

# **We Can Work It Out**

**Bellevue Neighborhood Conference**

**May 21, 2016**

**Cheryl Cohen**

**Bellevue Neighborhood Mediation Program**

**425-452-4091**

# Bellevue Neighborhood Mediation Program

## Telephone Conflict Coaching

a phone conversation with a trained volunteer who can coach you on how to handle difficult conflict situations

## Mediation

a confidential, voluntary face to face process for resolving disputes, guided by a neutral third party

## Group Facilitations

a structured and guided path through multi-party disputes

## Conflict Management Trainings

to improve your negotiation and dispute resolution skills

Contact us: **425-452-4091**

# Training Goals:



**To show how you get  
stuck in conflict**

**... and teach some tools to  
help you manage.**



# Our instinctive response to conflict is:

**Fight**



**or**

**Flight**



**But  
often  
the  
result  
is:**



**We need to override our instincts and find a middle way: managing conflicts through *collaboration***

# How conversations get stuck

**We have different “truths”**

**If we are impacted we assume it was intended**

**When things go wrong, we blame someone**

**We have different conflict styles**

**We avoid expressing feelings**

**We jump to our solution too soon**

**We have different  
“truths”**

**Our PERCEPTION *is the way we view things.***

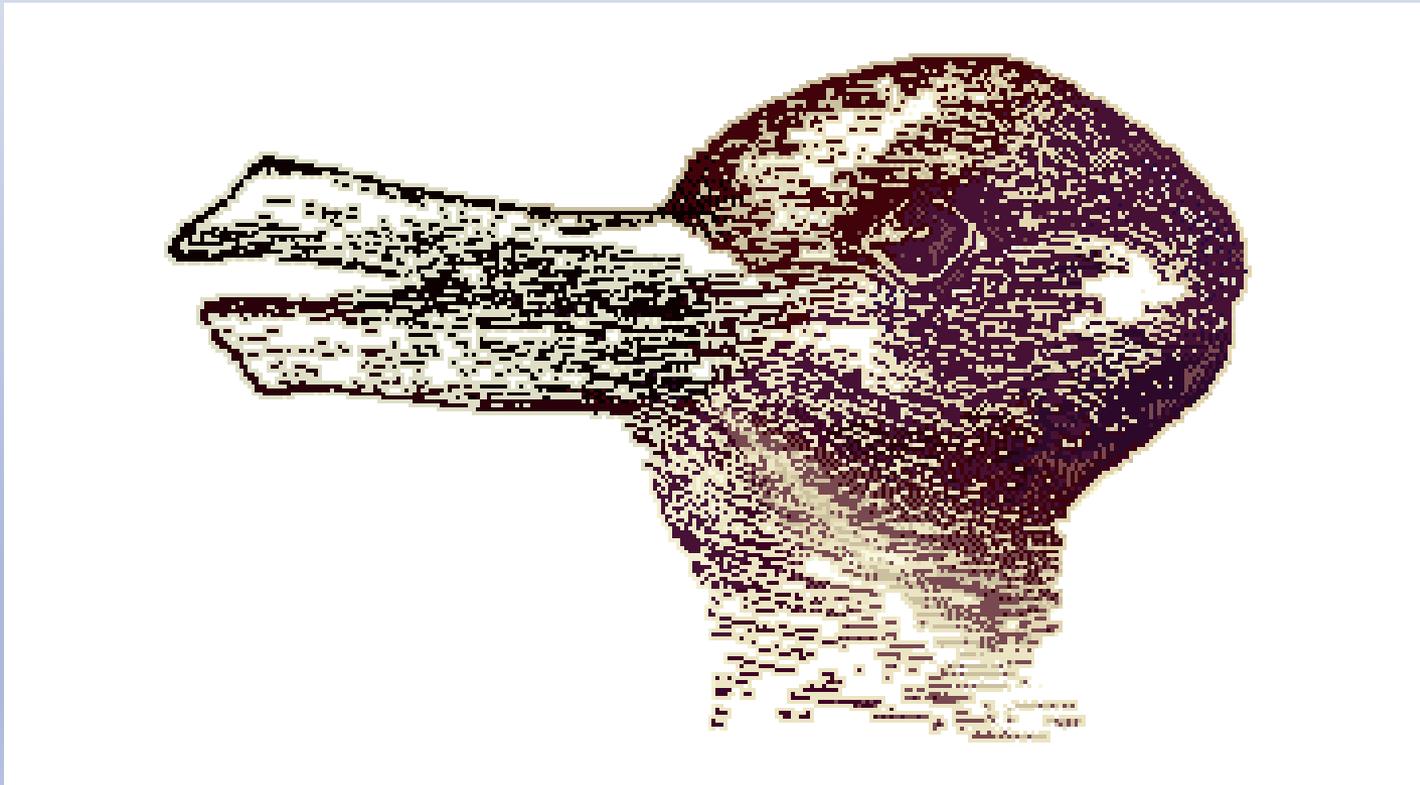


***If you can't see things  
the way I do, then  
you're just not looking  
at them the right way***

***Our Perception Is the  
Truth!***

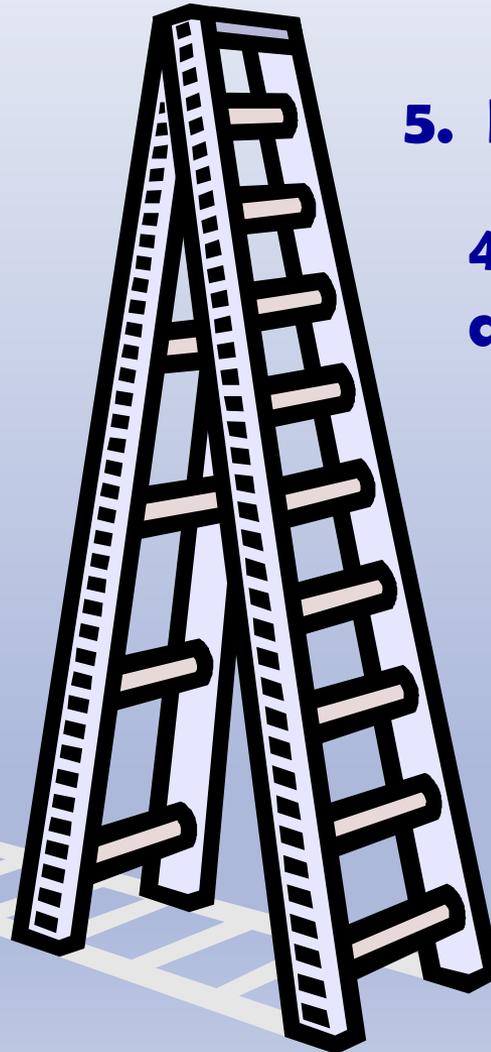
# We have different “truths”

*What kind of animal do you see?  
Are you sure?*



# The Ladder of Inference

We have different  
“truths”



**Reflexive Loop: my beliefs affect the data I select**

**5. I take action**

**4. I draw conclusions and adopt beliefs**

**3. I add meaning to the data**

**2. I select data I think is important**

**1. I observe the world – collect data**

# Techniques for dealing with our different truths

**Be *curious* about their story: what information did they think was important, what meaning did they attach to it?**



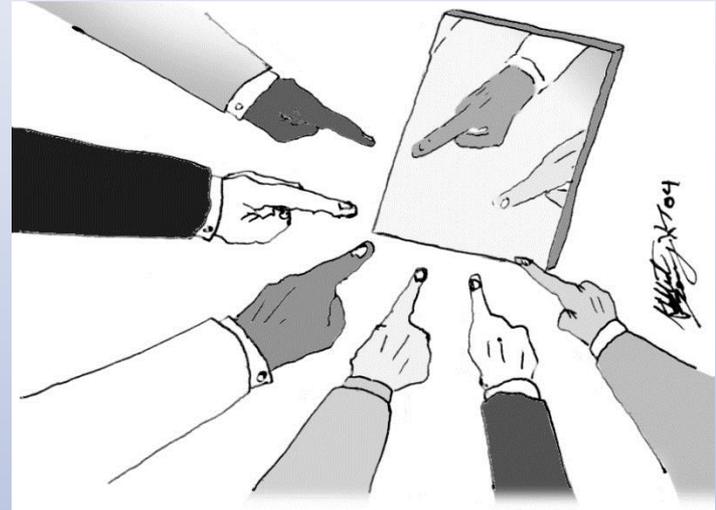
**Work your way back down the ladder**

**Investigate your own story: what assumptions are you making, what factors are you minimizing or exaggerating.**

***“The fine art of self-doubt”***

# When things go wrong, we blame someone

**Blaming someone can oversimplify the problem. Often, several people contributed to the problem. And, people who get blamed feel defensive, so discussion gets shut down.**



**When we consider all the factors that caused a problem, we can often fix it for next time.**

# **Techniques for disentangling intent from impact**

## **Explain what you know:**

- **The other person's impact on you**
- **Your own intentions**

## **Ask what you don't know:**

- **the other person's intentions,**
- **your impact on the other person.**

**Don't pretend you don't have a hypothesis...**

**Be willing to acknowledge that motives are often mixed and complex...**

# We avoid expressing feelings

In our culture expressing feelings is:

- Unprofessional
- Shows lack of boundaries
- Unmanly



But people have feelings anyway, and unexpressed feelings can:

- Leak into conversations in various dysfunctional ways
- Make it hard to listen
- Take a toll on our self esteem and relationships



# Techniques for working with feelings

## Accept them:

- **Feelings are normal, inevitable, and can be unpleasant (good people have bad feelings).**
- **Everyone's feelings are important, including yours.**
- **Significant feelings that are repressed often cause damage later (they leak out in nasty ways, or they erode self esteem)**



# Techniques for working with feelings

**Often we disguise feelings as judgments and accusations**



**Try expressing your feelings directly, rather than disguised as judgments or accusations.**

**Use the classic I-statement:**

**“When you do ... (simple nonjudgmental description of behavior)**

**...I feel (feeling).”**

# The Challenge of Listening

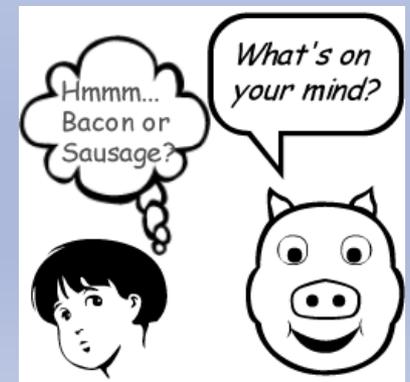
Why  
Stuck



**Sometimes you are  
distracted by your  
thoughts...**

**Sometimes you hear  
something different from  
what was intended**

**Sometimes your thoughts  
are not appropriate for  
sharing...**



# STEPS IN COLLABORATION

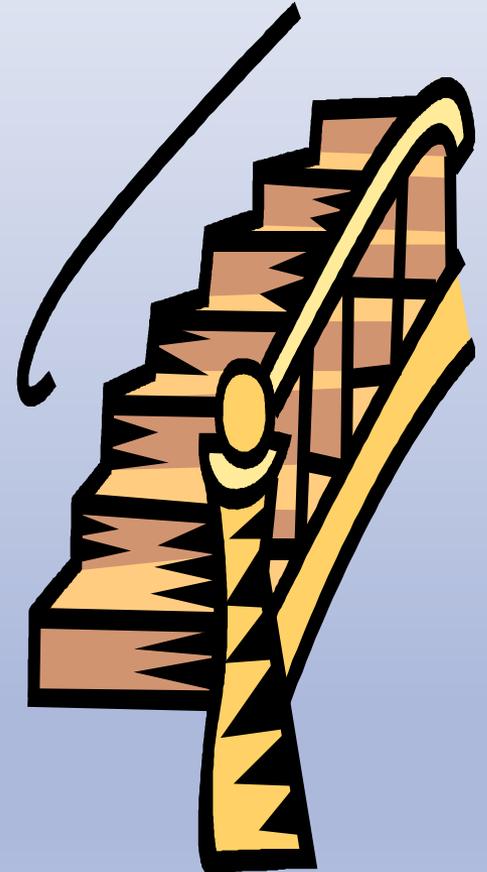
Tools  
to help



**1. Establish rapport and understanding**

**2. Identify underlying interests**

**3. Find solutions**



# Establish rapport and understanding

## Owning your part – better than blaming

In most disputes everyone plays a role.

Make a **map** of everyone's contribution to the problem.

It helps reduce defensiveness and improves problem solving.

Sometimes your role is hard to see... For example, being busy and hard to reach.



**We jump to our solution too soon**

**People are in a rush... they want their solution, and won't talk about what needs and desires lie beneath their proposed solution.**

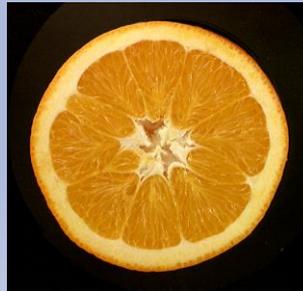
**My Way or the Highway!**



# Identify underlying interests

**Often people are in conflict because they each want their solution. Instead of arguing about solutions, find out about *underlying interests*. Underlying interests are the feelings and needs that are *why* people want their solution.**

**A story: Two sisters and the ORANGE:**



# Identify underlying interests

## Open ended questions:

**To get at underlying interests, ask open-ended questions.**

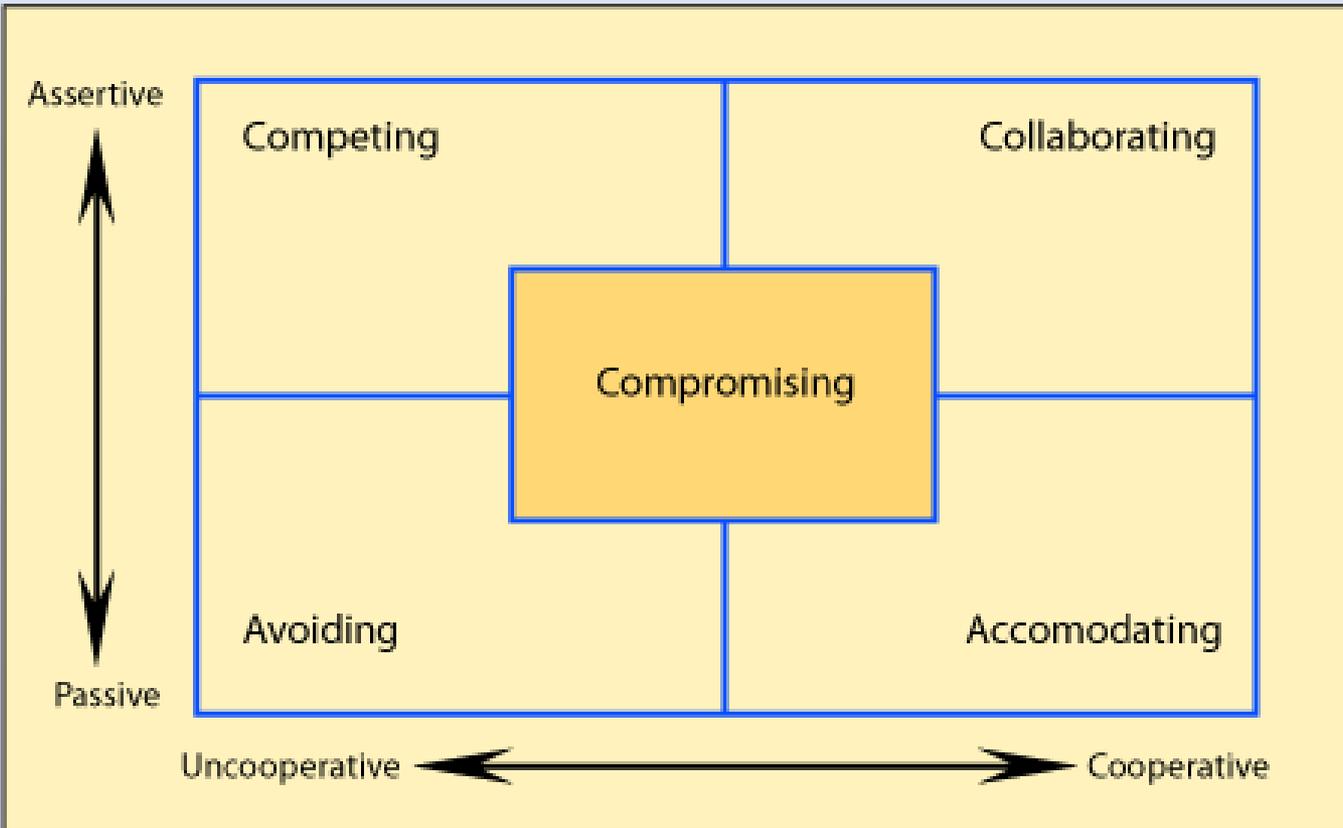
**Here are some examples:**

- **What about \_\_\_\_\_ is important to you?**
- **What concerns you most about the situation?**
- **What would make you really satisfied about this situation?**



# Five Conflict Styles

Why  
Stuck



# Finding solutions:

## *Joint Problem Statements*

**After you have identified everyone's underlying interest, the next step is making a joint problem statement:**

**"How can we have both (*the other person's interests*) and (*your interests*)."**



# Finding solutions:

Tools  
to help



## Brainstorm solutions:

- 1) decide how many ideas you want or how long you want to brainstorm;
- 2) generate a bunch of ideas about how to solve the problem;
- 3) don't criticise or judge them while you are brainstorming;
- 4) have everyone participate.



# Finding solutions:

Tools  
to help



## Picking the best one:

Once you have a few ideas, take a look at them to see which one does the best job of answering the problem statement.



Sometimes the best solution is a combination of ideas. The final task is to add the specifics (who, what, where, when...) so everyone understands their responsibilities.

# RECAP

1) Establish rapport and understanding:

Present your concerns

Active listening

Own your part



2) Identify underlying interests:

Ask open-ended questions to discover underlying interests



3) Find solutions

Joint problem statement

Brainstorming

Crafting the best solution

