The background features a complex network of blue lines and arrows. Some lines are solid and straight, while others are dashed and curved. Arrows of various sizes and orientations are scattered throughout, pointing in different directions, creating a sense of movement and interconnectedness.

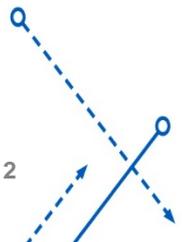
# UB DEPARTMENT CHAIR LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Effective Communication and Managing  
Conflict

October 16, 2018

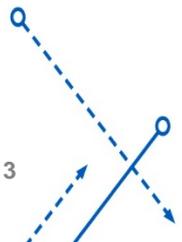
# Core Competencies of Department Chairs

- **Personal Mastery** — The ability to know oneself and learn from experience
- **Interpersonal Mastery** — The ability to communicate and work well with others particularly in difficult conversations
- **Team Mastery** — The ability to develop and lead groups of individuals toward common goals
- **System Mastery** — The ability to think and lead organizations/departments through a strategic change process



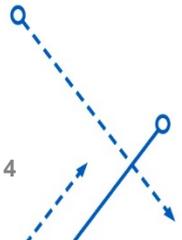
# Agenda

- Two sides of conflict communication
- The Ladder of Inference – Argyis' Theory of Action
- Case example – Advocacy with Inquiry
- Effective Conflict Communication Strategies



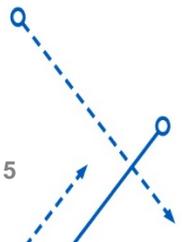
# Common Issues and Complaints That Chairs Encounter

- Complaints about academic issues (example: grades/financial aid).
- Student and parent complaints (example: courses and advisors). Student funding?
- Staff complaints about faculty treatment.
- Diminished faculty morale and productivity.
- Issues related to tenure, promotion, renewals, and salary.
- Conflicts between faculty, students, staff, and administrators.



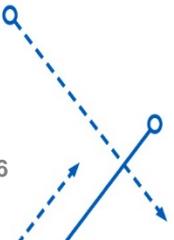
# Not All Situations Require Conflict Resolution

- Some complaints can be easily addressed through proper channels and with the application of policies, guidelines, or practice (grade complains, advisor complaints, staff complaints, etc.). Technical problems vs. Adaptive Problems. Policy is your friend!
- But not addressing conflict (when it is present) will only make the situation worse.
- Often times, a chair is surprised by a new conflict that he/she “didn’t see coming.”
- Other times the chair is aware that a conflict has been building for weeks, months, even years and has been left unaddressed.



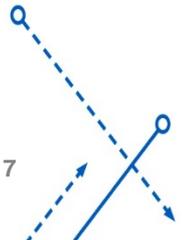
# Address Conflict For The Good of The Department

- Conflict is inevitable in higher education administration because leadership is often about change. “Dispositional outliers”
- Regardless of whether the conflicts are new or old, as the department chair it is your job to do your best to address them for the good of the department.
- Gambling that the conflicts “work themselves out” is a losing bet.
- Left unresolved, conflicts can damage the department in many ways and make your job more difficult. “Frictional loss”.
- Unresolved conflicts will often extend past the departmental barriers to the Dean’s, Provost’s, and President’s Offices.
- Some conflict has positive aspects if it can lead to learning and growth for the department. No conflict may equal stagnation.

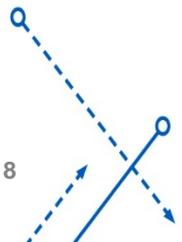


## Questions

1. What types of conflicts have you encountered?
2. What forms of communication were **most** effective in resolving those conflicts?
3. What forms of communication were **least** effective in resolving those conflicts?



Think about a conflictual encounter that didn't go well. Try to remember the actual conversation; what you said and what the other person said. Also try to remember what you were thinking at particular time. Using the worksheet, write down, as best as you can recollect, what was said and what you were thinking at the time.

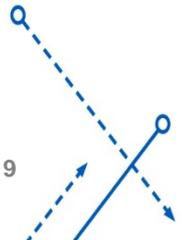


# Left Hand Column Exercise

From: Chris Argyris, *Overcoming Organization Defensive Behavior*

What you were really thinking

What was actually said



From: Bolman, Lee and Joan Gallos (2011) *Reframing Academic Leadership*, Jossey-Bass

Sarah is a new department chair who needs to conduct an annual review with George, a senior faculty member who is a “charming cunnudgeon – witty, articulate, opinionated, and quick to criticize.” Sarah needs to have a difficult conversation about George’s deteriorating performance in his research and in the classroom. Students have even complained that Gerge is canceling several classes. Sarah feels that the previous chair had ducked the problem by always giving him very high evaluations and recommending salary increases. With new faculty and decreased resources Sarah feels she needs to discontinue this practice and instead institute more rigorous evaluations. The right column shows what Sarah said while the left column shows what she was thinking.

Sarah's Meeting with George

What was said:

S: George, thanks very much for coming.

I'm glad we have this chance to talk.

G: I hope I'll be glad as well.

S: Of course. George, you know I have great respect for you, and I appreciate all you've done for the department over the years.

G: I'm delighted to hear that.

S: But it's because I have so much respect, I have to be honest. George, you must realize that your performance has slipped a bit in the last few years.

G: *(pauses, frowns, then smiles)* What makes you feel qualified to make such a judgment?

Sarah's thoughts and feelings:

Start friendly and positive.

I wish I thought that was possible.

Play to his ego, and maybe we can have a productive meeting.

But I'm not optimistic.

So far so good?

Try to be as gentle as possible, but tell him the truth.

He's trying to change the subject. Let's stick to the facts.

What was said:

S: This isn't about my personal judgment. It's about the evidence. You don't have any recent publications. Your teaching . . .

G: *(interrupting)* If you look at my output over the years, I'm sure you can easily see that it compares favorably to anyone in the department. I should certainly hope you're not trying to compare my reputation with your own.

S: *(as calmly and amiably as possible)* I'd never compare myself to you, George, and of course you have good reason to be proud of all you've done. But this isn't about your whole career, it's an annual assessment.

G: *(acidly)* Perhaps when you've matured a bit more, you'll realize that the only sensible way to look at scholarship is over the long term.

S: *(her voice rising)* I didn't ask to be department chair, but I am. I'm just trying to do my job.

G: Yes, well, I suppose you're doing your job about as well as you can.

S: *(heatedly)* George, it would help if you would open your mind and listen to someone else for a change! The evidence shows that . . .

G: There's no reason I should tolerate someone shouting and insulting me. I believe this meeting has already gone longer than productive. (He rises and leaves the office.)

S: *(watches George leave)*

Sarah's thoughts and feelings:

Stay calm. Be objective. Stick to the facts.

If only he were as good as he thinks he is. He's an annoying, arrogant windbag. I need to stay calm.

He wants to talk about me instead of facing up to his own performance. Try to get back on track. Stay focused.

There he goes again. This is infuriating.

I'm losing it!

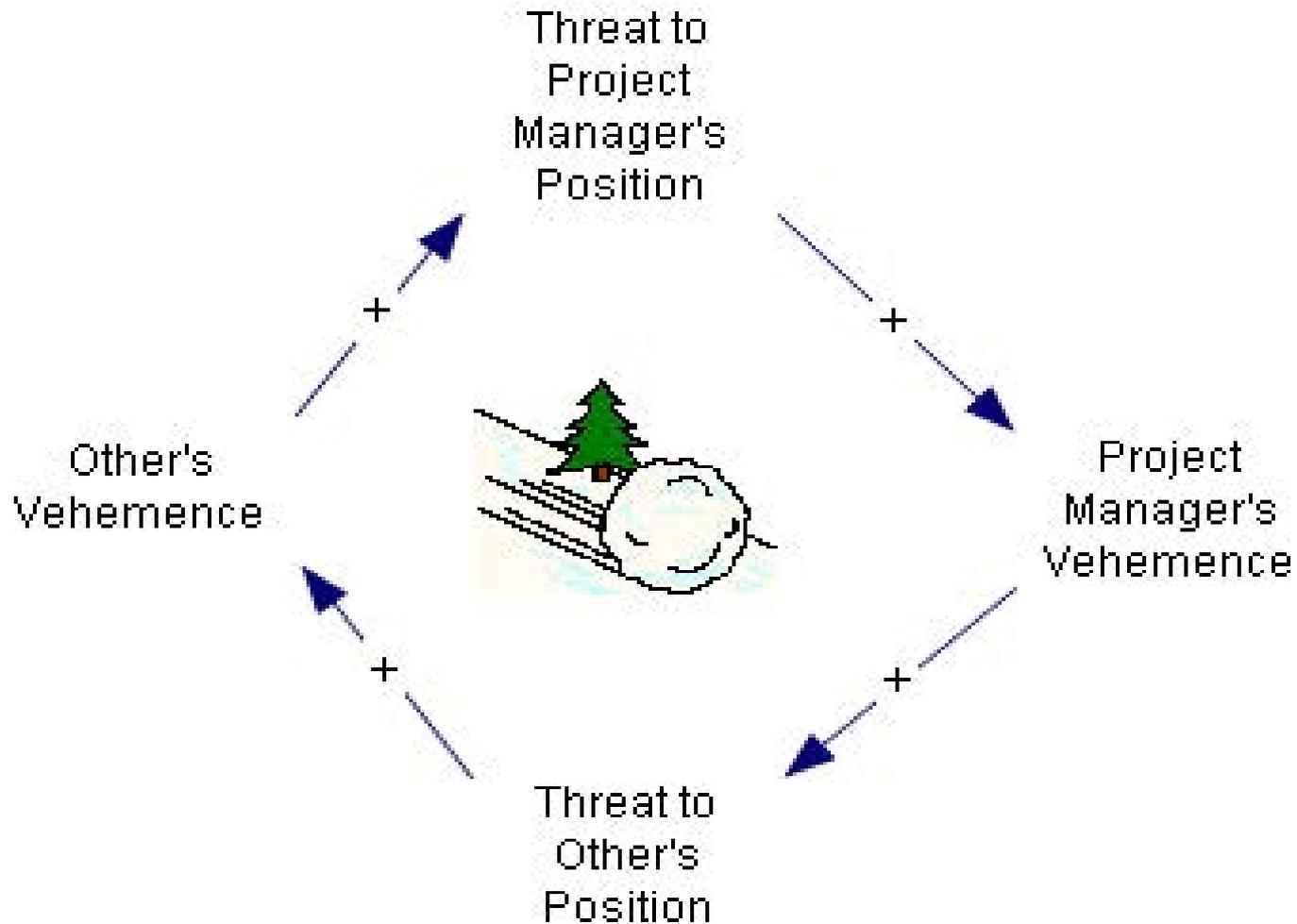
I don't like him, and I hate this job!

I've lost it.

What a disaster! He was totally uncooperative, but he'll blame me and tell all his buddies how unfair I was.

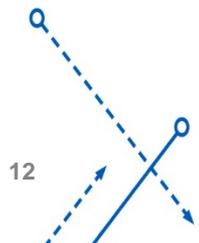
I should do something, but I have no idea what.

# Escalating Conflict



# Argyris and Schön's Model of Conflict Management

- **Model I – Ego-centric**
- **Assumptions:**
  - **Problem is caused by others**
    - Sarah is selfless, principled, reasonable
    - George is the problem – unreasonable and difficult
  - **Unilateral diagnosis that is not communicated**
    - Sarah did not test assumptions with George
  - **Get person to change**
    - 1) facts, 2) indirect influence 3) direct critique
  - **Resistance seen to confirm diagnosis**
    - Proves Sarah's point
  - **Respond to resistance by intensifying pressure**
    - "Listen to someone for a change"
  - **If not successful, it's the other person's fault**
    - Sarah sees her behavior as as fine, it was George who had the problem



# Argyris and Schön's Models of Conflict Management

- **Model II: Other-centric: Collaborative**
- **Assumptions**
  - **Emphasize common goals**
    - What can we hope to accomplish
    - Create shared agenda
    - What do the parties hope to accomplish
  - **Communicate openly**
    - Openly test assumptions
    - Sarah had built-in assumptions
    - Share what you're feeling – "I have a concern that raising concerns might anger you."
  - **Combine high advocacy with high inquiry**
    - Not only want I want but learn what others think

# Advocacy with Inquiry

## Inquiry

*Low*

*High*

*High*

Dominant

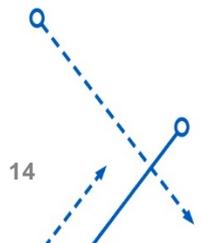
Collaborative

## Advocacy

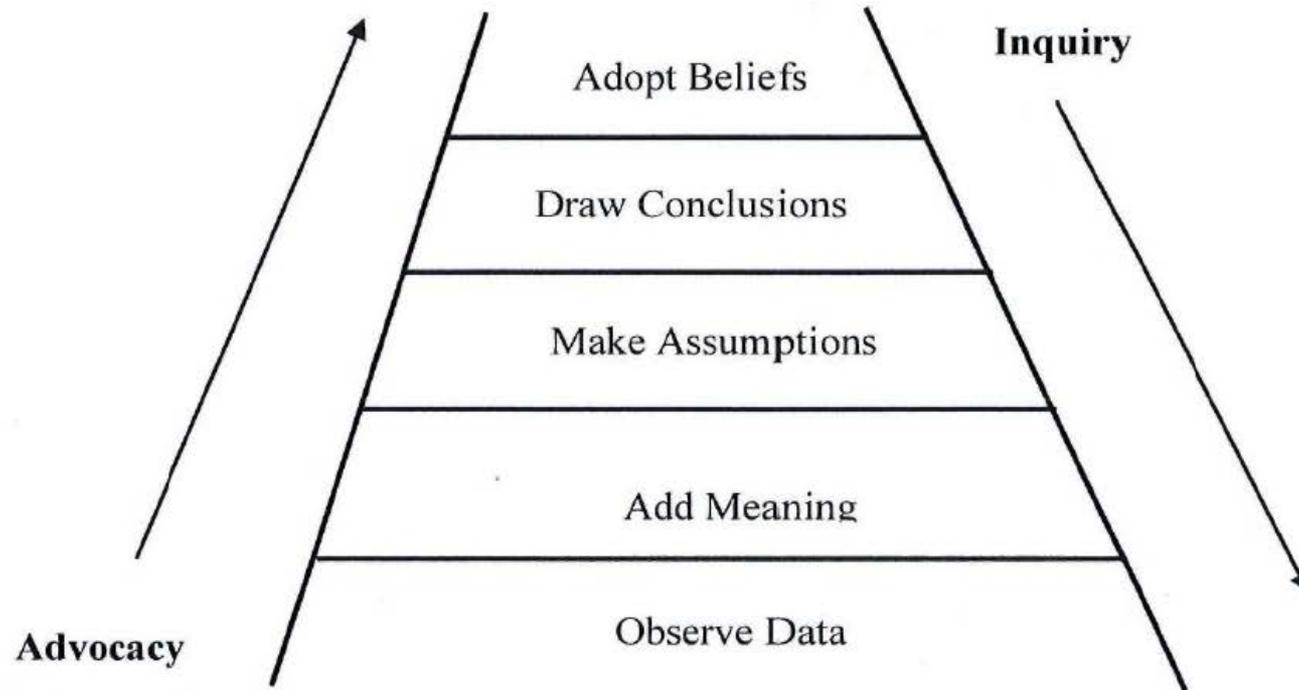
*Low*

Passive

Questioning



## Broadening Awareness



# Dialogue

## 1. Advocacy—Walk up your ladder of inference (reveal your ‘story’)

- State your view—don’t present as truth, abandon blame
- Reveal the thinking and feeling (your mental models) that leads you to that view
- Illustrate with examples and describe impact on self, task and relationship
- Refrain from defensiveness when questioned

### *Some phrases for advocacy*

Here’s what I think and how I got there . . .

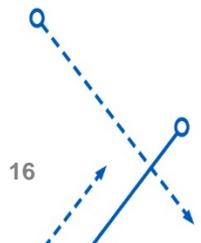
I assumed that . . .

What do you think about what I just said . . .

Please help me think this through . . .

## 2. Inquiry—Walk others down their ladder of inference (learn—check out their ‘story’)

- Explore the other’s view—reveal their mental models
- Gently question assumptions and data
- Suspend judgement and listen without resistance
- Draw out their thinking and feelings



# Dialogue (cont'd)

- Test by asking broader contexts and examples

## ***Some phrases for inquiry***

What leads you to conclude that . . .

Can you help me understand your thinking . . .

How does this relate to . . .

Am I correct that you are saying . . .

### **3. Create a shared pool of understanding**

### **4. Explore solutions together**

### **5. When you disagree**

- Continue to probe their thinking
- Invite further exploration of your thinking

## ***Some phrases for when you disagree***

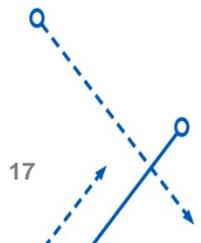
How did you arrive at that view . . .

If I understand you correctly, you are saying that . . .

Have you considered . . .

When you say such and such, I worry that . . .

I have a hard time seeing that because of the following . . .



# Dialogue (cont'd)

## 6. When at an impasse

- Agree on what you know in common
- Explore what other information is needed
- Go to a third party for mediation or influence

### *Some phrases for when there is an impasse*

What do we know for a fact . . .

What is unknowable . . .

What do we agree and disagree upon . . .

Are we using different assumptions . . .

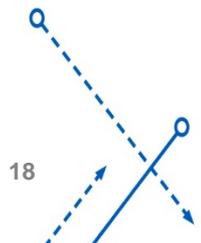
## 7. Other alternatives to an impasse: draw on other sources of power

- Positional authority
- Performance review
- Threats or rewards

## 8. Your attitude is key to success: from controlling to learning

## 9. Applications

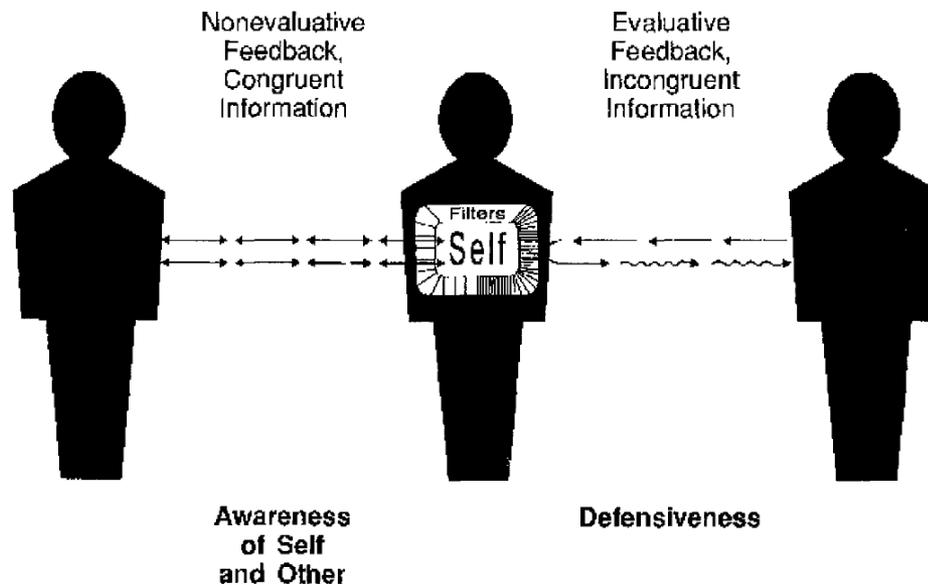
- Problem



# Dialogue (cont'd)

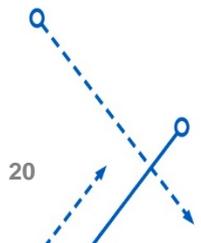
## 10. Applications

- Problem solving and Decision Making
- Feedback
- Conflict
- Negotiation
- Coaching

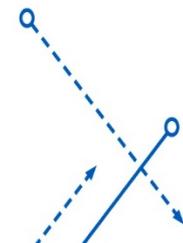


# Strategies for Resolving Conflict Constructively

1. Acknowledge the conflict
2. Gain common ground
3. Seek to understand
4. Attack the issue, not each other
5. Develop a plan of action



# Strategies for Resolving Conflict Constructively



# Strategies for Resolving Conflict Constructively

Building of Strategies

- Identify superordinate goals
- Identify and agree on principles for collaboration (e.g., be willing to share information and feedback openly)
- Identify common risks and benefits
- Set up a process for resolving the conflict

Gain Common Ground

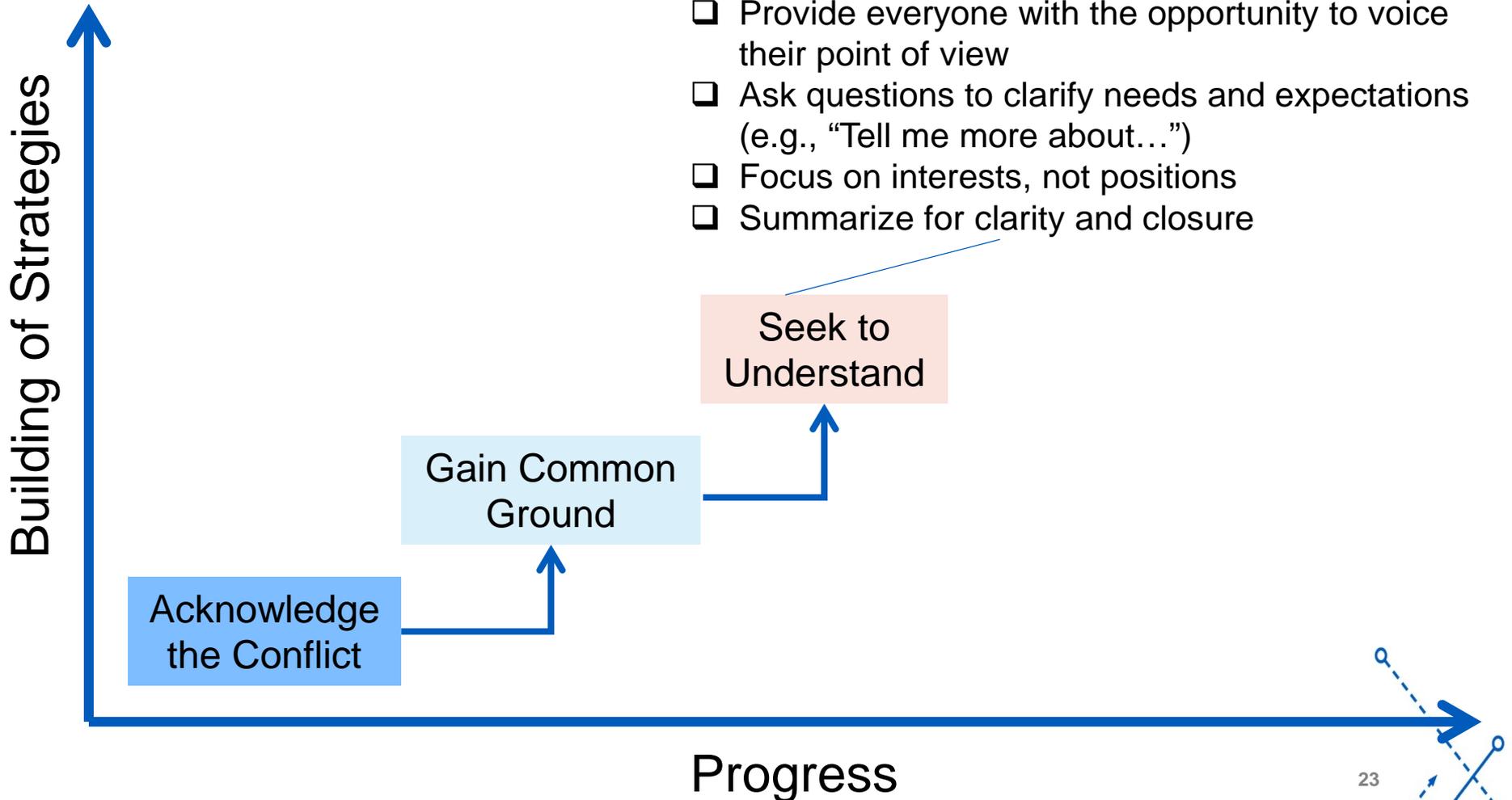
Acknowledge the Conflict

Progress



# Strategies for Resolving Conflict Constructively

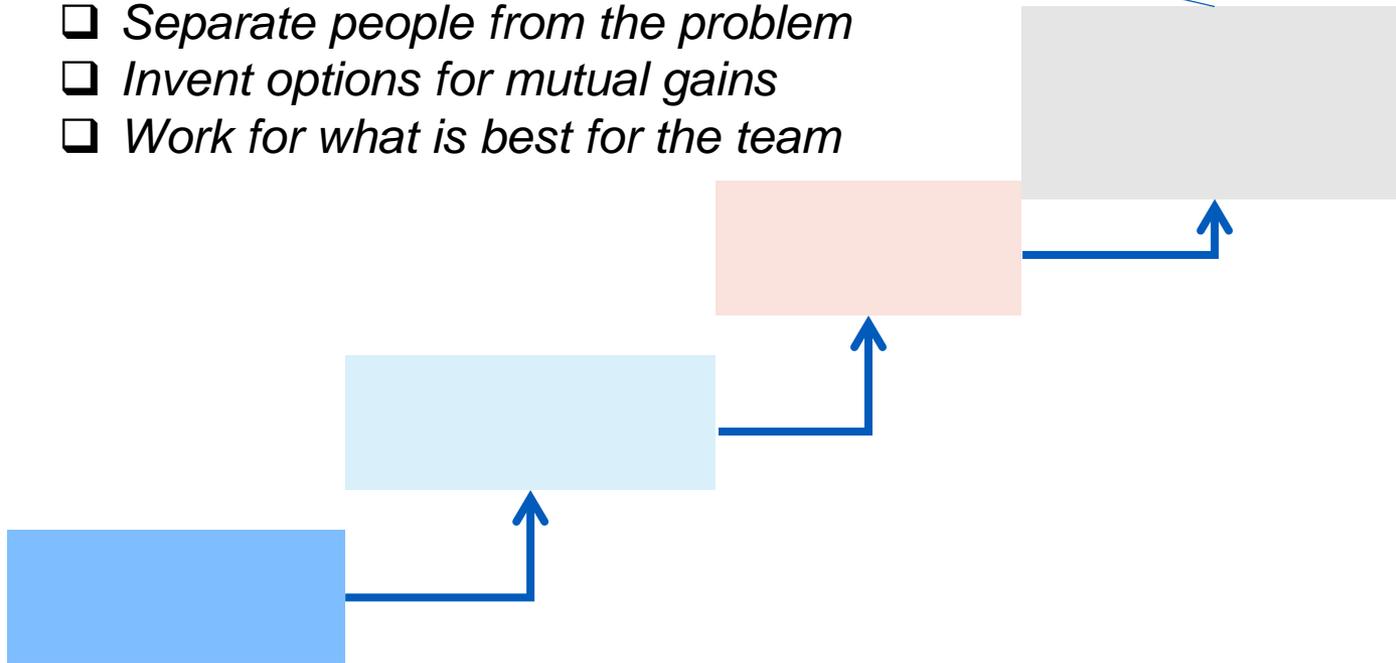
- ❑ Provide everyone with the opportunity to voice their point of view
- ❑ Ask questions to clarify needs and expectations (e.g., “Tell me more about...”)
- ❑ Focus on interests, not positions
- ❑ Summarize for clarity and closure



# Strategies for Resolving Conflict Constructively

Building of Strategies

- Focus on cause and effect – not just the effect
- Separate people from the problem
- Invent options for mutual gains
- Work for what is best for the team



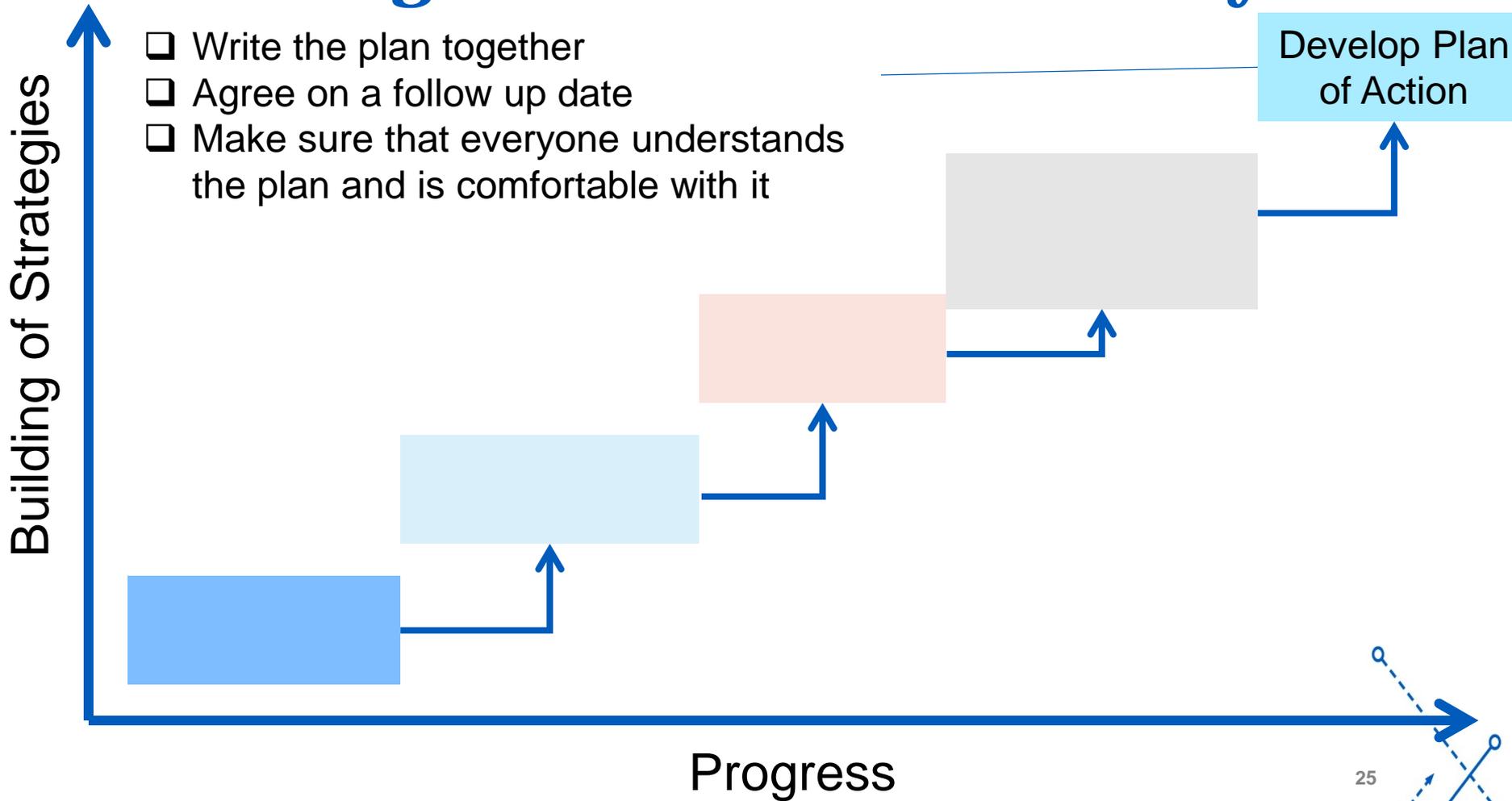
Progress



# Strategies for Resolving Conflict Constructively

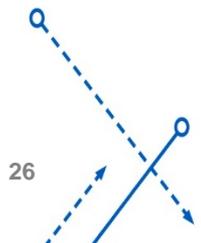
- Write the plan together
- Agree on a follow up date
- Make sure that everyone understands the plan and is comfortable with it

Develop Plan of Action



# Five Communication Strategies that you can employ

1. Active listening
2. Summarizing
3. Problem solving communication
4. One-on-one session management
5. Facilitation



# 1. Active Listening

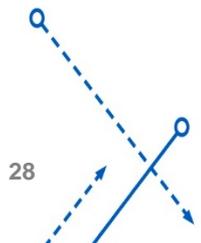
*When you actively listen, you are:*

- Paying attention (not just sitting quietly).
- Appropriately asking encouraging questions.
- Briefly repeating important points back.
- Being patient (not rushing or jumping to the end).
- Working hard to hear them from their perspective.
- Taking notes (appropriately).

## 2. Summarizing

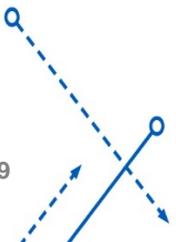
Summarize to show that you have heard and understand:

- By correctly summarizing what you have **heard**, you reinforce the fact that you are listening.
- It helps to show that you understand their perspective.
- Allows you to represent their points in a unbiased way, even if you do not agree.
- Allows you to clarify what you can and cannot do.



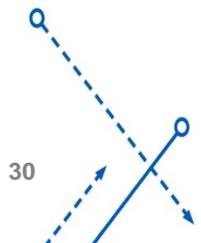
## 3. Problem Solving Communication

- Put aside all urges to assign blame or point out where they made mistakes.
- Focus on how can you get the parties to an agreed upon resolution or a positive change (in behavior, practices, etc.)?
- How can you get the parties to focus on how things can be better in the future so that they can move forward?



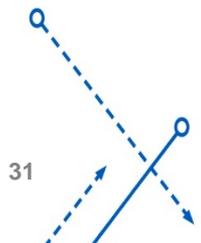
## 4. One-on-One Session Management

- Effective conflict resolution requires you to interact with the various participants in one-on-one sessions in order to get each person's story and perspective.
- This time is very important because it allows you to better understand the conflict from multiple perspectives.



## 4. One-on-One Session Management

- You must remain calm and encouraging even when the communication becomes very negative.
- You must be able to be assertive enough to keep the discussions on track without damaging the rapport.
- Feel free to take a break, if the conversation is getting too heated.



## 5. Facilitation

- Some conflicts must be managed with both parties in the room.
- After you have the trust of both parties, you must bring them together so that you can facilitate a discussion of the conflict.
- Your job is to keep the conversation positive (or at least neutral) and focused on resolution.
- End on a high note. If you have a good stopping place, do so with a comment such as “we have learned a lot today and this is a good place to pause our conversation.”