize you will only lead to worse feelings. Your story is your story; no one else’s is like yours so it matters. And the bigger question is – what are you going to do with the opportunities you have been given in this life to work towards a more just society? How are you going to hear the truth of others?



## Considering Dignity in Our Treatment of Others

Increasingly, there is a call to acknowledge the importance of DIGNITY when dealing with others with whom we have differences. This suggestion leads to a basic question: how is treating someone with **dignity** different than treating someone with **respect**? Reviewing the definition of each can be helpful.

**Respect:** treating someone thoughtfully or with consideration

**Dignity:** a term used in moral, ethical, legal, and political discussions to signify that a being has an innate right to be valued and receive ethical treatment.

For some, others have to earn respect. An important aspect of treating others with dignity is that dignity is not something that one has to earn, but the fundamental **principle that each person has a right to be treated with dignity.** One might not understand all of the different perspectives and identities that others have, but, according to this philosophy, we all have an ethical obligation to treat others with dignity. We all deserve dignity because we all have inherent value and worth.

According to Donna Hicks, who has written about dignity, it is important to recognize the inherent value and vulnerability of all human beings. In an intercultural environment, she suggests these ways in which one can honor the dignity of others:

- ***Acceptance of Identity.** Approach people as being neither inferior nor superior to you. Give others the freedom to express their authentic selves without fear of being negatively judged. Interact without prejudice or bias, accepting the ways in which race, religion, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, and disability may be at the core of the other person's identity. Assume others have integrity.*
- ***Inclusion.** Make others feel that they belong, whatever the relationship - whether they are in your family, community, organization or nation.*
- ***Fairness.** Treat people justly, with equality, and in an evenhanded way according to agreed-on laws and rules. People feel that you have honored their dignity when you treat them without discrimination or justice.*

Many of her other points reflect lessons from the ART of Communication. Adding the notion of dignity to our view of inclusive communication helps us recognize a **fundamental right that everyone is entitled to receiving: being treated with human dignity and respect.** By using the ART of Inclusive Communication, we can move toward achieving these goals.