

Methods for Managing Differences

- Express appreciation
- Express optimism
- Restate ground rules (refer to Resolution Ground Rules below)
- **Opening statement:** State the issue in nonblameful, specific language and listen (I-message optional).
- **Invitation:** Help me understand how you see this situation (empathic listening).
- **Question:** Is there really a conflict or simply a misunderstanding?
- Engage in dialogue and enforce cardinal rules.
- Stay engaged until breakthrough occurs (look for mutual interests).
- Reward conciliatory gestures.
- Make a deal with the following steps:
 - **Step 1:** Identify needs and interests for both parties
 - **Step 2:** Invent options for mutual gain and select the best
 - **Step 3:** Implementation plan (specific behavioral changes and steps)
 - **Step 4:** Follow-up, when and who?
 - **Step 5:** Consequences

Use “I Messages”

When you [behavior demonstrated], I feel [feeling] because [effect].

Resolution Ground Rules

- No distancing or walking away
- No power plays or coercion
- No personal attacks (attack the issue)
- Everything said in this room stays in this room
- Everyone must want to mutually resolve the situation; otherwise, arbitration may be necessary (be part of the solution)
- Participants must agree to follow through on their part of the solution as agreed upon during the session
- Walk in the shoes of the other (try to understand)
- Set aside preconceived solutions and hidden agendas
- Agree on common goals
- Create and keep a safe environment

Other Guidelines

- Before meeting, write down a brief objective paragraph about the conflict.
- Write down (honestly) your emotional triggers in this conflict.
- Ask a colleague who has no stake in the conflict to act as neutral participant.
- As you start the meeting, state the mission of your company and team. Ask the group how resolving the conflict will help better meet your mission.