Practical Skills to De-Escalate Conflict

Helen Jarvis

Tuesday 20 June 2023

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How to participate today
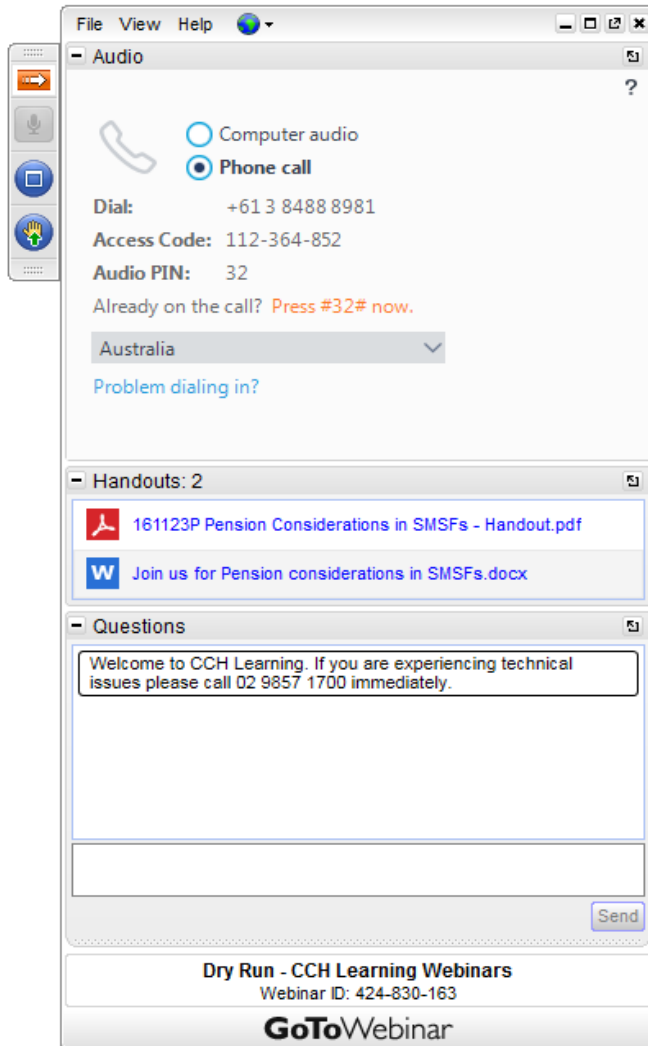
- Handouts Section - PowerPoint

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Alison Wood
Moderator

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Your Presenter

- Helen Jarvis
- Mediator and Founder
- Ripple Learning

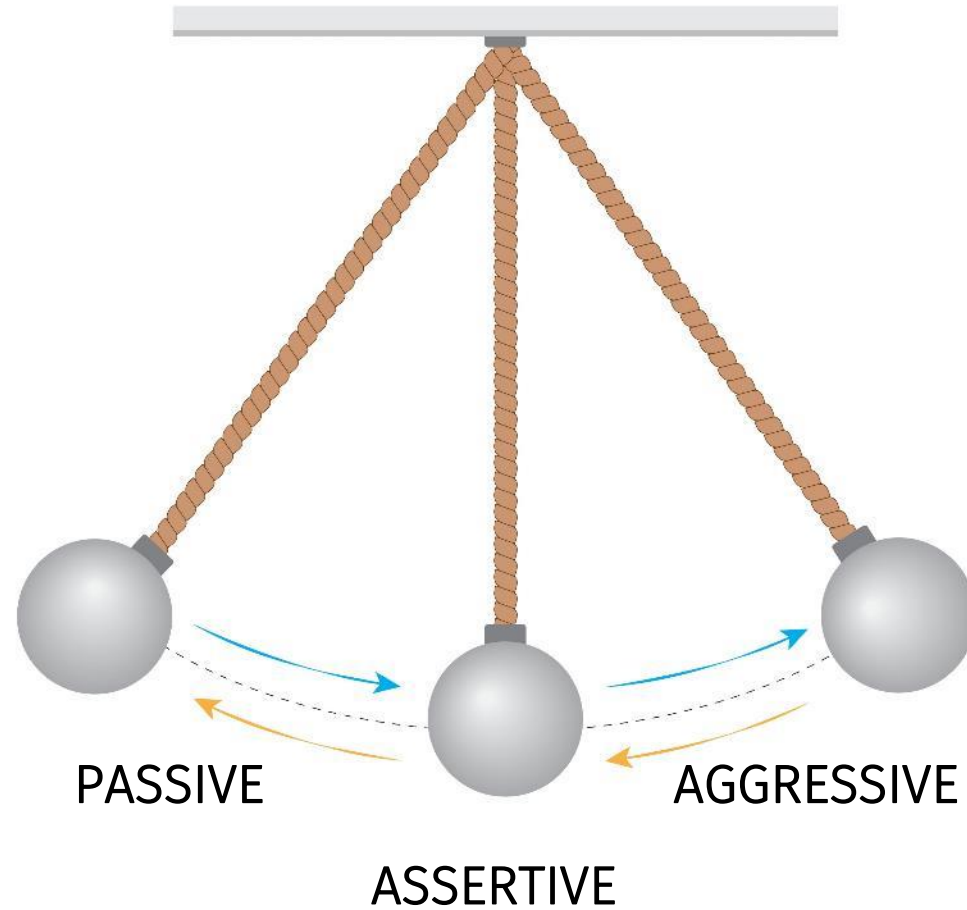# Conflict emerges often and the contexts vary

Impact of Conflict *can be*

| Constructive	Destructive
• Facilitates information sharing • Builds mutual respect and trust • Contributes to a focus on shared interests • Contributes to long term thinking • Solves problems • Encourages creativity • Facilitates change and growth	• Activates anger, anxiety, fear or helplessness • Triggers silence or violence • Deepens mistrust • Contributes to self-protective behaviours • Stifles creativity • Encourages short term thinking

Crisis

Danger   Opportunity

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SILENCE

VIOLENCE

PASSIVE

ASSERTIVE

AGGRESSIVE

Conflict often emerges when our stress levels are very high. Key causes include:

- Expectations don't match reality

- We're navigating lots of change

- We don't feel safe
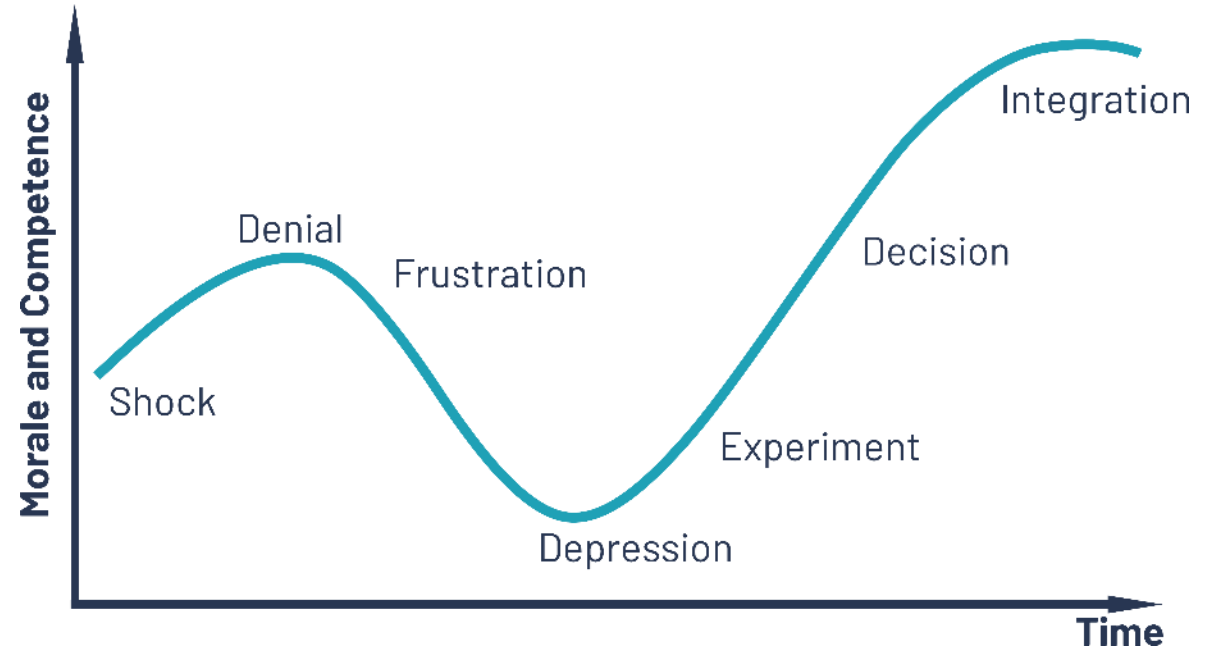
Adapted from a model by Adams, Hayes and Hopson (1957); and the Kubler-Ross 'Stages of Grief' model (1969). Cameron, Mike and Green, Esther., 2009, Making Sense of Change Management, p. 35

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Neurobiology of the Stress Response

NOTICEABLE EFFECTS

- Pupils dilate
- Tunnel Vision
- Mouth goes dry
- Heart beat is noticeably faster
- Muscles tense for action
- Sweating
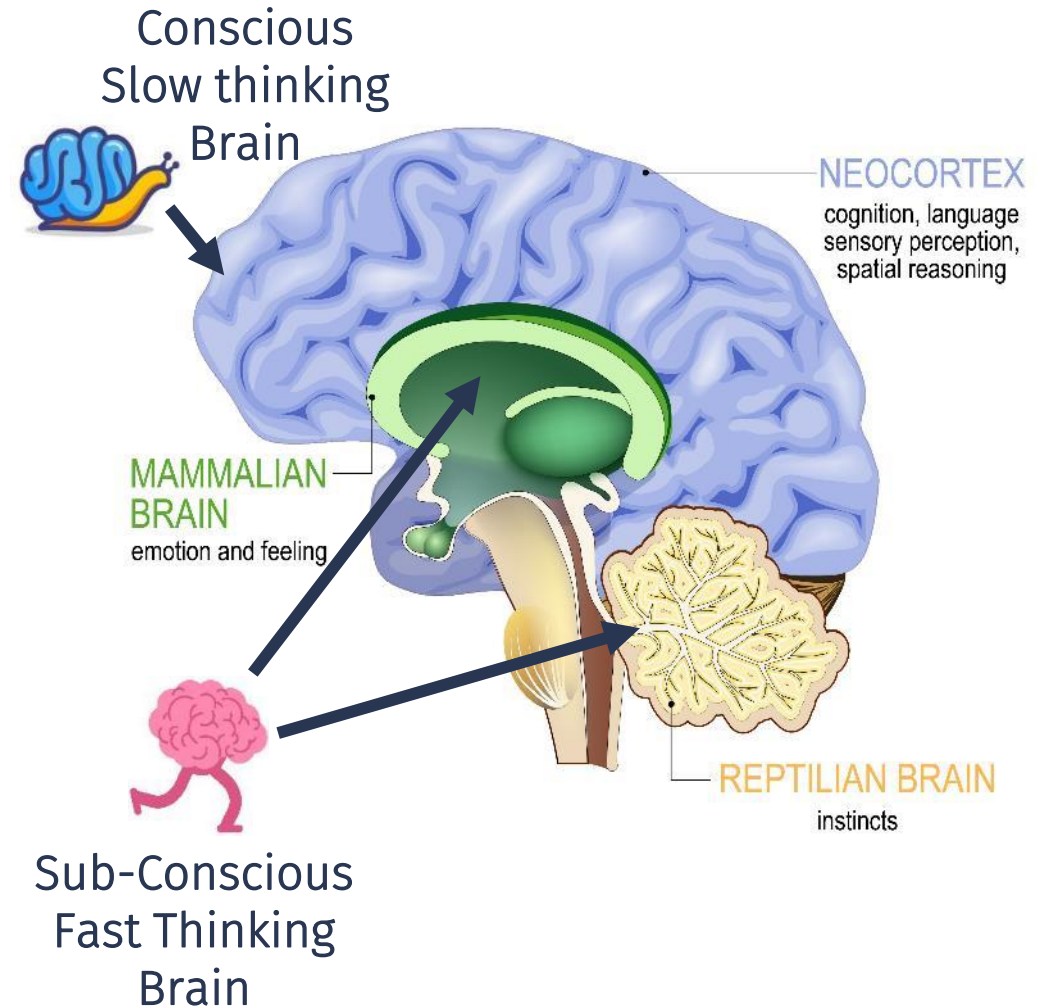- Breathing fast and shallow
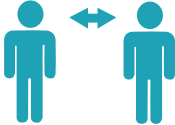- Insomnia
- ADD/ADHD type symptoms

Fight

Flight

Freeze

Conscious
Slow thinking
Brain

NEOCORTEX
cognition, language
sensory perception,
spatial reasoning

MAMMALIAN
BRAIN
emotion and feeling

REPTILIAN BRAIN
instincts

Sub-Conscious
Fast Thinking
Brain

SKILLS

Be Calm

Apologise *when you stuff up*

Sorry

H.E.A.R. *them out*

We both count

Be Assertive

Containment of High Conflict Personalities

Problem Solve

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SKILLS

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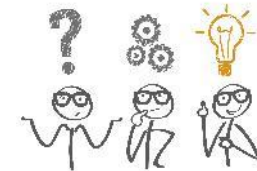
Sorry

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Problem Solve

Listen to H.E.A.R.

H
Hear
Listen for:
- ✓ Content – *what is the problem?*
- ✓ Emotions
- ✓ Needs

E
Explore
- ✓ Be curious
- ✓ Ask OPEN questions to learn more

A
Acknowledge
- ✓ Reflect
- ✓ Paraphrase
- ✓ Summarise
- ✓ Check for understanding

R
Reframe
- ✓ Replace negative with constructive
- ✓ Don't minimize
- ✓ Convey hope, but don't make promises

Empathetic Listening Don'ts

Don't

- Ignore or avoid
- Interrupt mid-sentence
- Debate facts or defend yourself
- Judge
- Ask 'why'?
- Label People or Ideas
- Take anything they say personally
- Think about what you're going to say next
- Take responsibility for their problems
- Challenge while they are very emotional or angry
- Invalidate: patronize/belittle/dismiss feelings or behavior

Don't say

- Don't worry
- Calm down
- It'll be ok
- I understand
- I agree
- You could try.....
- Why don't you......?
- That's not fair

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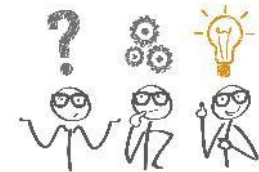
We need to hunt for the Assertive *Sweet Spot*

SILENCE

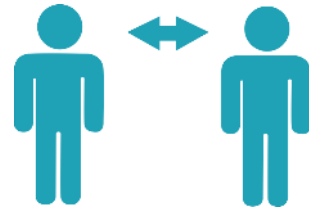VIOLENCE

PASSIVE

AGGRESSIVE

ASSERTIVE
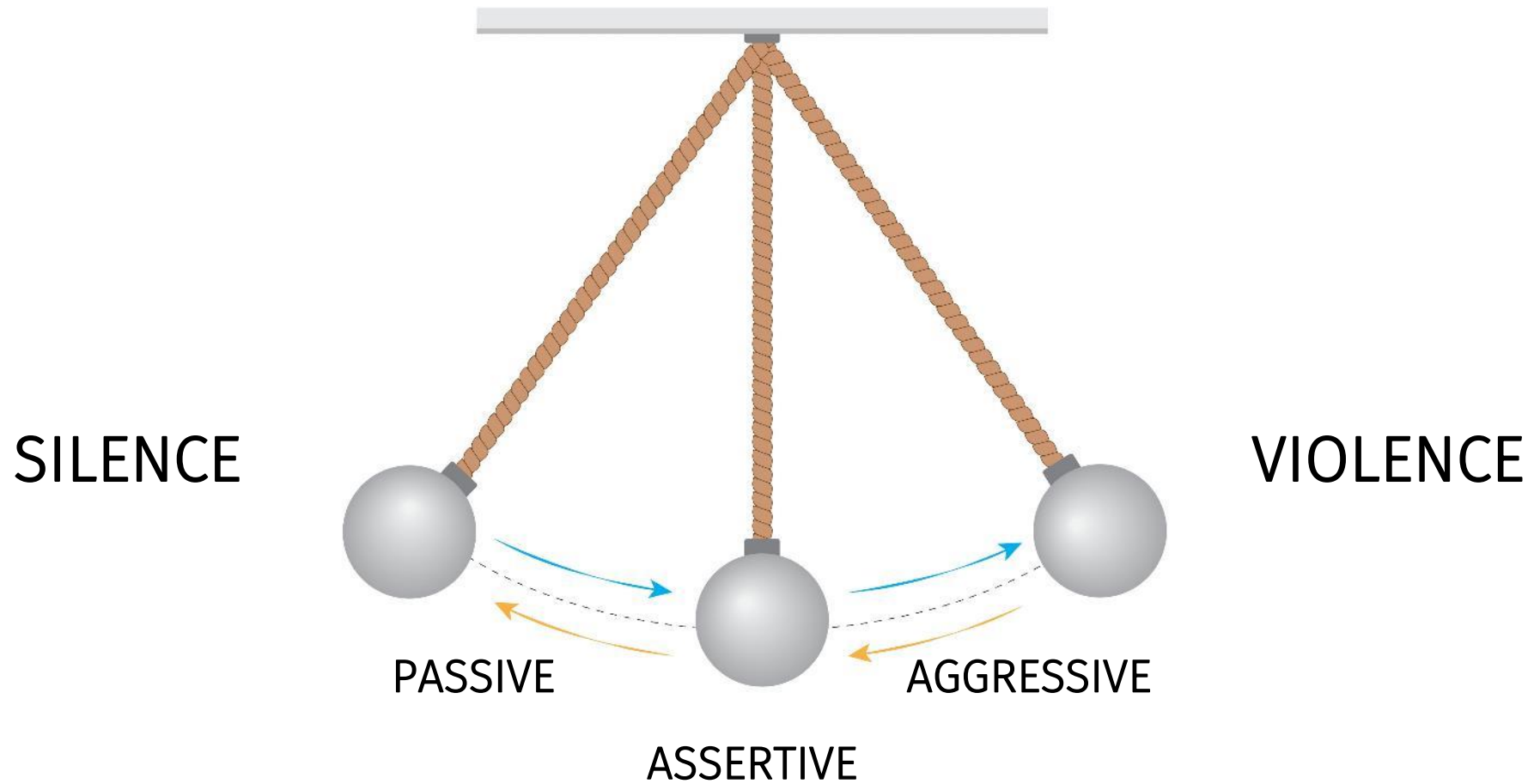
"I don't count"

Passive
- Gives in
- Not talking, not being heard
- Submissive behavior
- Avoids conflict or gives in
- Avoids eye contact
- Speaks softly
- Self deprecating
- Emotionally dishonest
- Conflict escalates if issues are not addressed
- May express resentment and enlist the support of others

"We both count"

Assertive
- Compromises
- Open dialogue
- Desire for the needs of all to be met
- Firm, but polite
- Warm, friendly eye contact
- Conversational tone
- Builds up others and self
- Appropriately honest
- Stands up for self

"You don't count"

Aggressive
- Takes
- Talking over people
- Can be effective in achieving goals in the short term
- Rarely effective in the long term
- Mean, harsh, sarcastic
- Glaring eye contact
- Speaks loudly and with a threatening tone
- Puts others down
- Inappropriately dishonest

Strategies for Assertive Communication

- Be hopeful – *Maintain the mindset that "We can sort this out."*

- Be clear and direct – *Don't beat around the bush*

- Describe the facts and omit opinions -

  Name it rather than *Confronting it*

- Separate the problem from the person

- Be solution-focused – apply a problem-solving mindset

SKILLS

Be Calm

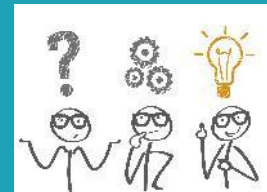Apologise *when you stuff up*
Sorry

H.E.A.R. *them out*

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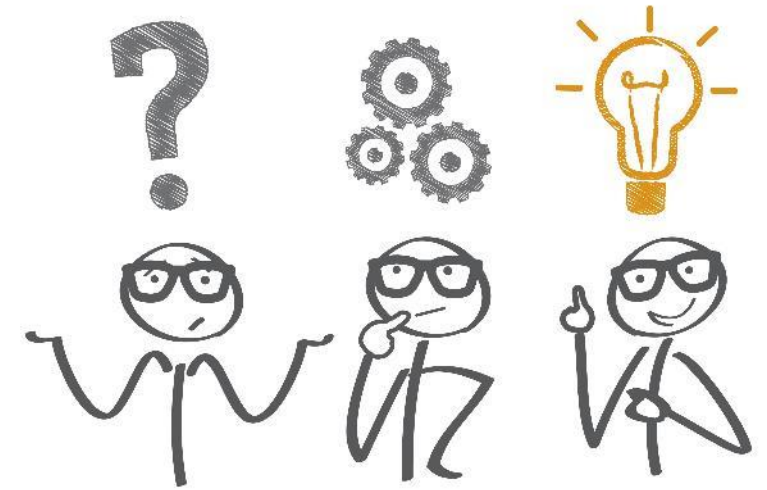Problem Solve

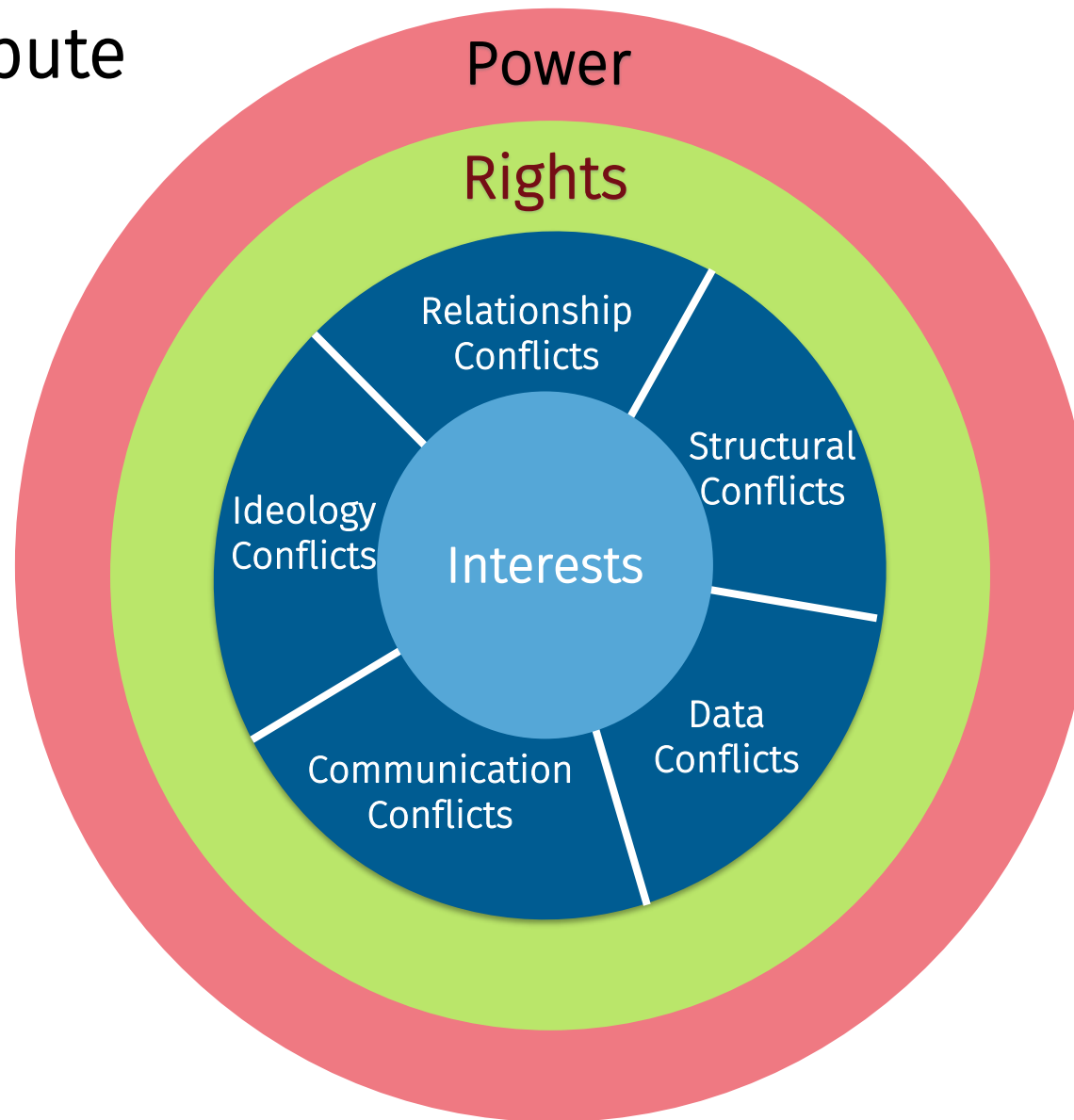Wolters Kluwer **CCH Learning**

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Problem Solve

- What is the problem?

- What type of problem is it?

- What is the context of the conflict?

- What does each person need out of the situation?

  - Acknowledge again what the other person's goal/needs/values are

  - Communicate assertively what you need/want

- Brainstorm lots of possible options for solutions?

- Check which solutions meet the needs of all involved?

- Get detail oriented – who, what, when, where & how?

Analysing the Dispute

Power

Rights

Relationship Conflicts

Structural Conflicts

Ideology Conflicts

Interests

Data Conflicts

Communication Conflicts

Adapted from:
Christopher Moore, *The Mediation Process*, Third Edition (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass), 2003
Fells, Ray., *Effective Negotiation: From Research to Results*
Ury, William. L., Brett, Jeanne, M., & Goldberg, Stephen., M., *Approaches to Resolving Disputes*
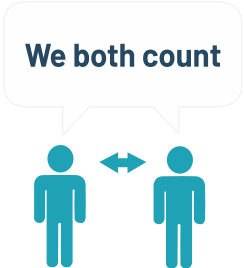
SKILLS

Be Calm

Apologise *when you stuff up* — Sorry

H.E.A.R. *them out*

We both count

Be Assertive

Containment of High Conflict Personalities

Problem Solve

Apologies – in some cases this is a necessary step to de-escalate conflict

- It is rarely sufficient to simply say "I'm sorry". We all value different aspects of an apology:
  - **Expression of regret for the impact we've had on others** – *I'm am sorry for …. which resulted in …. (describe impact) ….. for you*
  - **Acknowledgement that we stuffed up/were wrong** – *I'm sorry – I was wrong*
  - **Commitment to change** – ie not repeat past mistakes – *I'm sorry and these are the changes I've made so that I ensure that I don't do that again.*
  - **Making it up to the person we hurt/harmed** – ie Restitution – *I'm sorry. I'm willing to offer 'x' or do 'y' in order to make it right?*
  - **Several or all of the above**

- Most importantly, apologies need to be **authentic**

Adapted from:
Chapman, G, & Thomas, J., (2006) *"The Five Languages of Apology"*
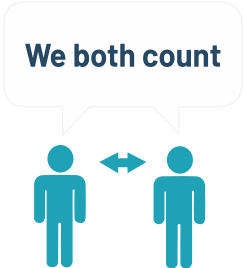Engel, B., (2001) *"The Power of Apology"*

SKILLS

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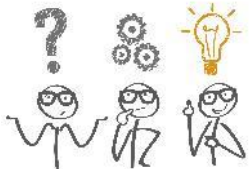Apologise *when you stuff up*

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High Conflict Personalities

*"Instead of sharing responsibility for solving problems, they repeatedly lose it and **increase** conflict by making it intensely personal and taking no responsibility"*

"The hardest thing to 'get' about High Conflict Personalities
is that they lack an awareness
of how they contribute to their own problems"

Bill Eddy

Bill Eddy (2011) *"BIFF: Quick Responses to High Conflict People"*

High Conflict Personalities

THOUGHTS

FEELINGS

ACTIONS

All-or-Nothing Thinking

- Black & white thinking
- There is a 'right' and a 'wrong'
- A person is 'all good' or 'all bad'
- Positional views

Emotional Dysregulation

- Extreme and exaggerated anger, fear, despair
- Emotion is out of proportion in response to the trigger event
- Lack insight into self and the impact of their behaviours

## Extreme & Impulsive Behaviours

- Yelling and denigrating
- Engage physically – eg hitting
- Lying and spreading rumours
- Blaming everyone else
- Never taking responsibility for the problem or finding a solution

Bill Eddy (2018) *"5 Types of people who can ruin your life"* | Bill Eddy (2011) *"BIFF: Quick Responses to High Conflict People"*

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De-escalating High Conflict in the presence of a personality disorder

- Respond to all issues raised, in writing, once – *ie CYA*

- For any further responses:

  - Keep it short

  - Be clear about what actions will or won't be taken

  - Ensure the tone is respectful and warm

  - Convey decisiveness and confidence

- If they seek to continue to engage stop responding unless:

  - Others are involved and action is needed to ensure their safety

  - There is a new or relevant issue that needs to be addressed

- Don't criticize or label their behaviour. Don't try to change them.

Questions
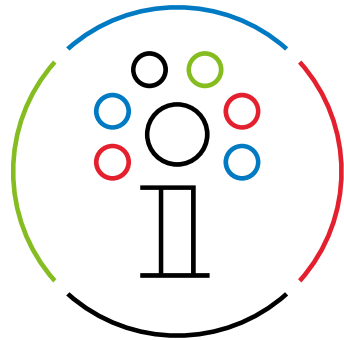
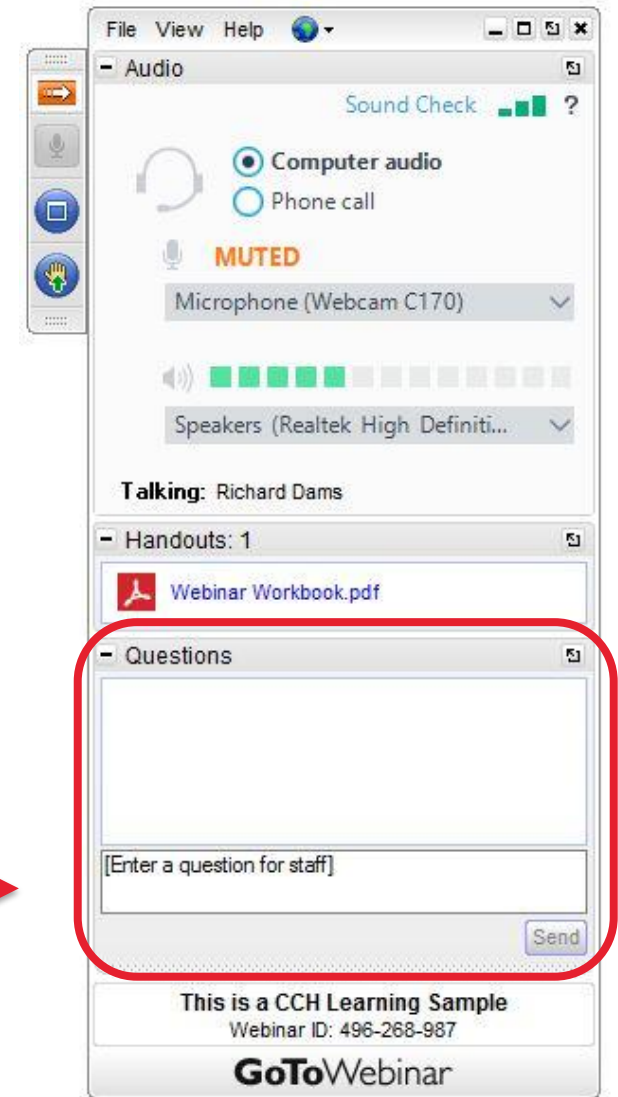You can type them in the "Questions" box now

Or contact me via:

- **Helen Jarvis**
- Mediator and Founder
- Ripple Learning
- 0402 057 754
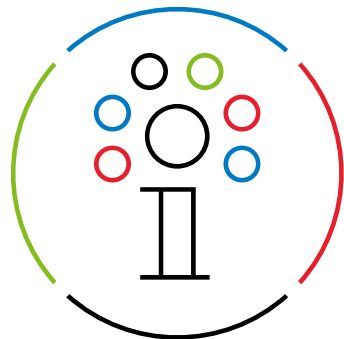- helen@ripplelearning.com.au

Questions?

Alison Wood
Moderator

Type your
question and hit
Send

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- 22 June – Establishing and Managing Healthy Workplace Boundaries

- 27 June – Tax Effect Accounting and Financial Modelling

- 27 June – Tax Technical Update - June 2023

- 28 June - Salary Packaging of Electric Vehicles

- 12 July – Keeping In-house Investments - All you Need to Know

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Thank you for attending

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