

Climbing Conflict Mountain: Changing the Climate Through Successful Conflict Conversations

Training exercise based upon
Eckert College Mediation Training Institute
Conflict Mountain model
and presented by
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What is Workplace Conflict?

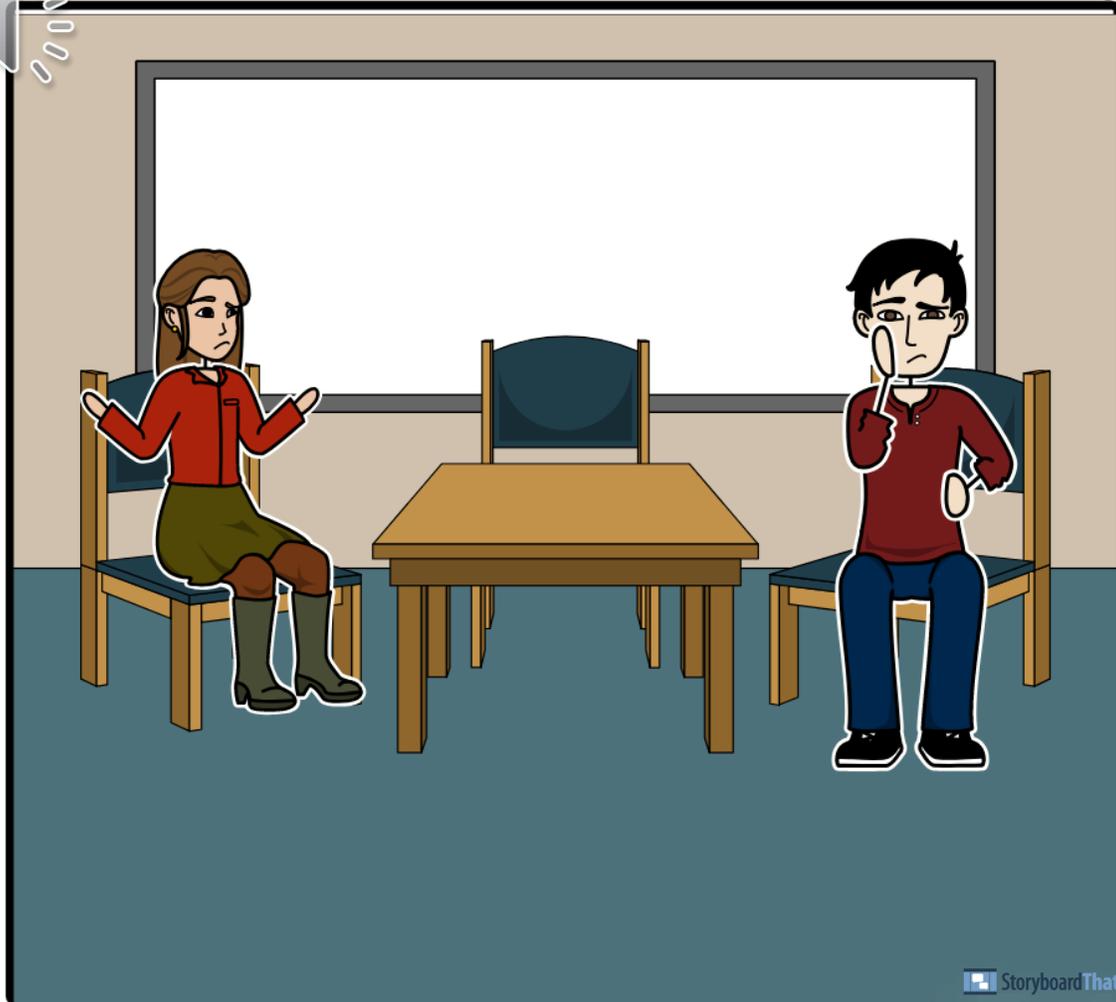
👉 Page 13 in
SCC Workbook



A condition between people

- who are **task interdependent**, and
- where **one or both feel angry**, and
- find **fault with the other**, and
- use behaviors that **cause a business problem**.

Helene and Tommy: Team Performance 👉 Page 2 in Trail Guide



- Tommy and Helene co-lead a project team.
- When under pressure, their personality differences and work styles clash.
- The project is starting to suffer.
- Aaron Go-Bragh the Project contractor threatens to shut down the project.
- Tommy and Helene see the team's morale going down.
- They ask George Tirebiter for advice on how to reduce their conflict and increase the team's productivity and morale.

Seeking A Solution

“Tommy’s analytical attitude and my action approach are creating problems for the team and the project.” - Helene



“Helene is telling the team to move forward and I am telling them to think things through before the next step. They have lost motivation in the project.” - Tommy

“Plus this person Aaron Go-Bragh keeps threatening to shut down the project if we do not meet the deadline.” - Helene

“It sounds like the two of you need to take a hike up Conflict Mountain. The front side of Conflict Mountain is a tough climb with destructive detours. . .” - George

“Reach the breakthrough at the top; it will be easier going down through the conciliatory meadows. Are you up for it?” - George



The Journey Begins



“That must be the mountain ahead. Let’s do this!”
- Tommy

Conflict Mountain

👉 Mediation Map
Page 138 in MD Book

The two phases of a successful conflict conversation session

The path from conflict to cooperation leads over the top of Conflict Mountain.



Hi

Escalation

Lo



- Two primary phases of a successful conflict conversation*
- The confrontation phase where people can engage in the retaliatory cycle of perceived threat, anger, and acting out.
- A breakthrough occurs when someone chooses to change behavior.
- The journey continues downhill with the conciliatory phase and the use of actions that contribute to a resolution.



StoryboardThat

Beware of the Warning Signs That Derail the Conversation

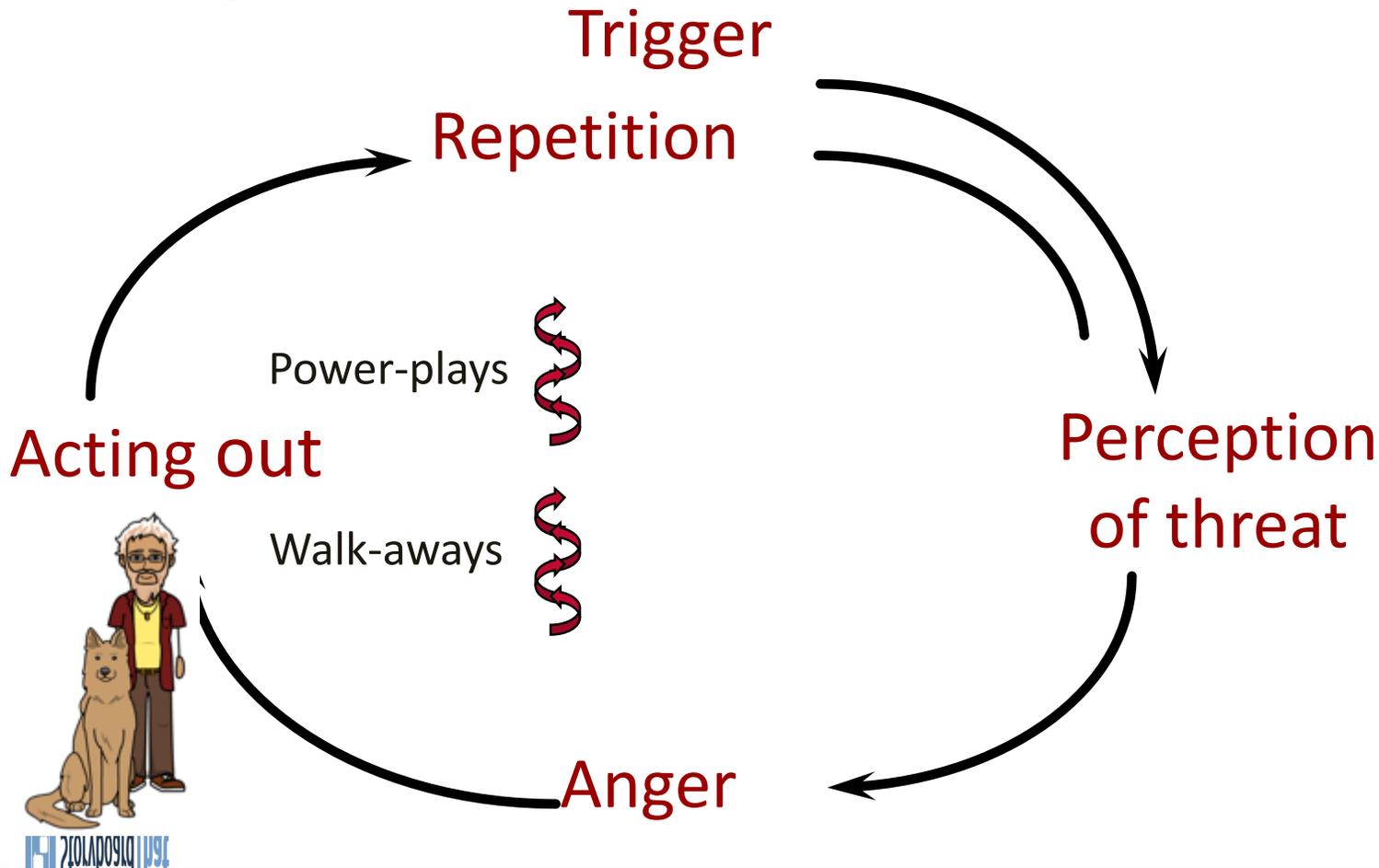


“This might be a possible destructive detour. I think we should go west. What do you think?” - Helene

“Let's be smart and move east with caution.”
- Tommy

The Retaliatory Cycle

MWC Quick Reference
Page 134 in MD Book



- The process begins with a trigger word or action that the person perceives as a threat.
- Threat creates an emotional response of anger.
- The threat creates a behavior response to act out through a power play of control or a walk away of distance.
- The acting out behavior can trigger the response again and the cycle repeats.

Destructive Responses Can Be Intentional Behaviors



MWC Quick Reference

Coercive “Power-Plays”

Threatening-Intimidate

Pre-empting – Prevent

Getting others to take sides –

Alliances

Shouting - Yelling

Using Hostile gestures –

Aggressive movement

Distancing “Walk- Aways”

Avoiding – Stay away

Withdrawing -Remove

Withholding information– Not Share

Refusing messages – No call

Giving Silent treatment – Don’t talk



StoryboardThat

Do You See What I Hear?

On page 3 of the Trail Guide, write the name Helene or Tommy next to the destructive behavior.



“Where are we?” – Helene

“I’m thinking of adding hiking to the dating app I’m using.” - Tommy

“If George were here, he would be on my side.” - Helene

“I do not care what George would say, we are doing it **MY** way. **DO I MAKE MYSELF CLEAR?**” - Tommy

“Respond when I ask you a question. Talk to me!” - Tommy

“Quit poking your finger in my face.” - Helene

“Forget this I am leaving! – Helene

“Fine time to walkway!” - Tommy

Common Responses

Circle the destructive behavior you recognize you have used in the past.



Tommy

Helene

Tommy

Helene

Helene

Tommy

Tommy

Helene

HeleneTommy Shouting – Yelling

Tommy

Avoiding – Staying away

Withdrawing - Removing

Withholding information – Not share

Not returning messages – No call

Giving silent treatment – Don't talk

Threatening - Intimidate

Pre-empting - Prevent

Get others to take sides - Alliances

Using Hostile gestures – Aggressive movement



Which Path Will Helene and Tommy Choose to Take?

*The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute
of the strong.*

~ Mahatma Gandhi

Tommy's Pitched Out



“I am so much better without her here.” - Tommy

“Tommy is such a jerk! I do not need his help. I was the one doing most of the work.” - Helene

“She is right. Really, this project needs my analytical mind and her can-do attitude, especially if we want to get the project done before the deadline.” - Tommy

“Tommy really is not that bad. He tends to be more of the thinker and I am the doer.” - Helene

“I am such an idiot! I need her help! I need to find her.” - Tommy

“I could use someone who sees the things we need to fine tune. I need to find Tommy and tell him.” - Helene

Choosing to Change



“I think we got sucked into the destructive detour of power plays and walk-aways.” - Tommy

“I agree. The only way we can stop is to agree not to walk-away and agree not to use power plays of threats or hostility.” - Helene

“Agreed! Let us get back on track and find an alternative path to make up for lost time.” - Tommy



Choose to Change: Cardinal and Gold Rules

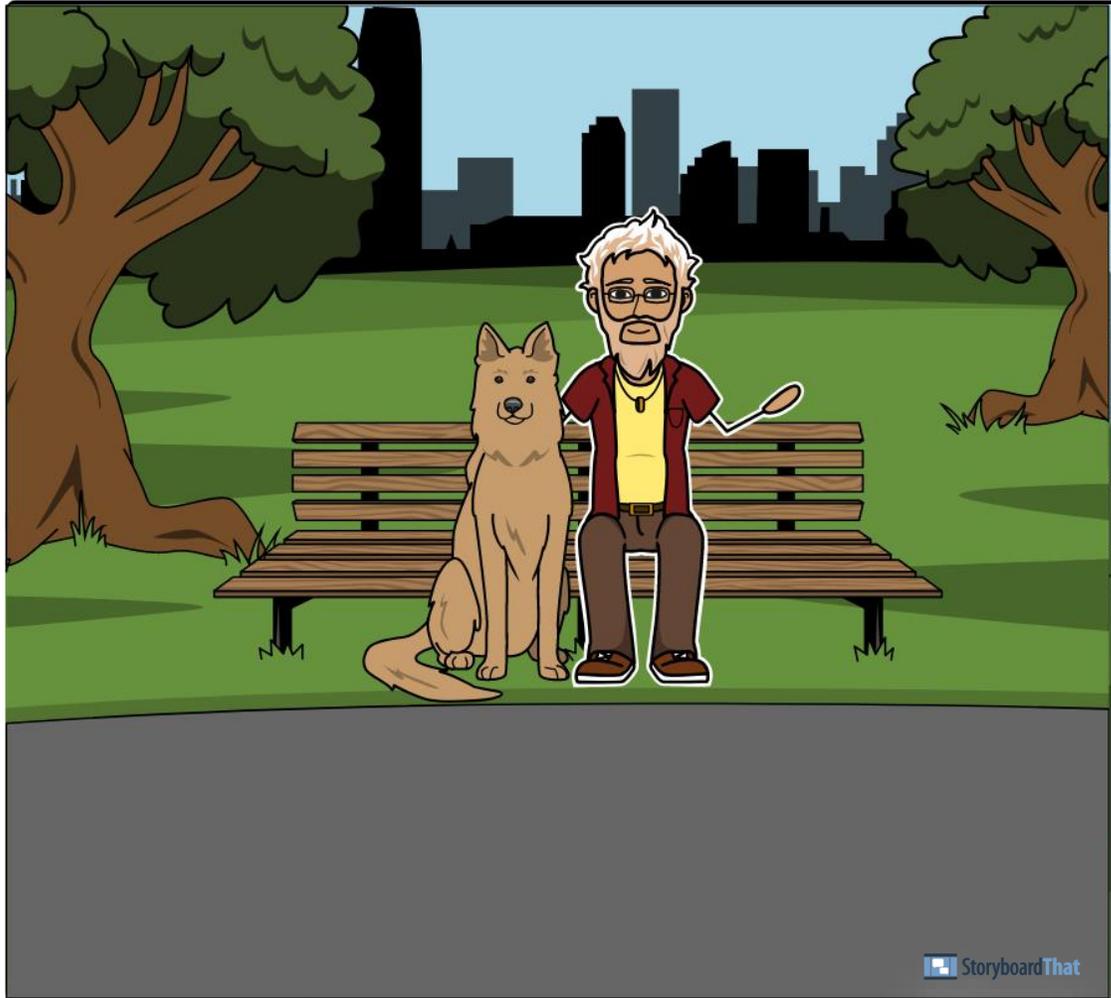
1. No Walk-Aways

*Stay in the **Essential Process**.*

Face-to-face talking about the problem without interruption long enough to find a solution.

2. No Power Plays

Do not impose a one-sided solution.





Conciliatory Behaviors: Voluntary Statements of Vulnerability

Apologizing – Express Regret

Owning responsibility – Accept personal part

Conceding – Admit something

Self-disclosing – Share own thoughts

Expressing positive feelings - State good

Initiating both-gain – Create win-win



Who Said What?

Write the name Helene or Tommy next to the conciliatory behavior you think they used.



“Tommy, I’m sorry for walking away and leaving you alone earlier.” - Helene

“I walked away when I wanted to; I needed to be in control of something because this trip feels out of control.” - Helene

“I did not have to be jerk. Sorry.” - Tommy

“I needed to take a break, relax, and reflect to change my attitude and my actions.” - Helene

“We’ve reached the top of Conflict Mountain!” - Tommy

Common Responses [👉]Page 4 Trail Guide



Helene Tommy

Apologizing

Helene

Owning responsibility

Tommy

Conceding

Helene

Self-disclosing

Helene

Expressing positive feelings

Tommy

Initiating both-gain



The Breakthrough Moment

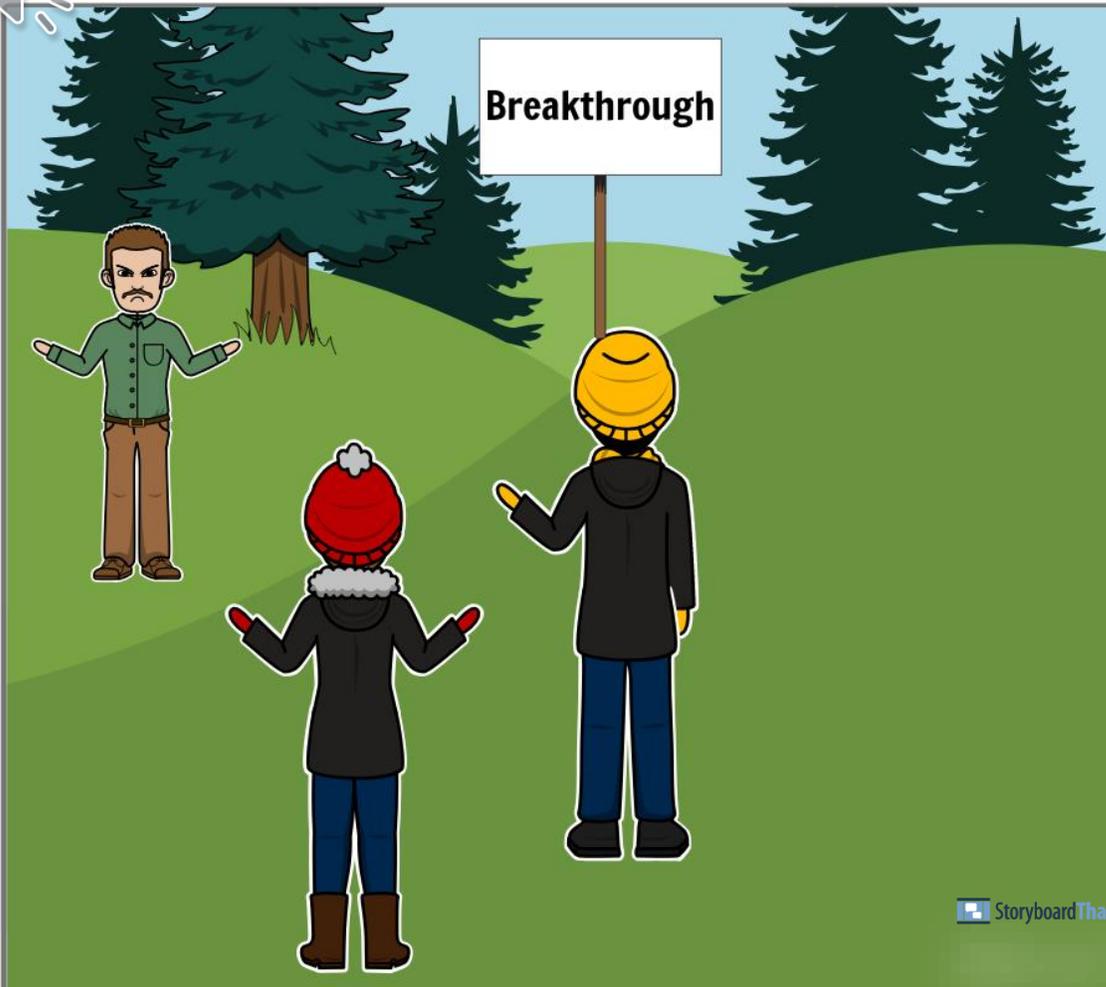


“He knew we needed to go through the retaliatory circle in order to experience a breakthrough with the actions learned in conciliatory meadow.” - Tommy

“Once we can relax and own up or accept our part, we can start to work together to find a resolution.”
- Tommy

“The breakthrough happens when there is a desire to do something different and we work together.”
- Tommy

Putting The Lessons to Action



“Hey Aaron! It’s Helene and Tommy. We want to talk to you about the project.” - Helene

“What is it to you? The project’s a joke.” - Aaron

“Look Dude! We need your help.” - Helene

“You aren’t worth my time. I am out of here!” - Aaron

“We would like to schedule a time to meet with you. Are you free to talk tomorrow at 10 am at Dead Man's Cave?” - Tommy

“If we meet, we all need to use the two Cardinal and Gold rules during the meeting.” - Helene

“Yeah. I’ll meet you at Dead Man's Cave at 10 am because that is what you’ll be after tomorrow – Dead!” - Aaron

We Are In It Together

Let us work together to brainstorm for **2 minutes** phrases and ideas we can use later in the game.



1. What are three phrases that can be used in a mediation to establish the idea “we are in this mediation together to find a solution”?
2. What are three nonverbal behaviors in a mediation session that can be used to communicate “we are in this mediation together to find a solution”?



Four Steps of Mediation



“Before we join their conversation, let me review the four steps of the mediation process.” - George



Step 1: Find a Time to Talk



The Issue Statement - The reason we need to talk

- ☑ **Objective**
- ☑ **Specific**
- ☑ **Resolvable**
- ☑ **Concise**

Issue Statement Examples:

- I'm concerned about the business outcome at risk.
- I've noticed evidence (observable behavior / facts) of a problem.
- I'd like for us to find a solution to the difficulty we are having in working together to ensure the business outcome.



Step 2: Plan the Context

Page 20 SCC
Page 55 MD Book



A Checklist

Where?

- Private place
- No cell phones

When?

- Enough time
- No schedule conflicts
- A time people are not tired

Physical Comforts?

- Seating and room arrangement
- Room temperature

Other Considerations?

- No distractions
- Protect the meeting from interruptions



Step 3: Engage in Dialogue - How to Talk It Out



Behaviors: "What?"

#1
Stay in the
Essential Process

#2
Support
Conciliatory Gestures

#3
Practice
Constructive Responses

Purpose: "Why?"

Face-to-face talking about the problem without interruption long enough to find a solution

Voluntary statements of vulnerability
Apologizing *Self-disclosing*
Owning responsibility *Initiating both-gain*
Expressing positive feelings *Conceding*

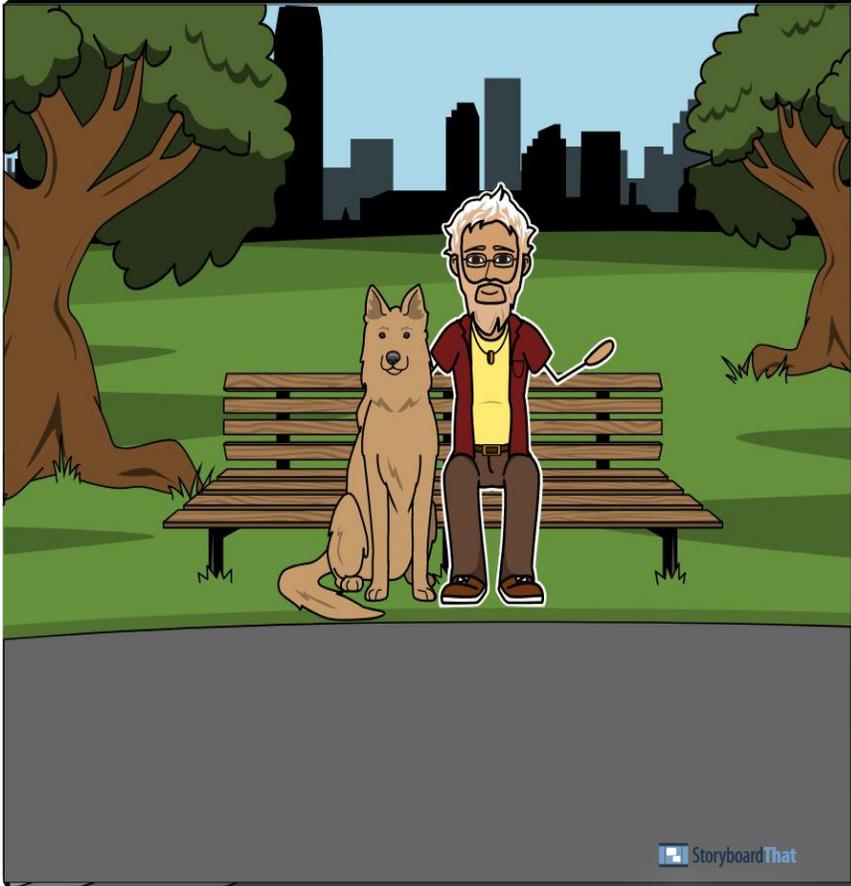
Perspective Taking *Creating Solutions,*
Expressing Emotions *Reaching Out*
Reflective Thinking *Delay Responding*
Adapting



Step 4: *Make a Deal*

Making agreements that last

👉 Page 37 SCC
Page 76 MD Book



- **Balanced**
 - Both of us benefit.
 - We share sacrifices and compromises.
- **Behaviorally specific**
 - What we will do, not what we may think or feel.
- **Written**
 - A record of what each one will do in the future.

Conflict Conversation Checklist

Use the conflict conversation checklist to see what was included in their conversation.



Welcome and Meeting Purpose

- Greeting: _____
- Additional welcome words or action: _____
- Business outcome at risk/ Concerns that: _____
- Evidence of Problem/Noticed that: _____
- Here to solve: _____
- Purpose of Meeting or problem to solve: _____
- Two Cardinal Rules and How to Treat each other with Respect:
 - No Power Plays include: _____
 - No Walk-Aways include: _____
 - Rules of Respect: _____

Discussion

- Invite to share story:
 - Message content and key points: _____
 - Message emotion shared: _____
 - Listen actively points to repeat: _____

Make a Deal

- Terms of written agreement: _____
- Balanced for both parties: _____
- Specific points of what each part will do now: _____
- Specific points of what each part will do in the future: _____
- Implementation Date of Plan: _____

Meeting Conclusion

- Review contents of agreement: _____
- Confirm agreement: _____
- Set follow up meeting: _____



Steps for a Successful Conflict Conversation



“We completed the first step. Aaron has agreed to meet.”- Tommy

“The second step is to plan the context. The morning is good. We will not be tired.”- Tommy

“The third step is to talk it out. I will thank him for coming, remind him of the Cardinal and Gold rules, and focus on our performance issue.” - Helene

“We need a breakthrough to get to the fourth step to reach a mutual agreement. The deal needs to benefit both of us, state what we will do, and put it in writing.”- Tommy

Listen to the Mediation and Learn from Their Example



1. Schedule a Time to Meet

“Thank you Aaron for agreeing to meet. We appreciate your time.” - Tommy

“Would you like a bottle of water?” - Helene

” Yeah, I’ll take a bottle of water.” - Aaron

2. Set the Context

“First, we will continue talking and not walk away until we hopefully we agree and second, we will not push for a one-sided solution. Agreed?” - Helene

“Agreed!- Tommy

”Agreed!” - Aaron

“Agreed!” - Helene

Conflict Conversation with Tommy, Helene, and Aaron



3. Start the Dialogue

“Why do you keep threatening to pull the project from us?” - Tommy

“I put in a project bid with another company. My colleagues wanted you guys. Now they blame me for the project delays. They think I have sabotaged the project when you two are the ones who have caused the problems.” - Aaron

4. Seal the Deal

“First, stick to the deadlines. Second, I need you to tell me what’s happening. Third, I want a public apology from you.”
– Aaron

“We can stick to future deadlines and communicate with you better. We’re sorry you’ve been blamed for our mistakes.”
- Tommy

Conflict Mountain Conquered



“Thanks again for helping us resolve the situation.”- Tommy

“Not a problem. Hey remember, the next time I am in town, lunch is on you.” – Aaron

“Fight on.”- Tommy



Lessons from the Mountain



“So you hiked Conflict Mountain after all. Good for you.” - George

“We realized the hike up Conflict Mountain was not so much about the destination, but the journey to learn how to self-mediate and resolve conflict.” - Tommy

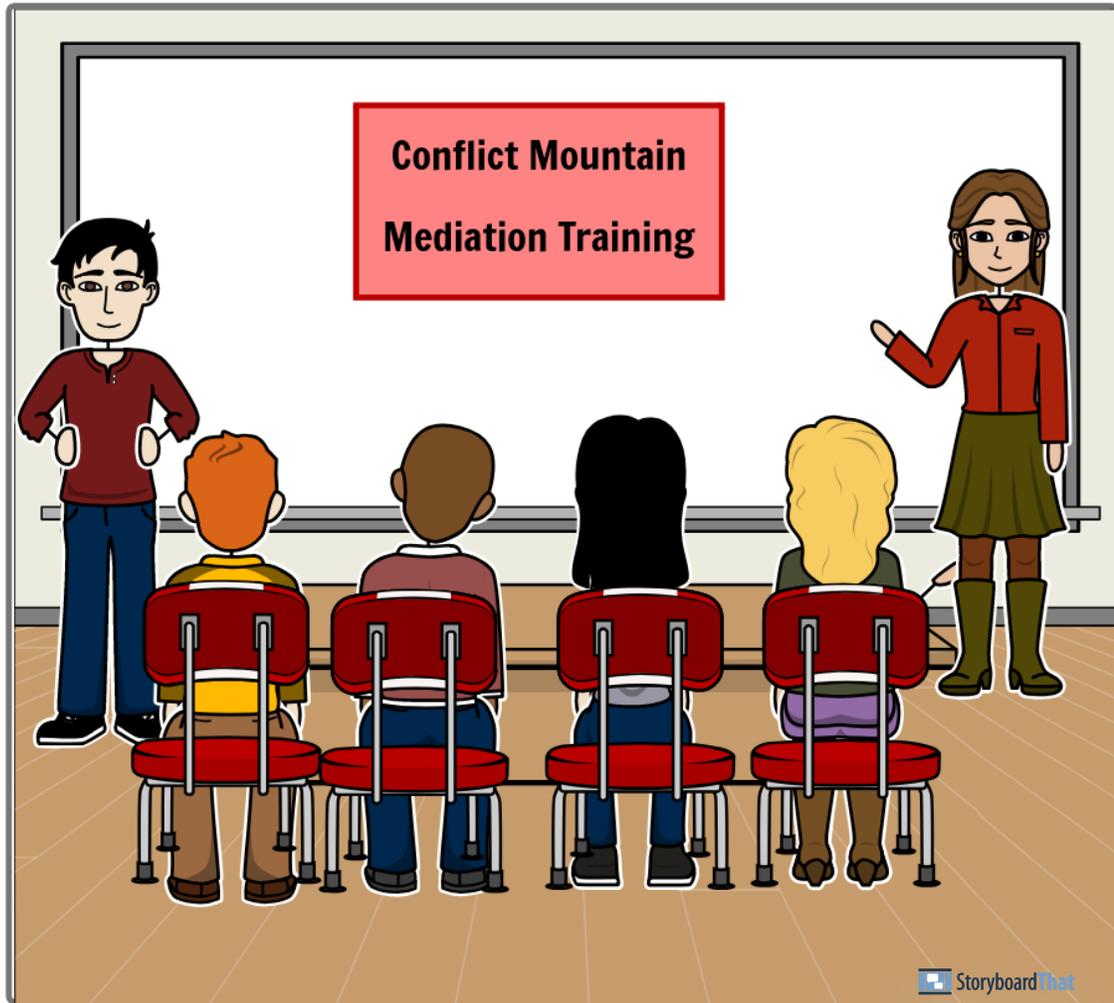
“Sometimes using conciliatory gestures is the best move to reach an agreement.” - Helene

“Walking through the conciliatory gesture creates the breakthrough that gets people to start working together toward an agreement.” - Tommy

“Thanks for your help George.” - Helene



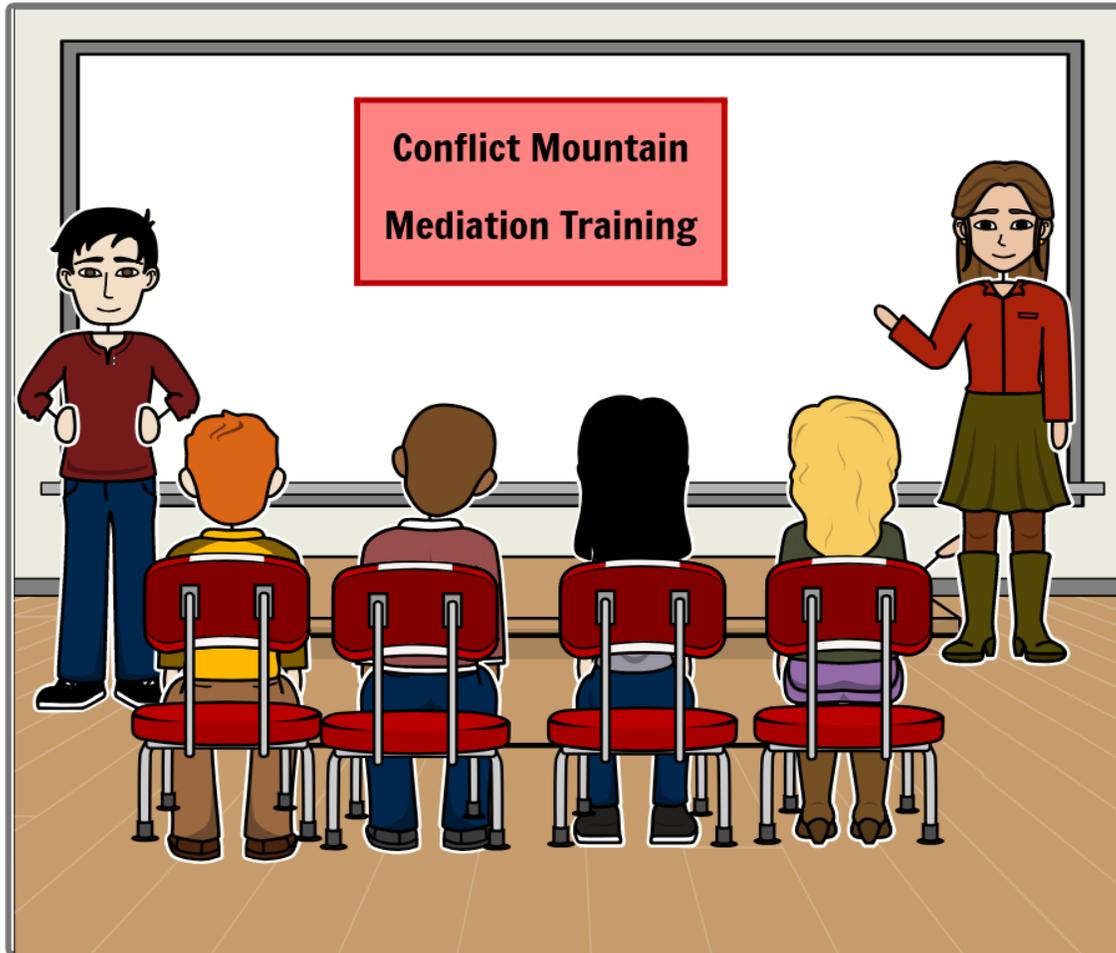
Treasures from the Trip



1. What tips about employee self- mediation* did you learn from Helen and Tommy?
2. How will you avoid destructive behaviors during a conflict conversation?
3. What conciliatory gesture could you see yourself using in a conflict conversation?
4. What step of the conflict conversation would be easy for you?
5. Which step would you like to improve?

*Self-mediation is also known as a successful conflict conversation.

Two Practice Conflict Conversation Sessions



1. Form teams with three to four people.
2. Rotate the roles during each practice session – two people mediating and one or two people listening.
 - a. People mediating will choose which scenario and role to play.
 - b. People listening will place jewels next to the person they are listening to speak when the person uses conflict mountain behaviors during the mediation.
 - i. Award **clear** jewels for conciliatory behaviors used.
 - ii. Award **dark** jewels for destructive behaviors used.
 - iii. Award **orange** jewels for “we are in it together” phrases and nonverbal behaviors.
3. Take **2-3 minutes** to individually complete the welcome, meeting purpose, and discussion sections of the conflict conversation checklist.
4. Take **5-7 minutes** to engage in the conflict conversation and listen for the responses.
5. Take **2-3 minutes** after the conflict conversation to debrief the jewels awarded.

Two Practice Mediation Sessions



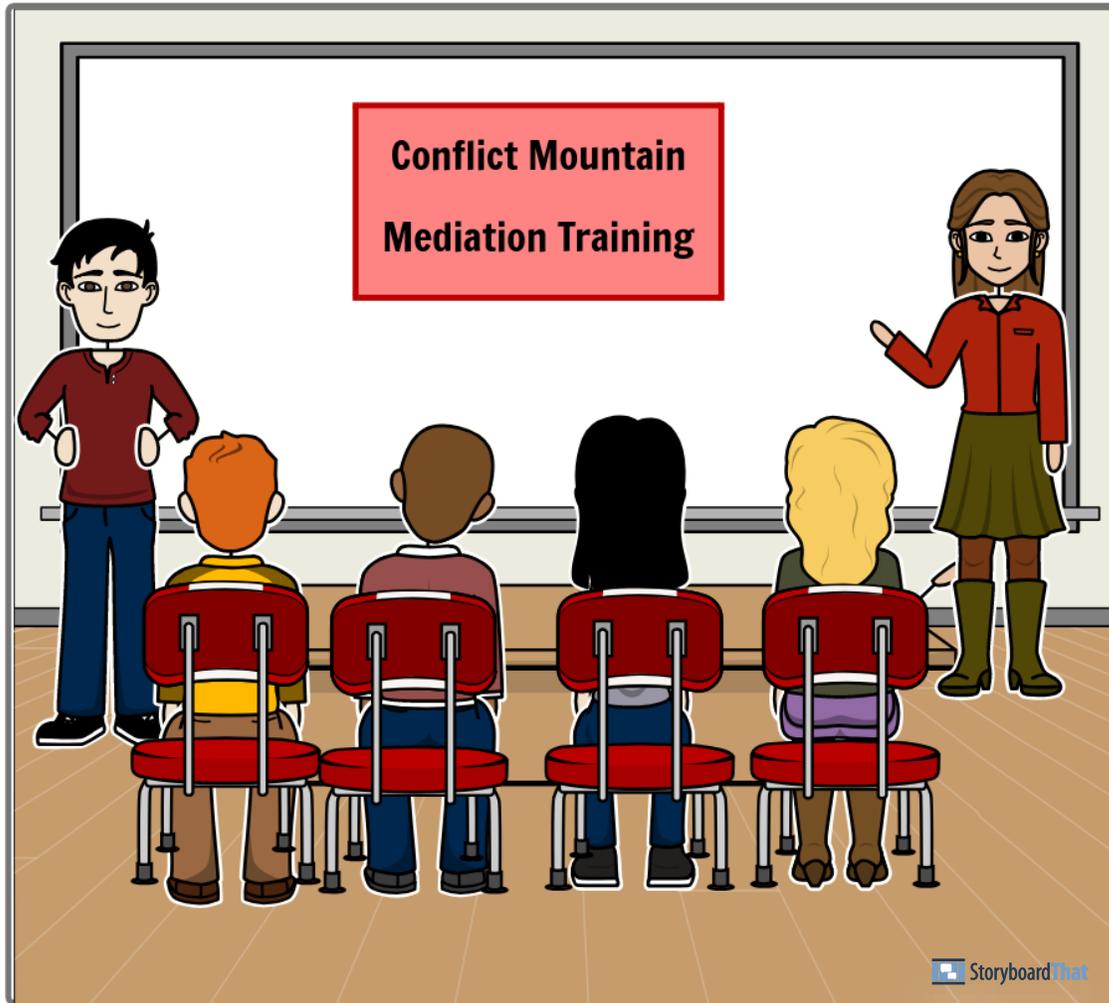
Scenario 1: Helene and Tommy

Scenario After meeting with Aaron, Helen and Tommy decide to mediate and resolve the conflict of how their different work styles contributed to a time management issue on developing an animated employee training video for Aaron and how to work together to meet the new deadline.

Scenario 2: Mick and Reagan

Scenario Mick is the Program Specialist for the Campus Community Partnership Center. A professor received a large grant to develop an innovative community health and wellness program through the Center. The professor asked Reagan the Administrative Specialist to create a brochure with specific information to include in the brochure. Mick saw the brochure and asked Reagan to make changes to the parts of the brochure. When Reagan made Mick's changes, the professor was upset. Reagan has put off making additional changes Reagan's procrastination delays the program's deadlines. Mick asks Reagan to meet to talk about the delays on the brochure and the procrastination on other projects.

Lessons Learned



1. Which Scenario did people choose?
2. What agreements were reached?
3. Who earned the most stones in the sessions?
4. What will do you differently in a conflict situation as a result of what you learned?

Please Provide Feedback



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