



PRESENTS

Taking the *difficult* out of difficult conversations

July 18, 2013

Maureen Brodie, M.A.
Kanade Shinkai, M.D., Ph.D.



Office of the Ombuds

Agenda

- Addressing conflict through a “Difficult Conversation”
- What’s your conflict handling style(s)?
 - Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Inventory
- Choosing to collaborate when conflict arises
- Demonstration
- 5-step approach to a “Difficult Conversation”:
key skills for leaders
- Role-playing: let’s practice
- Discussion



What makes a conversation difficult?

It's complicated:

- Emotions
- High stakes
- Roles – in the organization; in the conflict
- Context
- Styles
 - ✓ Gender
 - ✓ Generation
 - ✓ Cultural
 - ✓ Background, temperament
 - ✓ Conflict/communication style



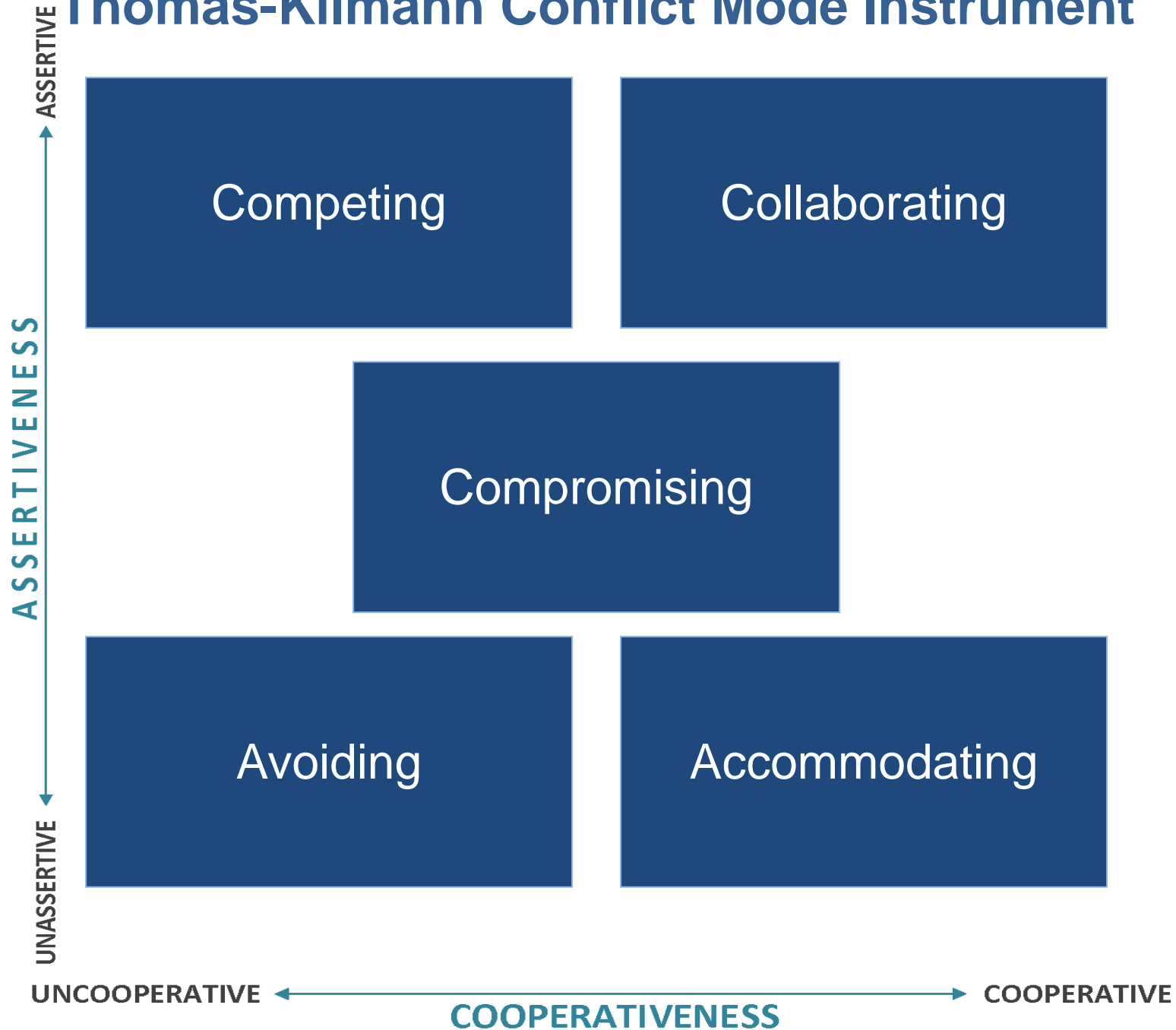
How do you respond to a difficult conversation or conflict?

- Prior patterns
- Emotions
- Changes depending on:
 - Context
 - What's at stake
 - Who's involved

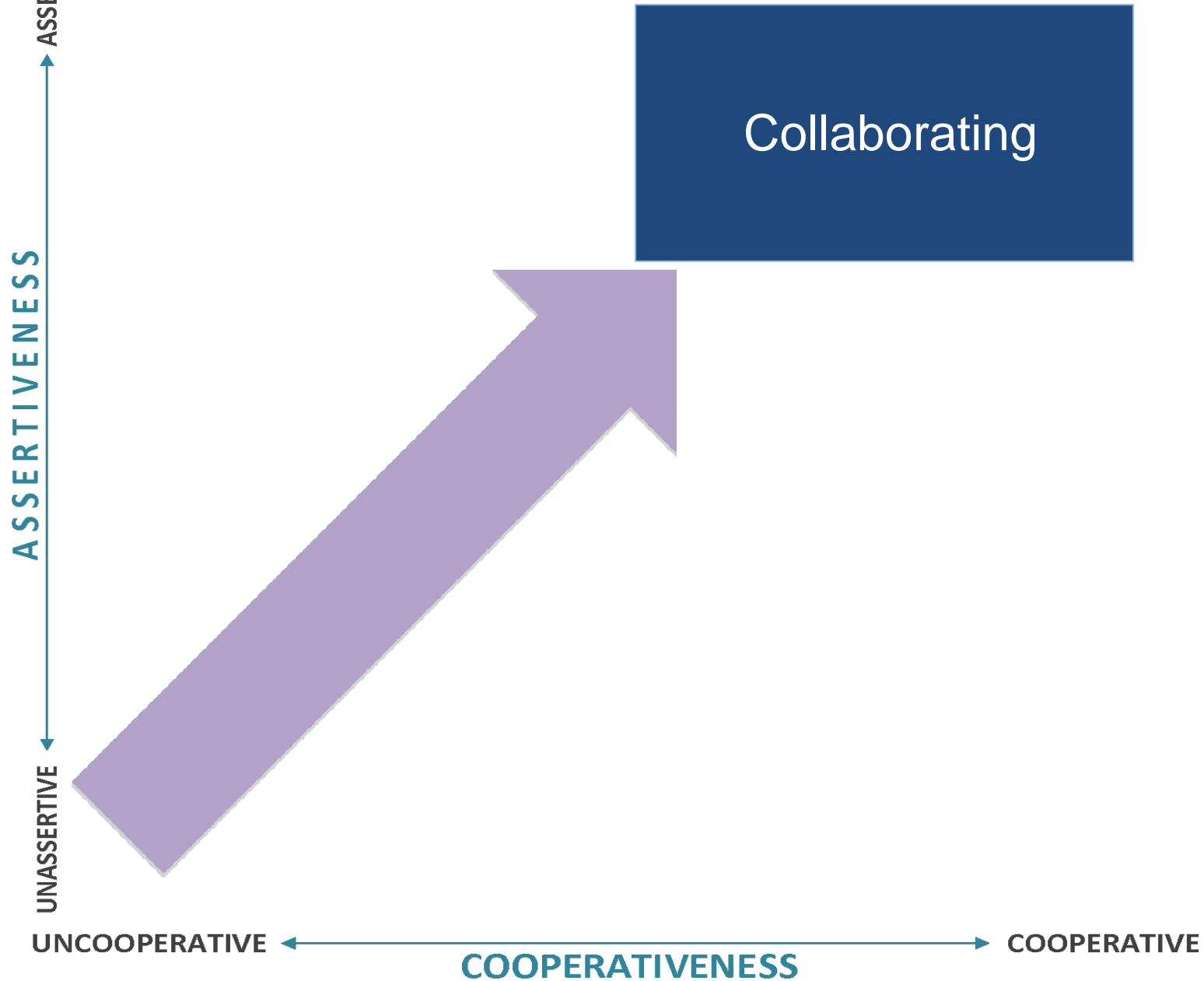
Self-awareness of your own conflict response style is essential



Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument



Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument



Collaboration: Getting on the same side

- Getting on the same side of the table:
 - To meet common goals
 - To mutually satisfy the other (merge insights)
 - To move past the issue
 - To come up with creative solutions
 - To gain commitment through consensus



Listening and Communication

“Most people do not listen with the intent to understand, they listen with the intent to reply.”

-- Stephen Covey

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

-- George Bernard Shaw



Demonstration

UCSF



Assistant Professor-Chair Scenario

Created by Melissa Brodrick, HMS/HSDM/HSPH Ombudsperson; summarized with permission.

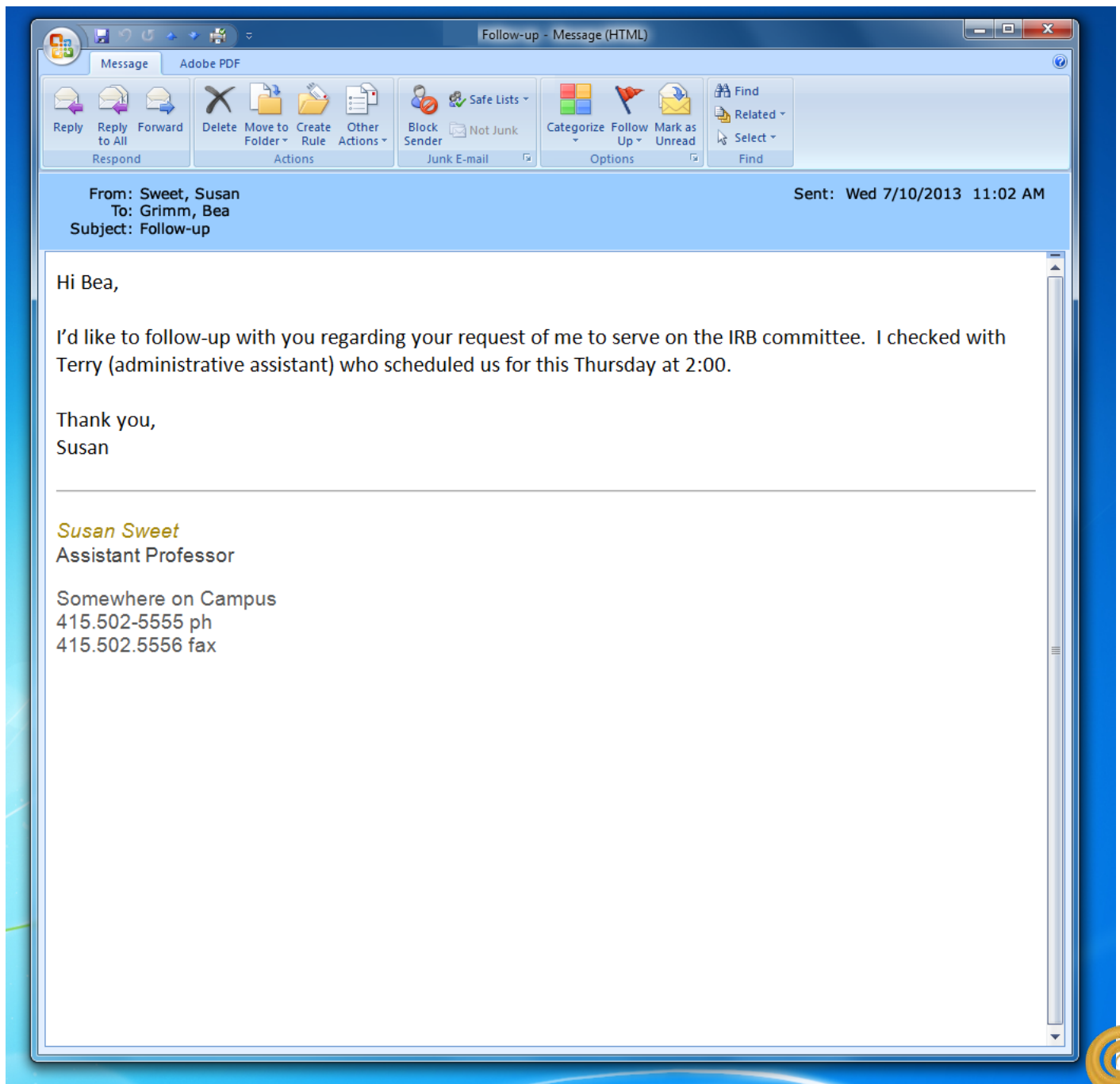
You are an assistant professor working in Hospital Z, where you've enjoyed a successful and productive, albeit hectic career. Your mentor, Dr. Louis Su, was supportive and well-connected as the Department Chair and you were sorry to see her retire in December of 2010.

What a change with the new Department Chair, Bea Grimm! While undeniably brilliant and a leader in the field, you have found her challenging to work with--she's demanding, humorless and socially limited. By watching the tussles that some of your colleagues have had with her, you've learned to keep a relatively low profile, but as a result, your contact with her has been limited.

A few days ago, Bea asked you to become a member of the IRB Committee, a committee overseen by one of Bea's closest colleagues. When you heard the request, you felt concerned about the large workload and diminished time you would have available to do the work needed to support your promotion. A colleague who participated on the committee in the past said it was time consuming and far less interesting than she'd hoped it would be. At the time, you told your Chair that you'd need to think about it and said you'd be back in touch by the end of the week. You could tell you didn't earn any brownie points by putting her off.

You are scheduled to meet with Bea on Thursday. What do you need to consider in preparation for this meeting and how will you handle it?





- Bea is new chair – challenging to work with; needs respect/ recognition
- Since she took office, lots of changes (and conflict) within the department
- I need her support for career advancement and would like to have smooth relationship
- I'm overwhelmed by current academic responsibilities; additional activity will detract from my research time – research is important for advancement
- Pros of IRB Committee: need for individual committee/campus service, departmental representation is valuable. Is it ever possible to say “no” to your chair?
 - Cons of IRB Committee: Heavy workload, not interesting, two-year position
 - Bea is impatient, so I need to prepare “talking points”

Susan
(Assistant Professor)



- I need to fill the seat of the IRB committee to keep the department in a highly-visible position on campus and also to keep a seat at the table of the active research committee.
- I'd like to promote Susan's career because she's really close to making associate professor – this committee spot could fulfill a community service requirement that would help her advancement and also give her skills needed to advance her own research/learn how to navigate the research community here.
- I've been getting some pushback from other faculty members so I hope this is a quick and easy road to a “yes.”

**Bea
(Chair)**



Demonstration



Discussion



Five-Step Process for Difficult Conversations

*Adapted from
Melissa Brodrick, Harvard Medical School Ombuds
David Michael, NIH Ombuds*



The five-step process towards collaborative conflict resolution

Step 1: Invitation, finding a time to talk

Step 2: Cognitive preparation & conflict analysis

Step 3: Defining/ discussing the problem

Step 4: Finding solutions

Step 5: Follow-up



Step 1: invitation and finding a time to talk

- Emotional readiness: address your emotions
- If the timing is right, invite the other to join you in a dialogue. Seek agreement to meet.
- Offer a date/time that is mutually convenient and sufficient
- Find a place that is neutral, quiet and confidential

Set it up to succeed



Step 2: Cognitive preparation & conflict analysis

- What is this conflict about? Who is involved?
 - Clarify values, beliefs, interests and concerns
 - Underlying themes?
- Consider what will happen if we fail to manage this conflict?
 - Impact on parties involved
 - Impact on others
- Think through possible successful solutions



Step 3: Defining and discussing the problem (I)

- The Opening
 - Express appreciation and optimism
 - Establish privacy or confidentiality if appropriate
 - Briefly state your understanding of the issue
- The Transition to Dialogue
 - Invite the other to tell you how they see the situation



Step 3: Defining and discussing the problem (II)

- The Dialogue
 - Take turns stating issues and feelings
- When speaking:
 - Use “I-messages” and collaborative language
- When listening:
 - Don’t interrupt
 - Use active listening skills: reflections, open questions
- Throughout:
 - Pay attention to non-verbal communication



Step 3: Defining and discussing the problem (III)

- Depersonalize the conflict through reframing: shift from “me versus you” to “us against the problem”
 - Recognize intention versus impact
 - Focus on behavior or issue and not the person
 - Identify interests (vs. positions)
 - Identify common ground, interests and goals
 - Summarize new understandings/progress



Step 4: Finding solutions (I)

- Brainstorm together with creativity, without judgment
- Problem-solving with a focus on common goals, issues at hand
- Agree on a mutually satisfactory solution or on individual-specific solutions, ensuring that the solution is specific and balanced
- Perform a reality-check: will the proposed solution work for the present and the future?



Step 4: Finding solutions (II)

- What if you reach impasse?
 - Try for small gains; break it down
 - Acknowledge commitment and progress made in understanding
 - Consider whether to re-engage in the process



Step 5: Follow-up

- If agreement has been reached, meet to review and refine if necessary



Questions?



Practice: Two role-plays

1. Break into pairs and choose roles.
2. Practice Scenario 1 for 15 minutes.
3. Debrief for 5 minutes.
4. Practice Scenario 2 for 15 minutes.
5. Debrief for 5 minutes.
6. Raise your hand if you'd like a coach!



Discussion



Key skills

- Increase self-awareness about conflict styles
- Engage early – don't avoid, especially if that's your style
- Set up the conversation to succeed: goal is to get on the same side of the table
- Practice active listening
- Use collaborative language
- Depersonalize the conflict through reframing
- Shift from blaming to problem-solving
- Shift from position (the what) to interests (the why)
- Affirm the partnership in finding a solution
- Commit to reviewing the outcome



Questions?

Confidential consultation or coaching appointments regarding difficult situations are available through the Office of the Ombuds

<http://ombuds.ucsf.edu> 502-9600



UCCSF