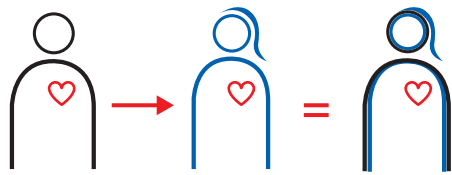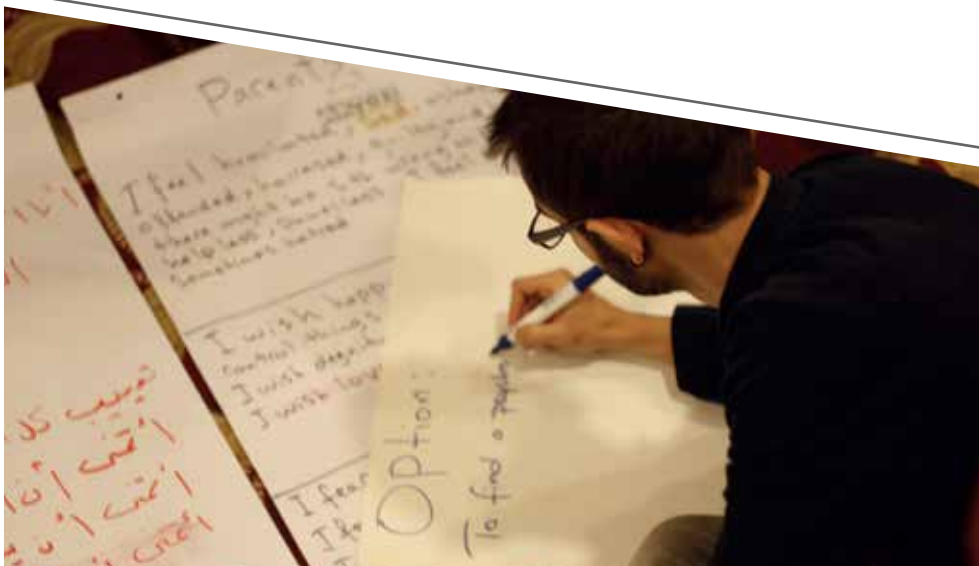# ADVANCED GUIDE TO
MEDIATION

Step inside
the other

"I feel... I wish... I fear"

Willibald Walter
Ljubjana Wüstehube
Ulrike Pusch

ADVANCED GUIDE TO
MEDIATION

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Imprint

All pictures were taken during a serial of trainings conducted by DVV International, Support to Life and
inmedio Berlin in November and December 2014.

Editing: Colin Shepherd

Design and Layout: Gülcan Kaya Menteş

Print: Damla Tasarım

Content

Foreword

The "Advanced Guide to Mediation" was published within the framework of a project realised by DVV International and its Turkish partner Support to Life (STL) to assist Syrian and host community workers, NGO field workers and community leaders in better coping with the immense challenges they face as a result of the Syrian refugee crisis.

According to official sources, Turkey has hosted more than 1,600,000 refugees in the period up until 2015. In some border provinces Syrians outnumber the local population, stretching housing, schools and medical facilities to the limit. The growing numbers have already overwhelmed existing structures and diminished the capacity to deal with the needs of both local people and refugees. As wages go down and prices up, tensions have arisen over the use and distribution of the limited resources. This is worrisome insofar as local conflicts such as neighbourhood and resource conflicts have the potential to rapidly turn violent and/or spread to the regional level.

Against this backdrop, leaders from the affected populations, community workers and NGO field personnel working closely with both the refugee and host communities play a crucial role in navigating tensions and promoting peaceful solutions.

Within the framework of the project, community workers of various national and international NGOs working in three different districts of the Hatay Province received an advanced training in non-directive mediation. They formed a loose mediators' network and were linked to the respective community mayors and religious leaders from the respective districts who were sensitised to constructive conflict resolution in a basic training. In this way the project aimed to strengthen the role of local actors in jointly addressing emerging tensions and establishing an additional mechanism of conflict resolution.

In the long term we hope it will contribute to supporting a future peaceful coexistence in Turkey's multiethnic southern province of Hatay, while at the same time the skills can help Syrians to manage the disputes they will encounter upon their return.

The manual follows the Basic Guide to Mediation which was published in 2014. It primarily addresses mediation practitioners, enabling them to further deepen their knowledge gained during the training sessions. Although published within the context of the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey to support community workers and local leaders, it can also be used as a working guide in other regions and settings.

The manual is composed of three parts. After a brief foreword, the first part discusses advanced tools for mediators. Apart from communication tools such as complete message and systemic questions the chapter also focuses on co-mediation and a technique for elaborating alternatives to mediation together with the conflict parties. Part II focuses on body language and its importance in mediation. Part III presents different models for understanding and analysing conflicts, thus helping mediators to better understand the nature and dynamics of conflicts and to decide in which cases mediation is a suitable option. The booklet concludes with references and sources providing further insight into the topic.

We would like to thank the German Federal Foreign Ministry and the IFA (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) for their generous financial support and inmedio Berlin for conceptualising the mediation trainings and for writing this valuable publication.
We hope you enjoy working with this manual and that it empowers mediators to resolve conflicts and tensions peacefully.

Ulrike Pusch, Initiator and Coordinator of the Project

Matthias Klingenberg, Regional Director Caucasus & Turkey, DVV International

In a country that takes pride in its "hospitality", Syrian refugees in Turkey have redefined the notion of what it is to be a "guest". We are no longer able to take for granted that solidarity alone will pave the way to peaceful co-existence.

This guide is a reminder that more is needed to ensure a smooth transition of refugees into host communities, wherever they might be. In partnership with DVV International, Support to Life (STL) has helped NGO field teams acquire the skills and tools needed to integrate mediation into their work with refugees.

I hope that whoever makes use of this guide will benefit from it in the same way that we have.

Sema Genel Karaosmanoglu, Director, Support to Life (STL), Istanbul

ADVANCED TECHNIQUES

Overview
Basic Communication Techniques [1]

Active Listening

Listen with keen awareness and show that you are listening. Keep good eye contact. Look attentive. Be polite. Avoid interrupting. Let the parties know you are listening by maintaining eye contact, leaning towards them, not fidgeting. Nod your head when appropriate.

Paraphrase

After listening carefully, restate the content of what the person said. You can highlight the key points of a narration and as mediator demonstrate to the party that you were really listening and that you are really eager to understand. Quite often the other party is unable to listen to the voice of the opponent, but is able to listen to what the mediator says. Of course, the mediator will not repeat insulting words, but rephrase them in a way that is not offensive.

Summarise

When a party has finished her story it is very helpful for both parties to hear a reasoned, orderly summary of the important features of that story in neutral language. This helps parties to feel validated and also gives them the impression that things can change, that they can sound more reasonable, that things can improve.

Mirroring

Validate feelings. Acknowledge their feelings (*"I can see that this was difficult for you. I understand that you were very angry."*).

Ask open-ended questions

That is the only way to remain neutral. If your questions sound like interrogations or judgments or that you are attributing blame, you have lost your neutrality and trustworthiness. Open ended questions give the person a chance to tell you what they think, not what you think they should think. (*"Can you tell us a little more? In your own words, what happened? What would you like to see come out of this?"*)

Clarify

If something is unclear, help the person tell his/her story more clearly. (*"Help me understand what made you think that? Did I hear you say that...?"*)

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[1] Active listening, paraphrasing, summarising, mirroring and other basic communication techniques are described in detail in *Basic Guide to Mediation.*

The Four-Sided Message

Based on the ideas of Friedemann Schulz von Thun [2]

Purpose:

The four-sided message is a basic model of communication that helps us to understand and to clarify misunderstandings. Furthermore, it provides the basic understanding for forming a complete message which can be used when communication becomes difficult.
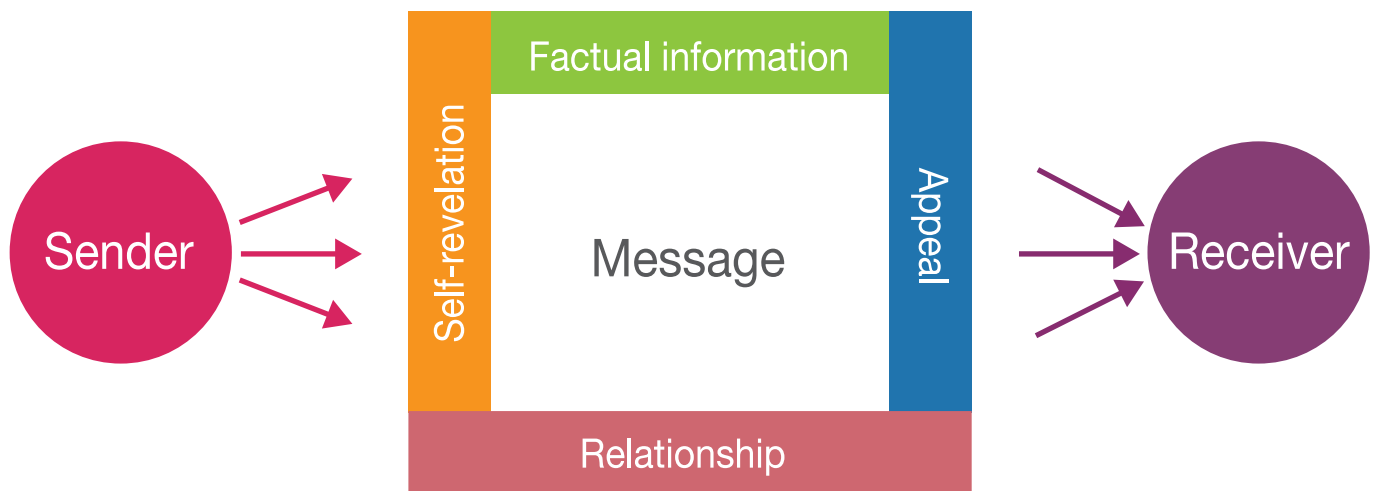
The four-sided message is a model which can be used to illustrate the multilayered character of communication.
All communication, all behaviour, every statement – every message – always has 4 aspects – both on the side of the sender and the receiver.

The sender:
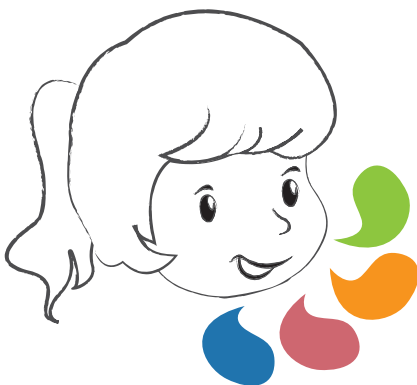
The factual content: what I am providing information about - information about things and actions in the world.

The self-disclosure: what I reveal about myself – the sender says something about themselves: their personality and current mental state.

The relationship aspect: what I think about you and what our relationship to each other is – the sender indicates how he defines the relationship to the receiver

The appeal: what I want you to do – the attempt to influence, a command to think, feel, or act in a certain direction.

[2] Schulz von Thun: Miteinander Reden.

Usually only one side of the message, a statement, is made explicit – often the factual level. The other messages remain "between the lines", however, they are just as effective or important. The implicit messages are primarily sent using nonverbal statements: facial expression, gestures, intonation, use of words – and are often the main message.

Example: *"It is too loud here"*.
- On the **factual level** it expresses: *"It is too loud"*.
- On the **appeal level** it means, e.g.: *"Be quiet"*.
- On the **relationship level** it may mean: *"I am the boss here"*.
- On the **self-disclosure level** it could mean: *"I don't feel respected"*:

Example: *"Hey, the light is green!"*
- **Factual content:** *"The light is green."*
- **Appeal:** *"Drive quicker!"*
- **Relationship cue:** *"You need my help when driving."*
- **Self-disclosure:** *"I am in a hurry!"*

Complete message: all four sides become clear. Above all the appeal and the self-disclosure are expressed explicitly. The precondition is a good self-awareness – what is going on inside me, what do I feel, what do I want from you, what do I feel about you at this moment.

Loudness example: *"It is too loud for me here. I can't concentrate very well. I think you also need less noise in order to be able to work well. I want to tell you something, please be quiet."*

Car journey example: *"The light is still green. I am in a hurry and would like you to drive a little faster so that we can make the light."*

The receiver:

The factual ear: what does the factual content mean – attempts to understand the information
The self-disclosure ear: what kind of person is this – tries to diagnose the state of the sender, what is going on inside them, what feelings, motives are connected with their message
The relationship ear: how is this person actually speaking to me – assimilates what this person appears to think of them, and feels treated accordingly
The appeal ear: what should I do, think, feel, where does he want to have me – hears the command addressed to it
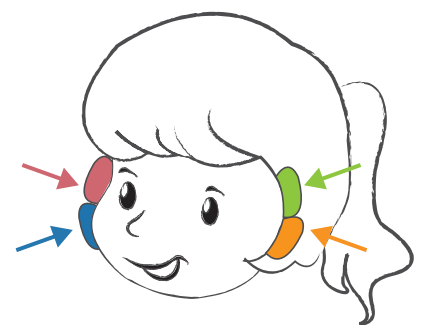
Some of our ears are better trained and have had more practice than others, one ear is generally preferred – according to our inner state and our personality traits. The receiver is generally free to choose which of the four messages he will react to. The feelings are largely generated by the relationship messages received. The appeal ear is responsible for the "pressure" we feel ourselves subjected to.

Example: *"Hey, the light is green!"* Answer: *"Am I driving or you!"*

Which side, which message is being responded to here? Maybe it is understood as follows:

▶ with the **factual ear:** *"Yes, the light is green."*
▶ with the **self-disclosure ear:** *"He is annoyed, displeased."*
▶ with the **relationship ear:** *"He doesn't have any faith in my driving abilities."*
▶ with the **appeal ear:** *"I should drive faster!"*

Feedback:
The multilayered character of communication – the four voices of the sender and the four ears of the receiver – make it clear how much room there is for misunderstandings. As complete messages are rarely sent (and are only occasionally necessary or even appropriate) and no 4-eared, perfectly equipped receiver exists (furthermore, messages can be received that were never sent) feedback should be obtained in order to compare the message received with the message sent**.**

Example *"I think the term "message" is stupid". "You consider the term 'message' inappropriate, you are annoyed. Do you have the impression that I haven't introduced it well? Do you want me to explain it better?"*

The model is useful for understanding and analysing communication problems – in the event of conflict – and misunderstandings.

It is not a diagnosis tool for looking inside other people from outside. Starting with a statement, all I can do is make conjectures about the sender's "inner state". The receiver's reaction to my message does not tell me what he hears with what ear and how he feels about it. I can only find this out by asking!
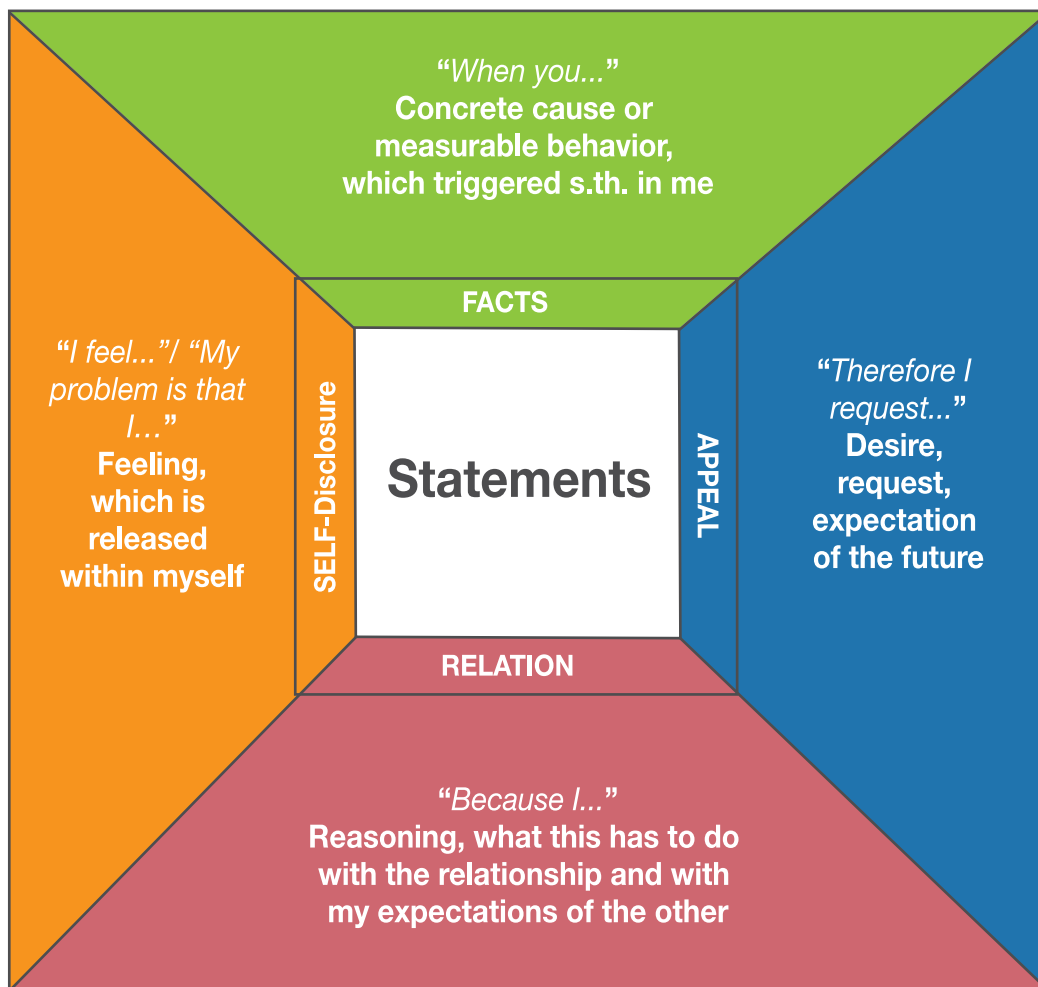
However, the model can sensitise me to the necessity of sharpening and developing my ears (with the aim: empathy) and assist in developing my self-awareness as sender and to express things explicitly in order to achieve a good correspondence between "inner state" and statement (with the goal: authenticity).

Complete Message

Purpose:

Complete Messages are statements which convey anger, criticism as well as other feelings, interpretations and reactions to the opponent in a clear and at the same time non-offensive manner – in the form of constructive criticism.

As mediators we can help the parties to transform accusation, blaming or offensive anger-messages into complete messages that can be understood by the other side.

```
                    "When you..."
                    Concrete cause or
                    measurable behavior,
                    which triggered s.th. in me

                         FACTS

"I feel..."/ "My                              "Therefore I
problem is that     SELF-Disclosure    APPEAL  request..."
I..."                                          Desire,
Feeling,                 Statements            request,
which is                                       expectation
released                                        of the future
within myself
                        RELATION

                    "Because I..."
                    Reasoning, what this has to do
                    with the relationship and with
                    my expectations of the other
```

Steps:

When parties use offensive "you-messages" (like: *"you are not reliable...", "you never listen to me...", "you always do this wrong..."*) the other side will most likely react by defending her or his behaviour and quite often by "blaming back".

1. As soon as mediators hear a "you-message", they can ask for an example or the concrete behaviour in a specific situation. For example: M: *"Could you share the last situation when you thought that she was not reliable? ... "What exactly happened? What exactly did she say and/or do?"* We should support the party to talk about the specific situation in a way the other side can agree upon. For example: P: *"Just last week she promised to accompany me when I needed to go to the hospital for an examination. She just didn't show up."*

2. Then the mediator can ask for the feelings involved: M: *"How did you feel when she didn't show up?"* P: *"I was disappointed and also frightened about going to the doctor by myself, because I don't speak Turkish."* M: So you felt disappointed, but you were also afraid? Did you have other feelings as well?" P: "Yes, after a while I became quite angry because I didn't know what to do. I waited for 30 minutes. Then I had to hurry in order not to be too late."

3. Next we can ask for explanations, what these feelings have to do with the relationship and the associated expectations: *"Why is it so disappointing for you – especially in regard to her? What expectations did you have of her?"* P: "Well, I thought she would be me friend. She knew that I was nervous about going to the hospital. And since she knows Turkish I hoped she would also help to communicate if the staff didn't speak English".

4. We could continue: M: *"What did you /what do you wish for with respect to your relationship with her?"* P: "I would like to have her as a friend. As someone who cares for me. Who is there for me when I need her."

5. The mediator might summarise what she has heard so far: *"Let's see if I got you right: Last week you needed to go to the hospital for an examination. Since you were nervous and don't speak Turkish you asked your friend to come with you. When she didn't show up you were disappointed. You didn't know what to do and you waited for half an hour. During this time you became angry and didn't know what to do. And you were afraid of the situation in the hospital, especially because you don't know Turkish. (Quite often the mediator can see from the body language whether P agrees – or not.) I also heard that you want a friendship with her, a friendship that allows you to rely on each other. Is that true for you?"*

6. Only after all four sides are clear and explicit should the mediator switch to the other side and ask something like: *"If you hear that, … ?"*

The message is now complete because all four aspects of a statement have been made explicit. The naming of the Facts-level separates the problem from the person referred to and facilitates the reception of criticism. Articulating elements of Self-Disclosure and the Relationship-Aspect help detoxify the message. The emotional background of the speaker is revealed to the opponent and invites them to alter their perspective.

The Appeal-aspect points to the future and includes an offer to further the relationship. It helps prevent the one giving the criticism, as well as the recipient, from misusing the message as a means of degrading the other or as a source of misunderstanding. Instead it can be used as the beginning of substantial change.

In the general literature on communication the unclear term "I-Message" is often employed. In practical usage this term can prove misleading: The use of "I" is not an indication of a Complete Message. (e.g. *"I know exactly that you always lie and cheat!" "I have the feeling that you are being dishonest."* These are offensive "you-messages" despite the fact that they start with "I".)

Systemic Question-Set

Purpose:

In escalated conflicts parties focus on the things the other side does wrong. They want to prove that one is right and the other wrong. In worse cases they are convinced: We are good, they are evil. In mediation we want to support the parties in separating the person from the problem.

Systemic questions are the key to understanding how a conflict works. They support the shift away from the other person as the problem towards the problem they share in a given system (like a family, neighbourhood, organisation etc.). Systemic questions focus on the effect of the interdependent behaviour of actors in a co-created environment or system.

The aim is to shift the focus away from the character (and from the assumed negative qualities) of the other party towards understanding the dynamics in which the different actors are embedded. What are their roles within the system? The behaviour of the actors is determined less by the qualities (character, personality) than by their relationships. The reasoning is circular. It is about the reciprocal relations of communication and behaviour, about the vicious circles that frequently result. It is about how problems arise because they are interpreted as problems, thus generating the corresponding behaviour (constructivist epistemology).

Systemic questioning techniques aim to make these connections visible and therefore support parties in finding ideas which enable them to change them. Many of these questions are deliberately formulated to be slightly unusual or irritating. Combined with the mediative approach of the person asking them, they support the parties in thinking differently. Instead of repeating what they thought and said before they are stimulated to rethink their situation and to gain a different perspective on it.

Types of Systemic Questions

Concretisations and operational questions

Keep questioning until concrete behaviour is named, and not just implicit insults. *"I wouldn't do that anymore…"* should be answered with: *"And what would you do instead?" "I don't know."* with: *"And if you did know?"*

▸ *"How would you know that …* (B takes you seriously/accepts you as boss/trusts you…)?"
▸ *"What must B do in order that you…* (believe him/accept him as the boss)?"
▸ *"What would make B notice that you…* (are committed to the project)?"
▸ *"How would you recognise that the mediation was successful?"*
▸ *"How would you recognise that the conflict has been defused/resolved?"*
▸ *"How can you find out if you have actually fulfilled her expectations?"*

Scale questions

Focus on differences and changes, regardless of in which direction. Use this to activate problem-solving potential.

▸ *"Suppose you were to ask the other side to evaluate your willingness to find a negotiated agreement on a scale from 0 to 10. '0' would mean 'no willingness left at all' and '10' would mean you were 'totally willing'. At what level would she rate you? … And at what level would you rate yourself?"*
▸ *"You rated your current willingness to negotiate at 6. What would have to happen to make it a 7 or 8? And what would it need to get you to a 9 or 10?"*
▸ *"On a scale from 1 to 10 how serious is the conflict for you at the moment? '1' means 'hardly perceptible' and '10' means 'extremely serious and acute'."*

Follow-up questions
▸ *"How severe was it when you decided in favour of mediation?"* (Spontaneous initial improvement)
▸ *"In the case of positive changes: And how did you achieve this?"*
▸ *"How did you manage to improve things somewhat?"*
▸ *"In the case of deterioration: What is good about the fact that it has gotten worse?"*
▸ *"When was the last time it was a little less severe?"* (Exceptions)
▸ *"What was different then? How can you go a step down the scale?"*

Hypothetical questions

Hypothetical questions are questions that help you create new possibilities and focus on causes and effects.

▸ *"What would happen, if…"*
▸ *"What would someone do/react, if…"*
▸ *"If your conflict would persist for the next few months, how would it affect the relationship with your neighbours/customers? What customers would you most likely risk losing? And how would your other customers/neighbours react?"*
▸ *"If the other party were to send you flowers (message: lets make peace), how would you react?"*
▸ *"If both of you were to find a peaceful solution, who in your neighbourhood/family/team would be the most surprised? How would the other people involved react? Would they respect a peaceful solution? Or would some people be against it?"*

Escalation or worsening questions

Focus on worst case scenarios, escalation mechanisms or the undesired consequences of conflict in order to generate counter-energy

▸ *"How could you escalate the conflict?"*
▸ *"What would you have to do for B to really slam the door in your face?"*
▸ *"What would have to happen for you to really have sleepless nights because of this conflict?"*
▸ *"What would you have to do to make your system (family/neighbourhood/team etc.) collapse as quickly as possible? Who would have to do what with whom?"*

Miracle question

Miracle questions lead the party into a state with more resources and with a greater orientation towards problem solving. They can be employed as an intervention (springboard method) during mediation. Important: Depending on the escalation stage, the miracle state can be maintained for different lengths of time before the parties generate themes or explore perspectives.

Pragmatic variant:

▸ *"Assuming the mediation was very successful, what would be different then?"*

Shuttle mediation/individual discussion variants: [3]

▸ *"Assume you go home this evening… go to bed at some point and fall asleep… And in the night, while you are sleeping, a miracle occurs… and all the problems that have led you here today have been solved. Just like that. And it really is a miracle that it has happened so quickly. Unfortunately you don't notice that this miracle has occurred because you are sleeping. And that would really be a shame if you of all people didn't notice anything. When you wake up the next day, what would be the first thing that would tell you that the miracle has taken place?"*

Now allow the client to provide as much concrete detail as possible:

▸ *"And what would be different/better? How would you recognise this?"*
▸ *"And what else?"*
▸ *"What would you now do differently? How would the others recognise this/what would the others notice about you?"*
▸ *"And how would they (the others) react? How would you react in turn?"*
▸ *"What will you do with respect to the conflict that you haven't done before?"*

Circular questions [4]

Circular questions encourage parties to develop a change of perspective.

▸ *"What do you think your colleague (B) feels about that situation?"*
▸ *"What does B expect from you?"*
▸ *"What is B telling her best friend about the incident?"*
▸ *"What was the worst thing you did to B?"*

Important for the Approach of the Mediators:

▸ Don't forget to reconnect with the other party! (*"Did you know that? What does it feel like when you hear this? What is new/surprising/remarkable about this for you?"*)
▸ Also ask the other party a mirror-image question.
▸ Summarise and if necessary mirror what the party has just said.
▸ Rapidly switch your questioning from the one party to the other.
▸ If you have a good relationship to the clients: Be confrontational in your questioning – but always remain empathetic and respectful!

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[3] Kim Berg, Insoo/Peter de Long: Interviewing for Solutions 2008.
[4] For more details see Basic Guide to Mediation: Circular Questions.

BATNA – WATNA – Analysis [(5)]

Purpose:

Conflict parties should be able to make a decision about whether they want to participate in a mediation process – or not. With a BATNA-WATNA analysis we can help them to make up their mind, taking different perspectives into account. The idea is NOT to persuade them by "selling" mediation to them, but to help them come to a considered decision by exploring the alternatives, and to compare them with mediation (= negotiated agreement).

With respect to their willingness to participate in a mediation, the parties are usually driven, consciously or unconsciously, by a consideration of their possible alternatives to a negotiated agreement. The better their alternatives, the less likely they are to participate. The worse their alternatives, the more likely they will be to agree to a mediative negotiation.

Unfortunately, parties frequently fail to undertake a thorough analysis of their alternatives and therefore make a decision based on unrealistic ideas and wishful thinking. Consequently, we need to ask them questions that help them to think from different angles and to take realistic long-term consequences into account.

B est	Alternatives to a negotiated agreement, i.e. to mediation	**W** orst
A lternative		**A** lternative
T o		**T** o
N egotiated		**N** egotiated
A greement		**A** greement
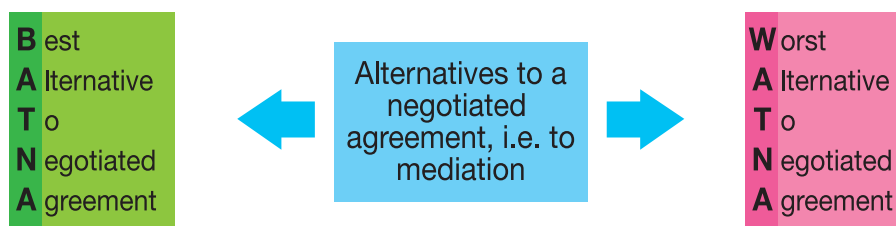
BATNA – WATNA – Analysis:
Exploration of the best, i.e. the worst alternative to a negotiated agreement
(i.e. through mediation).

Steps:

1. Instead of trying to persuade a party to agree to mediation, we can first ask them for possible alternative paths. These might include: going to a local authority, going to court, termination of a contract, threatening the other side, seeking a new job/apartment/employee etc., sitting it out, going to the press/making it public, seeking illegal ways to attain justice.

Here are examples for questions during this step:
- *"How would things develop if you were not to find a negotiated agreement with the other side?"*
- *"What would or could you do? What would or could the other person do?"*

2. We can then ask for the best and worst possible outcomes with respect to these alternatives: *"What would be the worst-case scenario, i.e. best-case scenario if you were to do this".*

3. We might then ask them about the likelihood of an expected outcome. *"How likely is it that this will happen?"*

[(5)] Based on Roger Fisher / William Ury: *Getting to Yes*.

4.   Other perspectives can be included. For example: *"What would the other side's lawyer say about the likelihood of you winning? What would others say?"*

5.   Concerning an expected "best alternative" we should also ask about the long-term consequences. For example: *"What effect will this have on you and your family? What will the other side do (after losing)? How will your relationship be afterwards? How will this effect you, your children etc."*

6.   Only after several best and worst alternatives have been thought through from different perspectives, and with their short and long term consequences, would we finally support the party in coming to a decision: *"What else should you take into account in order to have a solid basis for making a good decision? … If you look at all the best and worst alternatives to a negotiated agreement – how good are they compared to a agreement you could find during a mediation process?"*

Timing of analysis

The mediators can support the parties by conducting a BATNA-WATNA analysis with them:

Before the mediation in individual discussions – if the parties are undecided about whether they should/ would submit to mediation. In the case of conflicts which have escalated dramatically this analysis should be confidential as it is feared that revealing one's BATNA/WATNA could result in strategic disadvantages.

During the mediation, in the event of a blockage. Depending on the degree of escalation and willingness of the parties to the conflict, it can either be discussed openly with all the parties, or in separate discussions with one mediator respectively in order to guarantee confidentiality (caucus).

Caution: Do not attempt to convince the parties that it is better to come to an agreement. Instead, support them in a critical and realistic analysis.

Co-Mediation

Purpose:

Co-mediation means that two or more mediators run the mediation process together as a team. They have equal rights and responsibilities. In many situations, two mediators working together in a team have a lot more possibilities, resources and opportunities than just one mediator. The main advantages of teamwork/co-mediation are that a team:

▶ can mirror the conflict parties (e.g. sex, age, background, and ethnicity).
▶ can role model positive conflict resolution behaviour.
▶ can complement one another's strength and weaknesses.
▶ can follow up on one another's ideas.
▶ can give feedback to each other.
▶ can learn from one another's strategies and approaches.
▶ can use certain methods (e.g. reflecting team, private/separate sessions).

Challenge:

▶ It can take longer to make decisions, which could lead to discomfort for the parties.
▶ If the mediators are not working well together, the process may be undermined.

Issues to be addressed:

Prior to Mediation:
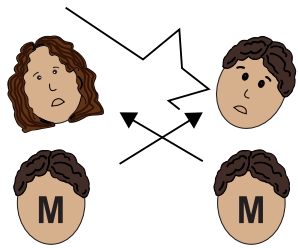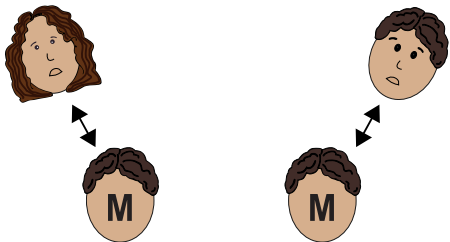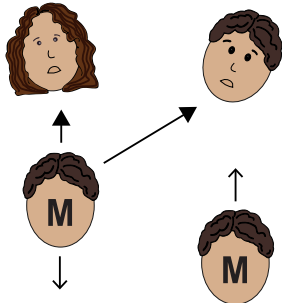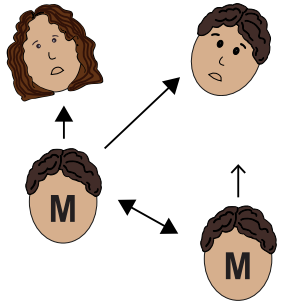
▶ Discuss your style, strengths and weaknesses with each other.
▶ Inform each other of personal worst-case scenarios. Clarify how you want your co-mediator to react in the event of your own worst case scenario. Present your specific type of "worst-case body language" so he can identify it when the time comes.

During the Mediation:

▶ Honour one another's signals.
▶ Trust one another's intuition. Assume that there is a valid idea behind each of your colleague's suggestions.
▶ Suspend your own judgment on your team-mate's line of questioning and/or behaviour and watch for the reactions of the parties.
▶ If a serious disagreement about strategy arises, mediators should offer a short break and clarify their disagreement.

After the Mediation:

▶ Conduct a debrief of the mediation together and be prepared to share what you learned from the experience with other mediators.

Techniques	Seating Arrangements
Paraphrasing and mirroring in a crosswise direction (mainly during story telling phase)	
Private sessions	
Possibility of withdrawing	
Co-mediator as advisor	

BODY
LANGUAGE

Basic Usages of Body Language in Mediation

Purpose:

Body language is the first language that human beings learn in life. Even though adult humans tend to exchange a great deal of information via verbal and written language, body language always plays an important role in communication. Body language becomes particularly important in conflict situations. The greater the level of misunderstanding and mistrust, the more people tend to believe their interpretation of the body language rather than the verbal language.

Therefore, it is helpful if mediators have some basic insights into the functioning of body language and can utilise it for building trust and understanding.

Basic uses of body language

There is a continuous interdependence between a person's thoughts and their body. Some practical conclusions can be drawn from this that we can make use of in difficult situations. We can make conscious use of our awareness of body language in a number of different contexts:

Self-management – effect of my body language on myself

Which inner attitude is conducive to my task? How can I use my body to stay in a powerful mode in which I can access my personal resources?

Effect of my own body language on others

What is the effect of my body language on other people? Is this effect conducive to my task? If not, how can I modify it?

Body language of the mediation parties

Which information can I infer from the bodily expressions of my conversation partner? Observe as many, and even subtle nonverbal signals, as possible.

Building trust and contact (Pacing[6])

Subtle adaptation of one's own body language to mirror the signals of the other. This will strengthen the contact and trust between the parties and you.

Matching the body language of the other will help you understand the other's feelings.

All-partisanship check:

Am I able to mirror all the parties with the same quality?

What does the body language of the parties tell me about how comfortable they feel about me in the role of mediator?

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[6] This term is used in NLP (neuro-linguistic-programming) which provides insights used in different counseling techniques.

Important Knowledge about Body Language

Body language is perceived subconsciously

Every second we collect a huge amount of information about our environment. Only a small fraction of it reaches our conscious thoughts, the majority remains subconscious. Consequently, nonverbal signals generally affect us subconsciously. Subliminal processes contribute to forming an impression of the other person before we are even aware of it.

Body language is individual

A lot of people might use the same signal to express the same message, but there are always exceptions and differences. Depending on body size, gender, culture, age, socialisation, habits, health condition, comfort, and many other aspects, people develop their own individual style of body language.

Perception of body language is subjective

The subconscious interpretation of the perceived signals is based on highly subjective criteria. Therefore, our interpretation of the other sometimes says more about ourselves than about the other. "We see the world the way we want to see it." It is important to keep in mind that the distinction between perception and interpretation usually becomes blurred. Our subjective idea of the other person can easily be mistaken for the truth, which might be doing him an injustice.

Nonverbal signals are individual and individually recognisable (→ Calibration)

Even though body language is individual, we can get to know the body language of an individual and become better at recognising the meaning of her or his body language.
Tuning in to a specific person's condition is called calibrating physiologies[7]. That means adjusting our interpretations to a person's individual expressions. Physiology refers to parts of a certain (neurological, psychological, physiological) state that are perceptible to other people. Calibration refers to perceiving, memorising and recognising these perceptible elements as well as matching them to the corresponding state of mind.

The following features can be used for the purpose of calibration:

Body Language:
▸ **Body posture:** Straight or bent? Symmetric? Tense or relaxed? Posture of head, position of legs, arms and feet, tension in shoulders?
▸ **Face:** Tense or relaxed? Which areas are tensed? Wrinkles? Lips, skin colour, perspiration? Eyes: wide or nearly closed? Wet? Size of pupils, direction of gaze?
▸ **Breath:** Deep or shallow breathing? Quick or slow? Chest or stomach?
▸ **Motions:** Gestures, unconscious micro-movements (subconscious micro-movements like lightly shaking the head or nodding, movements of fingers, tapping of feet)

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[7] NLP

Trust is built and expressed through body language

Body language and nonverbal communication has a strong effect on the emotional relationship between the mediator and the conflict parties. Body language is crucial in winning someone's sympathy and trust. It is essential in the creation of an open and trusting atmosphere.

The mediation will only be successful if the mediator is able to convey compassion, acknowledgement and recognition to the parties. To create and maintain this supportive relationship conducive body language is needed. Giving the parties the feeling of being understood is a basic principle of mediation. This cannot be achieved through summarising and mirroring alone. Have you ever observed your body language when you were having a nice conversation with your best friend? It is very likely that the two of you had a very similar posture and moved simultaneously. When we feel a good connection to our interlocutor, if we feel safe and comfortable in his presence and engage in an intense exchange, we usually mirror the other without even realising it. It is this phenomenon, called pacing, that we make use of.

Copying some elements of the parties' body language can help us to better connect with them. By discreetly incorporating some characteristics of the other's body language, e.g. adapting his posture, facial expression or imitating specific ideomotor movements one is usually able to build up an emotional connection to this person. However, be careful not to bluntly copy the person's behaviour.

Try to make the movements look authentic and in harmony with the rest of your body language. Again, we have to stress the interdependence between inner attitude and body language. On one hand, pacing the clients will reflect back on you and your attitude. It will help you remain open and attentive. On the other hand, if you strongly dislike the other person, you will probably not be able to pace him or her convincingly. This should be a sign for you to reflect on your multipartiality. In most cases, pacing results in a strong connection on a subconscious level. Be aware of it and avoid losing your multipartiality by having a stronger relation to one of the clients than to the others.

If we try to understand somebody really well we tend to adopt their body position. If two people have a very good and trusting encounter they tend to copy each other's body language. This is called pacing.

In order to build trust and to avoid someone feeling excluded a mediator can pace each of the parties alternately or simultaneously integrate expressions from each party into his/her body language.

Triad for the constructive interpretation of body language (according to Ljubjana Wüstehube)

Step 1: Purely descriptive observation
Free from interpretation and evaluation

↓

Step 2: Hypotheses creation
Interpret observations in form of
several hypotheses

↓

Step 3: Intervention
Check hypotheses

Inwards
Self-management

Outwards
Verbalisation, pacing, mirroring
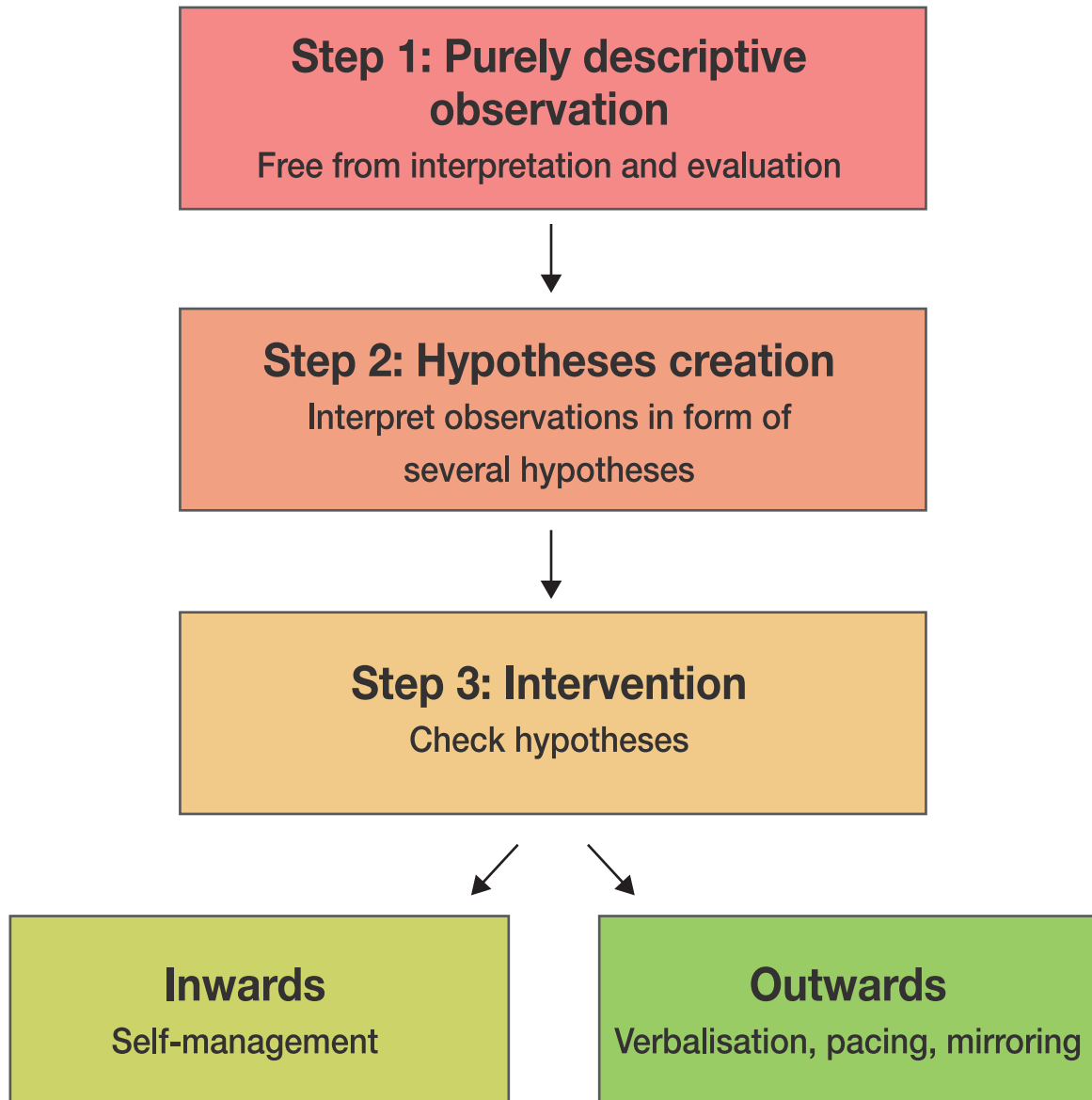
How nonverbal signals can be used despite all this:

▸ Use all your senses and collect as much nonverbal information as possible. Try to stay neutral and open to every signal. Beware of hasty interpretations!

▸ See your interpretations as hypotheses, not as the truth. Try to collect information to confirm or refute your hypotheses. Eventually, obtain feedback from the clients: *"I have the impression… is that correct?"*

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▶ Interpret the signals in the light of the whole process and what has already been said. Pay attention to changes in the body language of the clients. This might indicate an alteration in their inner attitude, for example a newly emerging openness. A careful observation of these signals might give you a hint of the future course of the mediation before the clients can even voice their feelings. Example: If the client stayed in one body position during the whole process and now changes his posture, this might be an indication that he relates new feelings and thoughts to the topic he is now talking about. This can be the signal for a turning point in the mediation process.

MODELS FOR ANALYSING AND
UNDERSTANDING CONFLICTS

Three Basic Forms of Conflict Management[8]

Purpose:

Mediation is one part of conflict management. As mediators we should be able to generate the context for conflict management. Depending on the escalation of a conflict and other factors we need to frame the progress of mediation in the triangle of power, rights and interests. Mediation needs a framework of rights (i.e. justice system) and of power balance.

This model can support us in the premeditation stage in order to council conflict parties or stakeholders.

Organisational/Systemic Fingerprint
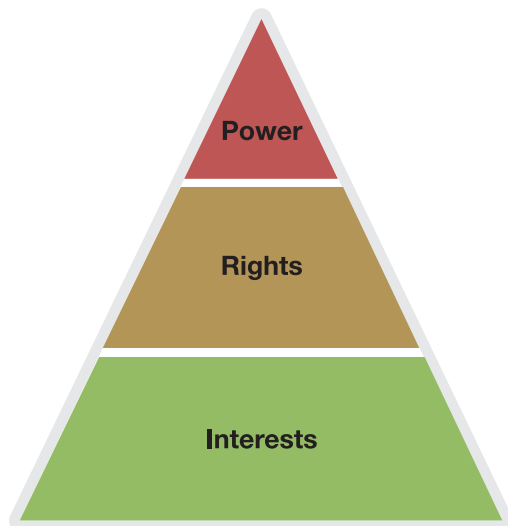
Three basic forms of conflict resolution are available.

The exercise of power, recourse to rules & rights, or mediation between the different needs. The proportion in which these basic forms are applied to the total of all conflicts varies from organisation to organisation (or system to system).

However, one can count or check this on the basis of one's own experience in order to obtain a fingerprint of the organisation's conflict culture.

Each of the three basic forms is composed of a series of formal and informal instances: In the school for example, the power (of the teacher), to issue the students with instructions, the power of the headmistress to decide; the house rules/rights and code of punishment which also apply in the school; the agreements which the students have made with the teacher; and the mediation of conflicting needs, maybe through a clarifying discussion between a student and their class teacher, with the assistance of the school counsellor.

As a rule, within an organisation each of the three basic forms also contain, like a hologram, the two other forms so they each reflect the overall proportions. Thus, during education or the implementation of rules, the same proportion of power or mediation is employed as found in the overall proportions. The same proportions apply in securing mediation processes, power and rules.

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[8] According to: William L. Ury/ Jeanne M.Brett/ Stephen B. Goldberg, Getting Disputes Resolved: Designing Systems to Cut the Costs of Conflict.

Requirement: Decision makers (and mediators) should have the ability to provide information at any time as to which of the three basic forms one is now using in the current conflict.
The question as to which of the available instances should be addressed in which conflict and in which order is a concrete leadership skill.

Conflict management involves examining and reorganising the available instances and the conventional sequence in which they are addressed within specific conflicts, as well as introducing new instances where required.

All three basic forms have their uses in (nearly) all organisations. Stigmatising individual areas inevitably leads to a distorted perspective and uncontrolled procedures.

Characteristics

Each of the three basic forms describes a specific path. These different paths can be chosen by one and the same person on different occasions. There are a series of instances available to support each path.

Exercise of power
"That is enough!" "Now I will tell you what you have to do!" "I have considered things carefully and have come to a good decision."

This presupposes: The means for enforcing the claim to power must be available, i.e. the parties to the conflict recognise the position of power.

Advantages/disadvantages: This basic form can also be used in highly escalated conflicts. However: The satisfaction and frustration of the conflict parties is directed towards the 3rd person. The measures enforced through the exercise of power frequently fail to correspond to the needs of the parties to the conflict. This results in conflict resolution with a low level of sustainability and thus high follow-up costs (due to the repeated flare-up of the conflict – unless the means of enforcement are continually present, which in turn generates high costs).

Attention: In certain socio-cultural settings power and the exercise of power are taboo, so that they are employed in a virtually uncontrolled manner (ultimately, as a rule, the taboo only prohibits the reflection and discourse on power, not its deployment). This is often also accompanied by a taboo on guidance.

Recourse to rights & rules

"There is an agreement/a law that is appropriate to your dispute and you have to abide by it." (Agreements within the group, house rules, law).

This presupposes: The universal validity of the rule must be recognised by both parties to the conflict, otherwise power will be required for its enforcement.

Advantages/disadvantages: Under certain circumstances it is sufficient to merely refer to the rule – namely, when its universal validity is recognised. In such cases the costs for conflict resolution are low. In all other cases they are high, namely as high as the price for the provision or the deployment of the means of power.

Attention: How did the rules/rights come about (agreed or imposed)?
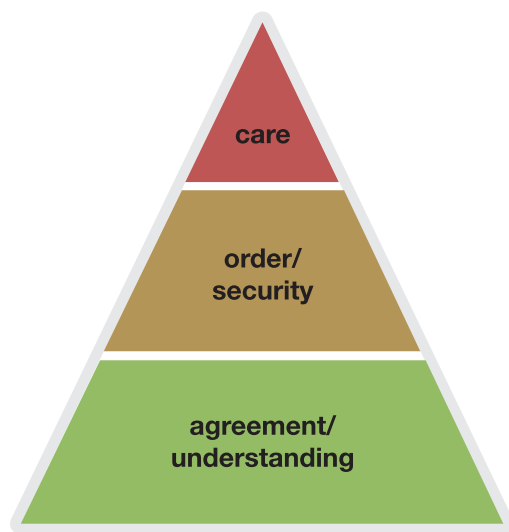
Neither form of conflict management is good or bad per se. If power, rights and interests operate together in a good way, then power is perceived as care, rights as providing security and interests lead to agreement.

If not, power can be seen as despotism, rights can be perceived as a constraint
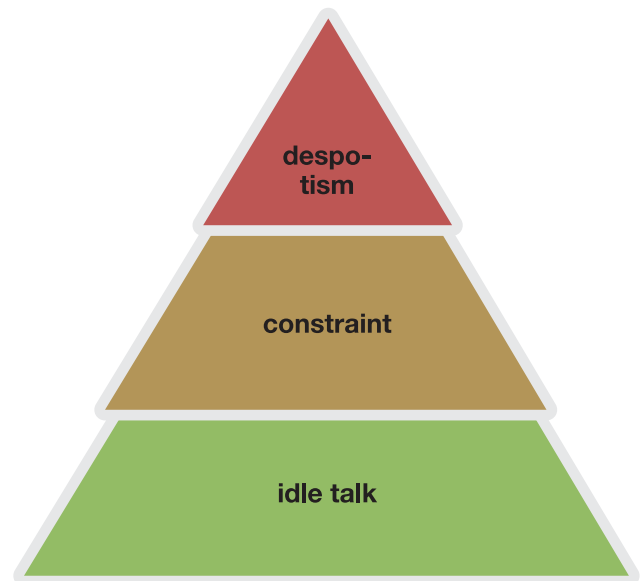
and the interests-orientation as idle talk.

Mediating between different needs

"You should work this out amongst yourselves." (Negotiation, mediation)

This presupposes: Willingness of the conflict parties to look for a solution; and: Sufficient time to negotiate the solution.

Advantages/disadvantages: The solution/regulation comes from the participants and includes their needs. This fosters a sustainable solution and thus lower costs. Under certain circumstances it is a protracted process; the result cannot be predicted.

Attention: Organisations which require a certain degree of disorder can operate better in this disorder when the conflicts are mediated.

Mediation as a "Dialogue of Recognition[9]"

Bernd Fechler (inmedio Frankfurt)

Purpose:

The job of facilitative mediators seems to be clear-cut: They are supposed to help the conflicting parties to find their own solution to the conflict. In order to do this job they use any method and any kind of intervention they can think of – depending on each individual case, the situation at the time and the cultural and institutional context.

But what exactly does "support" mean? Why do the conflicting parties need an independent and impartial third party which is supposed to mediate? And what exactly happens during this mediation process?

The following chapter provides a general idea of what the process of mediation is about — a kind of roadmap, pointing out what the work of the mediator actually consists of. We start with a seemingly simple question: What is so 'bad' about a conflict?

Escalation of conflicts caused by a loss of recognition

Conflicts, no matter whether they are between parties with the same or different cultural backgrounds, cause alienation. Conflicts draw their destructive energy from increasingly disturbed relationship dynamics. No matter what might have been the original cause, the intensity of conflict escalation is usually the result of mutual insults which the conflicting parties have exchanged during the conflict.

Strong feelings and rigid positions are usually not the result of the material side of the conflict (which means whatever the conflict is about: a thing, an issue, a right), but more the result of the personal insults traded during the course of the conflict and the fear of losing face. In the end most conflicts come down to the question of honour or identity. Friedrich Glasl (1997) describes how in the course of conflict escalation the conflict based on factual matters increasingly turns more into a personal fight between the opponents. In the end it's all a matter of principle.

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[9] For the purpose of this publication this is a short version of a model that was originally published in: Bernd Fechler (2003): Dialog der Anerkennung. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Mediation bei „interkulturellen" Konflikten in der Schule. In: Kloeters, Ulrike/Julian Lüddecke/Thomas Quehl (Hg.): Schulwege in die Vielfalt. Handreichung zur Interkulturellen und Antirassistischen Pädagogik in der Schule, Frankfurt/M., p. 103-148

I. It is about **Issue/s**		
Hardening, debate, actions not words	**II.** It is about **Person/s**	
Win-Win: Solutions are possible	Images & coalitions, moral loss of face, strategies of threat	**III.** It is about **Principle/s**
	Win-Loose: Solutions are likely	Limited destruction, fragmentation, together into the abyss
		Lose-Lose: All parties lose
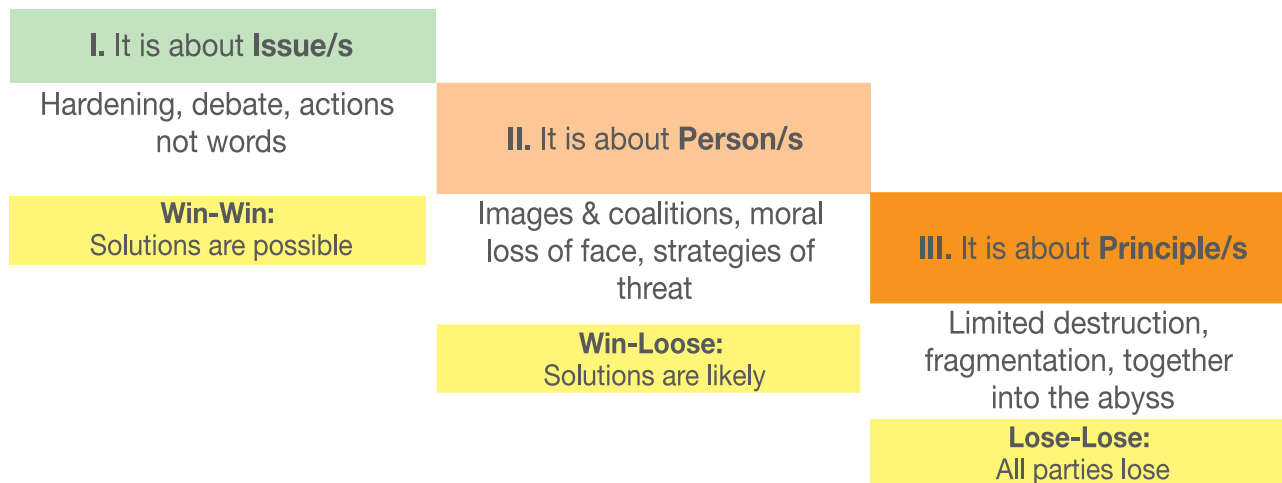
Escalation Steps according to Friedrich Glasl[10]

To sum up, the destructive dynamics are based on the failed recognition of the conflicting parties with respect to one-another. It draws its energy from mutually questioning each other's personal integrity and aims at damaging the public image of the other person – the status, recognition, dignity, honour of the opponent. Irvin Goffman (Goffman 1967) talks about a "disturbance in the expressive order" between the opponents: A change from a situation of coherent mutual recognition and acceptance to an imbalance, either one-sided or mutual, which is characterised by disrespect. This imbalance can only be "sorted" again through acts of compensation in accordance with the relevant socio-cultural rule system.

(Re)creating the willingness to find a solution

In compliance with the principles of impartiality and abstaining from providing a solution, mediators never decide what it was "really like" or who might be "the most responsible" or who might "carry the guilt" in a conflict situation. In fact their first task is to help the involved parties to view the conflict, its elements and its causes in a way which is perceived as acceptable and bearable for everybody. Then they help to find criteria for a solution which again is acceptable for everybody. The way the agreement is finally reached remains with the conflicting parties. In contrast to a court situation where the "real course of action" is reconstructed to find a common binding solution (= sentence) by applying legal norms, in mediation the main goal during the phase of conflict elucidation is to *(re)create the willingness to find a solution. It is about introducing a turning point in the relationship* of the parties involved. This turning point enables them to contribute towards finding an amicable solution and to take responsibility for the solution finally agreed upon.

This does not necessarily mean that during this process the opponents intensively and explicitly talk about their relationship. Depending on the situation and the prevailing "conflict culture", there are different factors and triggers which can lead to such a turning point. The crucial point for the success of the intervention is to make sure that the parties involved are in a position to save face.

[10] Glasl, Friedrich: Conflict Management, 1997

On the way to a good solution

What exactly contributes towards this readiness to find a solution? To me, the problem of recognition is crucial to understanding the healing effect of mediation. Even though the methods and interventions might differ from case to case, successful mediation always follows a similarly structured, step-by-step process that contains elements of what I would call a "dialogue of recognition". No matter which agreements can be found, the core goal is to regain a coherent relationship between the opponents at the level of personal integrity: There has to be a gradual "settling of accounts", from an open or concealed exchange of blows at the level of accusation and devaluation to a settling of all incriminating and exculpatory stakes in the conflict. The task of the mediator is to find out which questions or interventions they can use as "midwives" to initiate and support the necessary communication and recognition process on the way to reconciliation.

The levels of recognition

There are three different consecutive levels of recognition:

1. Emotional first aid: The conflicting parties need to be heard and understood in *principle*. They need to get rid of their frustration, they need someone who takes them seriously, who believes them.

2. Signals of recognition: The conflicting parties want *the opponent* to understand them – at least they expect the opponent to *seriously* try to *understand* the other party's view. And: The opponent is supposed to show in some recognisable way that he is *impressed*.

3. Settling of accounts: Where the parties feel that their personal integrity has been violated there has to be some sort of "healing act", *a settlement* based on the recognition and acceptance of the insult. This settlement contains material and immaterial forms of "pay back" for the damages caused through the conflict.

As both parties frustrate each other's needs in escalated conflicts, an impartial third party is required to assist in taking the first step. The wish to be recognised at the first level is thus initiated by the mediators themselves. They actively listen to all the parties and signalise that they want to understand what the parties have to say and that it is taken seriously.

The second level of recognition focuses on achieving a basic change of attitudes: From confrontation to a readiness to cooperate. This is more difficult to achieve as here the opponents themselves have to do something: They want the opponent, who in their eyes is "the real cause of the whole misery", to "seriously" look at the whole story the way the other side sees it, adopting their point of view. This is not an easy level to manage for either side. However, there are differences as to how "deep" mutual understanding has to go and how a willingness to concede ground has to be expressed. Whereas in one case it may be enough for the opponent to express that the way the other party sees a situation "might be true", other situations may require the opponent to almost fully understand the other party's view – a real change of perspective. No matter whether they are voiced directly or indirectly, elaborately or clumsily, the necessary actions are always acts of communication, symbolic acts of recognition: Acts, which emphasise the equality of the opponents and which transform the imbalance of mutual disrespect into a balance in the opponents' "expressive order".

All settlement activities at the third level derive from one central question: What is still needed to heal the situation? What does A still need (to hear, to see, to get) from B? And vice versa, what does B need from A? Only the conflict parties can answer this question. Having reached a basic willingness to cooperate they can work on a reasonable solution for the actual issues in question. Some issues must be healed by an exchange of material goods. Other issues have to be settled through rules and agreements which refer to the way the parties deal with each other – to do or not to do certain things, to say or not to say certain sentences.

Mediators know: Intelligent and durable agreements can be achieved by focusing on individual or mutual interests. However, a change of personal attitude cannot be enforced, it can only be an additional bonus gained from fair mediation experienced by both conflicting parties.

Change of Perspective and Steps of Recognition

Purpose:

A change of perspective is often considered the core of mediation. But how can the mediator encourage the parties to change their perspectives and to mutually approve each other?

If we know the steps of recognition that the parties need to ascend, then we can proceed carefully and recognise where the parties are.

It is important to accept that a mediator can increase the probability of the parties risking a change of perspective, but cannot force it. Just like a host, they can only establish the right preconditions for a successful party.

Steps:

0. **Basic pre-condition: Both parties must feel that they are understood by the mediator!**

Mediators use techniques like: Active listening, mirroring, paraphrasing etc.
The party can wholeheartedly say or think:

"I feel understood and recognised by the mediator."

1. **Recognition of the other party**

By agreeing to the mediation process the parties accept the other as a conflict party:

"I accept you as a negotiating partner."

2. **Listening and repeating**

"I hear what you say."

Mediators can ask: *"What has reached you? What have you heard?*
Could you briefly summarise what has just been said?"

3. Recognition of the other's subjective truth

"I believe that you mean/feel what you say."

Mediators can ask: *"Do you believe that he really feels that way?"*
"Can you believe it as it is?" "Which part do you believe and where do you have doubts?"

4. Cognitive and/or emotional understanding

"I understand what is important to you (and can relate to it)."

Mediators can ask: *"What exactly can you relate to?" ("And what not?") "What percentage can you understand?"* In addition, we can ask circular questions to encourage parties to step into the other's shoes.[11]

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[11] See Systemic Question Set.

Introduction to the Nine Steps of Escalation

In everyday life, people associate the term escalation with an increasing degree of violence or a rise in emotions. In his well known escalation model, Friedrich Glasl identifies 9 steps of conflict escalation[12]. The model does not refer to a scale of violence but the inner logic and dynamic of the conflict. In this model conflicts escalate by going downhill.

With every step in conflict escalation parties lose empathy, compassion and other resources and competences helpful for a constructive and creative resolution to a conflict. The downhill escalation increasingly limits access to options that are available for a sound and sane human being until the parties completely lose their self-control.

This model applies to family conflicts as well as inter-group conflicts or even conflicts between states.

Purpose:

▶ This escalation model can be useful as a tool for analysing and understanding a conflict.

▶ It is also highly valuable for sensitising people to the dynamics of conflict escalation. Sensitising conflict parties can lead to a greater awareness. It can warn parties and stakeholders of the steps they should avoid if they want to prevent a conflict from escalating out of control.

▶ It helps parties to understand how conflict escalation dynamics work in general. It can help them to understand that this dynamic is part of human reality. In addition, it can support parties in finding constructive ways out of the escalation.

▶ For stakeholders and mediators, this model is an important tool for identifying what kinds of interventions are possible and necessary. Depending on the stage of escalation, very different approaches, tools and methods need to be applied.

If conflicts escalate, more and more resources are bound up in the conflict. At some point parties can no longer say: *"I have a conflict"*, instead they need to realise *"The conflict has me"*.

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[12] Glasl, Friedrich: Conflict Management, 1997

Overview: Escalation Steps

1 Hardening	2 Debate & polemics	3 Actions not words	4 Images, coalitions	5 Loss of face	6 Strategies of threat	7 Limited destructive blows	8 Fragmentation of the enemy	9 Together into the Abyss
Opinions collide	Polarisation of thoughts, feelings and personal intents	Facts accomplished	Stereotypes, cliches, image campaigns, Rumours: to demolish the other's reputation	Public and direct insults = loss of belief in the other's moral integrity	Threat and counter threat	Thinking in categories	Paralysing and Desintegration of the adversarial system	No way back!
Being aware of a tension leads to strain	Strategy: quasi-rational, verbal abuse	Discrepancy verbal / non-verbal behaviour. Non-verbal attitude dominates		Degrading rituals to "unmask" the other's "true nature"	Unaccomplishable demands challenge potential sanctions	Disregard the other's humanity	Constriction of exponents from	absolute confrontation
Still being convinced that tensions can be solved through discussion	Talking via 3rd party		Bid for "fans" symbiotic coalitions	Kick out, elimination	Credibility: proportionality of compulsion to act/ trip wires	Limited blows of destruction as "prompt reply"	Destruction of vital system supporting factors, resulting in an ungovernable situation	Destruction via self-destruction, suicidal pleasure gain, if only the enemy was completely defeated!
Conflict partners, not yet parties or opponing blocks	Temporary grouping around different positions	Miss-interpretations	"Who is not with me, is against me!"	Disgust	"Second move"	Reversion of values: relatively small self damage as "winner"	Total write-off!	
	Discrepancy between what is said and what is thought	"Pessimistic anticipation": misstrust, acceleration	Fraudulent behaviour	Battle for ideologies, values, principles	Issues of ultimata			
		Grouping, cohesion, cristallisation of rols	Accusations about the other's shortcomings	Demand for rehabilitation!				
		Loss of empathy						

Escalation and Styles of Mediation

Modified acc. to F. Glasl, 2003

Harde-
ning

Debate,
polemics

Actions
not
words

Images,
coali-
tions

Moral
loss of
face

Threats

Limited
destruc-
tion

Fragmen
-tation

Together
into the
abyss

Moderation
facilitative mediation
problem-solving mediation

*Concentration on the
issues of controversy*

Transformative mediation
"therapeutic" mediation

*Increasingly directive in regard to
the process, taking into account
deeper causes of the conflict*

Shuttle-mediation
rights-based mediation

*Concentration on issues, directive
regarding the process*

Mediation-arbitration; "power
mediation"

*Directive in regard to the
process and issues*

Description and Example of the Escalation Steps

In order to clarify the steps of escalation, the different steps are explained using a sample case. The example is printed in italics.

Sample Case:

Two communities live on the banks of a river. Both sides of the river are connected by many bridges. The two communities have a good neighbouring relationship. Minorities from the other community live on each side of the river. Intermarriage is common and trade is flourishing.

The leaders of both communities jointly develop a new school project. They agree on everything except the site for the school. Both leaders wish to have the building on their side of the river.
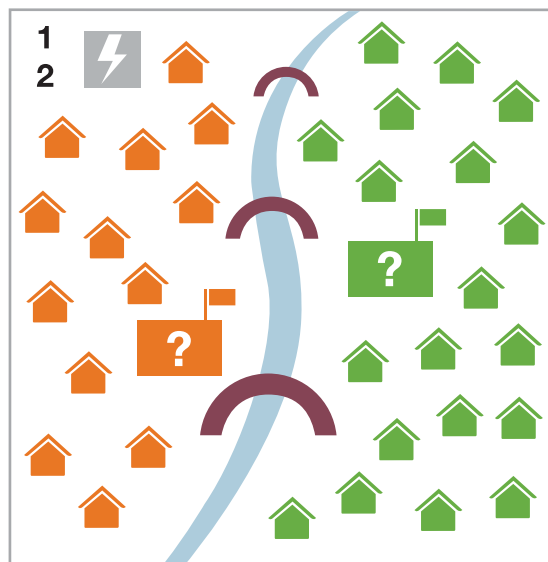
Step 1: Hardening

Conflict begins with occasional clashes of opinion which are not perceived as a conflict. Unlike in an open discussion, where people exchange their different views constructively, they now become agitated. At least one party feels it in his/her stomach. The mood becomes tense and they sometimes talk aggressively, but they still hope that they will manage to convince the other side.

Sample case:

Orange community (left side-OC): "This site is really good. It is near the bridge so everybody can reach it comfortably!"

Green community (right side-GC): "But honestly, there are really more people living on our side of the river, so the school building should be with us!"

OC: "It doesn't matter how many people live on your side. This is not important. I will talk with my elders and I will come back to you to settle this thing."

Step 2: Debate & polemics

Parties start to lose confidence that they will be able to convince the other side. They still talk to the other party. However, when addressing them, the main aim is to gain support from their own peers and that part of the audience which is still undecided, rather than convince the opponent. They try to "prove" verbally that they have "better arguments". Therefore, rhetorical tricks and tactics dominate the debate. Undertones in the conversation convey insulting messages about the other party.

Sample case:

In a live-discussion, broadcast on the local radio station:

OC: "It's so sad that I cannot discuss this with your predecessor who's unfortunately no longer in office. He was always open to good arguments"

GC: "This is typical. I keep hearing this, even from members of your town council that you try to ridicule people rather than listen."

OC: "Come on, you are just too proud to admit that you just didn't think it through. It would be more beneficial even for your people to build the school on our side. You don't act in the interests of you own people!"

GC: "What a show you make! You already accepted our proposal. Don't you remember? Is your memory that bad in other areas of life too?"

Step 3: Actions, not words

Having discussed for some time without achieving a result the parties lose hope that they will manage to find an agreement. Desperately, in order to move things forward, the only thing they can do (in their view) is to take action unilaterally (= fait accompli). In this stage, one of the parties makes an important move without consulting the other party. Usually the party that becomes active has a good reason to do so, but the other party feels overridden, sold out and very upset. Once this border has been crossed it is difficult to return to a discussion without the help of a third party due to the development of a deep mistrust.
After one party has adopted action as their strategy the other party will do the same. The parties have lost faith in their ability to discuss things. They still talk but they don't believe each other's words. Instead they tend to interpret the other's actions. The risk of misinterpretation increases dramatically.

Sample case:

*Some time has passed and the leaders of the two communities meet again:*

OC: "You know I have spoken to an official and submitted the plan for the school. Here is the plan for the building. He was very happy about my ideas and agreed immediately."

GC: "How could you do this? I thought we agreed to have our community discussion here first. You tricked me!"

OC: "Ah, don't be silly. You know we can't go on discussing forever. When the representative came, I took the opportunity."

Again some time passed. Now the GC took action as a reprisal

GC: "I know you will be really glad about this. I also talked to the community and I found a donor who will pay for the school building exactly at the site I proposed all along. Isn't this great news? And since it was you who said that we have to hurry, I'm sure you will be really satisfied now."
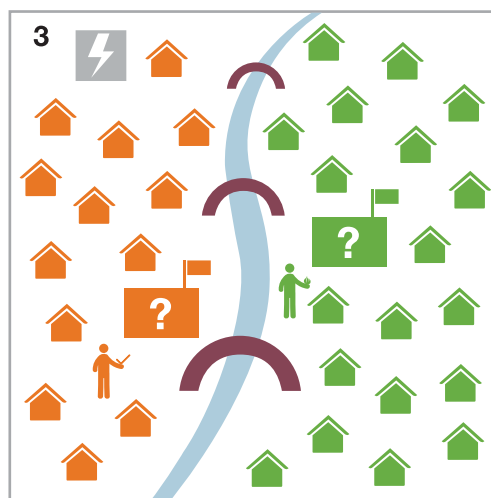
Step 4: Images & coalitions

What will the parties do next as the conflict continues? They will try to gain strength by seeking supporters, involving more and more people. The parties involve the media, write open letters, web-postings etc. They think in categories of friend or enemy. *"The friend of my enemy is my enemy, too! The enemy of my enemy is my friend!"* The parties are eager to create strong coalitions, which turn out to be very rigid, having a strong group-cohesion: No critics are allowed in their own group. Critics are quickly perceived as enemies and traitors *("Either you are with us, or against us!")*. There is little room for constructive discussion even within the group.

Fixed images and stereotypes have formed: The problem is no longer perceived as a disagreement about specific issues, instead the other party in general is seen as the problem: They are old-fashioned, unskilled, egoistic, not capable etc.

Covert provocations take place, which do not just follow the motto "*I take what I need*" as in step 3 (actions, not words). Instead they are also aimed at obstructing the other side, even if the acting party doesn't directly benefit from it. That is, lose-lose-thinking becomes prevalent. Nevertheless, these provocations are still not framed as deliberate actions, which the parties tend to deny. However, it doesn't matter whether such a provocation is in fact deliberate or not. If the other party perceives it as deliberate, the process of escalation will continue.

Sample case:

OC (to members of his own group): "I have heard rumours that on Wednesday a representative of the donor will come and hold a celebration at the site where they intend to build the school. They will come our way and have to use our bridge. We can organise a traffic jam so we can prevent them from celebrating, and the next day we can file a report saying the meeting didn't take place because they are not well organised. And if they ask, we would pretend it was simply an accident."

GC after this happened to his people: "Of course this was not by accident but a pure provocation! We know, we are really experienced in planning and building houses. They are not so experienced. They are the old fashioned and unskilled people. So the only thing we have to do is go to the government and other people we know and give evidence that, yes, they are simple people and have no idea whatsoever about building a house."

OC: "What I will do is inform my community that the GC's donor is from abroad and we don't want to have foreign governments meddling in our affairs. We'll issue a press release: "GC wants to sell our children's future to foreign investors!" We will organise a demonstration and some of our heroic, wild youngsters will go to the other party's school site and maybe destroy something. Not that I would give orders to do this, but it might happen simply because of the tense atmosphere and the vicious people from the GC."
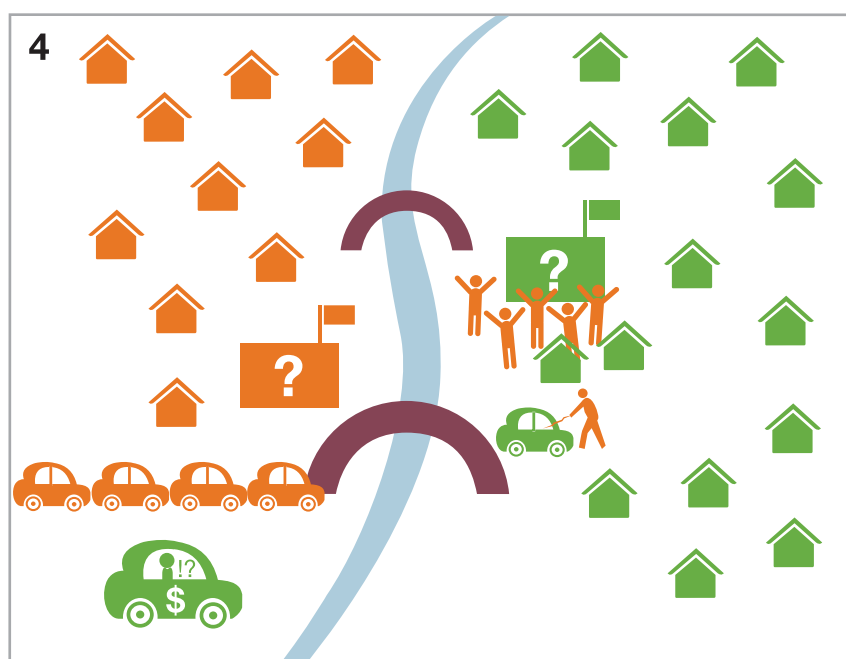
Step 5: (Moral) loss of face

So far, the attacks have been aimed at the competences of the other side (unskilled, old-fashioned, simple-minded…). The next step is that parties start to question each other's moral integrity. They start to think that the other side is not just stupid and incompetent, but criminal, ill-minded, liars, traitors and evil. That is, they lose their human face. The party who thinks this way will search for evidence and once they have found it, will present it publicly. Usually the response of the party attacked is very strong. In order to rehabilitate themselves they will try to prove that it is those who accused them who are criminal liars. Thus they undertake reciprocal action – the escalation dynamic is perfect! The original conflict issues are completely forgotten. It is now all about values: *"We cannot agree to cooperate with murderers! We have to cast them out!"*

Sample case:

The GC has started building their own school. One night there is a fire and all the timber is burned. There is a great outrage: "They lit the fire! They are arsonists! Criminals! People could have been killed and they didn't care! This shows how they really are!"

OC's reaction: "No, they are liars! They lit the fire themselves just to blame us! One month ago a girl was raped by one of them. They are a real threat! How blind and naive we have been not to recognise how dangerous they are sooner! We must not cooperate any longer!"

Earlier on, GC and BC would have made a joint effort to find the rapist/arsonist and punish the culprit, no matter from which community he came. However, at this stage of escalation such incidents are perceived as a revelation of the "true nature" of the other side and they are used politically to mobilise the population for revenge.


Step 6: Strategy of threat

Frequently, things now move forward extremely quickly. The conflict becomes dominated by threats and counter-threats. These are no longer minor threats as used for rhetorical purposes in escalation step 2, but essential threats: A massive demand, combined with a potential sanction and often an ultimatum. These threats are meant to be very forceful, but the parties can no longer see that it is highly unlikely that the other side will fulfil the demands. For them this would mean giving in completely. Furthermore, the party making the threat in order to increase their power has effectively put their fate into the other's hands because what they do next now depends on what the other party does or does not do.

Sample case:

GC: "We want you to hand over the culprits and the head of police as well because we know that he was informed! Your mayor needs to officially apologise. This has to happen within 48 hours otherwise we will block the bridges to protect our property."

OC: "We cannot hand over anybody because none of us did it. You must stop accusing us. Your mayor who lied about this needs to resign or we will cut off the electricity which we have been supplying you from our power plant up. Sorry, but we cannot do such business with people who lie to us in this way."
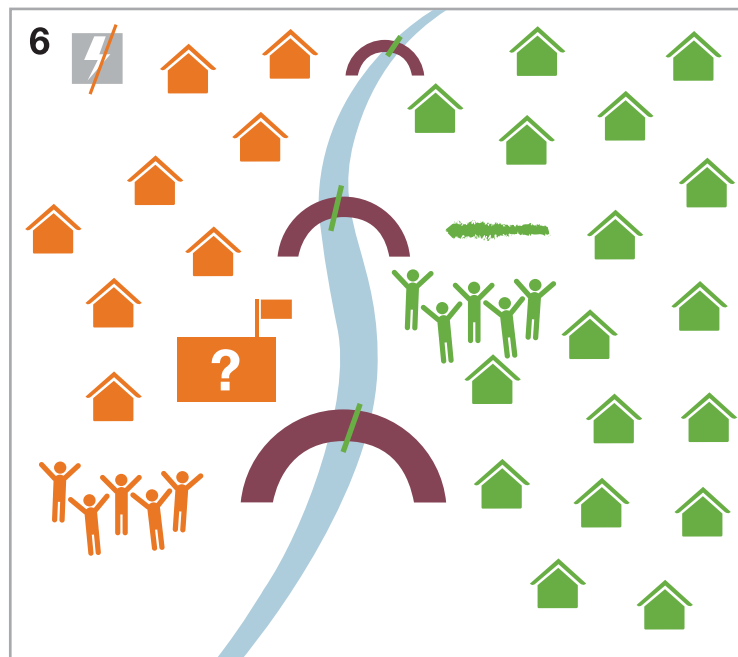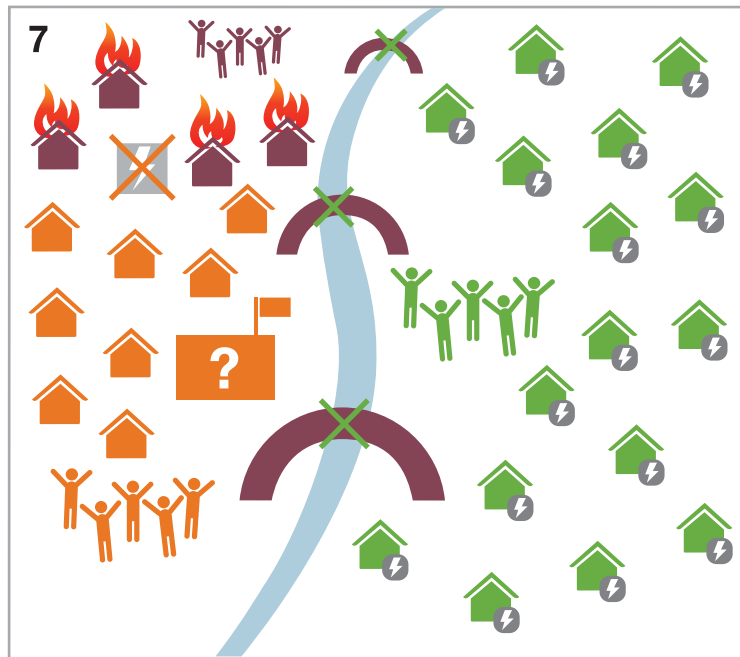
Step 7: Limited destructive blows

As it is not likely that either party will fulfil the demands, the threats have to be implemented and the parties start to inflict limited destructive blows on each other. Limited, because they are not meant to actually destroy the other system physically, economically or socially. Instead they are meant to be painful warnings to make the other side give in. Sometimes the parties are in a state of desperation: *"We really hate to do this! However, we just don't have any other option if you are not willing to give in!"*

Both parties now suffer from serious losses and damages (lose-lose), but in their lopsided way of thinking they feel like winners if the others suffer *bigger losses*. The other side is dehumanised in the public debate: They are labelled as "the enemy", rats, parasites and suchlike.

The reprisals are seen to be "appropriate". What is seen as appropriate depends a lot on culture and context (eye for an eye? 1 man=30 cows? 1 man=one family? 1 killing=1 helicopter attack?).

Sample case:

The bridges are blocked. Trade has come to a complete halt. Power is cut off. The GC has to spend a great deal of their savings on generator fuel. People from the opposing community living on the other side flee, are beaten up, expelled or arrested as alleged collaborators and spies. The money is confiscated, housed are burned.

Step 8: Fragmentation

As the limited destructive blows do not actually make the other side give in and the situation gets worse and worse, at some point the parties become convinced that the only way out is to destroy the opposing system. Depending on what kind of conflict you are looking at, 'system' could mean: A person, a family, a community, a company, a state etc. 'Destroy' in this respect doesn't necessarily mean 'kill'. A family could be outcast and thus destroyed socially; a company could be destroyed economically. In militaristic terms it is no longer just about dropping bombs on infrastructure. The parties now need to occupy their opponent's power-centre or destroy crucial parts of their structure so they no longer function.

Sample case:

Acts of sabotage are carried out on BC's water supply facilities. Roads are blocked in order to stop food deliveries getting to GC. "We cannot tolerate the other community adjacent to us. They are too much of a threat. Even the river itself is not enough of a security belt. We have to bring the other community under our control!" Political key figures from both sides are assassinated. Alleged collaborators and their families are killed in riots. Both parties try to bring the other party's administration to collapse so they can take over. It is only due to the fact that they don't have troops that no attempt is made to occupy the other's territory militarily.
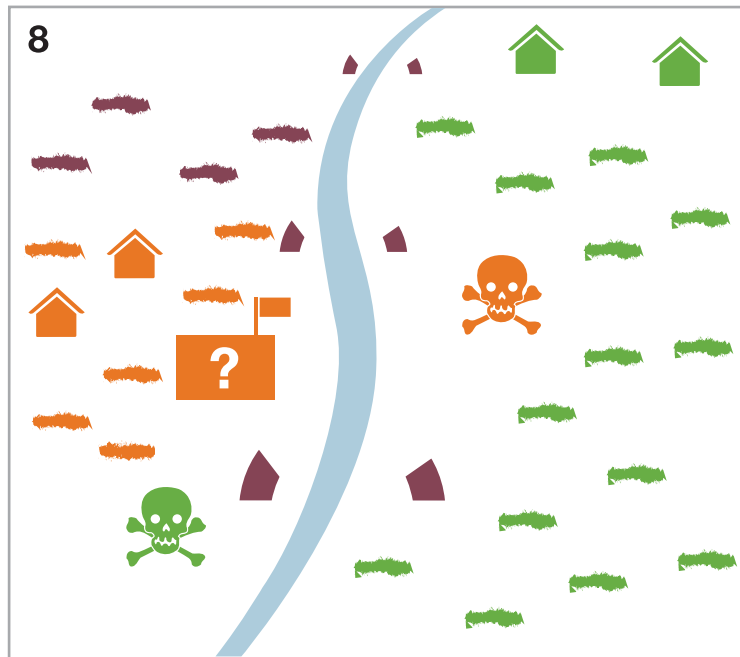
Step 9: Together into the abyss

After one party (or both) becomes aware that they will not be able to defeat the other one and that they themselves are going to lose everything, they might decide that there is still a way of destroying the other side by destroying themselves. Metaphorically speaking, suicide bombing.

Purpose:

There are three main ways of utilising the model of escalation steps:

1. Reflecting with parties (jointly or separately) in retrospect on how the conflict developed.
2. "Predicting" (in private sessions), what would happen if…
3. Planning intervention according to the level of escalation

Reflecting with parties (jointly or separately) in retrospect on how the conflict developed.

The model teaches us that a conflict follows all the steps. It doesn't jump e.g. from 1 directly to 6. Helping the parties understand how their conflict developed step by step might bring about some de-escalation because they can see how they contributed to the escalation. In highly escalated conflicts this should be conducted with both parties separately. The model provides hints for questions which could help identify the earlier steps, e.g.:

Body Language:

▸ *"When did you feel tension for the first time?" (step one)*
▸ *"When was the first time that your opponent acted without consulting you at time when you thought he should have done so?" (step three)*
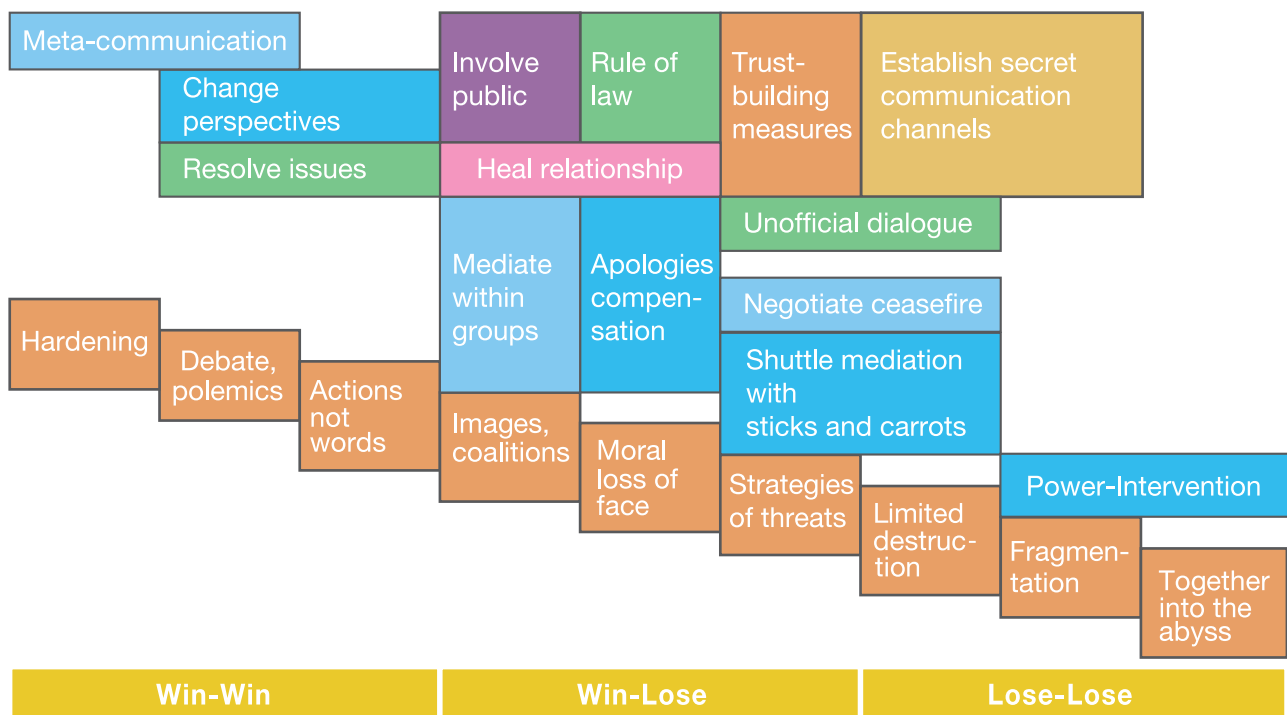▸ *"What is the worst incident so far?" (current level of escalation)*

"Predicting" (in private sessions) what would happen if …

The parties may tell you privately what they plan to do next. You can relate this to the model and predict how the other side could possibly react according to the steps of escalation. This sometimes convinces parties to stop the escalation.

Interventions According to the Escalation steps: Ascending.

If escalation is a step-by-step-process, de-escalation has to be like this too. That is, any intervention from a mediator or third party (= neutral person, organisation or outside actor) has to be designed according to the current level of escalation. What can we draw from the model in this respect?

Interventions for ascending levels of escalation

Meta-communication			
Change perspectives	Involve public	Rule of law	Trust-building measures	Establish secret communication channels
Resolve issues	Heal relationship		
		Unofficial dialogue	
	Mediate within groups	Apologies compensation	Negotiate ceasefire
Hardening			Shuttle mediation with sticks and carrots
Debate, polemics	Actions not words		
	Images, coalitions	Moral loss of face	Strategies of threats	Limited destruction	Power-Intervention
			Fragmentation	Together into the abyss

Win-Win	Win-Lose	Lose-Lose

One needs to ascend from level to level, step by step. Therefore – depending on the level of escalation already reached – the third party needs to carry out very different tasks.
Mediation by itself does not work if the conflict has escalated to a lose-lose scenario. Here is a brief description of possible interventions, starting from the most severely escalated level.

Level 9: Together into the abyss

No outside intervention possible except stopping the violence by force (= police, army).

Level 8: Fragmentation

Parties will generally only respond to a force-based intervention from outside (army, police). Or they will get tired of war by themselves.

Sample case:

Scenario 1: The national government steps in with massive police force, stopping the violence.

Scenario 2: Despite all their efforts, the parties cannot defeat the other side. There is a (military) stalemate. Victory seems to be unrealistic. The parties suffer from and become tired of war. They stop major blows because they simply can't afford them any longer. They focus on minor attacks and defensive measures. That is, they return to level 7.

Level 7: Limited destructive blows

Ascending from 7 to 6 means negotiating a cease-fire agreement because a ceasefire is nothing other than a situation where both sides live under the permanent threat that the other side is only trying to buy time, regain their strength and resume hostilities at any moment. In a lot of conflicts CSOs and unofficial dialogue-groups are essential to establishing communication channels for initial indirect contacts between the parties. If official cease-fire negotiations are mediated by a third party the mediators usually need some leverage in the form of incentives and sanctions (sticks and carrots). There is no purely facilitative mediation at this stage. But don't use too much pressure.

Scenario 1: The envoy from the national government talks to leaders from the two communities separately, later on they sit together. He needs to apply some pressure, but still manages to be impartial. An interim-agreement on how to normalise the situation is hammered out.

Scenario 2: Clandestinely, the parties send out envoys to talk to outsiders (e.g. well respected religious leaders or former politicians, foreign NGOs) and ask them to explore secretly the other party's willingness for talks on the modalities of an agreement to stop the attacks. In a shuttle mediation, facilitated by a highly-respected religious leader and his team of conflict experts, they agree on a number of measures to cease hostilities.

Level 6: Strategies of threat

Unofficial dialogue and trust building measures take place (strength of CSO). The people conducting the dialogue don't have to be leaders of the conflicting parties. They think about trust building measures (like taking down checkpoints, exchanging prisoners) that will be communicated to their leaders. The dialogue moderators use the facilitative style. In most of the cases the conflict in question might not even be addressed directly, but other comparable conflicts serve as examples. The aim is to carry out trust building measures. In these cases people from other countries who have experience in conflict resolution might be invited to share experiences.

Objective: Regaining trust, mitigating fear and reducing the likelihood that the other side will restart hostilities.

Sample Case:

Governmental bodies and CSOs work hand in hand and complement each other in conducting and organising workshops and dialogues at all different levels of society where trust building measures are discussed and a change of perspective is facilitated in order to generate the understanding that the other side also has fears (even if rhetorically they try to show only strength and power). Finally, some of the measures are implemented, e.g. property is handed back to the original owners or they are compensated, limited cross-border-traffic is allowed; dead bodies are handed over etc. The atmosphere shifts in a way that people feel the other side is serious about the desire to stop hostilities in the long term.

Level 5: (Moral) loss of face

The parties are quite sure that an outbreak of violence is not to be expected in the near future. Nevertheless, they still believe that the others are criminals and murderers. The governmental perspective: The rule of law has to be implemented; fact-finding missions are conducted to find out about atrocities and crimes committed during the "hot" phase of the conflict. Very often transitional justice mechanisms will be put in place, guaranteeing amnesty up to a certain extent and under certain circumstances in order to reintegrate former combatants. In some countries traditional courts are used for this, in other countries e.g. South Africa, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions.

CSOs can play an important role in working towards official apologies. In dialogue-groups which need good facilitation, people start to face the past and take responsibility for the atrocities committed by their own side. Even if officials are reluctant to do so, individuals and media can start with apologies and create a certain pressure. Finally, a major step for reconciliation is an official apology, which will only help if it is seen as a real expression of remorse and not just a tactical move. A good example is the former German Chancellor Willy Brand who knelt down before a war memorial in Poland. This was not part of the official protocol and was seen by many as a spontaneous act as he was suddenly overwhelmed by emotion. In many cases, forms of compensation need to be granted as well. Traditional healing ceremonies can also be included.

In all likelihood, some parts of society will now be unhappy with the on-going reconciliation process. Do not forget to engage with them or it will backfire.

Sample case:

CSOs facilitate 'cross-river-dialogue' groups as well as dialogues within their respective communities. In some of these projects pieces of art are created in which people not only deal with their own suffering but also the other's pain and their own responsibility. Exhibitions are held, documentaries, radio features etc.

The national government agrees with the leaders of both sides to conduct an investigation of crimes committed. Victims can speak out publicly; the results of the investigation are made public and both sides commit themselves to punishing the culprits while amnesty modalities are also agreed upon. Compensation is paid to the victims.

Years later, a memorial site with a sculpture made by artists from both sides is unveiled. The successors to the former community leaders express their remorse in their opening speeches. Elders are involved and conduct a public healing ritual. This event leads to an immediate increase in inter-community trade and collaboration.

Level 4: Images & coalitions

After they have apologised, the parties start to view each other as human beings again. Nevertheless, there is still a lot of mistrust and anger because they have inflicted a lot of pain on each other. Whenever there's a problem or conflict these feeling surface quickly. If e.g. a child is killed in a traffic accident caused by somebody from the other community the media may quickly make an issue out of it, leading to demonstrations. When conflicts over minor technical issues occur in joint ventures it quickly comes to a "we" against "them" situation and people refer to the "old" stereotypes and prejudices.

As mediators at this stage you have to deal with the substantial issues of the conflict at hand <u>and</u> with underlying deeper relationship problems (with an emphasis on the latter). Intra-party work might be even more important than inter-party work because there is still a high level of peer pressure which makes people stick to the opinions of the majority in their group. As a consequence the group as a whole takes a rigid

position. The intra-group relationship issues which underlie this peer pressure need to be addressed on an intra-group basis.

If the wider public is involved mediators also need to engage with the public (media, important stakeholders) – not just with the direct conflict parties.

Sample Case:

Government and CSOs conduct lots of trainings and workshops to consolidate the reconciliation process, encouraging people to reflect on existing emotions, concerns and stereotypes. Reconciliation cannot be enforced top-down; you have to listen, especially to those who are critical. If incidents occur which could easily contribute to a re-escalation, the administrations and CSOs immediately step in with symbolic public acts which make clear that the leaders are not willing to politicise those events. E.g. after the death of the child (see above) an inter-faith funeral service is held where religious and political leaders are present.This calms down public outrage.

Level 3: Actions, not words

When conflicts occur between members of the two communities, at this stage they are (again) seen as conflicts over specific problems and not the communities as such. Nevertheless, relationship problems still play a role and the parties are likely to expect others to act unilaterally in their own interests and not stick to finding joint agreements. Therefore, as mediators we need to address the question of how to create a safe environment for the mediation where parties can feel confident that the status quo will not be undermined during the mediation process. If a major unilateral act has just occurred, it might be necessary to go back to a status quo ante (at least symbolically) before the mediation starts.

The facilitative style of mediation is highly applicable at this stage – focusing on issues, underlying interests/needs/fears as well as the relationship. A change of perspective needs to be facilitated.

Sample Case:

Trade and joint business projects are common, intermarriage is still rare but increasing. Conflicts are seen as quite normal no matter between whom they occur. They are mediated from time to time but don't threaten the communities as such.

Level 2: Debate & polemics

Debates and controversial discussions are not seen as a major problem by many. However, polemics and rhetorical tricks still occur regularly in discussions. Meta-communication ("Talking about how you talk to each other") is a good way to improve the situation, with or even without the assistance of a mediator. Models like "Non-Violent Communication" (Marshal B. Rosenberg) or the "Four-Sided Message Model" (Schulz von Thun) are helpful tools in this respect. Analyse how it comes about that things are misinterpreted and how it is possible to express oneself clearly without hurting the other party unnecessarily.

Case study: Years later, a new school is being built on the Green side while a joint hospital is planned on the orange side. End of that story.

Level 1: Hardening

If at all, you will be asked to assist conflicting parties as a moderator, not mediator. It's easy to discuss the substantial issues at this stage because the relationship is generally positive and stable.

Vicious Circle [13]

Purpose:

▶ The participants are given the opportunity to take a look at their conflict pattern from the outside.

▶ The possibility of meta-communication using a systematic model focuses on the question of how the conflict functions, making the question of who is to blame or in the right appear obsolete.

▶ The model points to the fact that two players are needed in order to maintain the vicious circle.

▶ Anyone who knows how the conflict functions will find it easier to develop functional options enabling them to break out of the conflict/vicious circle.

▶ When both parties – with all their differences – feel that they are understood and taken notice of, then they will also develop the inner willingness and ability to look for solutions in a common effort.

Background:

The dynamic of people in conflicts often functions and escalates according to the pattern of a classic vicious circle.

In a vicious circle the players justify their own behaviour by referring to the behaviour or assumed characteristics of the others. In the process they mutually reinforce each other: The more the other party does something I don't like, then the more I "must" counteract this.

Watzlawick illustrates this using the example of a married couple:

Wife: *"Because he withdraws more and more, I react by complaining."*

Husband: *"Because she continually nags me I react by withdrawing."*

The combination of the two patterns results in a vicious circle from which there is no escape

Translation of graphics: Husband Withdraws, Wife Nags

The combination of the two patterns results in a vicious circle from which there is no escape

Husband withdraws
Wife nags
Wife nags
Husband withdraws
Wife nags
Husband withdraws
Wife nags
Husband withdraws
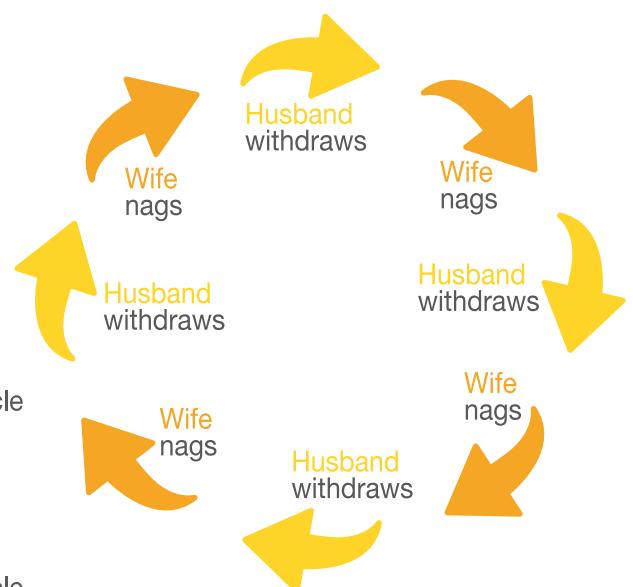
Source:
www.paulwatzlawick.de/axiome

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[13] See also: Schulz von Thun, Friedemann: Vier Stationen zwischenmenschlicher Kreisläufe. In: Miteinander Reden 2, in particular pp. 28-37. And Watzlawick, Paul: The Situation is Hopeless, But Not Serious: The Pursuit of Unhappiness.

Person A

A's statements / behaviour

As a result B feels...

Behaves accordingly

Circularity Punctuation Escalation

A's inner reactions

B's inner reactions

Behaves accordingly

As a result A feels...

B's statements / behaviour
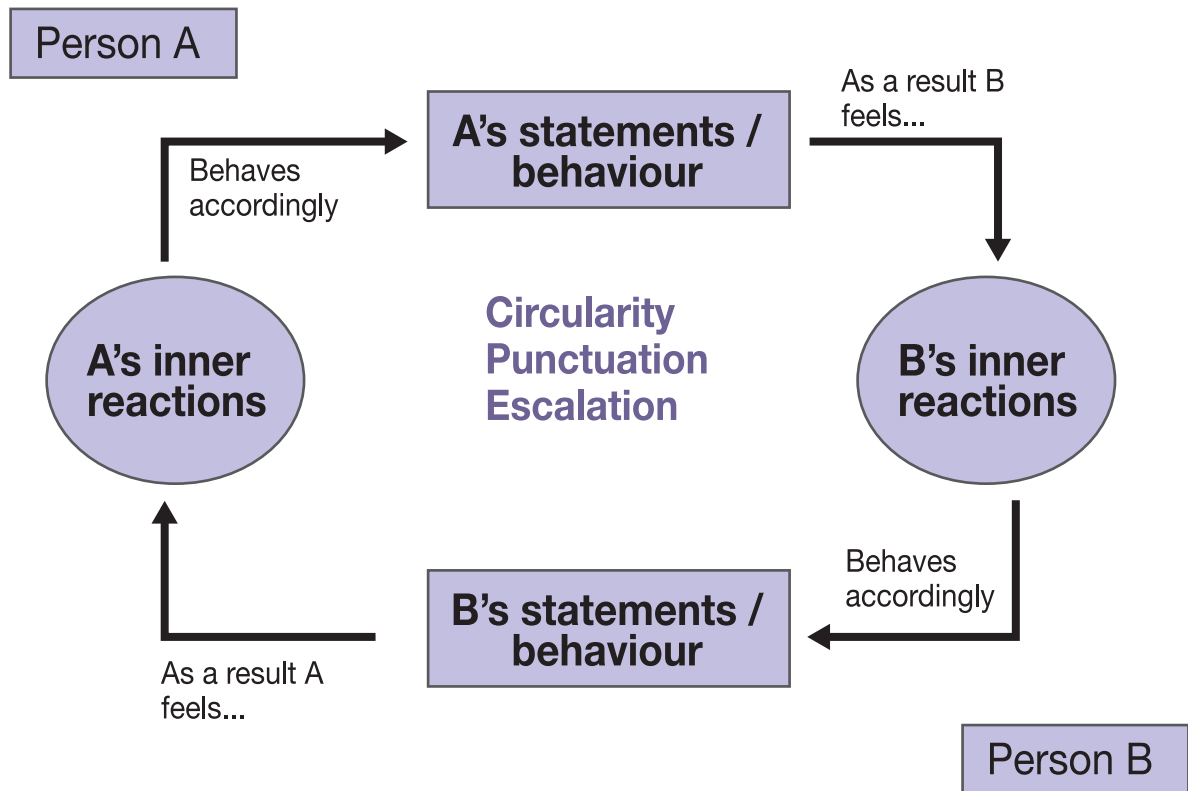
Person B

© Prof. Dr. F. Schulz von Thun

Source: Schulz von Thun – Institute [14]

The behaviour, i.e. the statements of the other person are interpreted according to internal maps, resulting in internal reactions and external behaviour, which is then interpreted accordingly by the other side. The tragic thing is that both sides see themselves as the person reacting.

Steps:

If the mediators intend to use the vicious circle model they can present it to the parties during the in-depth exploration phase or develop it together with them.

Here is an example: Roshan and Ali are at odds with one another.

Roshan accuses Ali of being cold, dishonest, condescending and authoritarian. In the company of others he always puts on a show of being so fair and friendly. However, he reveals his true face when he humiliates her in disputes, depicting her as irrational and stupid.

Ali objects, accusing Roshan of being egocentric, moody, unpredictable, verbally abusive and of overstepping boundaries.
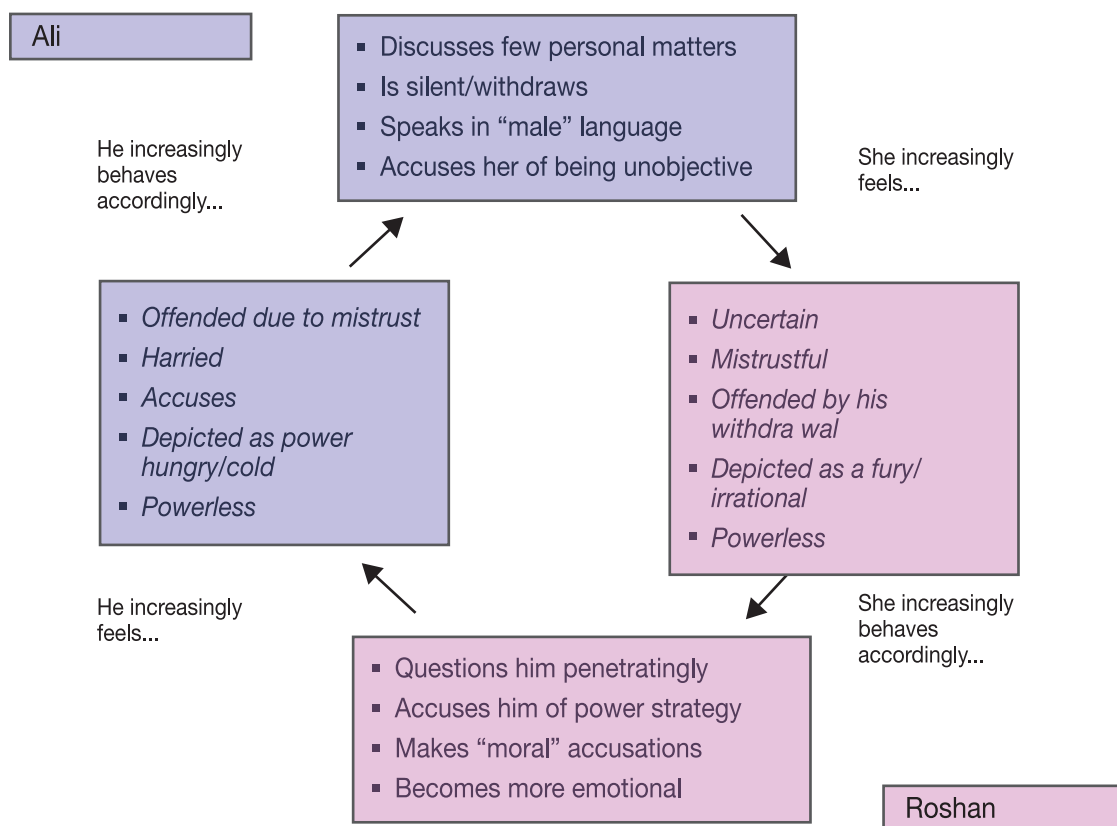
A possible approach would be:

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[14] http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AFolien_bearbeitet.jpg

"We have noticed that you repeatedly end up making mutual accusations. It is possible that a model could help us to understand the functioning of your conflict dynamic better. If you are in agreement we would like to write this together on the flipchart…"

Then the mediators begin to draw, stage by stage, the vicious circle pictured below. In the process they repeat actions and statements which they have already heard from the parties to the conflict.
Once the vicious circle has been drawn, it is often sufficient for the mediators to simply ask what occurs to them when they look at it.

Or they state explicitly: *"Amongst other things this model is called the "Vicious Circle Model" because there is no escape from it as long as the players are concentrated on who "is to blame" or who "started it". However, if the model helps you to realise how the conflict functions, then maybe you can now develop ideas which will enable you to escape this dynamic."*

Ali

He increasingly behaves accordingly…
- Discusses few personal matters
- Is silent/withdraws
- Speaks in "male" language
- Accuses her of being unobjective

She increasingly feels…

- *Offended due to mistrust*
- *Harried*
- *Accuses*
- *Depicted as power hungry/cold*
- *Powerless*

- *Uncertain*
- *Mistrustful*
- *Offended by his withdra wal*
- *Depicted as a fury/ irrational*
- *Powerless*

He increasingly feels…

- Questions him penetratingly
- Accuses him of power strategy
- Makes "moral" accusations
- Becomes more emotional

She increasingly behaves accordingly…

Roshan

Source: **Walter**, Willi: Gender. Diversity. Mediation – Part 2: Was tun, wenn Vielfalt zu viel wird? In: Perspektive Mediation 2012

Note: The visualisation of the vicious circle model is very helpful and has a considerably greater effect than when it is only explained verbally. Taking a look at the flipchart or drawing together supports the parties in adopting a meta-perspective.

Comments on the approach:

Alternatively the vicious circle is developed when reflecting on a session and is then introduced by the mediators at the start of the next session: *"When reflecting on our last session we developed the following picture… Maybe this is a conflict pattern that looks familiar to you..."*

Depending on the escalation stage it may be appropriate to develop the vicious circle model in separate, individual sessions.
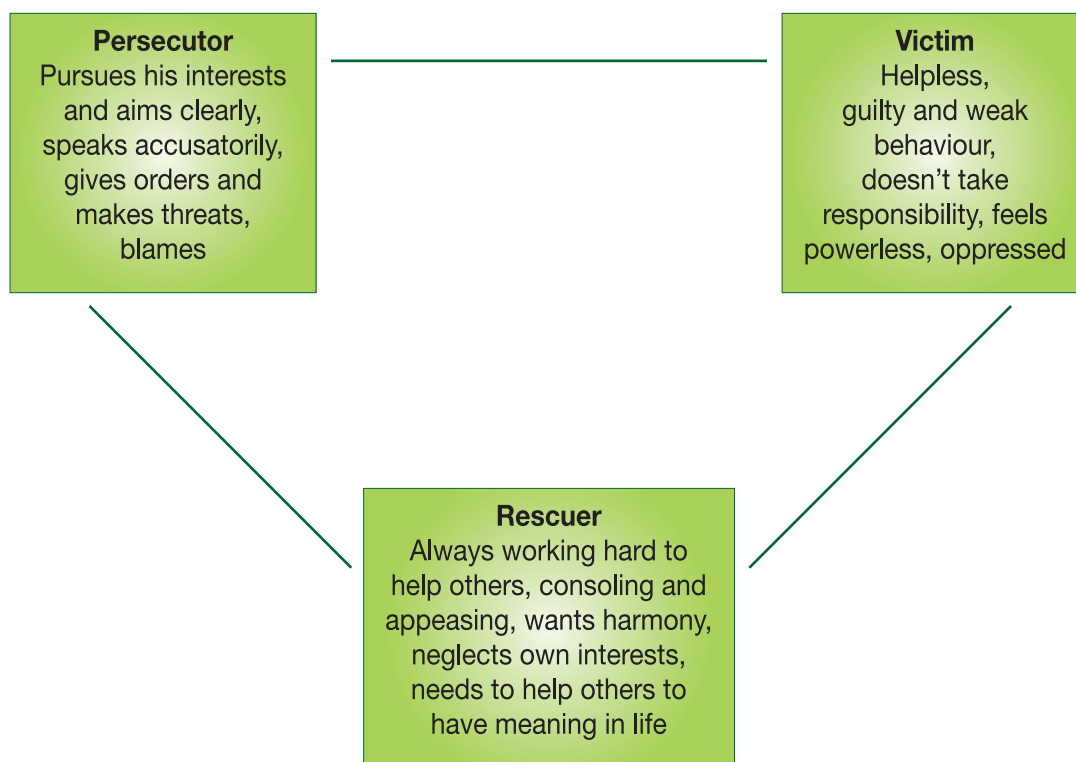
Drama Triangle: Persecutor – Victim – Rescuer

Purpose:

People and conflict parties tend to relate to each other through interactive roles. The drama triangle describes a set of roles that condition each other. [15] This set of roles is frequently acted out by the conflict parties.

Mediators need to be very careful, not becoming "rescuers" who try to protect the "victim" against the actions of the "persecutor". Instead, mediators need to support each party to step out of the drama triangle and to bring in their needs and interests in a self-responsible and constructive way.

Drama Triangle
(a model of transactional analysis)

Persecutor
Pursues his interests and aims clearly, speaks accusatorily, gives orders and makes threats, blames

Victim
Helpless, guilty and weak behaviour, doesn't take responsibility, feels powerless, oppressed

Rescuer
Always working hard to help others, consoling and appeasing, wants harmony, neglects own interests, needs to help others to have meaning in life

Mediator/facilitator should not assume the role of the rescuer!

Caution: Do not attempt to convince the parties that it is better to come to an agreement. Instead, support them in a critical and realistic analysis.

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[15] See Eric Berne: Games People Play (1964) or Stephen Karpman: Fairy Tales and Script Drama Analysis (1968).

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