



# Dealing With Conflict & Change In Church

Elders Training South Australia Conference

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# Conflict Normal Part of Life



# Effect of Conflict



“...congregations which had experienced serious conflict over theological, social, financial or other issues in the previous ten years were less likely to grow numerically than churches which had not experienced such conflict.”

Olson

# Conflict In The Church



How much conflict is there in our churches?  
44% of leaders feel conflict has been evident in their congregations in the last two years. NCLS

# What Type Of Conflict

- 45% difference in personality
- 33% over procedures or ways of doing things.
- 23% over goals, purpose or vision of the church.
- 21% about power and control.
- 14% differences in theology/doctrine.
- 9% role conflict

# Relationship Priority

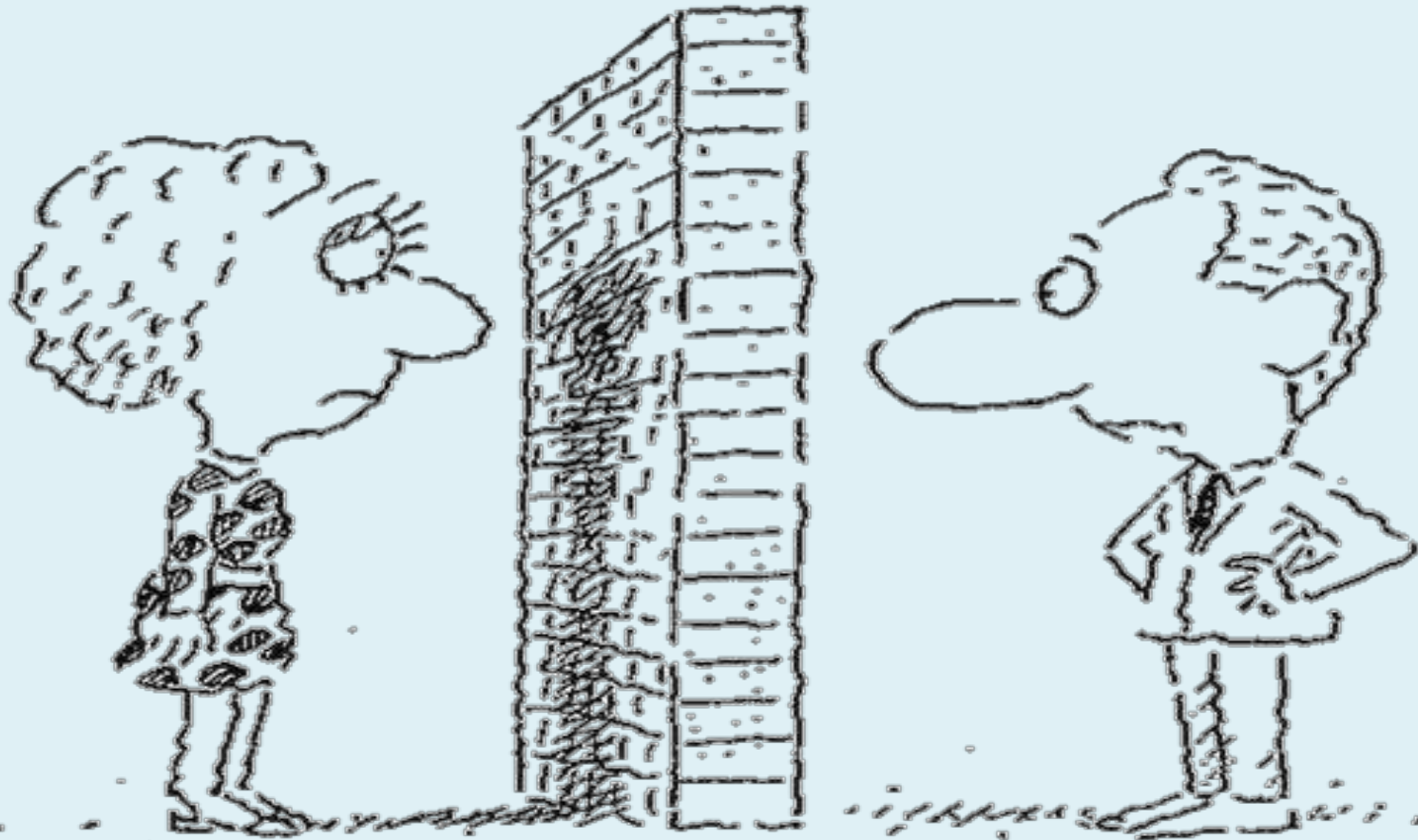
- “I pray that they will all **be one**, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world **will believe** you sent me.” John 17: 21
- “No one has seen God at any time. If we **love** one another, God abides in us...”(1 John 4:12)
- “Be completely **humble** and **gentle**; be **patient**, **bearing** with one another in **love**. Make every effort to keep the **unity** of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” Ephesians 3: 2,3

# What is Conflict?



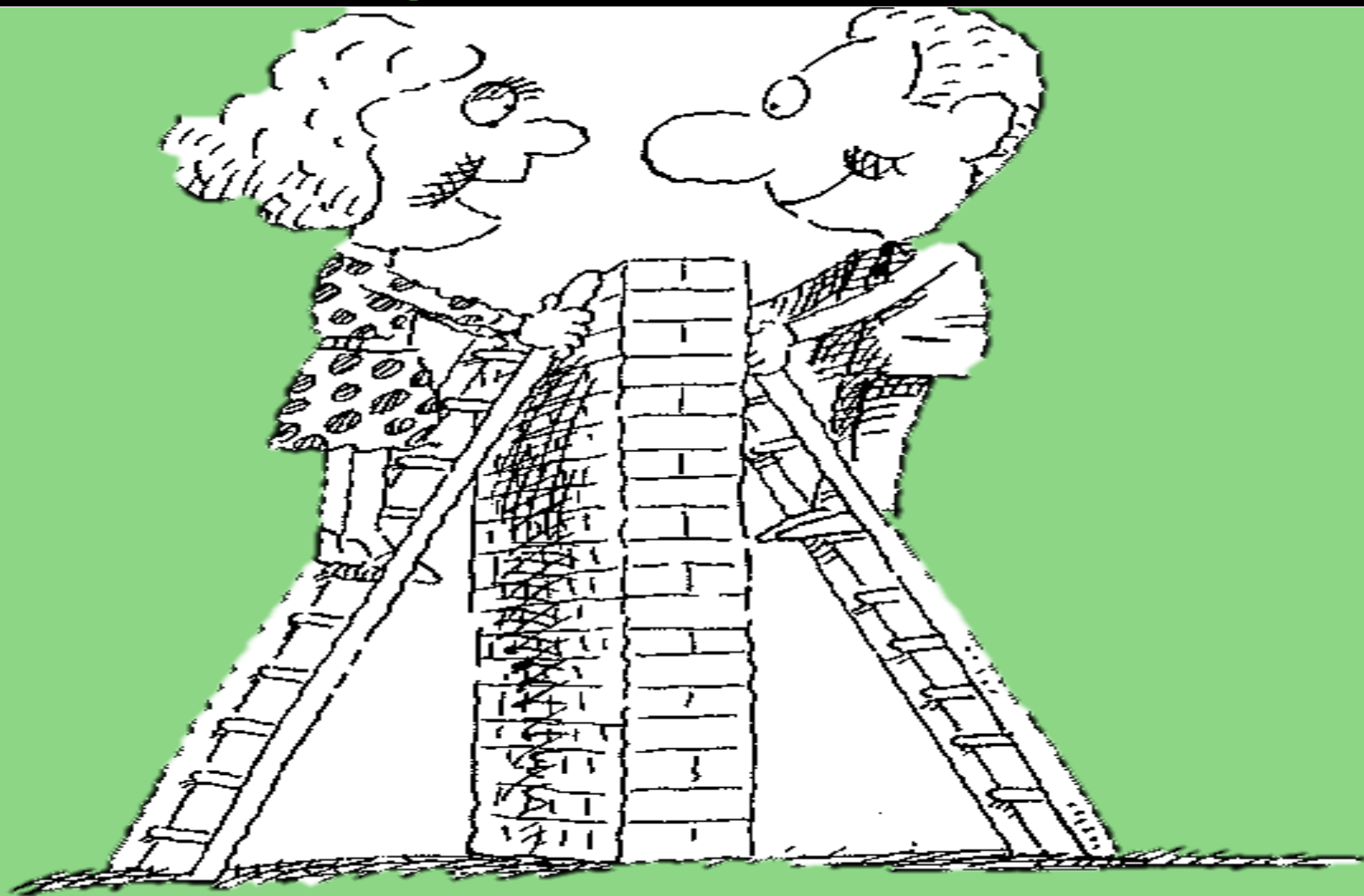
- Conflict exists whenever an action by one person, prevents, obstructs, or interferes with the actions of another person.

# Unresolved Conflict Weakens Relationships





# Resolved Conflict Builds Relationships



# What is your conflict style?

We naturally default to one style



High  
Importance

**Smooth**

**Negotiate**

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**Compromise**

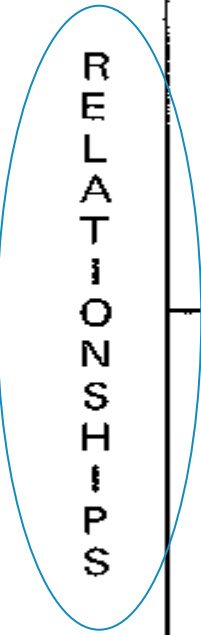
**Withdraw**

**Force**

Low  
Importance

GOALS

High  
Importance



# Choosing Appropriate Style

1. How important the relationship is with the other person and how important is the personal goal.
2. If both relationship and goal is important then negotiation is required to ensure the relationship is preserved and that individual goals are met.

# Examples

Withdraw - Public Brawl

Force - Car Salesperson

Smooth- Choice of Bed linen

Compromise – Travel

Negotiate – One Car Controversy

# Exercise: Discuss

1. When your parents had a disagreement, conflict, fight what did they do?
2. How similar is your way of dealing with conflict with your parents?



# Steps for Handling Conflict

1. **Diagnose:** Identify an issue and decide if it can be managed.
2. **Initiate:** Express in concise and descriptive language the issue for you. Use the **X-Y-Z formula**: When you do 'X' it causes me "Y" and I feel 'Z'. Keep the 'X' component brief.

# Steps for Handling Conflict

3. **Listen:** Give plenty of opportunity to the other party to express their views. Obtain a clear understanding of their position.

4. **Negotiate:** Express a desire to deal with the issue in a way that all will be satisfied.

5. **Problem Solve:**

*a. Define:* Obtain agreement on the issue.

*b. Alternative suggestions:* Brainstorm a number of possible solutions.



# Steps For Handling Conflict

- c. Decision:* Select the solution that both parties are happy with.
- d. Implementation:* Carry out the solution, agree how and when.
- e. Assessment:* If the solution fails to deal with the problem then re-negotiate another solution.

# Example of Effective Conflict Resolution

# Principles For Dealing With Conflict



1. View the other person as a partner rather than an opponent.
2. Go hard on the Problem soft on the Person.
3. Be specific when you introduce a gripe.

# Principles For Dealing With Conflict



4. Don't just complain, ask for a reasonable change that will relieve one gripe at a time.
5. Keep to one issue at a time.
6. Acknowledge the others view of reality as been as real as yours.
7. Never assume you know what the other person is thinking.

# Principles For Dealing With Conflict



8. Don't label the other; avoid sweeping statements; and judgments
9. Avoid sarcasm
10. Forget the past, stay with the here and now.
11. Do we need a third person to mediate?

Listening skills, creative problem solving, staying in the adult ego, pacing skills, utilizing the power of groups, build cohesiveness and apply the 'golden rule'.

# Conflict Resolution Tool Kit

## 1. Listening Through Conflict

“Know this, beloved brethren. Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (James 1:19).



# Listening Through Conflict

An obsession with Listening is ... the ultimate mark

of **Respect.**

Listening is ... the heart and soul of **Engagement.**

Listening is ... the heart and soul of **Kindness.**

Listening is ... the heart and soul of **Thoughtfulness.**

Listening is ... the basis for true **Collaboration.**

Listening is ... the basis for true **Partnership.**

Listening is ... a **Team Sport.**

Listening is ... a **Developable Individual Skill.\*** (\*Though women are far better at it than men.)

Listening is ... the basis for **Community.**

Listening is ... the bedrock of **Joint Ventures that work.**

Listening is ... the bedrock of **Joint Ventures that grow.**

Listening is ... the core of **effective Cross-functional Communication\*** (\*Which is in turn **Attribute #1** of organization effectiveness.)



# Strategic Listening: Tom Peters



# Listening Conveys Value

*"I wasn't bowled over by [David Boies'] intelligence... What impressed me was that when he asked a question, he waited*

*for an answer. **HE NOT ONLY***

***LISTENED ... HE MADE ME FEEL***

***LIKE I WAS THE ONLY PERSON***

***IN THE ROOM."*** —Lawyer Kevin \_\_\_\_\_, on his first,

inadvertent meeting with renowned attorney David Boies, from Marshall Goldsmith, "The One Skill That Separates," *Fast Company*

# Attending Behavior



How many times have we just thought...."If I just close my eyes the bitch will go away"

- “Attending is the oil that lubricates the entire communication process.” G. Egan

# Attending



- Give your full attention both physically and psychologically.
- Your body position encourages or discourages disclosure.

# Listening to Understand

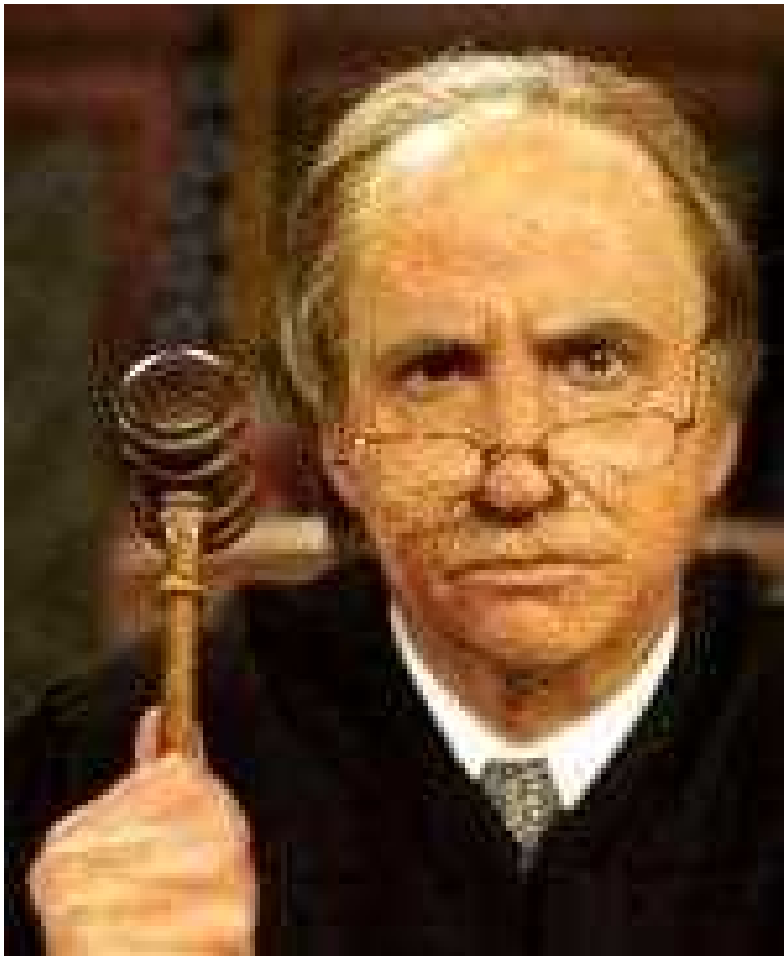


# Active Listening



- The ability to respond with understanding is the single most important skill in conflict resolution.
- Responding with understanding creates trust between you and the other person.

# Respond in 3 Ways



*Evaluation:* To make a judgement or criticism of what the person has said seems too been an instinctive reaction

# Hollow Listening

*“Yes, I understand  
exactly what you mean,  
I have the same  
concern.”*

*Such a response is hollow because it does not prove whether the listener understands and if they do, they couldn't “exactly” understand.*



# Respond in 3 Ways: Basic Understanding

1. Responding with understanding involves listening to the client's total communication.
2. Trying to identify with their feelings and their thinking that gives rise to their feelings.
3. And communicating that understanding back to them. This is often known as "reflective listening."

# Formula for Understanding

- Reflective (Active) listening.
- “You feel (Feeling words) ...Because (Behaviour\experiences)...”
- R.L. allows the parties to negotiate their understanding of each other.
- RL is a summary of feelings and thoughts.

# Guidelines for Reflection

1. Send back a summary of the core of the message.
2. Summarize the person's feelings.
3. Be tentative and willing to be corrected.
4. Be brief in your statement so as not to interfere with the person's train of thought.

# Exercise: Active Listening



Share with your partner, one thing you would like to change in your life.



Give the thumbs up sign when your partner has reflected back your 'thoughts' and 'feelings'.

# Listening With Basic Understanding

1. I have no idea what is going on. I am going to pull out if things don't improve!

3. Yes I am. I just want to be part of...

2. You're pretty annoyed about beening left out of this!



# Deeper Understanding

1.

I have no idea what is going on. I am going to pull out if things don't improve!

3.

Yes I am. I just want to be part of...

2.

You're pretty annoyed about being left out of this!

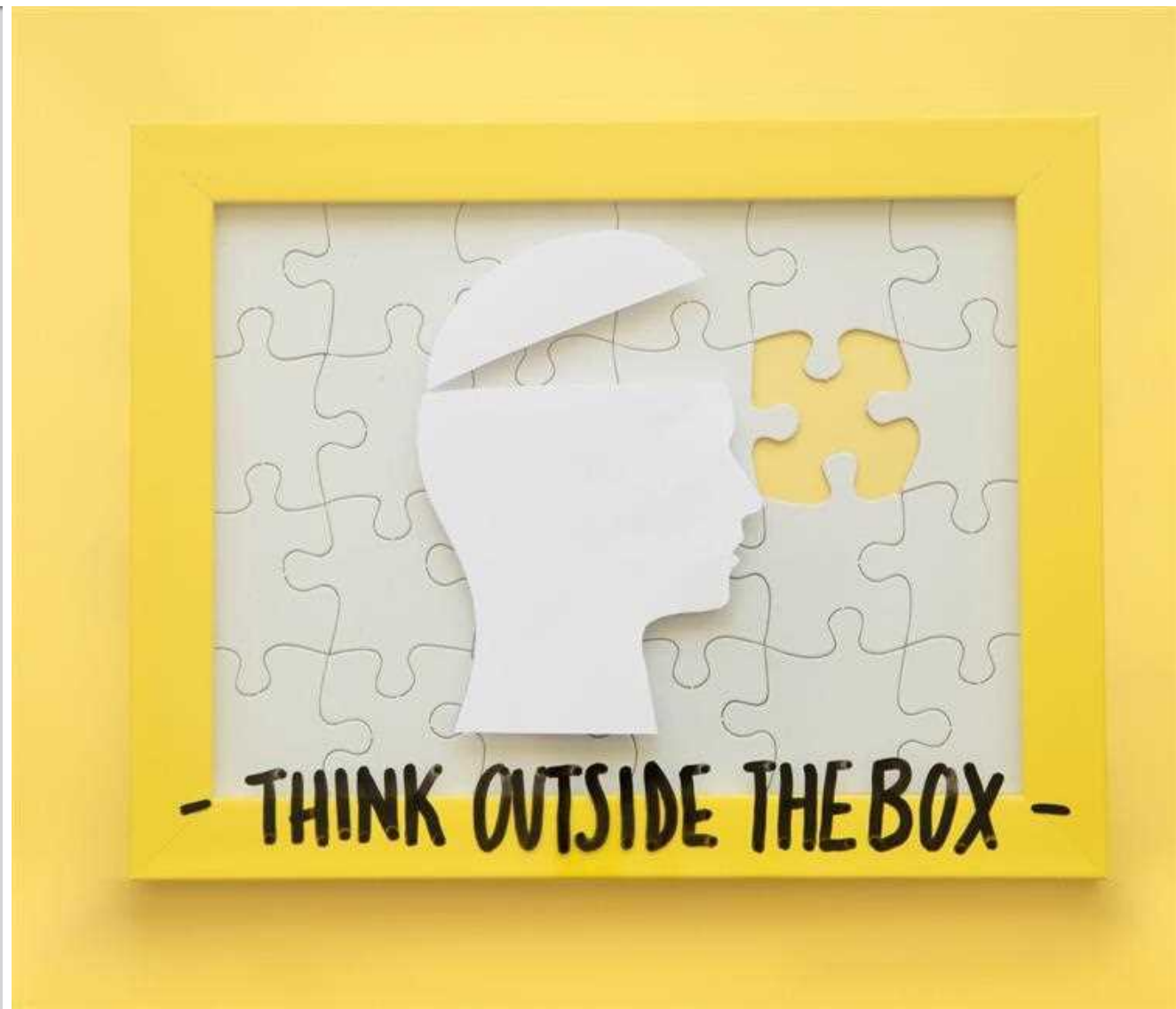
4.

Tom do you think you feel this way because....



## 2. Creative Problem Solving

“Creativity is  
God’s. It’s from  
God, and it’s for  
God.”



# Brainstorming Tutorial



# 1. Brainstorming

1. There is no evaluation until the end (exhaustion sets in).
2. All ideas are listed for all to see.
3. Share any ideas, even if they appear to be silly.
4. You may build on each other's ideas.
5. When no more can be thought of, select the best ideas. These are discussed and the solution that gains the most consensus is selected.

## 2. Share with a Partner

- Each individual writes a number of ideas down then shares them with a partner and by consensus choose 3-5 from their combined lists.
- This step is then repeated once if not twice more to achieve consensus.

### 3. Staying In The Adult

"When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me"  
1 Corinthians 13:11



# Transactional Analysis

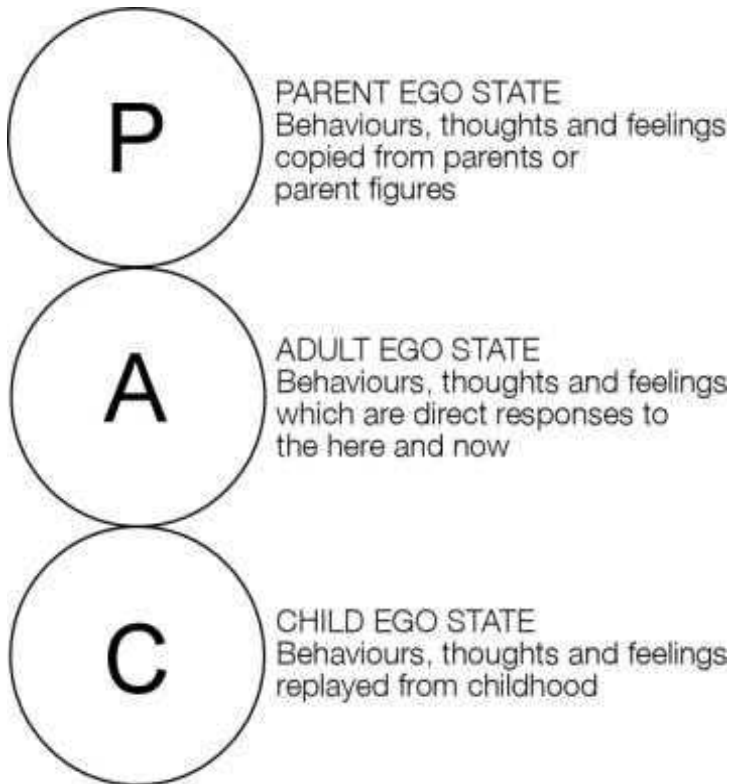


Figure TA Three Ego States

- Transactional Analysis became a method of examining the transactions and relationship between people.
- Helps identify games people play in relationships.

# Five Positions

1. *Nurturing parent*: Support and concern.
2. *Critical parent*: Judgemental and controlling.
3. *Adult: Sensitive*, thinking, open and data gathering.
4. *Natural child*: Aroused feeling, playful and spontaneous.
5. *Adapted child*: Complaining or withdrawing.

# Principles of TA

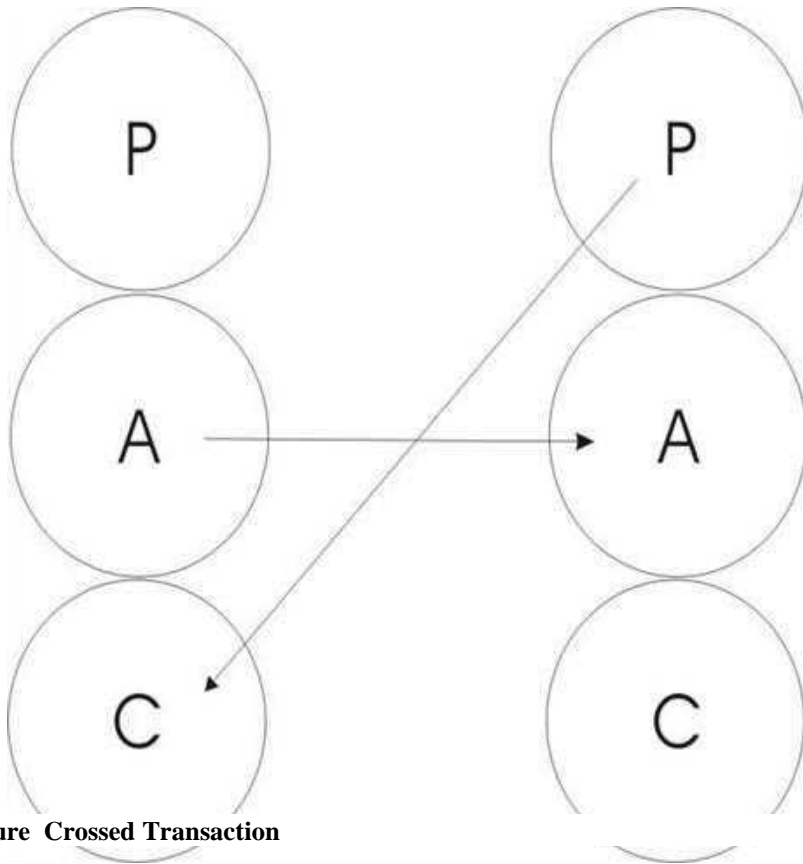


Figure Crossed Transaction

- Transactions must be matching.
- Those responses should go back to the ego state that they were sent from.
- Effective communications are complementary (response echoing the path of the stimulus), preferably adult to adult and from positive quadrants – NP, A, NC

# Techniques to Hold Yourself in Adult

- It takes conscious awareness to be able to bring ourselves into the adult ego state and hold ourselves there.
- Slow things down, breath, summarise and reflect back what you hear
- Stay present
- Be curious and ask open questions
- Validate emotions AND focus on problem-solving

# Responding to Critical or Adaptive Transactions

- Cross the transaction by responding from a different ego state than the one the stimulus is designed to hook.
- Pick up the ulterior rather than the social message.



# Example



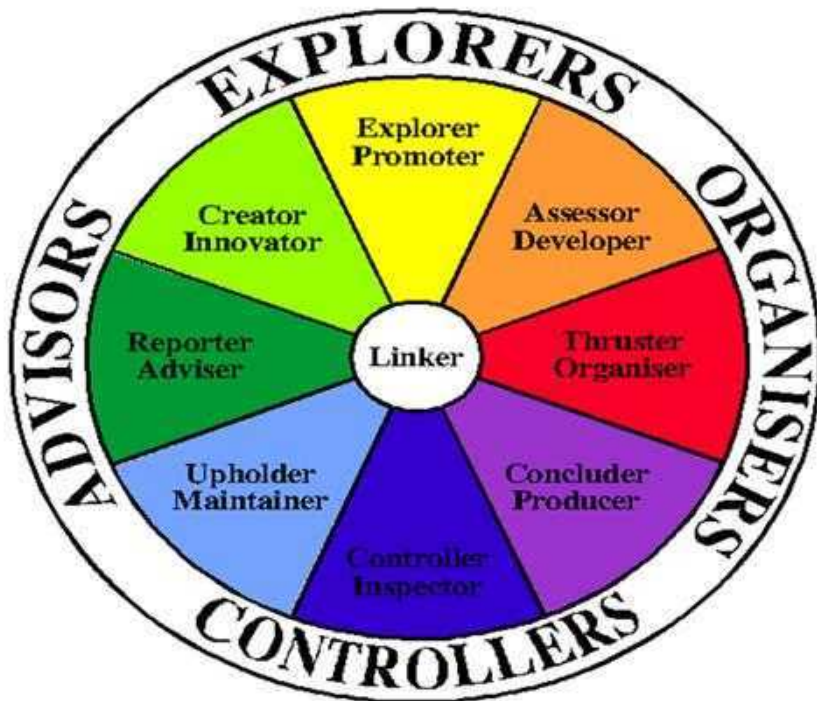
## 4. Pacing Skills

*“The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.”*

Proverbs 20:5 ESV



# Team Management System



- Pacing skills is the ability to change your work style according to the need of the other person.
- Identifying the other person's style helps to build relationship.

TMS gives you insights into how you prefer to work and how you are likely to interact with others in the workplace.

# PACING THE REPORTER-ADVISER

## DO

- Be flexible
- Develop personal relationships
- Be co-operative
- Give personal thanks
- Establish harmony
- Allow them to express their concerns

## DON'T

- Don't put the facts before feelings
- Don't move too fast
- Don't be insincere



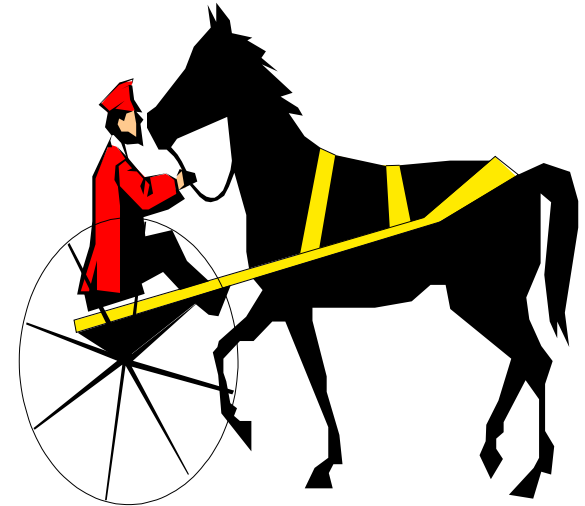
# PACING THE CREATOR-INNOVATOR

## DO

- Explore ideas
- Be enthusiastic
- Ensure you have some knowledge of the area under discussion
- Give personal thanks
- **Tolerate their disorganised ways**
- Record important agreements in writing

## DON'T

- Don't be too structured
- Don't force them into difficult deadlines
- Don't be too convergent in your thinking



# PACING THE EXPLORER-PROMOTER

## DO

- Explore ideas
- Allow them to talk
- Give *positive* strokes
- Concentrate on the future
- Be enthusiastic
- Record important agreements in writing

- Be flexible
- Don't talk about details
- Don't take issue with their opinions unless they persist
- Don't dwell unnecessarily on the past



## DON'T



# PACING THE ASSESSOR-DEVELOPER

## DO

- Be prepared
- Analyse issues fully
- Explore possibilities
- Be factual
- Speak clearly logically and precisely
- Think laterally

## DON'T

- Don't talk about subjects you know little about
- Don't give too many opinions
- Don't waste time



# PACING THE THRUSTER-ORGANISER

## DO

- Be business-like
- Be factual
- Be goal oriented
- Give incentives
- Be punctual
- Make things happen
- Summarise regularly
- Don't attack personally but focus on the facts surrounding disagreements
- Don't be ambiguous
- Don't get off the subject

## DON'T





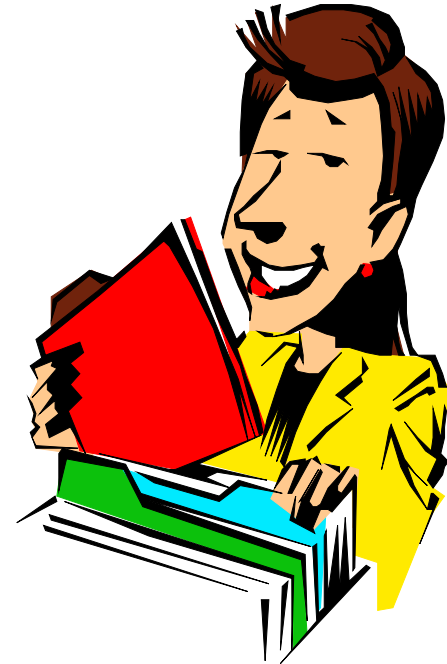
# PACING THE CONCLUDER-PRODUCER

## DO

- Be structured
- Give notice of proposed changes
- Be practical
- Stick to your word
- Keep to deadlines
- Focus on results

## DON'T

- Don't change your mind too frequently
- Don't waffle



# PACING THE CONTROLLER-INSPECTOR

## DO

- Use memos
- Send written information prior to meeting
- Slow down your pace
- Take time to understand them
- Talk about details
- Think before you speak
- Don't surprise them
- Don't rush them
- Don't concentrate on the future at the expense of the past

## DON'T



# PACING THE UPHOLDER-MAINTAINER

## DO

- Develop personal relationships
- Be clear and precise
- Encourage them to talk
- Be supportive

## DON'T

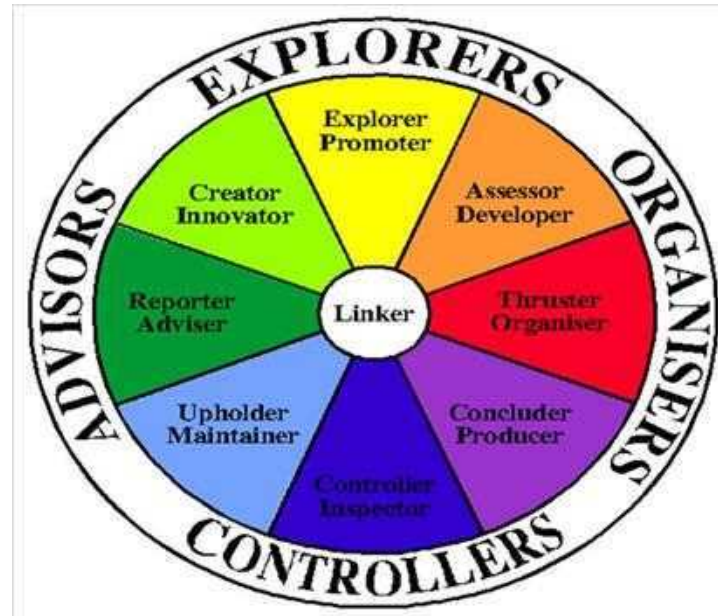
- Don't dominate discussions
- Don't ignore their feelings



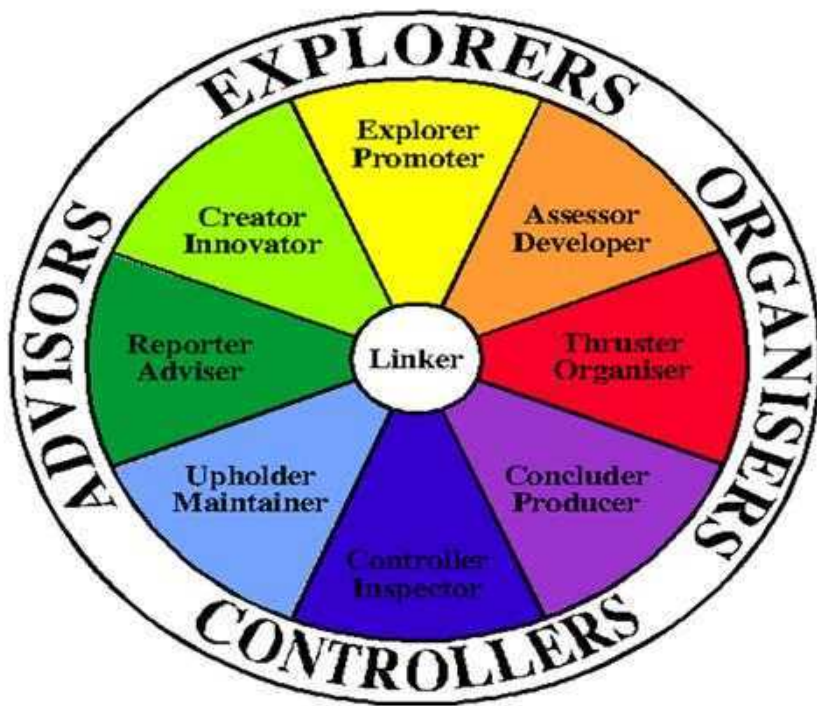
# Identifying Work Preference

| <i>Determine Team Roles Check list 17</i>   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| <b><i>Explorer-Promoter:</i></b><br>Outgoing<br>Enthusiastic<br>Warm<br>Talkative<br>Stimulating<br>Imaginative<br>Impulsive<br>Excitable<br>Persuasive<br>Opinionated<br>Emotional<br>Far-sighted<br>Dramatic<br>Risk-taker              | <b><i>Assessor-developer:</i></b><br>Outgoing<br>Analytical<br>Experimenter<br>Idea-developer<br>Challenge-seeker<br>Sociable<br>Organizer<br>Pragmatic<br>Logical<br>Planner<br>Product-champion<br>Talkative<br>Group-worker<br>Expressive | <b><i>Reporter-advisers:</i></b><br>Helpful<br>Kind<br>Well-liked<br>Thoughtful<br>Knowledgeable<br>Supportive<br>Tolerant<br>Easy-going<br>Information-gatherer<br>Willing<br>Cooperative<br>Soft<br>Conflict-avoiding<br>Procrastinating<br>Principled | <b><i>Upholder-maintainer:</i></b><br>Beliefs-based<br>Quiet<br>Supportive<br>'Defender-of-the-faith'<br>Conscientious<br>Traditional<br>Reserved<br>'Long fuse'<br>Conflict-avoiding<br>Controlling<br>Advising<br>Consensus-seeking<br>Self-effacing                                     |
| <b><i>Thruster-organizer:</i></b><br>Determined<br>Action-oriented<br>Disciplined<br>Tough<br>Independent<br>Logical<br>Decisive<br>Factual<br>Commanding<br>Impatient<br>Task-oriented<br>Stubborn<br>Competitive<br>Conflict-confronter | <b><i>Controller-inspector:</i></b><br>Conservative<br>Quiet<br>Practical<br>Logical<br>Detailed-oriented<br>Through<br>Accurate<br>Conscientious<br>Dependable<br>Reserved<br>Critical<br>Distant<br>'Nit-picker'                           | <b><i>Concluder-producer:</i></b><br>Steady<br>Reliable<br>Effective<br>Efficient<br>Dependable<br>Finisher<br>Organizer<br>Systematic<br>Orderly<br>Practical<br>Deadline-conscious<br>Crisis-hardy<br>Change-resistant<br>Present-oriented             | <b><i>Creator-innovators:</i></b><br>Imaginative<br>Intuitive<br>Independent<br>'Head-in-the-clouds'<br>Researcher<br>Innovator<br>Information-seeker<br>Procrastinating<br>Absent-minded<br>Non-finisher<br>Deadline-misser<br>Future-oriented<br>Flexible<br>Idea-generator<br>Visionary |

- Determine work preference.
- Tick those words which apply to the person.



# Identify Your Work Preference



- Using the wheel and the check list identify your work preference.
- Share your finding with your partner.

## 5. Utilising the Power of Groups

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." Hebrews 10:24-25



# Dealing With Conflict In Groups & Committees



# Some Good Advice

“...we should be guarded, that the spirit of controversy does not control in our discussions of the Sabbath School lesson... There should be liberty given for a frank investigation of truth, that each may know for himself what is true” Ellen White Counsels on Sabbath School Work p.27



# Dealing With Conflict



1. Deal with conflict don't avoid it.
2. Create an open, accepting, sharing (non-debating) atmosphere.
3. Refer difficult members to the group rules and goals.

# Dealing With Conflict



4. Initiate discussion on group process.
5. Address issues directly in a mediating way.
6. Problem Solve.
7. Use prayer.

# Avoiding Small Majority Decisions



- NT the apostles used a **Spirit-lead consensus** decision-making approach. They would come together to **discuss** and **prayer** about issues.
- When a sense of **harmony** was arrived at, they believed this was an **indicator** of the Spirit's leading.

# Spirit Lead Consensus



Paul wrote: “Let the peace of Christ rule (referee) in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace”. Colossians 3:15.

# Committee Stalemate

- **Importance of Cohesion:** The more cohesive a group (committee) is the greater the ability it has for discussing and resolving issues.
- **Small Group:** Controversial issues should be managed by small groups of mature members e.g., Elders, Church Board or a specially selected committee.
- **DO NOT TAKE CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES TO A BUSINESS MEETINGS.**

# Moving Past Committee Stalemate

1. **Brainstorm** as many solutions as possible. Select 3-5 best ideas. After discussion take a vote.
2. **Delay Decision:** If progress is difficult, delay the vote and provide additional information for members to study.
3. **Enlarge Committee:** Official or by guest invitation. Make sure they have good people skills.
4. **Refer:** If it is just not working refer the issue off to the church board or to a new subcommittee.

# Dealing With The Dominant

1. Go Around the Circle
2. Use your body language
3. Sit strategically
4. Written input (worksheet)
5. Subgroup discussion



# Dealing With The Dominant

6. Group Rules
7. Confront the Group
8. Gently challenge the Person
9. Terminate Person's Participation





## 6. The Golden Rule of Respect

“In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you...”  
Matthew (7:12):



# Christian Assertiveness



- *“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.” Luke 4:15*

## 7. Mediation for Resolution

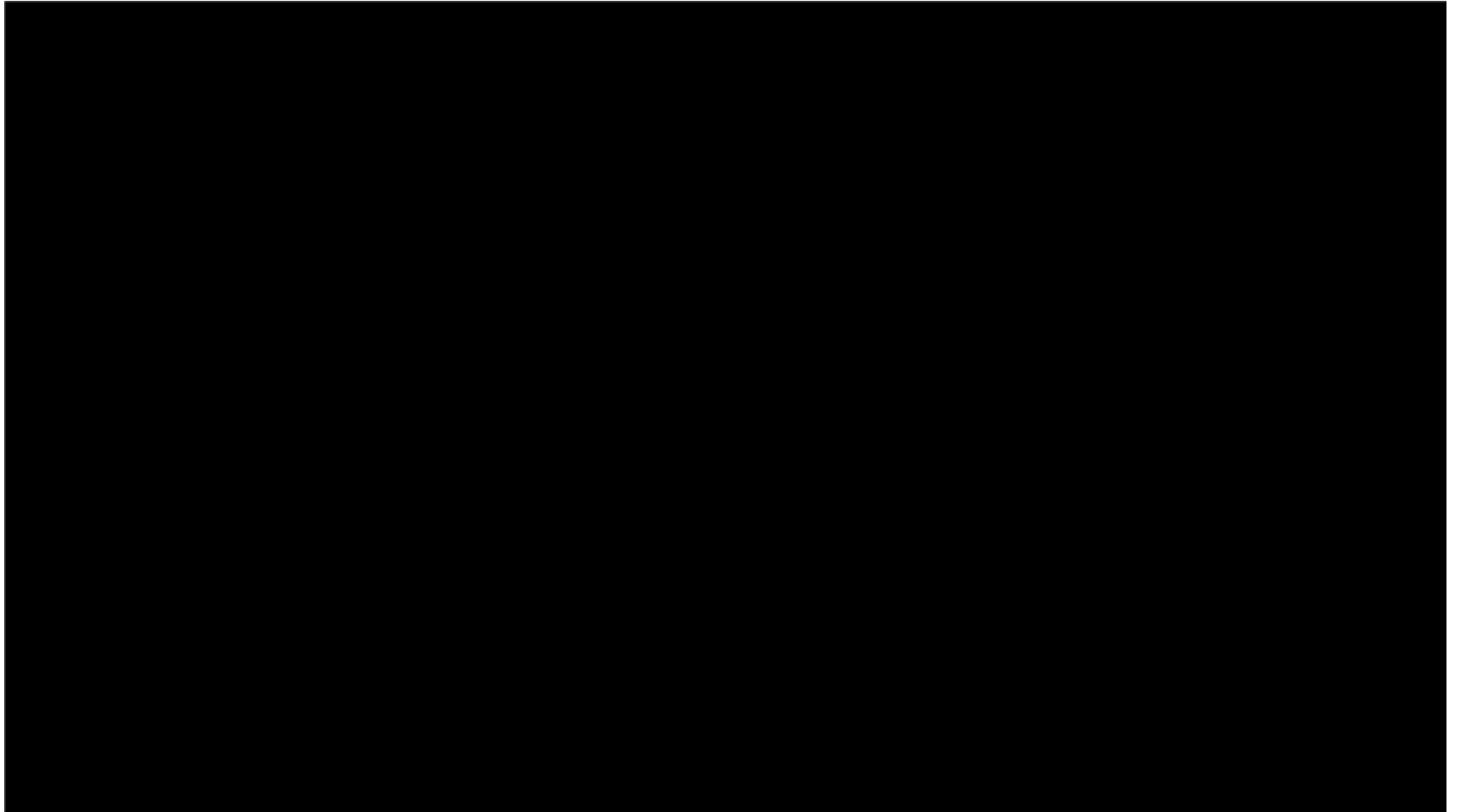
"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" Matthew 5:9



# A Definition

- "Mediation is a process in which a third party intervenes in a conflict, usually with the consent of the parties, to facilitate a mutually acceptable resolution which requires the agreement of the participants for implementation. In a sense, it is facilitated collaborative problem-solving." *Dr Gregory Tillett, Resolving Conflict*

# Example of Mediation



# STAGES IN MEDIATION

Initiate: acknowledge that a  
difference exists

# ESTABLISH

i) Overview: What is the issue? Each person to express their view of the conflict, the issue and their feelings.

---

ii) Details: Clarify misunderstandings, identify relevant issues.

# MOVE

i) Where are they now? Identify areas of agreement. Encourage willingness to move forward.

---

ii) Negotiate: Focus on future. How would they like to be? What would that take? Develop options. Trading building wins for everyone.



# CLOSE

Completion: Contracting.

# MEDIATION METHOD

Use the following principles to mediate.

1. Make it clear that you are there to support both people.
2. Get agreement that there is an issue and it needs to be fixed.
3. Let each person say what the problem is for them.

4. Guide the conversation towards a joint problem solving approach and away from personal attack.
5. Encourage them to look for answers where everybody gets what they need.

## 6. Redirect "fouls".

- ✓ Name Calling
- ✓ Put Downs
- ✓ Sneering
- ✓ Blaming
- ✓ Bringing up the past
- ✓ Getting Even

Where possible you reframe the negative statement into a neutral description of a legitimate present time concern.

# Mediator's Skills

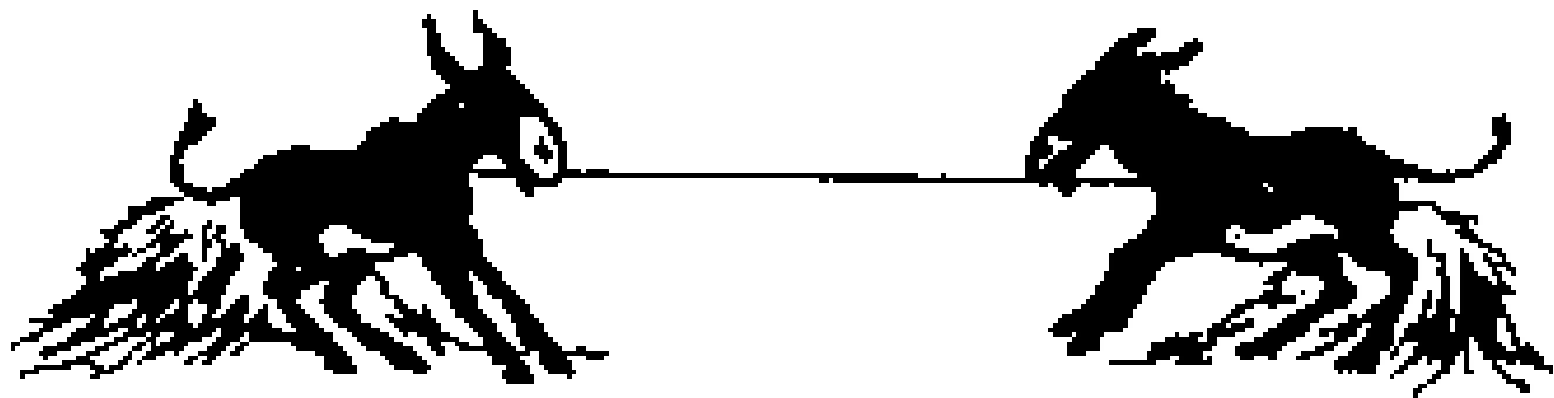
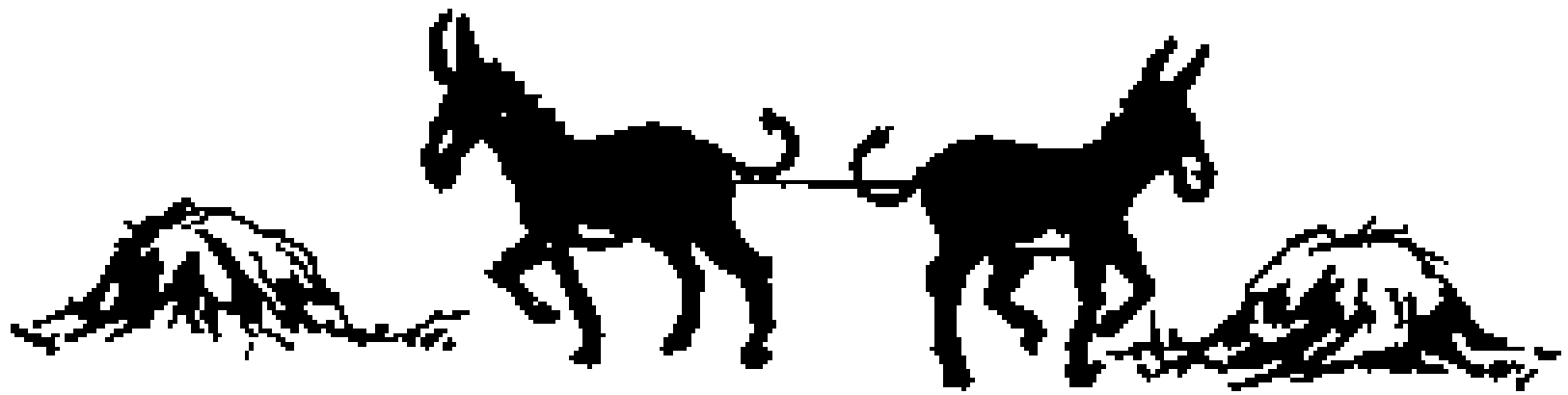
- able to show empathy
- able to communicate acceptance and respect for the parties in the conflict
- having skills in active listening
- being competent in analysing the process to help participants understand what is happening in the discussion

# Mediator's Skills

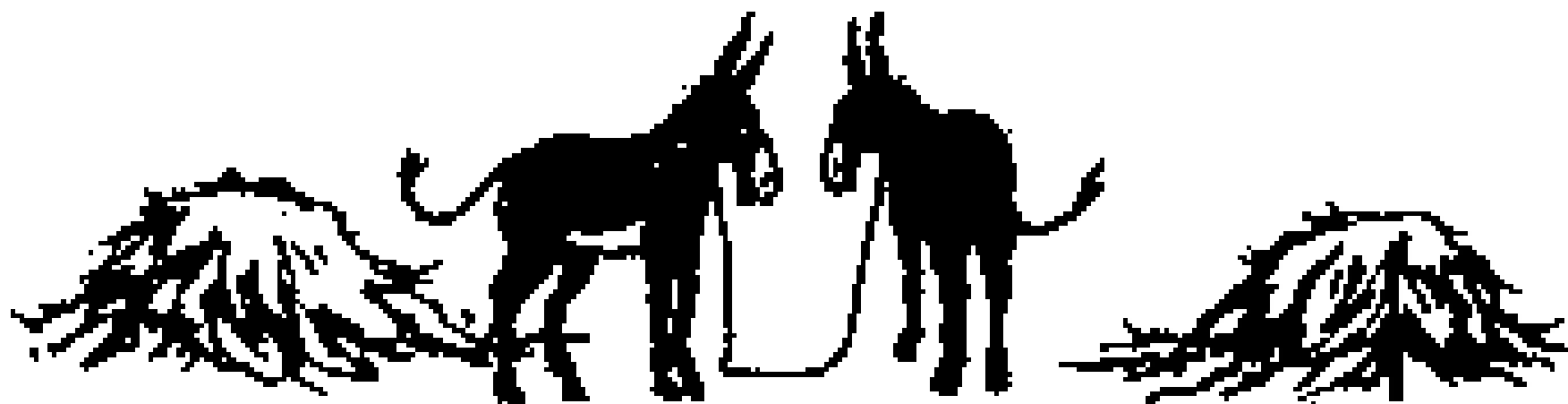
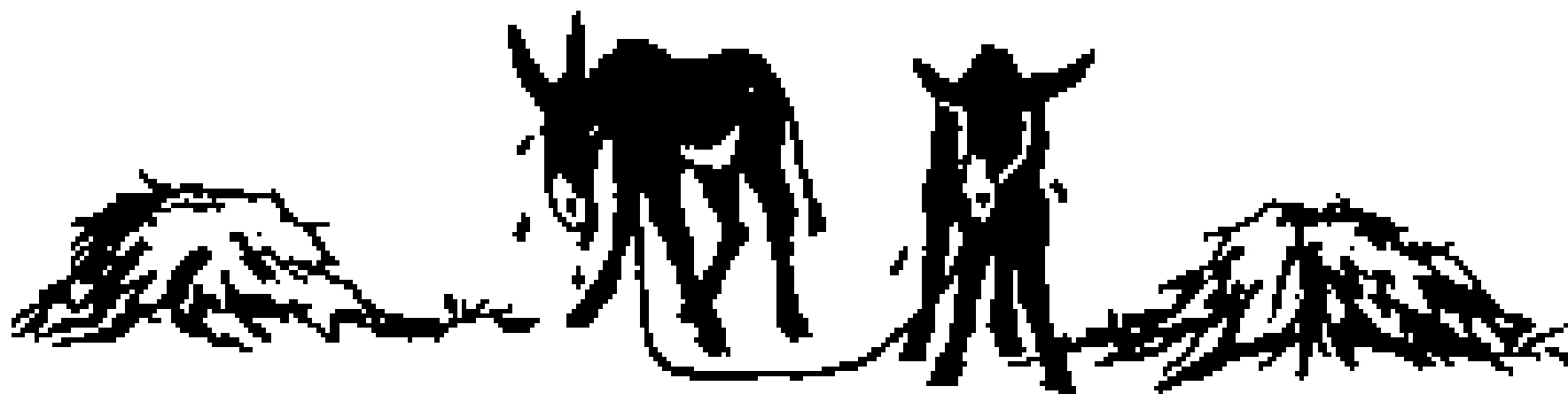
- able to reframe conflict-creating language into conflict-resolving questions or statements
- able to identify areas of common ground or agreement
- able to make explicit the implicit options that arise during discussion

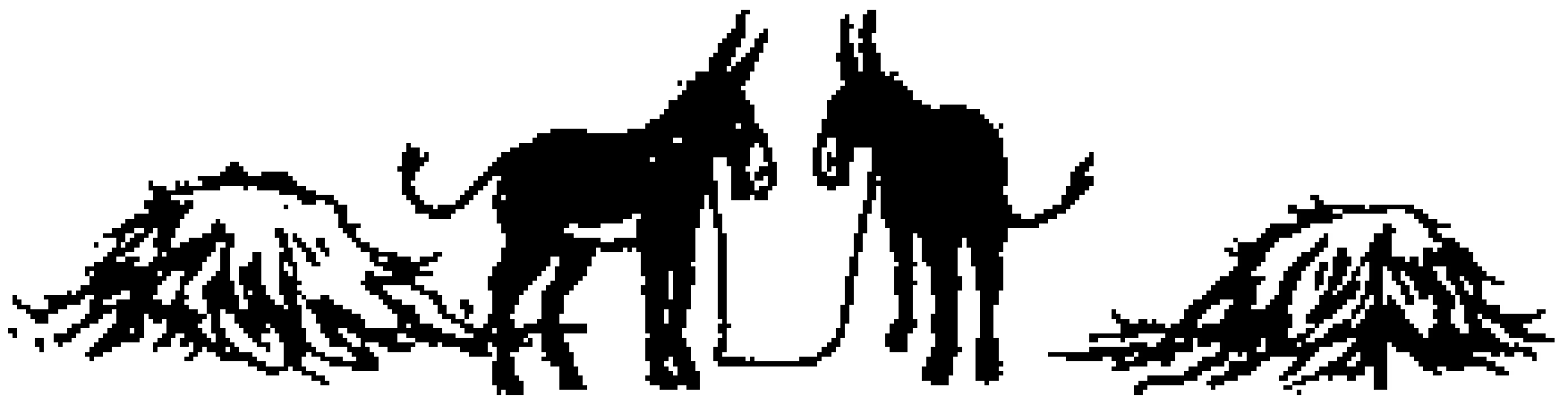
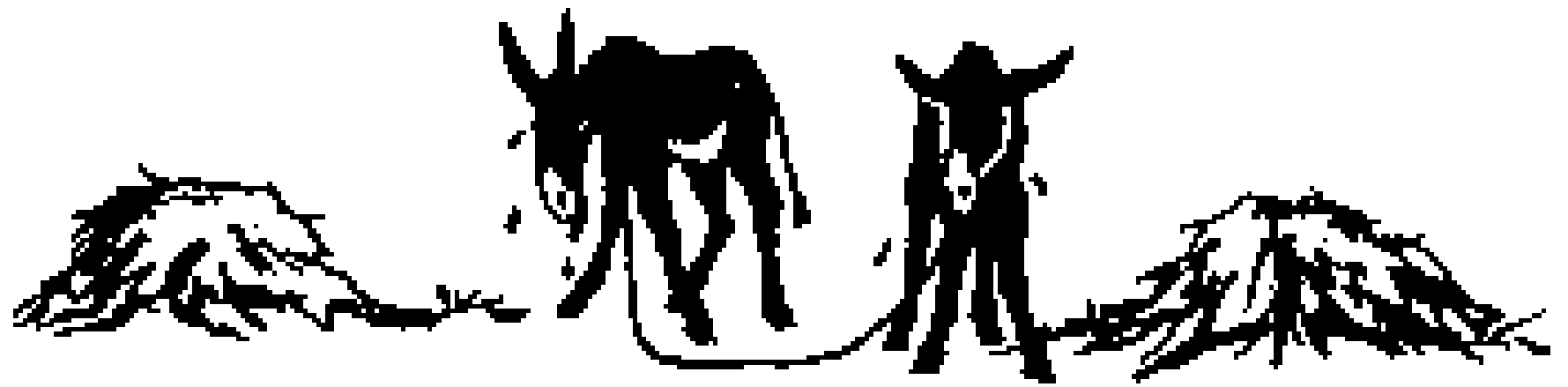
# Mediator's Skills

- able to self-disclose appropriately “when it helps the participants consider options and assists them in understanding their situation and themselves.’
- able to confront appropriately on issues which may be crucial to resolving the conflict.











*“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” Colossians 3:12,13*