

Supervisor Core - Module 3

# COMMUNICATION, CONFLICT & CHANGE

Supervisor Core- Module 3: Communication, Conflict and Change  
Written by IHS for the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program, 2010 Revision

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**Foundational  
Elements of  
Supervisor  
Core**

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## Introductions

Choose action or feeling words that start with the first letter of your first name and then complete the following sentence:

"My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am \_\_\_\_\_ in communication, \_\_\_\_\_ with conflict and \_\_\_\_\_ with change"

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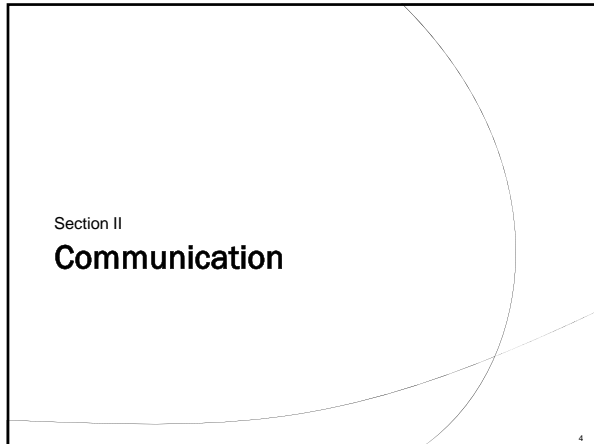
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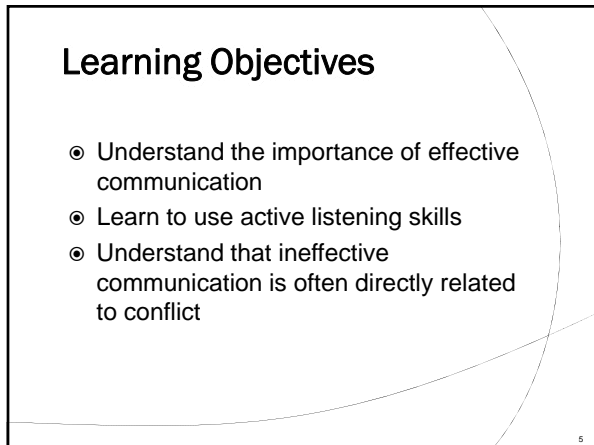
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### Learning Objectives

- Understand the importance of effective communication
- Learn to use active listening skills
- Understand that ineffective communication is often directly related to conflict

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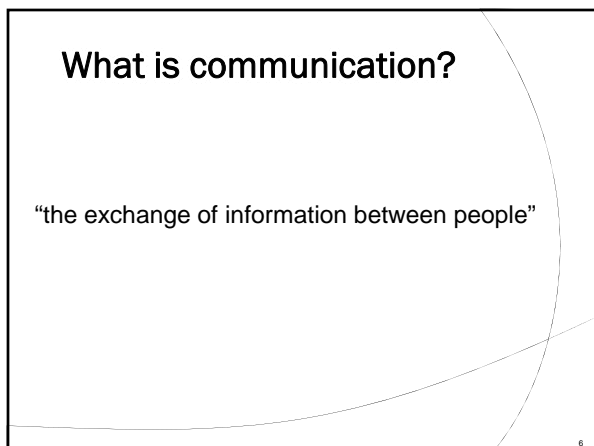
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### What is communication?

"the exchange of information between people"

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### Communication Exercise

- ◎ Draw the shape that the presenter is describing
- ◎ Share your drawing with the class

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### Communication and Supervision

- ◎ Staff need clear and concise direction in order to perform tasks correctly
- ◎ Poorly articulated instructions can limit staff understanding of the intended message

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65-90% of  
Communication  
is nonverbal

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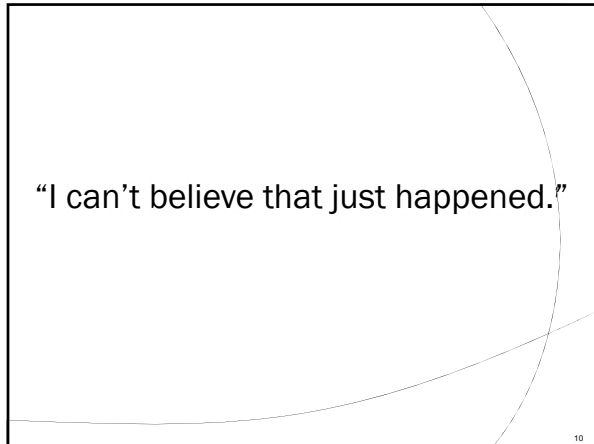
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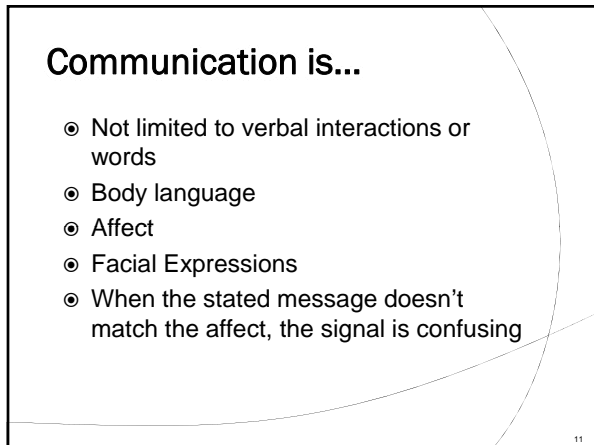
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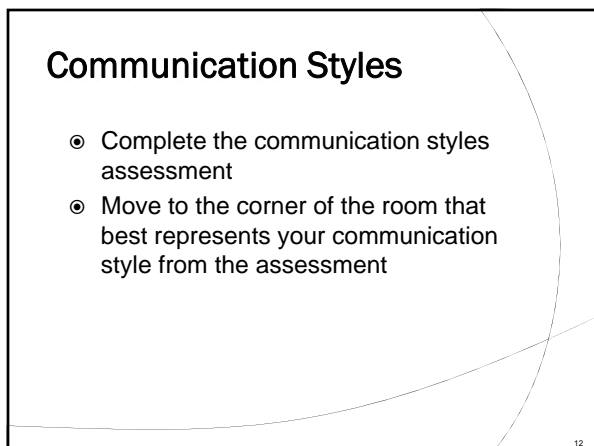
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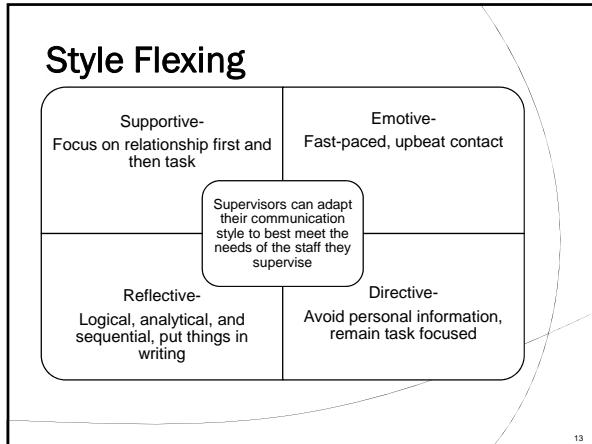
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- ### Dyad Exercise
- Partner with someone who has a different communication style than you
  - Discuss the following:
    - How each person prefers to give information
    - How each person prefers to receive information
  - Return to the large group for discussion
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- ### Active Listening
- Attends to verbal and nonverbal messages
  - Requires full attention
  - Not only hearing, but understanding the intended message
  - Serves to build rapport and demonstrate genuine interest
  - Can help deescalate a situation
  - 7 basic Active Listening Skills
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**7 Active Listening Skills**

- Paraphrasing
- Silence
- Minimal Encouragers
- Open-ended Questions
- Mirroring
- Emotion Labeling
- "I" Messages

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**Paraphrasing**

- Demonstrates that you are listening and understanding
- Summarize in your words what the other person has told you
- For example:
  - It sounds like...
  - What I'm hearing is...
  - Are you telling me...?

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**Silence**

- Deliberate use of pauses can encourage the other person to continue talking
- Can be helpful in stressing importance of a statement or calming down another person
- Silence indicates that you are listening and processing what the other person has said

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### Minimal Encouragers

- Demonstrate attentive listening
- Conveyed through body language or brief verbal replies
- For example:
  - Yes
  - I see
  - Uh Huh

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### Open-ended questions

- Questions that cannot be answered with yes or no
- Stimulate the other person to talk
- Avoid asking “why” questions because it can feel like interrogation or blaming
- Can focus on understanding what the other person thinks and feels

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### Mirroring/Reflecting

- Repeat only the last few words or the main idea of the message
- Demonstrates interest and understanding
- For example:
  - Staff member: “I can’t believe this mother did not attend her counseling appointment!”
  - Supervisor: “Didn’t attend her appointment?”

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### Emotion Labeling

- ⦿ Allows you to attach a label to the feelings expressed by the other person
- ⦿ Shows you are paying attention to the emotional aspects of what the other person is saying
- ⦿ For example:
  - You sound....
  - You seem...
  - I hear...
  - You must be...

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### "I" Messages

- ⦿ Allows for expression of your feelings without placing blame
- ⦿ Useful during confrontation
- ⦿ Includes two parts:
  - A statement of how you are feeling
  - A statement about what is causing that feeling
- ⦿ For example:
  - I would like to help you work through this case, but it is difficult for me to do so when you are talking so fast. Can you slow down a bit so I can better understand you?

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### Active Listening Practice Activity

- ⦿ In groups of three, practice the various scenarios
- ⦿ Get into your roles. Don't just read the scenario
- ⦿ Observer should see if the active listener is employing the Active Listening Skills
- ⦿ Rotate roles until each person has played each role

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**Practice Listening**

- Choose a partner
- One person face the front of the room, the other person face the back of the room. Partners should be facing one another.
- The person facing the back of the room should tell their partner about their favorite vacation or where they would like to go on vacation and why.
- The person listening, shall follow the instructions provided during the activity.

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**Strengths-Based Communication**

- Topics are framed in a positive manner
- Relies on effective use of questions
- Useful in confrontational situations
- Help staff respond less reactively and more creatively

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**Benefits of Strengths-Based Communication**

- Expand staff thinking about how their job contributes to agency outcomes
- Empowers and energizes staff
- Can increase the overall capacity of the unit

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**More Benefits of Strengths-Based Communication**

- Encourages staff involvement in decision-making
- Promotes shared vision and desired outcomes
- Creates a high-trust environment
- Reduces resistance to change

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**Opportunities to use Strengths-Based Communication**

- Giving feedback
- Case Conferences
- Unit Meetings
- Performance Evaluations
- Performance Concerns
- Identifying Unit Needs

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**Sample Email**

To: [Sue@ifs.gov](mailto:Sue@ifs.gov)  
From: [Supervisorsally@ifs.gov](mailto:Supervisorsally@ifs.gov)  
Date: 1-10-2010  
Re: YOUR WORK

SEE ME AFTER YOUR APPT. I AM TRYING TO REVIEW THIS CASE AND CAN'T MAKE SENSE OF IT...LOL. U NEED TO CONTACT THE FAMILY, THEY KEEP CALLING ME AND I DON'T KNOW ENUF ABOUT THE CASE.

ALSO YOUR TIMESHEET IS WRONG AGAIN. IT LOOKS LIKE YOU ARE MAKING UP HOURS TO WORK. I TOLD YOU ONCE BEFORE NOT TO DO THAT.

GO SEE PAYROLL TO FIX IT OR I WILL HAVE TO WRITE U UP.

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### Written Communication

- Examples
- Permanent Record
- Can provide clear direction
- Can be misconstrued
- Public Record

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### Email Guidelines

- Don't use all capital letters
- Address the person to whom you are sending the email
- Be polite, courteous and professional
- Be cautious about sending one line instructions
- Don't use big, flowery words

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### Better Email

To: [Sue@ifs.gov](mailto:Sue@ifs.gov)  
From: [Supervisorsally@ifs.gov](mailto:Supervisorsally@ifs.gov)  
Date: 1-10-2010  
Re: Individual case conferences

Good afternoon Sue,  
I am setting up case conferences for next week and would like to make sure that you get an opportunity to discuss your cases with me.

Please email me with two or three days and times you are available next week and I will accommodate your schedule.  
Thanks,  
Sally

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**Ethical Communication**

- Confidentiality of Email
- Communication should mirror expectations of staff
- Venting and Discussing Cases

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**Use with Caution...**

- Criticizing
- Labeling
- Diagnosing
- Manipulative
- Ordering
- Threatening
- Moralizing
- Interrogating
- Advising
- Topping
- Reassurance

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**Communication as a Tool**

- Communication must be purposeful
- Careful consideration of one's communication strategy in each situation can impact the outcome of each situation

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**Purposeful Communication**

- In small groups, review each scenario and decide the following:
  - What outcomes you would like to achieve via communication
  - Communication strategies for achieving the outcomes

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**Communication Strategies**

- Active Listening
- Strengths-Based Communication
- Motivational Interviewing

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**Dealing with Resistance**

- Understand the reason for resistance
- Identify when it is happening
- Support the employee in expressing resistance directly
- Don't take it personally

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**Six Steps**

- Consciously acknowledge the resistance
- Center yourself
- Subconsciously grant the other person permission to take the position they are adopting
- Explore the other person's resistance
- Identify your own perceptions, rationale
- Resolve/decide/act as you see fit

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**Communicating with a Resistant Staff Person**

- Develop a situation in which you will have to communicate with a "resistant" staff person
- Divide into groups of three
- Role play the situation with one person being the staff member, one being the supervisor and one serving as an observer
- Each person should have an opportunity to perform each role

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**Communication...**

- With a resistant employee can be uncomfortable and challenging
- Strengths-Based communication can help both the supervisor and staff person be open to the dialogue
- Active listening demonstrates willingness to listen and can serve to decrease resistance to the interaction

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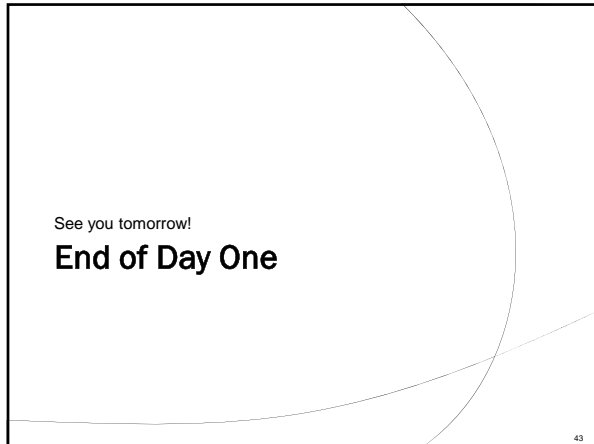
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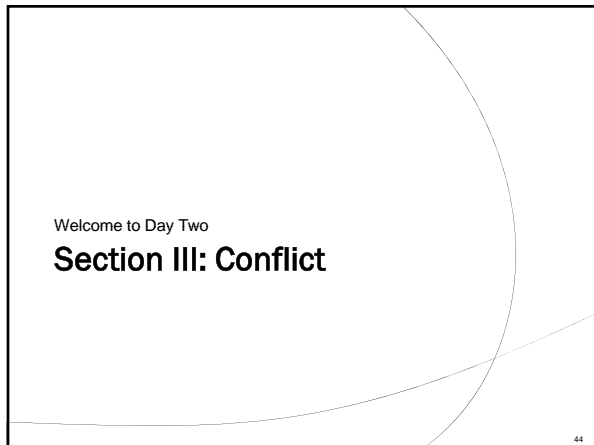
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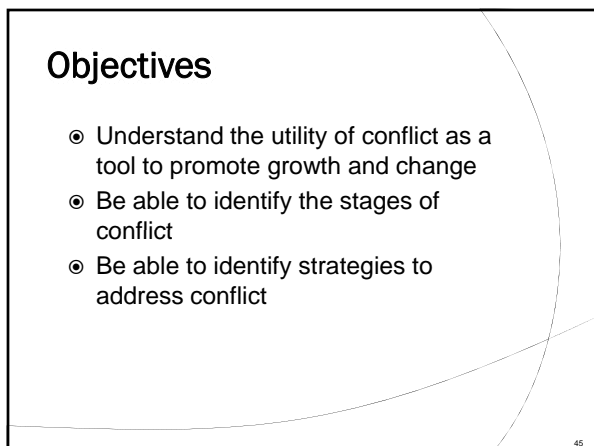
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## Conflict

- ⦿ According to Webster's Dictionary "The result of real or perceived differences which may affect actions or outcomes we believe are important."
- ⦿ Others define it as "A state of being that occurs over a prolonged period during which issues are not addressed, thereby leading to dissonance."

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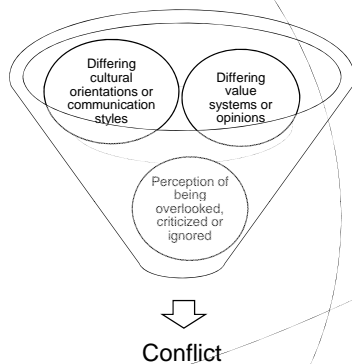
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## Conflict

- ⦿ Is necessary
- ⦿ Is inevitable



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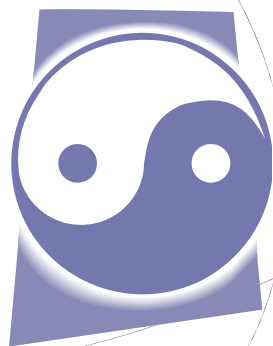
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Harmony and conflict exist within a flowing circle. To appreciate one, the other must be present.



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**Are there other conflict metaphors?**  
Complete the Conflict Metaphors Handout

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**Perceptions of Conflict**

- Negative
  - Described in negative terms
  - Struggle which results in destructive outcomes
- Transformational
  - Normal, natural and constructive
  - Can be a positive force
  - Provides an opportunity to talk openly and encourage understanding
  - Can improve working relationships
  - Can bring renewed energy

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**Management of Conflict**

- Poorly managed conflict can:
  - Hamper productivity
  - Lower morale
  - Generate additional conflict
  - Cause inappropriate behaviors
- Conflict that is managed well can:
  - Promote growth
  - Support an open and encouraging environment.

(McNamara 2008)

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**“To be alive is to be in conflict. To be effective is to be in conflict. Organizations cannot function without conflict and members of an organization cannot interact without conflict. If organizations are to be effective, and if members of an organization are to be competent, they must be able to manage and resolve conflicts constructively.”**

Tjosvold & Johnson, 1983

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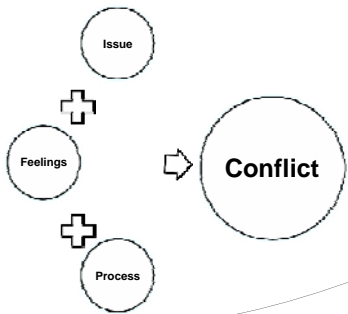
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### Elements of Conflict



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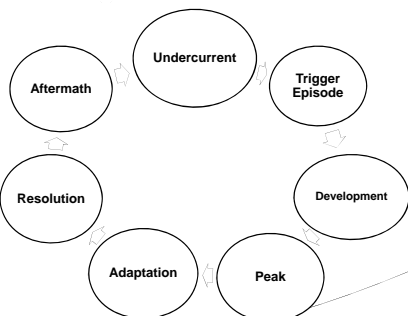
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### Conflict Cycle



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**Supervisors can cause conflict**

- ⦿ Poor communication
- ⦿ Providing insufficient resources, or misaligning resources
- ⦿ Leadership problems

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**Limiting Unproductive Conflict**

- ⦿ Regularly review job descriptions
- ⦿ Develop relationships with all staff
- ⦿ Involve staff in the development, review, revision, distribution and training of routine procedures
- ⦿ Communication of new initiatives and the status of current programs
- ⦿ Use of anonymous suggestion box
- ⦿ Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

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**Conflict Resolution**

- ⦿ In small groups, identify various ways people respond to conflict
- ⦿ List the approaches you identify
- ⦿ Share them with the class

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When dealing with conflict you must consider...

**NEEDS FIRST  
SOLUTIONS LATER**

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**Slide the coin...**  
Making conflict a win/win situation.

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**Irritating Traits**

- List the top five traits in others that irritate you.
- Are these traits “hot buttons” for you?

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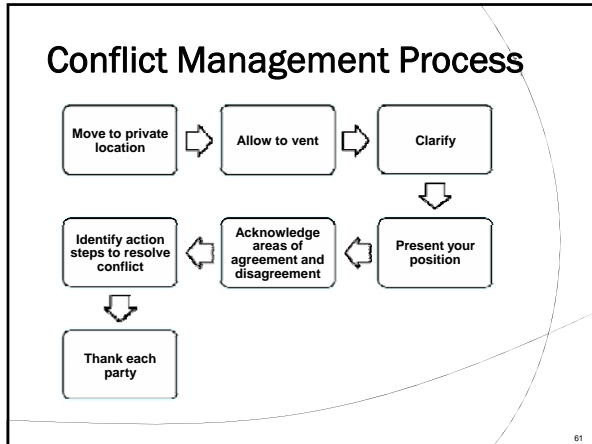
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- ### Conflict Management Strategies
- Active Listening
  - Conflict Resolution
  - Conflict Mapping
  - Mediation
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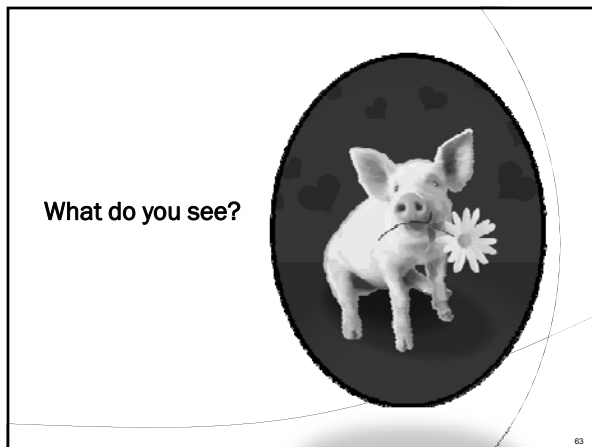
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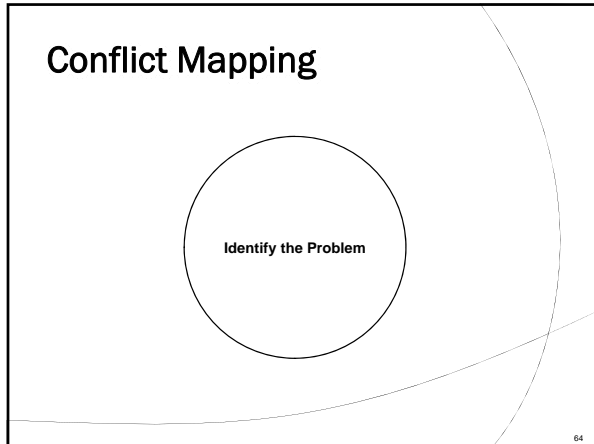
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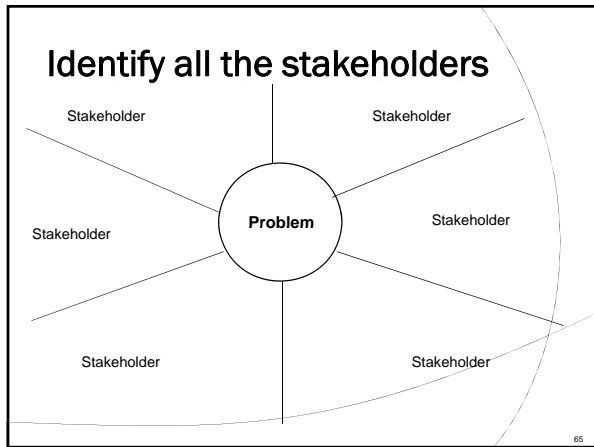
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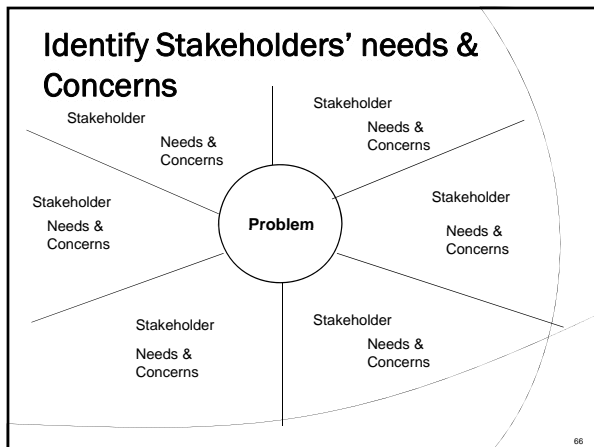
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### Then What?

- Read the “map”
- Brainstorm solutions
- Evaluate the alternatives
- Design options
- Implement the solution
- Seek feedback and monitor the results

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### Create a conflict map

- In small groups, review the conflict situations provided.
- Develop a conflict map for the situation.

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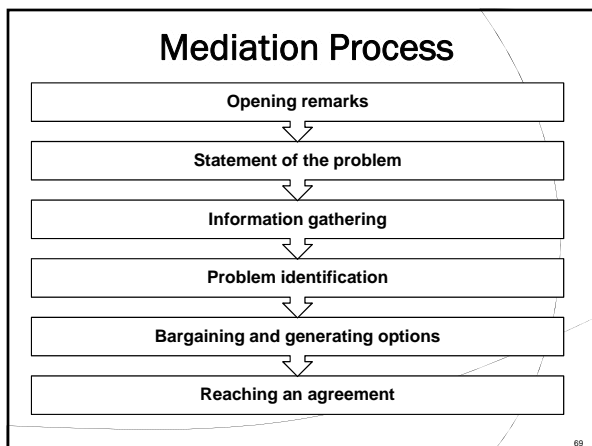
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**Optional Mediation Activity**

- ⦿ Each person should take a turn being the observer, mediator and the parties in conflict
- ⦿ Observer should watch the mediator for the following:
  - Treating both parties as if they have equal authority?
  - Allow both parties to state the problem?
  - Use open-ended questions?
  - Form common goals?
  - How could they improve their approach?

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**Mediation steps...**

- ⦿ Are useful in surfacing the problem.
- ⦿ Help participants feel that their concerns are being addressed in a “safe” way.
- ⦿ Focus attention on resolving the problem and not on blaming or arguing with the other person.

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Section IV  
**Change**

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**Objectives**

- Understand the different types of change that impact the organization
- Identify strategies to assist staff in implementing change

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**Understanding Change**

- Child Welfare is constantly changing
- Poorly implemented change can result in conflict and poor morale
- Agency change is caused by staff turnover, state of the economy, rule changes, practice standards and philosophical changes
- Change can promote growth
- Change can cause crisis or crisis can be a catalyst for change

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**Types of Change**

- Reactive
- Proactive
- Evolutionary

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**Reactive Change**

- ⦿ Response to crisis or other event
- ⦿ Usually results in rash reactions that do not have line staff buy-in
- ⦿ Supervisors must work with staff to help them understand the change and build their commitment to the change

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**Proactive**

- ⦿ Oriented toward a plan
- ⦿ Involves collaboration with staff and stakeholders
- ⦿ Supervisors should encourage staff to participate in the planning process
- ⦿ Can be an excellent training and developmental tool

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**Evolutionary**

- ⦿ Change as a result of the course of business. I.e., staff turnover, caseload changes
- ⦿ Supervisors should help staff understand and predict this change
- ⦿ Staff should be involved in the planning process at the unit level

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### What change have you seen?

- In small groups, list any philosophical or practice changes you have observed or are aware of in the child welfare field.
- Discuss these changes in your groups and identify if the change was managed well. Why or why not?

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### Change Management

- Change is frequent and unavoidable.
- Implementation is generally easier if staff are involved in the planning process
- Staff commitment impacts how change is adopted
- Philosophical shifts must be well-planned and planning should include all agency staff

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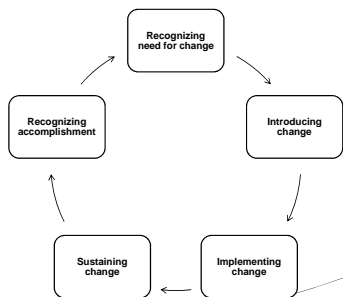
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### Stages of Change



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### Implementation of Change

- Change is scary, people are often resistant
- For every proposed or achieved change, someone loses something
- Change is a process and people respond differently

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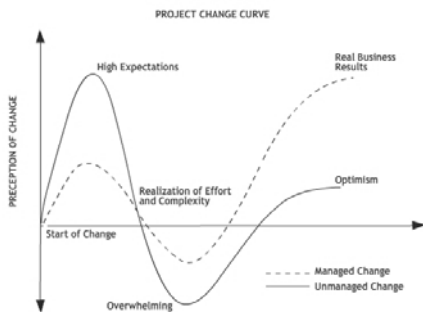
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### Change Curve



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### Roles staff take in the change process

- Early Adopters
- Early Majority
- Late Majority
- Resistors
- Champions
- Opinion Leaders
- Minders

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### Small Group Activity

- In small groups, think of a situation in which you participated in or observed a change being implemented
- Draw the change curve and label some of the characteristics of the change you observed at the corresponding point on the curve
- Identify different roles you observed staff members taking in the process

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### Situational Leadership

- Tool for change management
- Consider staff differences and alter approach with each staff
- Varying staff roles in the change process impact how supervisors should help staff adapt to the process
- Using situational leadership, the supervisor selects the most appropriate approach
- Relationship is important in change management, so supervisors should rely on “selling” and “participating”

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### Supervisor Role in the Change Process

● Vision Keeper	● Builder of Engagement, ownership and commitment
● Culture Builder	● Coach, trainer, educator
● Co-designer and Change initiator	● Provider of Feedback and advocacy to agency
● Gatekeeper	

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### Guide Employees Through the Change Process

- ⦿ Set the course and navigate the change
- ⦿ Communicate realistic expectations to all involved
- ⦿ Establish “hand holds” or “stepping stones”
- ⦿ Encourage employees to take individual steps that will enable attainment of the final goal

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### Transformational Leaders...

- ⦿ Help others to see the benefits of change
- ⦿ Embrace and continuously promote proactive change
- ⦿ Anticipate change and proactively manage it

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### The family who wants change

- ⦿ Review the case example in your small groups. Consider the following questions:
  - What can happen in the family as a result of the mother’s sobriety?
  - What are the unintended consequences of the mother’s sobriety?
  - What conditions might family members want to sustain that are present when the mother is abusing drugs and alcohol?
  - What might family members say or do when they see the mother overcoming the abuse issues?

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### Equitable Case Assignment

- ◎ Still in small groups, consider a unit where cases have not been equitably assigned.
- ◎ Consider these questions:
  - What changes can happen in the unit if cases are equitably assigned?
  - What unintended or perceived consequences may result from the new system?
  - Will there be any consequences that are intended but unwanted?
  - What do supervisors need to think about when considering this type of change?
  - What can supervisors do to help unit staff be more comfortable with the change?

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### Consequences of Change

- ◎ Positive and negative
- ◎ Must be considered prior to implementation
- ◎ Strong reactions in others, even if requested or positive

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Supervisors must embrace these in a way that helps the unit achieve the outcome of safety, permanency and well-being for children and families.



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**What is the connection?**

- Draw the connection between communication, conflict and change as it resonates with you
- Share your work!

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**Closing**

- Identify a strategy you can use in your agency
- Complete the Action Plan

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**REMINDER**

- Pre-training assignments need to be completed prior to attending classroom trainings
- To access these materials go to [www.ocwtp.com](http://www.ocwtp.com); link to *For Trainees*; link to *Resources* and then scroll down to *Supervisor/Manager Core Tools*.

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