Soothing Conflict Smoothies

Nine 30-minute online sessions
to build interpersonal and inter-group conflict resolution skills and knowledge

http://events.anr.msu.edu/Smoothies2015/

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Conflict Smoothies Series, Winter 2015

Conflict Smoothies are a series of nine, 30-minute online sessions focused on interpersonal and inter-group conflict resolution. They consist of engaging and interactive ‘snippets’ of a comprehensive framework. All will occur from 1:30-2:00 p.m. EST on nine consecutive Tuesdays from January 13 through March 10, 2015. Most of the time is spent building understanding and practicing skills (through poll and chat pods). Please join us for some healthy thought nourishment that will build your conflict muscles!

Session 1: Approach: How to handle a conflict? January 13. Do you tend to avoid conflict, or are you always ready for a good debate? When you disagree with someone, are you more likely to do what they want, or work out a compromise. Yes, it depends! However, we do have comfortable tendencies or preferences when it comes to handling conflict. This 30-minute ‘Smoothie’ will help you identify yours and recognize situations when other approaches might be more effective. Each participant will take an online ‘conflict mode’ inventory and receive an 11-page interpretive report.

Session 2: Begin: How to avoid fight or flight? (Part 1) January 20. Have you ever avoided dealing with a situation for fear of hurting someone or making the problem worse? Or, have you tried to deal with it and it blew up in your face? This Smoothie will provide you with a tool for beginning a difficult conversation in a non-threatening but honest way. We’ll focus on the concept of ‘keeping it safe’ by speaking from the heart and help you practice with realistic situations.

Session 3: Listen: How to avoid fight or flight? (Part 2) January 27. People experiencing a problem with others tend to express themselves on a continuum with silence at one extreme and violence on the other. This session will help you look at where you fall on the continuum, but more importantly, help you learn how to use listening techniques to draw others into a safety zone where dialogue wins over anger or withdrawal.
Session 4: *Apologize or Contrast: How to avoid fight or flight? (Part 3)* February 3.
Sometimes we say or do something we regret, and sometimes we’re just misunderstood. This session will focus on ways to recognize the difference. Participants will practice two simple tools to use when we ‘mess up’ and when we don’t.

Session 5: *Reframe: How to move toward resolution? February 10.* In session 3 on listening skills we described reframing as ‘stating what someone really wants, in neutral language.’ In this session we’ll focus on the use of reframing in a two-party (2 individuals or 2 groups) conflict. Participants will learn to recognize the interests behind the positions people take, and practice using both/and thinking to help the parties agree on a mutual purpose for building an agreement.

Session 6: *Role Storming: How to construct creative resolutions? February 17.* There’s a conflict in your team and you’ve recognized each other’s interests, committed to stay in dialogue, and invented a mutual purpose. Now, how can you brainstorm workable solutions in the face of widely varying interests? How do you help people go the next step and think both/and? How do you help people stand in each other’s shoes and see things from others’ perspectives? This session will focus on a technique of shifting perspectives called ‘role storming’ and participants will practice using it.

Session 7: *Reach Agreement: What to do when stuck in the Groan Zone? February 24.* All groups working together in authentic ways will experience disagreements and differences of opinion, no matter how carefully you communicate and recognize each other’s interests. These disagreements can be opportunities for productive engagement, or destructive pitfalls that can undermine or even derail a group's movement toward its goals. This session will focus on using the ‘Groan Zone’ and "gradients of agreement" as tools for preempting the potentially destructive force of disagreement and keeping a group moving and forward together.

Session 8: *Diagnosis: Why consider the ‘why’ of conflict? March 3.* Understanding five major causes underlying conflicts, as depicted in the “circle of Conflict”, can help guide possible interventions. In this smoothie we’ll consider these causes—Values, Relationships, Structure, Data, and Interests—and participants will practice identifying which are at the core of a variety of conflict situations.

Session 9: *Application & Review: How to handle difficult behaviors? March 10.* Difficult behaviors sometimes hinder group/team conflict resolution. How to deal with these difficult behaviors for the good of the larger group is an ongoing challenge. In this session we’ll look at some typical problematic behaviors, and participants will use the conflict resolution model they have learned in the eight previous Smoothies to brainstorm effective strategies for dealing with them.