

# **Chapter 9**

## **Working Effectively in Groups**

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### Working Effectively in Groups

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*Through television our youth are taught that the way to be more attractive is to buy a better deodorant; I have yet to see an advertisement for increasing one's communication or conflict resolution skills.*

-- Spencer Kagan, *Cooperative Learning*

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#### SCOPE

This chapter provides concepts and activities designed to help members work effectively in groups -- with other members, consumers or community members served, staff of the host agency or other community organizations, and community residents. The chapter directly addresses communication skills, effective meetings, group problem solving and decision making, and force-field analysis, and provides supporting information on brainstorming and other group-process topics.

**IMPORTANCE**

Most organized activities are done in groups, so one of the most critical requirements of pre-service training is that it helps members understand and apply basic concepts of group dynamics and strengthen their group-process skills. This chapter provides a theoretical and practical foundation for the group activities included in almost every other unit of PST.

**TARGETED USERS**

This chapter is designed for use by the individuals responsible for planning and implementing the PST, and contains a variety of materials for use by and with the members.

**EXPECTED LEARNING**

This section provides activities and supporting materials which should enable programs to plan and facilitators to deliver training which provides members with a variety of group-process skills. Members should understand basic communication processes, have the information and skills to plan and chair a meeting, describe and carry out the steps in group problem-solving, apply force-field analysis to tasks and problems, and be able to differentiate and apply basic conflict resolution techniques, with emphasis on win-win strategies.

**RELATED CHAPTERS**

The concepts and skills presented in this chapter provide a foundation for the entire PST process. Most of the activities in the Training Topics & Activities chapters use group-based experiential learning and provide practice in group process. *Chapter 14: Community Projects*, page 575, provides additional opportunities to apply group process skills. Also closely related are *Chapter 7: AmeriCorps Affiliation and Teambuilding*, page 283, and *Chapter 8: Leadership and Self-Understanding*, page 311.

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**Hint:** Help members understand the importance of group work in carrying out complex activities. Groups are especially likely to be involved in planning and organizing; an event like the Special Olympics occurs only once a year, but groups work year-round to plan and prepare for it. The concepts described here can be applied regardless of the subject matter. The ability to function effectively in a group helps members succeed in almost any kind of professional, volunteer, or social activity.

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## Activity #13: Communication Basics

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### Trainer's Notes

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<b>Trainer Skills Needed:</b>	Facilitation skills Familiarity with group process issues
<b>Time Required:</b>	1 1/2 hours
<b>Materials Needed:</b>	<i>Member Instructions</i> Cooperative Learning Roles Chart posted on newsprint
<b>Learning Objectives:</b>	At the end of the activity, members should be able: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● To differentiate between communicating content and emotion</li><li>● To listen and paraphrase information</li><li>● To critique an oral presentation</li></ul>
<b>Skill Development:</b>	Oral communication -- communicating content and emotion Public speaking Listening and paraphrasing Critiquing
<b>Directions:</b>	<p>First provide a brief lecturette on elements of good communication. Use the box on the following page plus information from <i>Communication Basics</i> at the end of the chapter. Have the group consider the critical importance of communication in every aspect of life. Review the communication process. Talk about some of the ways to look at or categorize communication -- verbal and non-verbal, direct and indirect, individual versus group, etc. Ask the group to think of different communication channels or media, and then list them on newsprint. Ask members about the kinds of communication skills they think are most important for AmeriCorps members.</p> <p>Now have members work in cooperative learning groups, preferably at least four different groups so one group can take each of the roles specified.</p> <p>Once members are in their groups, review the <i>Member Instructions</i> with the full group. Explain that the focus of this</p>

assignment is to practice the following basic communication skills:

1. Communicating content
2. Communicating emotion
3. Listening and paraphrasing
4. Critiquing

### **COMMUNICATION TYPES AND CHANNELS**

#### **Some ways of categorizing communications:**

- One-way versus two-way
- Immediate versus delayed
- Individual versus group
- Verbal versus non-verbal
- Direct versus indirect

#### **Communication channels or media:**

- **Oral:**  
Face-to-face speech  
Telephone  
Radio
- **Written:**  
Newspaper  
Letter  
Paper/report/memorandum  
Book  
Electronic mail
- **Multi-Media:**  
Television  
Video  
Play  
Role play  
Teleconference  
Movie

The activity involves a case study for an immunization drive coordinated by members which will be heavily dependent on volunteers. Each cooperative learning group will have a different assignment related to the immunization drive. One group must plan a member presentation in which the emphasis will be

communicating content; Group 1 is responsible for preparing this presentation, and one member of Group 1 will make the presentation. Another group must plan a member presentation which emphasizes communicating emotion; Group 2 is responsible for preparing this presentation, and one person from Group 2 will make the presentation.

Group 3 is responsible for developing a process for listening to each of the presentations and then having one or more group members paraphrase each presentation, demonstrating that the communication was heard and understood. Group 4 is responsible for critiquing the content and delivery of the presentations made by the other groups.

Each group is to review the situation, prepare for its role, and identify a lead person (or several people) to represent it in the task for which it is responsible.

Allow the groups 20 minutes to plan. Make sure Groups 3 and 4 develop the process they will use for their tasks, since they will not be able to get back together between hearing the presentations and responding to them.

Have the Group 1 representative give its presentation. Then have Group 3 paraphrase it, and Group 4 critique it. Repeat with the Group 2 presentation. This should take about 12-15 minutes for each process, or a total of 25-30 minutes.

Then **process**; how did it go? What was difficult? **Generalize**; what are the important aspects of communicating content, and how do they differ from communicating emotion? What are the difficulties in listening and paraphrasing? What are the challenges of giving a useful critique? Now **apply** the results; how do the members expect to use these skills in their AmeriCorps roles?

### Variations:

Divide members into groups of five people. Have one person in each group take each role specified, and one serve as observer. Have each person work individually to prepare for his/her role, go through the process within the group, and have the observer summarize what took place. Then bring the full group together and share the experience.

Videotape each group and let them critique their own presentations.



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## ***Activity #13: Communication Basics***

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### ***Member Instructions***

#### **Assignment:**

To practice various communication roles and identify skills needed to carry them out successfully.

#### **Directions:**

Once in cooperative learning groups, decide on the roles for group members, choosing from the cooperative learning roles list posted in the training room.

Your group will have one of the following four roles:

- Group 1.      Communicating content
- Group 2.      Communicating emotion
- Group 3.      Listening and paraphrasing
- Group 4.      Critiquing

Assume that you are a group of AmeriCorps members who are responsible for planning and gaining community support for a community-wide immunization drive. You want help from employers, giving release time to their workers to go door-to-door to educate people about the need to immunize their children, and to give people rides to the local clinic for free immunizations on a specified day.

You have collected the following information:

- 35% of children in the target community have not had all their immunizations.
- Last year there was an outbreak of measles, at least 173 children got sick because they hadn't been immunized, two children have had serious health effects, and one pregnant woman got measles and her child was born with severe birth defects because of it.
- Research shows that every dollar spent on immunization saves at least \$10 in future medical costs.
- A similar drive in another community last year managed to reach 90% of the children who had not been fully immunized. This was done with the help of 350 community volunteers, many of them from churches and from local employers.

**Group 1:** You have been asked to make a 5-minute presentation to the senior management and the Employee Volunteer Committee of a large local bank. You want the bank to provide release time to employees to help with the door-to-door canvassing, encourage employees to volunteer on one weekend as well, and provide rides to the clinic for people who live more than three miles from it in an area with poor public transportation. You have been told that the bank's attitude is



"Stick to the facts, ma'am -- no emotional arguments." Your assignment is to prepare the presentation and select someone to deliver it as your representative.

**Group 2:** You have been asked to make a 5-minute presentation at a local church, at the end of the Sunday service. The church is very committed to helping children, and it is a church which enjoys emotion and shows it freely. You want the church members to help with the canvassing and give rides to the clinic using the church's two vans. You have been told by a member of the church that "You have to get them emotionally involved, or the church won't get involved." Your assignment is to prepare the presentation and select someone to deliver it as your representative.

**Group 3:** You are responsible for listening for the content and emotion of the presentations of Groups 1 and 2, and to report back or paraphrase that information to the full group. Your challenge is to hear, understand, record, and repeat the key content (factual or emotional) of these presentations. Your assignment is to prepare two people to be your listeners, one for the Group 1 presentation and one for the Group 2 presentation.

**Group 4:** You are responsible for giving constructive feedback to Groups 1 and 2, so they can make even better presentations in the future. Your assignment is to prepare two people to critique the presentations and provide appropriate feedback. One person is to provide feedback for the Group 1 presentation, the other for the Group 2 presentation.

You will have 20 minutes to prepare, and not more than 5 minutes to give your presentation, paraphrasing, or critique.

## Activity #14: Meeting Planning

### Trainer's Notes

<b>Trainer Skills Needed:</b>	Facilitation skills Familiarity with group process issues
<b>Time Required:</b>	1 hour
<b>Materials Needed:</b>	<i>Member Instructions</i> <i>Meeting Planning Worksheet</i> Cooperative Learning Roles Chart posted on newsprint
<b>Learning Objectives:</b>	<p>At the end of the activity, members should be able:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● To identify meeting objectives</li><li>● To describe important logistical concerns in planning a meeting</li><li>● To describe important "content" considerations in planning a meeting</li><li>● To demonstrate skills in meeting planning</li></ul>
<b>Skill Development:</b>	Group problem-solving skills Planning and organizational skills
<b>Directions:</b>	<p>Divide members into cooperative learning groups, preferably with 5 members each. Review the <i>Member Instructions</i> with the full group.</p> <p>Once everyone is in a group, introduce the importance of meetings as a way of getting things done. Meetings, formal and informal, are among the most used activity in organizations. Most members are likely to spend a lot of time in meetings, and may have important roles in planning or chairing them. The PST process involves lots of group work which can be viewed as meetings with a specific learning or product development purpose.</p> <p>Emphasize that meetings are most likely to be productive and efficient if they are carefully planned, accompanied by appropriate materials, and effectively chaired and facilitated. Explain that this exercise is designed to provide members with a checklist for meeting planning, and practice in using it.</p>

Ask members to review the situation provided and the questions on the *Meeting Planning Worksheet*. Ask them to spend about 5 minutes on this task. Tell them when this time is up, and ask them to work for about 20 minutes to complete the worksheet.

When the time is up, bring all the reporters to the front of the room as a panel. Ask them to summarize their plans from the worksheet, question by question. Have one reporter take the lead for each question, and others indicate differences in their plans and the reasons for them. This should take about 15 minutes.

When the presentation has been completed, do some **processing**; ask members how the experience went, what they found difficult, whether the worksheet included considerations they might not have thought of without it. Then ask how they think the meeting might go; what might be the difficulties. **Generalize**; ask what they think are typical needs and problems in meeting planning and coordination. See if they can **apply** what they have learned; ask how they think they can use this approach in their AmeriCorps assignments. Allow about 15 minutes for this discussion.

**Variation:**

Develop several different scenarios based on different kinds of AmeriCorps assignments. If two groups work on each scenario, have them present to each other, and then bring the full group together for a summary discussion. Be sure there is a facilitator with each pair of groups.

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## ***Activity #14: Meeting Planning***

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### ***Member Instructions***

#### **Assignment:**

To plan a meeting which can successfully address specific needs.

#### **Directions:**

Once in a cooperative learning group, decide on the roles for group members, choosing from the cooperative learning roles list posted in the training room. Read the following scenario. Work alone for 5 minutes and then take about 30 minutes to plan the meeting by answering the questions on the attached worksheet.

#### **The Situation:**

You and four other members are assigned as senior tutors to a tutoring project involving a partnership between an elementary school and a community-based organization. The school refers to the project students in grades two and three who meet certain criteria -- grades below C, sharp reduction in school performance, high level of absenteeism, behavior problems, family crisis, etc. -- and tutors provide individualized assistance and try to develop a big brother/big sister relationship with the students. Ten of the tutors are college students from the community who work for the organization as part-time, paid personnel. Currently, the project is serving 30 students -- two per tutor. The emphasis in the tutoring is on reading, arithmetic, and communication (written and spoken).

The elementary school students come in Monday through Thursday afternoons for tutoring, and have field trips and enrichment activities every other Friday. As senior tutors, the five AmeriCorps members work full-time; each works with two students, plus one is team leader for the tutors, a second member is responsible for performance evaluation, a third handles school liaison, and the other two are involved in field trips and enrichment activities. An experienced teacher serves as Project Director, and two teachers working part-time are responsible for curriculum and for training the tutors. A social worker provides family liaison and works with other social service agencies when necessary. You are responsible for seeing that tutors get assigned to students and that there is a good personal "fit," as well as making sure the tutors get the help and supervision they need.

One of the concerns of the program is the lack of parental involvement. You have a parents committee, but only four or five parents participate. You have decided that parents need to support and assist with the tutoring process by going over the student's tutoring plan, having their children read to them, reviewing and signing school assignments, meeting with the tutor periodically at the organization's offices or their homes, and otherwise becoming familiar with and involved in the tutoring process.

You aren't sure how best to structure the parent component, so you decide to have a meeting involving school personnel, parents, and project staff including members and tutors. You also want to get ideas from another tutoring program across town that has an effective parent component; that project works with high school students.

You -- the five members -- have been assigned by the Project Director to plan the meeting.

## Meeting Planning Worksheet

1. What are the meeting's desired outcomes?
2. Who needs to attend?
3. Who needs to be consulted in meeting or agenda planning?
4. What should be on the agenda?
5. When should the meeting be held -- day of week, time of day?
6. Are special facilities or services needed (parking, child care, breakout rooms)?
7. Where should the meeting be held, so that the location is maximally accessible and the facility appropriate for this kind of meeting?
8. Is equipment needed, such as audio or visual aids?
9. What information should be prepared and circulated before the meeting?
10. What kind of meeting will this be -- formal, informal, or something in between?
11. What sort of meeting record is needed -- a tape recording? minutes? a record of action taken? Is secretarial help needed, or can the participants handle this function?
12. Will any participants require a pre-meeting briefing?
13. Are refreshments needed?
14. Identify any other special concerns or considerations.



**Activity #15: Group Problem Solving**  
**Trainer's Notes**

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**CLASSIC PROBLEM-SOLVING MODEL**

1. Define the problem
2. Generate data about the problem
3. Generate ideas or alternate courses of action for problem resolution
4. Choose among the alternative solutions
5. Implement the solution or decision

**Trainer Skills Needed:**

Facilitation skills  
Familiarity with group problem-solving models

**Time Required:**

1 1/2 hours

**Materials Needed:**

*Member Instructions* and *Problem-Solving Worksheet*  
Cooperative Learning Roles Chart posted on newsprint

**Learning Objectives:**

At the end of the activity, members should be able:

- To identify and describe the steps in problem-solving
- To carry out an organized group problem-solving activity

**Skill Development:**

Group problem-solving skills  
Other group-process skills

**Directions:**

Introduce the problem-solving model. Use an example related to your AmeriCorps program to show how it might work, and be sure members understand each step.

Before describing the activity, divide members into cooperative learning groups of 3-5 members. Explain that the groups should assume that they are a work team of members assigned to resolve a community conflict over priorities for their community service program. It is their responsibility to decide how to resolve the



problem, using the group problem-solving model. Now review the *Member Instructions* with the full group.

Using the situation specified and the *Problem-Solving Worksheet*, groups should use the model to go through a problem-solving process -- define the problem, review data about the problems, consider alternative courses of action for problem resolution, decide what is the best solution or decision, and indicate how to implement it. Groups should make any additional assumptions required to carry out the process.

Give the groups half an hour to do the problem-solving. Then bring them together, and ask what alternative each chose. Have reporters describe their solution and how they reached it. Have reporters individually talk about the process in their group. Allow 20 minutes for the reporting.

Now **process**. Ask how the group process went. Ask observers to indicate problems and challenges and how the groups resolved them. **Generalize**. Talk about the model and how they feel about using it. Then discuss **applications** to the AmeriCorps situation. Allow 20 minutes for this discussion.

#### **Variations:**

Prepare other problem-solving situations related to specific priority areas or types of assignments, and group members homogeneously based on assignment. Then have each group present its process and results. Assign one group to critique the process of each group, so every group presents and critiques.

#### **LESSONS LEARNED: OTHER GROUP ACTIVITIES**

You may want to add other activities which demonstrate the value of working in groups. Members report success with games and simulations such as the desert survival or NASA survival exercise: You are in a crisis situation and you can take along only certain items. The survival rate is better for groups that choose these items as a team, taking advantage of the range of knowledge and experience within the group. Many group problem-solving exercises are available from sources such as Pfeiffer & Company and Human Synergistics; see *Section D: Resources*.

**RESOURCES:  
EFFECTIVE WORK TEAMS**

The Volunteerism Project in San Francisco, an AmeriCorps Training and Technical Assistance Provider, has prepared training materials for developing effective member work teams. The materials, prepared by Nora Silver, Ph.D., build on basic learning styles and draw information from the following references:

Kolb, David A., *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1984.

Hagberg and Leider, *The Inventurers: Excursions in Life and Career Renewal*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1988.

For more information, please contact:

The Volunteerism Project  
50 California Street, Suite 200  
San Francisco, CA 94111-4696  
Telephone: (415) 772-7393  
Fax: (415) 391-8302



**Assignment:**

To use a group problem-solving model to analyze and resolve a problem.

**Directions:**

Once in cooperative learning groups, decide on the roles for group members, choosing from the cooperative learning roles posted in the training room.

Assume that you are a group of AmeriCorps members who have been working on community improvement projects. You are in the process of planning your next major project, which will be your last during your AmeriCorps year.

Your intent is to complete a project within three months, and to have it require not more than one month of activity. It must involve a group of 40 high school seniors as volunteers. The project must beautify the community or increase its facilities or services. It should have wide community benefit rather than affecting only a few people. It needs to be something high school students can do either afternoons and weekends, or during a three-day holiday that will be coming up in two months. Included in your group are two high school students representing the group of volunteers.

The process you have been using to select projects is to ask the community for recommendations, and then evaluate those recommendations and choose the most appropriate project. This time, only two projects were recommended, but there are very strong supporters for both.

The first project involves planting trees in the median strips throughout the neighborhood's business area, a four-block area of Main Street. There used to be elm trees there, but they all died of Dutch Elm disease, so almost no trees are left. You know that trees are not only beautiful but healthy. The commercial area needs a facelift, and the local merchants are very eager to have you do this project. They have offered to cover half the costs of the trees, and to provide all required equipment. They will also provide refreshments at two local restaurants. They say that if you will plant 80 trees, they will agree to paint or otherwise improve the facades of all 37 buildings on Main Street. Because Saturday is a busy day for the commercial area, they want you to plant a few trees each afternoon and perhaps do the rest on Sundays. They will provide you a truck and driver to move the trees from the nursery where they will be purchased to the places where they will be planted.

The second project is to make an empty lot into a park. The land is owned by the city, and it has agreed to make the improvements requiring heavy equipment -- grading, putting in cement walkways, adding a water fountain. You would construct some wooden play equipment using a

creative and practical design provided by a local architect, prepare a baseball field, and put in a basketball court. There is no safe place for children in the neighborhood to play, and so the residents are very excited about this. You have been told by the neighborhood association that it will cover the costs of equipment and supplies and supply 15 volunteers to help you. The best time to do this seems to be the three-day weekend; your volunteer architect says that once the city improvements are done, all the work can be organized and done in the three days except some painting or weatherizing of the wooden equipment, which would need to be done a week later.

Your problem is that both these projects have very strong support, and you are afraid that hard feelings will result with whichever one is not chosen. So you are very concerned that your process be perceived as fair and thorough.

Please go through the problem-solving process, summarizing your discussions and conclusions with regard to each step on the *Problem-Solving Worksheet*.

## **Problem-Solving Worksheet**

1. Define the problem.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Summarize relevant information/data about the problem.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Describe ideas or alternate courses of action for problem resolution.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Indicate the solution you chose, and describe your process for choosing among the alternative solutions.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Describe your plans for implementing the solution or decision.



## Activity #16: Using Force-Field Analysis

### Trainer's Notes

#### Trainer Skills Needed:

Facilitation skills  
Familiarity with group process issues

#### Time Required:

1 hour

#### Materials Needed:

*Member  
Instructions*

*Force-Field  
Analysis  
Worksheet*

#### Learning Objectives:

At the end of the activity, members should be able:

- To describe the concepts of force-field analysis
- To use these concepts to analyze a problem or situation

#### Skill Development:

Problem-solving skills

#### Directions:

Explain that force-field analysis is a way of diagnosing or analyzing a problem. Force-field analysis says that in any situation there are "driving" forces which encourage change, and "restraining" forces which discourage change. If these two sets of forces are of approximately equal strength, then the situation can be said to be in "equilibrium." If a change is to be made, either driving forces must be increased or restraining forces must be reduced.

Demonstrate the use of force-field analysis as a way of analyzing a problem; pick a situation relevant to the members. For example, suppose members are working in a senior citizen center which badly needs more chairs and tables so it can serve more hot meals. Everyone knows about the need, and 15 senior citizens are on a waiting list for the hot meal program, yet nothing has been done. These are clearly the "driving forces." Since no action has been

#### RESOURCES: FORCE-FIELD ANALYSIS

Force-field analysis was developed by social psychologist Kurt Lewin. For a particularly clear and practical introduction to force-field analysis and its applications to group work and problem solving, see Julius Eittington, *The Winning Trainer*. Houston: Gulf Publishing Company, 1989, pp 156-157.



taken, there must be some "restraining forces" as well, to create a state of "equilibrium." A little research might turn up the information that the center has only \$2,500 available for equipment this year, and the computer used for fiscal management is in very bad shape. So the administrator is afraid to spend the available funds on chairs and tables. Ask the group:

- **How might the restraining forces be reduced?**

Possible answers: If someone would donate a computer, then the need to reserve the available equipment funds would be eliminated. If someone were able to fix the computer so it was reliable, the same effect might be achieved. Costs for renting tables and chairs might turn out to be low enough to require only a portion of the equipment funds, which might make the administrator feel she could keep enough funds in reserve to lease or lease-purchase a computer.

- **How might the driving forces be strengthened?**

Possible answers: Someone might offer additional funds to cover the hot-meal program and these funds might include some additional overhead; this would encourage action to expand the program. Someone might donate or lend the chairs and tables, which would eliminate the need for equipment funds and increase the sense of urgency about program expansion. Another agency or a group of elderly people waiting for the program might come to see the Executive Director, which might focus attention on attempts to find another solution to the problem.

Once you have used the example, ask the members to review the *Member Instructions* and *Force-Field Analysis Worksheet*. Provide any needed clarification of the assignment.

Have members work individually, and then share information with another person. Each member is to identify a problem or a situation which s/he would like to see changed, and then to analyze that situation using force-field analysis; allow 10 minutes for this process. Then each member should share that situation with another person. The pairs should see if they find any common forces or factors in the two situations. Have them spend 15 minutes in pairs.

Ask a volunteer to present his/her analysis. Discuss it, emphasizing the analysis of driving and restraining forces. Ask for another, different kind of situation and do the same. Then **process**; ask how the analysis went. **Generalize**; see if the analytic model seems useful for understanding situations. Discuss **applications**; see how force-field analysis might be useful in analyzing situations which may arise during the members' community service.

**Variations:**

If the group has been working on any problem-solving activities, ask them to do a force-field analysis using a situation that has already been discussed, providing a different kind of analysis of the same situation.



**Assignment:**

To use force-field analysis as a means of analyzing a current problem or situation that you would like to see changed.

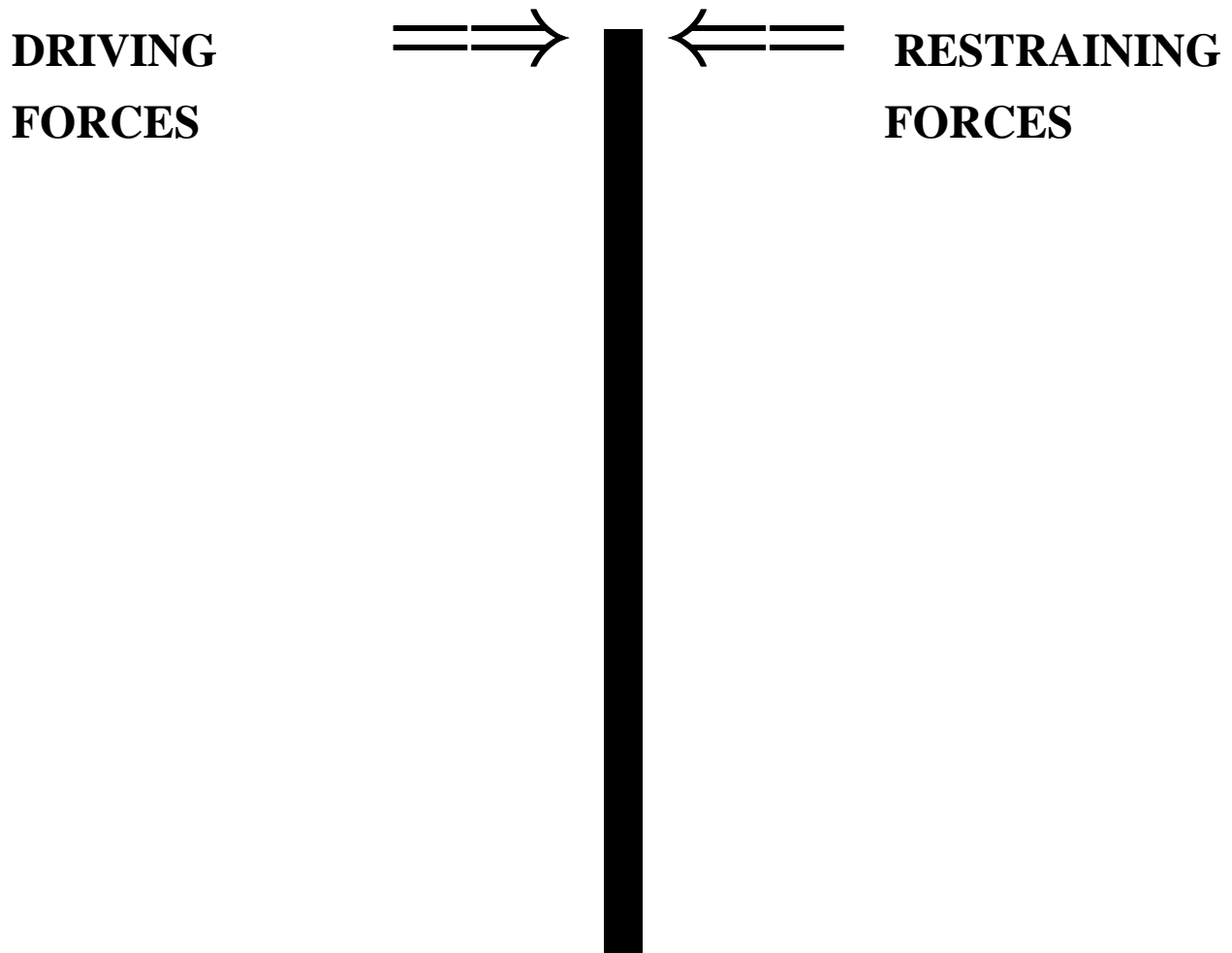
**Directions:**

1. Think of a current problem or difficulty that you would like to see changed, corrected or improved upon.
2. Summarize the problem in the top box on the worksheet that follows.
3. On the right side of the worksheet, list all the forces at work that are preventing the change you desire from taking place. These are the **restraining** forces.
4. On the left side of the worksheet, enter all the forces at work that are pushing for the change you favor. These are the **driving** forces.
5. After you have completed the force field analysis, assess the driving and restraining forces and provide the following information:
  - a. My change strategy is to: ☐ Increase the driving forces  
☐ Weaken the restraining forces  
☐ Do both of the above
  - b. Explain the rationale for your strategy.
  - c. Explain how you will go about implementing your strategy.
6. Share your analysis with one other person. Present your situation, discuss it for 5 minutes, then have the other person present his/her situation and discuss it for 5 minutes. Then try to identify any similarities in your situations or analyses; spend another 5 minutes on this task.



## Force-Field Analysis Worksheet\*

1. Describe the problem.
2. Describe the outcome you would like to achieve.
3. Describe the current "equilibrium" situation by listing the driving and restraining forces below.



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\* Adapted from a worksheet in Julius Eittington, *The Winning Trainer*. Houston: Gulf Coast Publishing Company, 1989, page 423.



## Activity #17: Approaches to Conflict: A Self-Examination\* \_\_\_\_\_

### Trainer's Notes \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Trainer Skills Needed:</b>	Facilitation Familiarity with different types of conflict, ways people respond to conflict, and approaches to conflict resolution
<b>Time Required:</b>	About 1 hour
<b>Materials Needed:</b>	Newsprint and markers Pencils and paper for all participants <i>Member Instructions</i>
<b>Learning Objectives:</b>	At the end of this activity, members should be able: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● To identify and distinguish between different types and sources of conflict</li><li>● To understand how they, as individuals, tend to respond to conflict</li><li>● To identify different approaches to dealing with conflict and situations where each might be appropriate</li><li>● To describe the importance of finding a conflict resolution strategy with the greatest payoff -- achieving "win-win"</li></ul>
<b>Skills Development:</b>	Distinguishing among different approaches to conflict Understanding their own conflict resolution styles
<b>Directions:</b>	Provide a brief introduction to the concept of conflict. Start by asking the group for examples of conflicts, recording responses on newsprint, and observing the patterns to responses. Explain that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Conflict occurs within, between, or among individuals, groups, and organizations.</li></ul>

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\* This exercise was adapted from Joan A. Stepsis, "Conflict Fantasy: A Self-Examination," in J. W. Pfeiffer and J.E. Jones, eds., *1974 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators*. San Diego: Pfeiffer & Company, copyright ©1974. Used with permission.



- There are many sources of conflict, including inadequate or faulty communication, simple misunderstanding, different information bases, differences in values and perceptions, competition for the same resources, rivalry for positions, personality clashes, and fear of the unknown consequences of change.
- Conflict can be made into a force for constructive change.
- People also have different ways of reacting to conflicts -- and trying to handle conflict helps us understand how we tend to react.

Introduce the following "fantasy" exercise which is designed to help members examine their own approaches to resolving conflicts; review the *Member Instructions* with the full group.

Ask members to get comfortable, close their eyes, and get in touch with themselves at the present moment -- by listening to sounds around them, the feel of their bodies, and so on -- and relax. Take about 10 minutes guide the group through a fantasy scenario.

Present the fantasy. Say the following: You are walking down a street (or hallway). It is late in the day, but you have a little extra time before your next meeting. You see in the distance a familiar person. Suddenly, you recognize that it is a person with whom you are in conflict with at present. You realize that you must decide quickly how to deal with this person. As the person comes closer, a number of alternatives flash through your mind.... Decide right now what you will do and then imagine what will happen.

Allow 2-3 minutes of silence to let the fantasies develop.

Continue: It's over now. The person is gone. How do you feel? What is your level of satisfaction with the way things went?

Ask members to stop fantasizing, to open their eyes, and to spend 5 minutes writing down:

- What they thought about doing, did, or were about to do
- What they think would have happened
- The level of satisfaction they feel concerning the outcome they envisioned

Now ask each member to share with two other members the alternatives they considered. Have one member of each group serve as the recorder, keeping a list of all the types of alternatives mentioned during the discussion. Reconvene the whole group to **report** all the alternatives generated, and list them on newsprint.

Write the *Continuum of Responses to Conflict Situations* on newsprint or on an overhead and define the major strategies (see the box on *Conflict Resolution Terminology*). A related model showing different conflict resolution styles, provided in a second box at the end of these Trainer's Notes, is used by the National Association for Community Mediation.

Ask participants to place their conflict resolution alternatives into categories using the model. Observe the range of strategies.

**Generalize:** Discuss pros and cons of each approach for resolving conflict. Note that each of these approaches may be appropriate in certain situations.

- Confronting the conflict with pure power strategies tends to produce a win-lose situation which can lead to bigger conflicts in the future. The winner may feel satisfied, but the loser most likely will be very dissatisfied.
- Confronting conflicts with negotiation can help both side win by resolving the conflict in a mutually agreeable manner, creating a "win" for all those involved.
- Avoidance and defusion generally do not result in resolution of the underlying problems. They may leave a person with feelings of dissatisfaction. However, these approaches may also allow individuals or groups to better define their

interests\* (needs, desires, concerns, and fears) in the conflict, identify alternative ways of resolving the underlying problem, and develop a conflict resolution strategy.

6. **Apply:** Ask participants how each conflict resolution strategy may be relevant to their AmeriCorps assignments. Stress the concept of win-win -- the benefits of finding a strategy that will make both parties to a conflict feel satisfied with the results. Note that negotiation provides an opportunity to find the win-win solution and that the next activity will provide members with an opportunity to learn the basics of negotiation.

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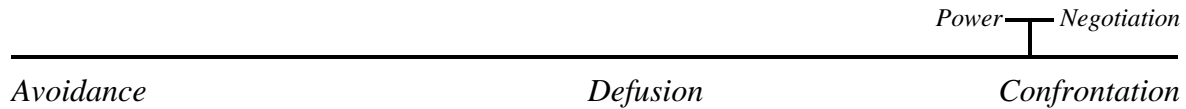
\* For a discussion of the concept of "interests," see Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes*. New York: Penguin Books, 1983.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION TERMINOLOGY\*

**Conflict:** A controversy or disagreement

**Parties to a conflict:** The individuals or groups who disagree

***Continuum of responses to conflict:***



***Approaches to conflict resolution:***

**Avoidance:** Keep away from the conflict -- either do not become involved or walk away from situations involving conflict; look the other way when conflict occurs; pretend conflict does not exist

**Defusion:** Smooth over the conflict -- keep issues unclear; resolve minor points while avoiding or delaying discussion of major issues

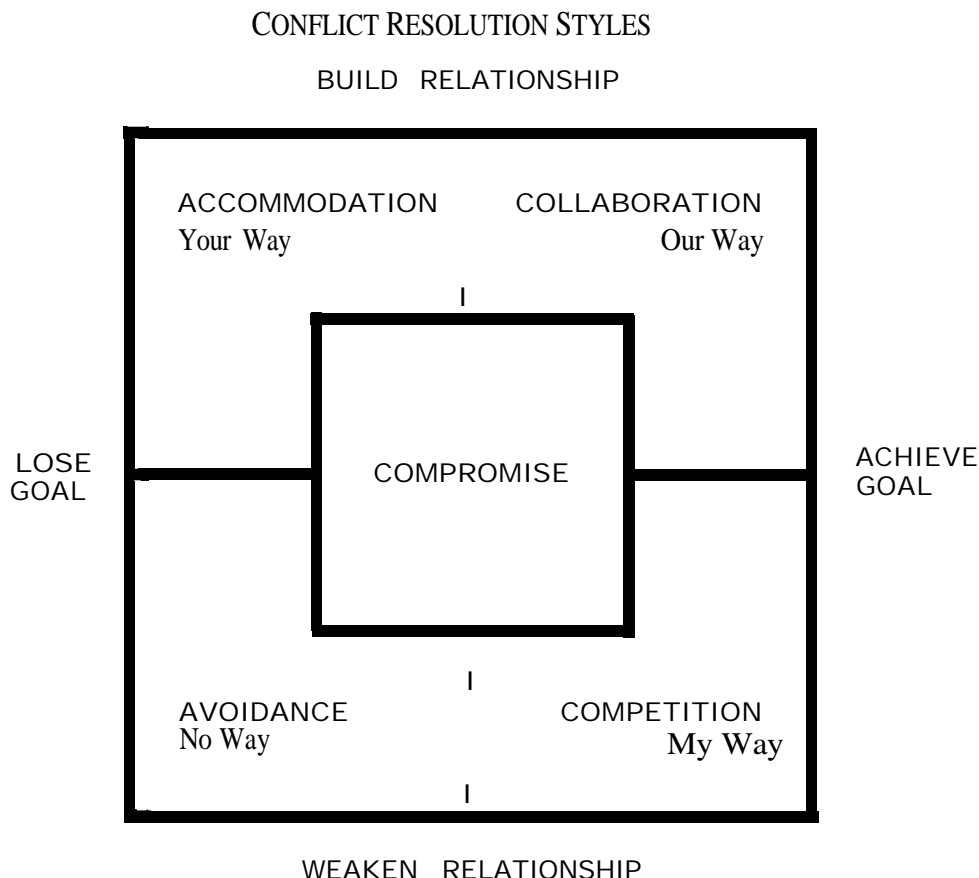
**Confrontation:** Tackle the problems/issues which are the focus of the conflict -- may involve use of pure power strategies (physical force, bribery, punishment) or strategies of negotiation and collaboration which result in a "win-win" situation for the people and groups involved.

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\* Adapted from Joan A. Stepsis, "Conflict Resolution Strategies," in J.W. Pfeiffer and J.E. Jones, eds., *1974 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators*. San Diego, CA: Pfeiffer & Company, copyright ©1974. Used with permission.

## RESOURCES: CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAINING AND STYLES

The National Association for Community Mediation (NAFCM) AmeriCorps training curriculum will use the following grid to identify five conflict resolution styles (accommodative, collaborative, avoidance, competitive, and compromise), all of which may be useful and effective depending on the situation and the conflict. For more information on NAFCM training and this approach to defining conflict resolution styles, contact: NAFCM, 1726 M Street, N.W., Suite 500, Washington, DC 20036-4502, Telephone (202) 467-6226, Fax (202) 466-4769, E-mail [billf@nafcm.org](mailto:billf@nafcm.org), Website: <http://www.igc.apc.org/nafcrn/ameriCorps.html>.



Source: National Association for Community Mediation, *Face to Face: Resolving Conflict Without Giving In Or Giving Up*. Curriculum for AmeriCorps and the Corporation for National Service. Washington, D.C.: Corporation for National Service, January 1996, p. 66.

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***Activity #17: Approaches to Conflict: A Self-Examination***  
***Member Instructions***

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**Assignment:**

To participate in a guided conflict fantasy, and then analyze the conflict resolution strategies you fantasized.

**Directions:**

Participate in a guided fantasy led by the facilitator.

Following the fantasy, take 5 minutes to individually write down:

1. What you thought about doing, did, or were about to do
2. What you think would have happened
3. The level of satisfaction you feel concerning the outcome you envisioned

Now share what you wrote with two other members. Have one member of each group serve as the recorder, writing a list of all the types of alternatives mentioned.



## Activity #18: Analyzing Conflicts and Using Negotiation

### Trainer's Notes

<b>Trainer Skills Needed:</b>	Facilitation skills Familiarity with negotiation process and techniques
<b>Time Required:</b>	2 hours
<b>Materials Needed:</b>	<i>Member Instructions</i> <i>Negotiation Worksheet</i> <i>Guidelines for Negotiating</i> Cooperative Learning Roles Chart posted on newsprint
<b>Learning Objectives:</b>	At the end of the activity, members should be able: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● To describe the stages of negotiation</li><li>● To identify the elements involved in each stage</li><li>● To develop a plan for negotiating a specific dispute</li></ul>
<b>Skill Development:</b>	Analyzing conflicts Preparing for negotiation Identifying possible win-win solutions to a conflict
<b>Directions:</b>	Introduce the concept and process of negotiation. Ask members to define the term <i>negotiation</i> . Share the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Negotiation is a process by which those in conflict try to agree on a mutually acceptable way to handle their differences. It occurs between individuals, within groups or between organizations. It is a process which should allow everyone to win.</li><li>● Negotiation requires identifiable parties who are interested in trying to resolve the conflict and willing to accept a settlement which may be less than what was initially wanted or demanded.</li><li>● The three stages of negotiation are:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Preparing to negotiate</li><li>◆ Conducting negotiations</li><li>◆ Closing the process with an agreement (or an agreement that no agreement is possible and other</li></ul></li></ul>



dispute settlement/conflict resolution mechanisms may have to be used)

- Sometimes people involved in negotiations need help and that help can be provided by a mediator, factfinder, or arbitrator (see definitions in the box on *Conflict Resolution Strategies*).

### CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES

***Negotiation:*** Process by which those in conflict try to agree on a mutually acceptable way to handle their differences. It occurs between individuals, within groups, or between organizations. It is a process which enables everyone to win -- reach an agreement which is acceptable to everyone (a "win-win" situation).

***Mediation:*** Process used to help those in conflict resolve their differences or reach an agreement. It involves using an individual or group acceptable to the parties as an intermediary; however, the parties to the conflict retain the decision-making power.

***Factfinding:*** Process through which a person or panel of persons not involved in the dispute prepares a report on the facts (and differing perceptions of facts) surrounding the conflict. The report may provide a framework around which the parties can structure negotiation and reach a settlement.

***Arbitration:*** The parties agree to let a person (or panel of people) who is not part of the conflict make a decision based upon the cases set forth by all sides, and to accept that decision.

Introduce the exercise on the next page which will provide members with an opportunity to analyze a specific conflict, and develop a negotiation strategy. Review the *Member Instructions*, *Negotiation Worksheet*, and *Guidelines for Negotiating*.

Have members work in small cooperative learning groups of 4-5 members. The groups should assume that they are the group responsible for settling the community conflict described. Give the groups 45 minutes to plan their strategy.

Now have each group **report**. Ask each reporter to summarize the group's answer to the four questions on the exercise worksheet. Ask the observer to comment on the **process** the group used to develop the strategies. Was there disagreement among members? How did the group resolve differences? Did any of the members play a mediating role?

### POINTS TO LOOK FOR IN GROUP REPORTS

In reviewing and discussing the group responses, note that there is no single solution to the problem. However, groups should have pointed out:

- The need to address specific tenant concerns (e.g., noise, lights, safety)
- Ways to address tenant concerns (for example, to eliminate the lights from the basketball court or arrange for special security patrols at night)
- An attempt to identify a service or program that tenants would view positively to be built into the plan
- Possible requests to the city (for example, the city might be asked to open up an indoor basketball court for evening games)

Discuss how members might **apply** negotiation as a conflict resolution technique during their AmeriCorps assignment.

**Variations:**

Have some groups take the role of the members and other groups take the role of the tenants' association. Present both sides, or have the two groups role play a negotiation. If you do a role play, be sure to prepare a detailed background sheet for each role with more information on the situation from their perspective, and allow an additional two hours for the activity, so the role play can be carried out and processed fully. See Activity #27 in *Chapter 12: Community-Related Skills*, page 511, for detailed role-play instructions.

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## ***Activity #18: Analyzing Conflicts and Using Negotiation***

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### ***Member Instructions***

#### **Assignment:**

To learn the process of analyzing a conflict and planning for a negotiation to resolve it.

#### **Directions:**

Once in cooperative learning groups, decide on the roles for group members, choosing from the cooperative learning roles posted in the training room.

Take 5 minutes to read the conflict situation below. Your group has been assigned to "work something out." You will have 45 minutes to complete the attached worksheets and come up with a strategy for trying to resolve the conflict through negotiation.

Assume that you are a group of members, a community agency director, and a Board member of the same agency. The members are working with this nonprofit multi-service agency on community improvement activities. Because there is no safe place for children in the neighborhood to play, you decided some months ago that you should try to develop a small park. Three months ago the agency had an offer from a property owner to give it an empty lot if the agency would agree to develop the park and maintain it for the next five years.

The agency's Board thinks this is a great idea, and so do the parents of children in the pre-school and latch-key programs. Mothers have suggested swings and an area where children can play ball and jump rope. An initial plan for the park has been submitted to the city authorities, and they seem very supportive of the idea. Your local Councilwoman has been a major supporter.

You have worked with a volunteer architect and a contractor to plan the park. They have come up a plan which not only includes swings and other playground equipment for small children, but also a basketball court for older youth. This is a new addition to the plan. Someone on the Board has said he will supply lights for the court.

You thought the whole project was almost ready for implementation when you went to the city for a construction permit. Then you discovered that the occupants of an apartment house next to the proposed park site are opposing your plan. When you asked why, the city official showed you a letter from the tenants' association claiming that the park would keep people awake at night due to the lights and noise, be unsafe for small children because drug pushers and users would congregate there, and it would become a public nuisance.

The city official suggests that you "get this all settled nicely and then come back with your plans." The Councilwoman, told about what is happening, says she has to agree. "The last thing we want is local opposition to this. But I am sure if you talk to them, you can work something out."



## Negotiation Worksheet

1. What problem(s) need to be addressed during the negotiation?
2. What would you like to achieve?
3. What are some possible "solutions" to the problem (Try to identify at least three)?
4. What solutions do you think you could live with?
5. Identify the individuals/groups (often called "parties") involved in the conflict. For each, identify what you think are their issues or "interests" (needs, desires, concerns, fears).

Parties	Issues of Importance

6. Circle the group(s)/individual(s) in #5 with whom you will try to negotiate.
7. Explain how you will try to reach an agreement with those involved in the conflict (e.g., How might you approach them? How will you get a discussion or negotiation started? What strategies/tactics will you use to try to develop a win/win solution to this problem?)
8. How does your own analysis -- what you see as the problem, what you would like to achieve, and your suggested resolutions -- compare with your assessment of the needs and concerns of the other parties?



## Guidelines for Negotiating\*

### A REMINDER ABOUT CONFLICT

To the extent that conflicts focus on specific problems rather than philosophical arguments, foster serious discussion, and help those involved understand perspectives of others, they can be creative and positive forces. To the extent that they are allowed to develop into personality battles or pure power plays with the participants ignoring the concerns of others, they can be destructive to communities, programs, and people.

### PREPARING FOR NEGOTIATIONS

- Articulate what you think the conflict or dispute is about;
- Prioritize the issues;
- Know what you would like to achieve from the negotiation; develop an initial statement of what you think you want (initial position) and what you think you could live with (fallback position);
- Think about how one issue or problem is linked to another, and consider which to consider first;
- Know how you will consider new ideas and responses from those with whom you are negotiating; and
- Have a plan for communicating with members of your group to minimize conflict within the group and prevent internal differences from interfering with efforts to resolve the broader conflict.

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\* Adapted from material prepared by Phyllis E. Kaye for *A Manual on Conflict Resolution for Health Planning Agency Staff, Board, and Committee Members*. Pittsburgh: CONSAD Research Corporation, 1977.



## CONDUCTING NEGOTIATIONS\*

- Don't make the conflict personal -- separate the people you are negotiating with from the problem;
- Focus on the problem which you are trying to resolve, not the position being taken;
- Come up with ideas which would allow both sides to gain something;
- Develop objective criteria for considering suggestions and proposals;
- Be calm -- control your emotions;
- Be courteous;
- Keep information confidential;
- Be willing to compromise;
- Be aware of the assumptions you and others are making -- one way to get someone to change a position is to change the assumption on which it is based;
- Consider the timing of your actions -- a good idea at the wrong time may be ignored or rejected;
- Understand the authority of those with whom you are negotiating -- it is best to negotiate with those who have the authority to reach an agreement; however, there may be times when you or those you are negotiating with will have to get others to approve or ratify the agreements you reach; and
- If the negotiation is between groups, be sure that your group operates as one, discussing differences among its members in private and taking time to meet privately to assess and reassess the situation.

## CONCLUDING NEGOTIATIONS

- Don't let shyness prevent you from recognizing that an agreement has been reached;
- When you reach an agreement, write it down, and if appropriate initial and date it;

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\* First four points on Conducting Negotiations adapted from Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting To Yes*. New York: Penguin Books, 1983.

- Make sure you know how the agreement will be implemented and how you will handle differences which might arise as the agreement is being implemented; and
- Recognize when no agreement is possible and think about how you might redefine the issues to make a resolution possible or make the conflict less important to those involved.



## **Supporting Information**



# Communication Basics\*

## THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is a complex process. Having a basic understanding of how it works is the key to effective interpersonal interactions between people.

Communication theory divides the process of communication into:

- A **message** to be communicated;
- **Encoding** of the message into the form in which it will be communicated;
- **Transmittal** of the message through some **channel** of communication; and
- **Decoding** of the message at the other end.

True communication occurs only when the message has successfully passed through the encoding and transmittal process and has been successfully *decoded* and *understood* at the other end.

## KEYS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- **It is two-way:** Ideas flow between individuals or groups. Facts, ideas, beliefs, and emotions are encoded, sent, received, decoded, and acknowledged at both ends.
- **It is both verbal and nonverbal:** Communication uses as many senses as possible given the method or channel of communication. Content is communicated not only through words, but also through tone of voice, gestures, facial expression, and other means.
- **It depends upon active listening:** Individuals receiving communication do not listen passively; they concentrate, clarify, and check the meaning, content, context, and intent of what others say.
- **It uses effective "feedback:"** The listeners check what they hear by paraphrasing or restating important information to be sure that they have understood the intended meaning of the communication. The communicator actively requests such feedback to be sure that the message is being received and understood.

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\* Contains information from many different sources, including the following: Claudyne Wilder, *The Presentations Kit*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1994; Donald Walton, *Are You Communicating?* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989; J. William Pfeiffer and John E. Jones, *UA Training Technologies 3: Using Lecturettes, Theory and Models in Human Resource Development*. San Diego: University Associates, 1988, Volume 3.

- **It is direct:** It "says what it means," without hidden or inconsistent messages. Any communication carries with it two kinds of messages: the *content message* and the *relationship message*. We hear both what others say to us and the implications about our relationship. If we are preoccupied with detecting a hidden meaning, we may lose the content message altogether. Effective communication contains clearly discernible messages.
- **It is appropriate for the recipient, not just the sender:** The language, message, and channel were chosen to be understandable and acceptable to the intended recipient.
- **It is based on some form of common interest:** People communicate best when all parties feel they have something to gain from the communication, whether personal, social, or professional. Individuals and groups both send and receive information better when they are interested in and committed to the process.
- **It is comfortable for all parties:** It is hard to concentrate on the message if the environment is tense and the individuals involved are fearful, hostile, nervous, or otherwise uncomfortable. For effective communication, try to establish a low-stress environment.

## APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION

Often you are responsible for initiating formal communication as a part of your responsibilities as an AmeriCorps member. Communication takes place in many ways, and there are lots of choices about the form that it takes. You can help ensure effective communication by answering some specific questions before deciding what form the specific communication should take. For presentations or other formal communication, the following questions may be especially important:

- **Who is your target audience?** Is the audience homogeneous or diverse? Are most individuals friendly, neutral, suspicious, or hostile? How much do they know about you and your topic area? What is their attention span? Are they familiar with technical terms?
- **What is the purpose of this communication?** Are you sharing knowledge? Selling an idea? Asking for volunteer support for a project? Are you trying to inspire and motivate people? Problem solve? Just make friends?
- **Is there a specific result you want to achieve?** At the end of your presentation, or after reading your report, what do you want the recipients of this communication to do? Simply know something or actually do something? Agree to volunteer for a specific event? Change something about their parenting style? Studies of communication and persuasion have found that people are much more likely to take the action you desire if you give them specific suggestions and instructions. To say "Get your child immunized against measles" is far less effective than "Take your child to the Family Clinic at First and Main on Thursday at 2:00 p.m. for free immunization against measles."

- **What does your audience really want?** Why are they present? Are they likely to respond best to a particular style of presentation? For example, if you are trying to gain their support and involvement for a project benefiting the community, are they likely to respond best to a factual presentation or one which contains an emotional appeal?

## **SAMPLE FORMAT FOR PRESENTATIONS**

Most communications have a beginning, a middle, and an end. There is no one "right" way to prepare a presentation, formal or informal. There are, however, some approaches which may help you to prepare a well-structured and effective presentation. Most of the same points apply to written communications such as memoranda. Consider the following:

- **Open with the purposes or objective of your presentation.** You should be able to say it in one sentence. If you can't, you need to go back to planning and clarify why you are making the presentation.
- **Emphasize a small number of key points.** Fewer is better; people will remember them better if there are only a few. If the topic is complex, divide the points into a few main topics or categories and present the information by category.
- **Provide some details.** Provide clear, concise explanations of each of the key points you are making. Include statistics or experience where appropriate.
- **Use anecdotes or examples.** To get people to understand your main points, illustrate them; give examples of how they apply in real life. Anecdotes and examples make presentations interesting, and help people to understand what you mean. The application of the key point to a real example is a very powerful tool.
- **Make analogies and comparisons.** Sometimes it is difficult to understand a complex idea all by itself. If you can identify a familiar situation or event for comparison, understanding is likely to be much greater -- if I don't know anything about X, show me how it is like Y, something with which I am very familiar.
- **Request desired action or specify next steps.** Near the end of your presentation, specify any action-oriented steps you would like people to take as a result of this presentation. The more specific the suggestion or request, the more likely it is to be acted upon.
- **Summarize and close.** Include a brief summary of the material you have presented, and relate it back to the purpose of your presentation. If you can find a brief gem of information or example that helps to integrate the information you have presented, use it here.



## CULTURAL ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION

When you speak before a group -- in a church, at a community center, in a hotel where a conference is being held -- you need to be concerned not only with the content and organization of your presentation, but also with your dress and with your interactions before and after the presentation. Here are some factors to consider, especially when the presentation is being made to a group or community different from your own.

- 1. Consider cultural issues.** For example, what about eye contact? Are there any hand gestures you shouldn't use? What signs will the audience give that they agree with what you are saying? What about when they disagree with you? What voice tone should you use? Are certain cultural or religious analogies inappropriate? Find out what is customary regarding shaking hands and touching. This varies a great deal across cultures. Take your cue from others; while it is usually best to be very conservative in touching anyone beyond than the customary hand shake, kissing and hugging is normal in some groups such as Hispanics.
- 2. Find out how formal to be in your dress and style.** In general, it is safest not to be too informal. Often, you will want to wear a jacket and tie if you are a man or a dress or suit if you are a woman, to show respect for the people you're addressing. Even so, there are times that business attire may end up alienating an audience. There is no substitute for doing some homework in advance about how the audience will be dressing.
- 3. Make sure you know the appropriate way to address people.** Is it by first names? This is often the case in our less formal American society, yet it is always best to check to make sure whether professional or honorary titles such as Dr., Ms., or Professor should be used.
- 4. When in doubt, ask!!** This applies to information about the gathering, the audience, the organizations involved, and the cultures represented. Most people are clearly delighted that you are taking the time to show some consideration for their organizational norms and for customs and habits which may be different from your own. Your interest will be appreciated.

## Tips for Effective Meetings\*

### 1. Arrange for a convenient and well-equipped location.

- A meeting will be more pleasant and better attended if it is in a convenient location in terms of distance to be traveled by meeting participants, accessibility to public transportation, availability of parking, attractiveness of facilities, and safety (especially for evening meetings).
- The room should be reasonably quiet.
- There should be a table big enough for everyone to sit around or some other practical arrangement. Chairs should be reasonably comfortable; be sure there are a few extra in case some unexpected participants arrive.
- If everyone doesn't know each other, large name cards should be prepared for participants. Provide a sheet of white paper and a marker and participants can hand-write their own.
- Provide amenities: Have telephone messages taken externally. Provide pads and pencils, an easel pad and markers. Be sure copying facilities are available. Ask for an extension cord if needed for a tape recorder or laptop computer.

### 2. Be sure the meeting has a written agenda including time frames and responsibilities.

The single most important way of keeping a meeting "on track" is to have -- and follow -- a detailed written agenda. Each item on the agenda should be accompanied by a time frame (starting and ending time), an indication of who will make a presentation or lead the discussion, and a specification of any action items.

### 3. Be sure necessary supporting materials are available.

This may include minutes from the prior meeting and other written materials needed as background. Where possible, they should be mailed out along with the agenda, for review before the meeting. If materials are not sent out ahead, set aside 15 minutes *before* the meeting so participants can review the materials and become familiar with them.

### 4. Identify a chairperson who is an effective facilitator and be sure that person is well-briefed.

You want someone who will encourage participation, ensure open dialogue, monitor time, understand meeting procedures, and keep the process moving. Prepare the chairperson by identifying key topics and information that need to be covered; identify any issues where controversy is likely.

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\* Modified from Emily Gantz McKay, *A Guide to Effective Meetings*. Washington, D.C.: National Council of La Raza, 1993; contains ideas from Arthur Young, *The Manager's Handbook*, United Kingdom, Special American Edition. New York: Crown Publishers, 1986.

5. **Be sure you participate effectively, especially when you have a position on a controversial issue.** Let others speak first and make their case. Listen carefully; opponents may help you identify aspects of the issue you had not considered. Summarize their views, and present your own. If you know that someone else shares your view, let that person speak first, then support their strong points and add any points they may have missed. Always appear reasonable: keep a sense of humor. If you lose control, you will probably lose the argument. Don't give uncertain information; promise to find and provide the information quickly.
6. **Use an agreed-upon decision-making process.** Debate can be kept orderly and a fair process assured by using a single authority for meeting proceedings. The most typically used in the United States is *Robert's Rules of Order*, which involves a structured set of rules and is based on decisions by majority vote. (You can purchase a book of these "rules" at any bookstore.) Many nonprofit organizations specify in their bylaws that meetings will be run using *Robert's Rules of Order*. Other approaches -- such as operating on a consensus basis -- can be equally appropriate; just be sure everyone knows the process to be used.
7. **Determine necessary attendance based on the agenda.** It is important in planning a meeting to decide who should be present, and then give them as much advance notice as possible to help assure their attendance.
8. **Start and end meetings on time.** Most people attending a meeting have other commitments, and should be able to count on the meeting's starting within a few minutes of its scheduled beginning time, and ending within a few minutes of its scheduled adjournment. Sometimes, a longer-than-usual meeting may be required; this should be predicted, and participants should be told how much additional meeting time will be required.
9. **Keep meetings "on track."** Encourage discussion, but keep it focused on agenda topics. To keep track of comments that are important but don't relate to the current agenda item, keep a piece of newsprint paper on the wall and write them down. Then be sure they are addressed at the appropriate point in the meeting -- as part of some other agenda item or under "Old Business" or "New Business." Some groups go around the table at the end of a meeting so that any topics not covered can be addressed briefly.
10. **Schedule the most critical items early in the agenda.** This assures adequate time for discussion and full participant attention, since participants are likely to be most alert and involved early in the meeting, and no one will have left. Identify one individual to be responsible for taking minutes. Sometimes staff take responsibility for minutes, but this can be very time-consuming for an organization with a small staff. The time requirements for staff or volunteers can be minimized if minutes briefly summarize discussion and focus on reporting actions taken.

11. **Ask participants for advice and assistance in improving meetings.** If you expect to have regular meetings, try going around the table and asking participants to comment on the positive and negative aspects of the meeting, and to offer suggestions for improving future meetings.

*If you chair the meeting...*

- **Be more concerned with the process than the content.** Keep the meeting moving to its conclusion and stay out of the discussion. If you have a strong interest, delegate the chair during that issue.
- **Protect the weak and control the strong.** Make sure everyone has an opportunity to speak, and no one interrupts.
- **Don't watch the speaker,** watch the listeners for reactions.
- **Ensure a result** -- identify the issues, and agree on a decision or action to be taken.
- **Agree on deadlines for updates or further action.** Set a date, time, and place for the next meeting before leaving this one.
- **Send good action-needed notes promptly to each participant.** Provide formal minutes if the organization has legal status or the process requires official documentation.



# Brainstorming\*

## WHAT IS BRAINSTORMING?

Brainstorming is a process for generating ideas about a particular topic from a group. It uses an open and non-critical process designed to get as many ideas as possible "on the table" for later discussion and consideration.

## USES OF BRAINSTORMING

True brainstorming meetings are rare because most adults have difficulty lifting their sights from current problems, and many people are hesitant to present unusual ideas for fear of negative reactions. Meetings called to generate ideas require sensitive facilitation but can be of immense value in finding new ways to approach problems and needs, and overcoming "tunnel vision." Brainstorming can be especially useful in the first three stages of the problem solving process:

- Defining or describing the problem
- Generating ideas about the problem or its causes
- Generating ideas or alternative courses of action for problem solving

## STEPS AND GROUNDRULES

1. **Define a narrow or limited problem or task to be addressed.** Be sure the scope of the topic is clear to everyone.
2. **Work in a small group -- preferably five or six, not more than 10 or 12.** If the group is larger, divide it into smaller groups to do brainstorming; then bring them together to share lists.
3. **Sit around a table or in a circle,** so everyone can see each other and it is easy to "go around the group."
4. **Make the process comfortable and informal** -- you want to encourage creativity.
5. **Select a facilitator or moderator to coordinate and encourage the process.**

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\* Includes information from many sources, including Julius E. Eittington, *The Winning Trainer*. Houston: Gulf Publishing Company, 1989.

6. **First, have everyone think individually, and write down some personal ideas.** This gets the process started, improves the quality of the work, and "levels the playing field" so that people who need a few minutes to think have a chance to participate fully.
7. **Now have the facilitator go around the group asking for ideas.** Each person gives only one idea at a time.
8. **Welcome all ideas, no matter how wild.** It is easier to tame them down than to come up with ideas in the first place.
9. **Encourage quantity.** The percent of usable ideas coming out of brainstorming sessions is usually quite small. The more ideas generated, the greater the possibility of having winning ones.
10. **Don't analyze, question, praise, or criticize the ideas raised.** Do nothing to interrupt or hinder the creative process.
11. **Have a recorder write each idea on newsprint.** If the group is moving fast, have two recorders share the writing so they don't get behind. Seeing information rather than just hearing it helps some people generate other ideas and see relationships among ideas.
12. **Keep the tempo quick-paced.** Anyone who doesn't have something to add when his/her turn comes can pass, and then add another idea on the next round.
13. **Have the facilitator praise the group, not specific ideas:** "That's great, AmeriCorps members, let's see if we can get another dozen ideas."
14. **Keep going around the room until everyone's ideas have all been recorded.**
15. **Once all the ideas are out, seek additional information or clarification, if any of the ideas are unclear.**
16. **Now look for relationships among the ideas.** Draw lines between related concepts. At this stage, "hitchhiking" is O.K. If you can improve on someone else's idea, now is the time and place to do it. Feel free to combine any number of suggestions or fragments of ideas.
17. **After grouping the concepts, see if you notice any gaps -- and add new ideas.**
18. **Evaluate the ideas later.** Hold a screening and evaluation session after the idea generating session.

# Using Force-Field Analysis for Group Problem Solving

## BACKGROUND

Force field analysis, an approach developed by social psychologist Kurt Lewin, says that until you have diagnosed or analyzed the problem, you shouldn't try to solve it. Force field analysis is useful in allowing groups to analyze the "restraining" or hindering forces and the "driving" or helping forces affecting a problem. Use a group process to thoroughly analyze factors affecting the problem or issue area.

## AN EXAMPLE OF FORCE-FIELD ANALYSIS

**Scenario:** On National Service Day last April 23, your AmeriCorps program was to complete a community clean-up. The results were disappointing; not as many people as expected showed up to participate. Instructions on how the big trash bags were to be handled did not get distributed to the people involved, causing pick-up problems. Animals got into the trash bags that were not picked up. There was no media coverage. As a result, the City doesn't want to fund next year's community clean-up.

### Problem Analysis:

Community Clean-Up on National Service Day April 23

Driving Forces	Restraining Forces
Strong local government support	No money available from local government
Complaints about trash all over town	Bad history due to last year's problems: lack of planning; no media attention; lack of organization, coordination
Top priority for members	Apathetic general community
New member has successful prior experience with clean-up days	Media seemed uninterested last year
AmeriCorps project commitment to conduct clean-up	Potential corporate sponsors don't see the activity as exciting
Research shows clean-up discourages rodents	Concern over possible low turnout based on last year's experience
School in the area is looking for a community activity for its students	



Once this diagnosis has been prepared, the next step to using a force-field analysis for problem solving is to begin designing a strategy for dealing with each of the restraining forces, while strengthening the driving forces.

There may be many ways to strengthen the driving forces. Put the new member that has had prior experience in charge of a checklist of tasks that must be done to make sure the event is successful. Build even more interest in the community around such themes as beautification, with community clean-up day becoming one part to an overall plan to improve the community habitat. Another strategy is to remove or weaken the restraining forces. Use last year's experience to address all the issues that were not addressed properly last time. Learn from experience. Be able to show the Parks and Recreation Department your briefing materials on what to do with bagged trash, and your arrangements for its prompt pick-up. Develop a cordial and ongoing relationship with several people in the television and newspaper media; match them with supportive county leaders interested in media techniques. Plan and execute the event strategically; use the planning techniques that appear in *Chapter 13: Planning and Evaluation*, page 527.