



Harry Webne-Behrman

## 8 Steps For Conflict Resolution Overview

### 2. Clarify Personal Needs Threatened by the Dispute

- **Substantive, Procedural, and Psychological Needs**
- **Look at BATNA, WATNA, and MLATNA**
- **Identify "Desired Outcomes" from a Negotiated Process**

Whenever we are confronted by a conflict, we have three sets of needs to be negotiated:

- **Substantive needs** have to do with the "stuff" of the conflict... often the problem that we feel needs to be solved.
- **Procedural needs** relate to the process of addressing these substantive needs. Ground rules, for example, are a process step that can help ensure that all stakeholders feel included in a meaningful way.
- **Psychological needs** relate to a fostering a safe environment, one in which people are willing to take the risks involved in honestly communicating their differences, concerns and potential similarities to one another.

In any dispute, all three types of needs are present and must be addressed. . If we are going to really try to build a meaningful agreement, we will need to understand how these various needs are present for each person in the situation.

#### Consequences of Not Resolving the Conflict

Thinking about what will happen if we **do not** resolve the situation helps clarify our needs-- "What are my boundaries in this situation?" Rather than constraining our creativity and flexibility, this analysis

actually illuminates our priorities and, as a result, gives us a greater willingness to explore possible solutions.

Alternatives to negotiating are commonly divided into three categories:

- Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA) - what is the **best** I can expect if we don't come to a negotiated agreement?
- Worst Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (WATNA) - what is the **worst** I can expect if we don't come to a negotiated agreement?
- Most Likely Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement - (MLATNA) - what is the **most likely** alternative if we don't come to a negotiated agreement?

By thinking these through, we can understand how a negotiated solution can meet our needs better than the alternatives and can clarify our desired outcomes.

### Focus

We cannot negotiate solutions to all of our problems in one session, or even in one series of meetings. Therefore, we need to clarify our desired outcomes from this process, and focus our energies on two or three priority issues among the dozen that we feel are important. By doing so, we are more likely to negotiate agreements that are meaningful to us, and less likely to get sidetracked with tangential or petty issues.

Answer these questions

- Which needs of mine are truly threatened by this conflict?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What are the needs that are most important to be negotiated at this time?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- If we are unable or unwilling to negotiate a meaningful agreement, what are my alternatives?

BATNA: \_\_\_\_\_

WATNA: \_\_\_\_\_

MLATNA: \_\_\_\_\_

How might these relate to the situation facing the other person(s) involved in this dispute?  
(Would their analysis be similar or different?)

\_\_\_\_\_

- When it really comes down to it, what do I want to happen as a result of this process? \_\_\_\_\_

### Ground rules

"Ground rules" are statements that reflect people's best intentions regarding how they wish to treat one another in civil dialogue. They tend to be present in many positive social relationships, and they are reflected in ethical codes and "the golden rule." In conflictive, challenging relationships, ground rules tend to be far more complicated, in part because there is an implicit assumption that one person believes that the other won't live up to them. In work teams, this becomes even more complex, as several perspectives may co-exist in the group about 'appropriate behavior.' The following ground rules

are offered as illustrations in order to inspire your work group to develop rules that are appropriate to your specific needs and situation. Feel free to use them, discard them, add to them, or modify them... what is important is that you identify ground rules that work for all parties as you attempt to negotiate solutions to the conflicts before you.

**1) One person speaks at a time.**

**2) We will make a sincere commitment to listen to one another, to try to understand the other person's point of view before responding.**

**3) What we discuss together will be kept in confidence, unless there is explicit agreement regarding who needs to know further information.**

**4) We agree to talk directly with the person with whom there are concerns, and not seek to involve others in "gossip" or "alliance building."**

**5) We agree to try our hardest and trust that others are doing the same within the group.**

**6) We will support the expression of dissent in a harassment free workplace.**

**7) We agree to attack the issues, not the people with whom we disagree.**

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<http://www.ohrd.wisc.edu/onlinetraining/resolution/stepsoverview.htm>

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