

# Engaging Conflict in Collaboration

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THE  
**COLLABORATION LAB**

*Increasing the Capacity of Individuals  
and Groups to Collaborate*

# Purpose and Process of Collaboration

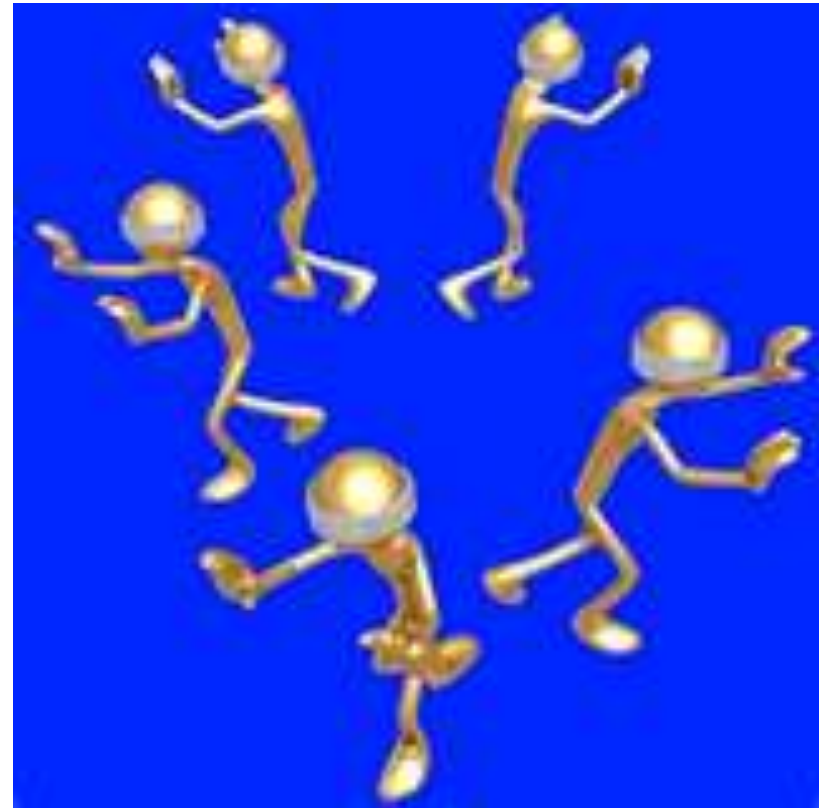
- Purpose is shared learning – maximize benefit of differences
- Process of collaboration is dialogue
- Quality of dialogue is an indicator of the success of collaboration
- We know when moments in dialogue become crucial – shift from learning stance to telling stance
- We have a choice – more than silence or violence
- Goal is to engage intentionally in dialogue

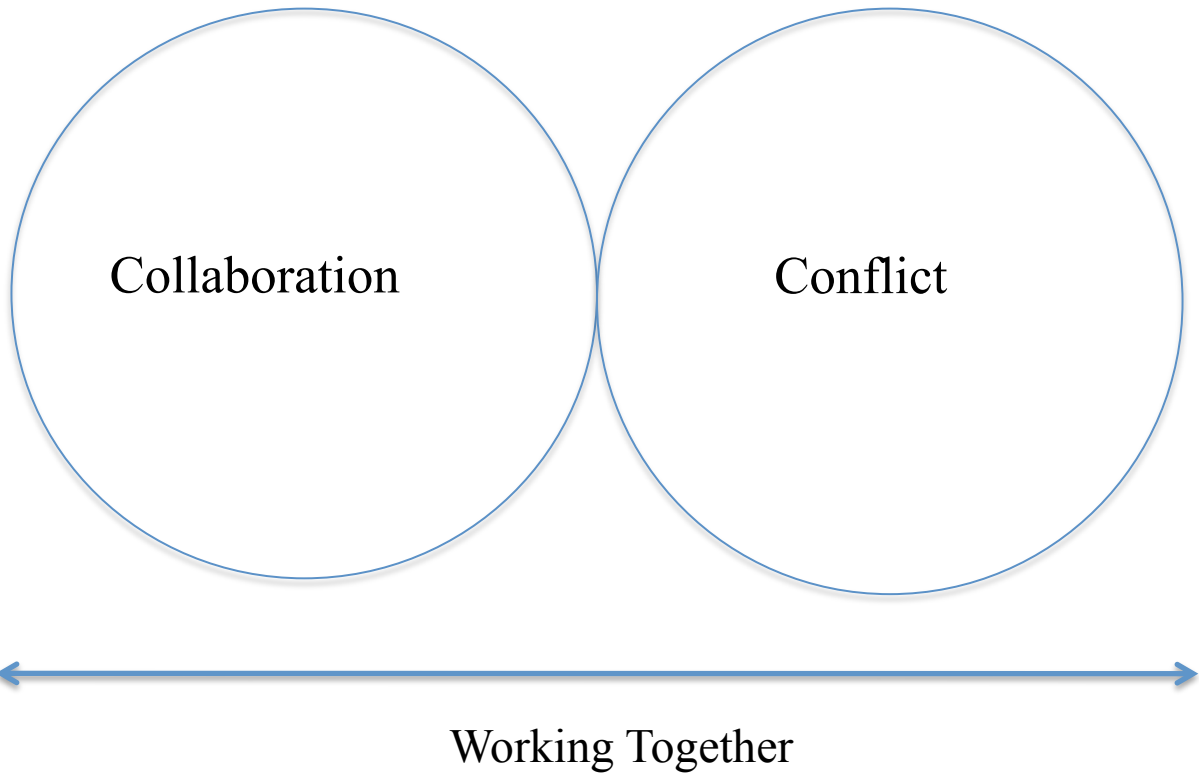


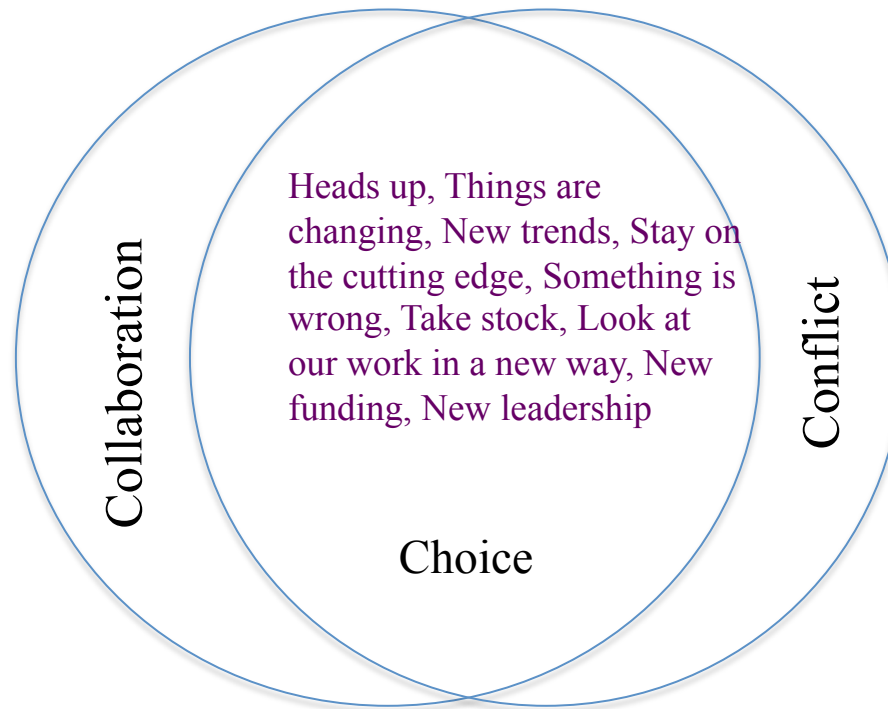
So why is it...

...when diversity (disagreement) among members shows up, we stop valuing diversity and collaboration breaks down?

# Collaboration and Conflict







Working Together

# Who are you in conflict?

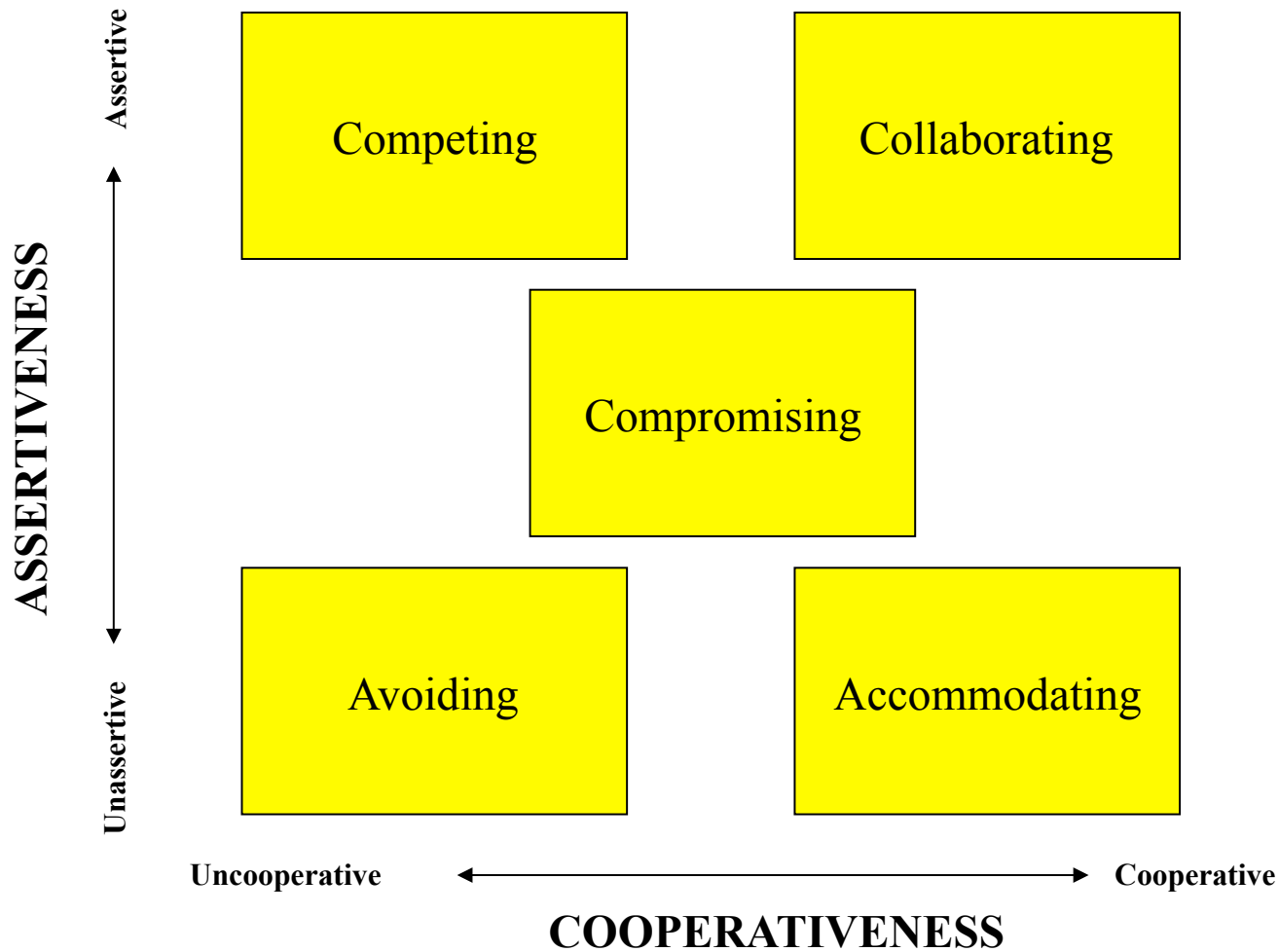
- Individually: Identify 2-3 events in your life that you believe shape the way in which you engage conflict.
- Share these events with your partner and identify what they taught you about conflict.
- How do these early lessons continue to inform you and show up in how you currently engage conflict?
- How has this shown up in your engagement with partners on Project Launch?

# Thomas-Killman responses to Conflict

- **Compete** – *you work to get your needs met, but you are not working to meet the needs of others*
- **Accommodate** – *you are not working to meet your own needs, but work to meet the needs of others*
- **Avoid** – *you are not working to meet anyone's needs*
- **Collaborate** – *you are working to meet the needs of everyone*
- **Compromise** – *you are working to meet some needs of everyone, but not all*



# Five Conflict-Handling Styles



# Common Definitions of Conflict



- **Wikipedia** - A **clash** of interests, values, actions or directions often **sparks** a conflict. Conflicts refer to the existence of that clash.
- **Websters - Fight Battle, War (!!!)**
  - **2 a** : competitive or opposing action of incompatibles : antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons) **b** : mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands
- **Teen definition** – a conversation that involves hostility or anger

# A Better One

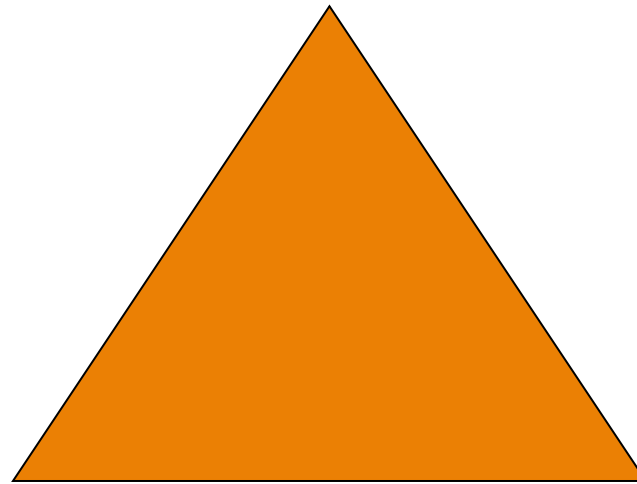
Conflict is the *interaction of interdependent* people who *perceive* incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals

Folger, Poole, Stutman, *Working Through Conflict: Strategies for Relationships, Groups and Organizations*, Longman, Inc., 2001

# Elements of Satisfaction



Substantive



Procedural

Emotional

# Why is conflict so hard?



- True difference in approach/philosophy and an inability/unwillingness to listen to others
- Pride/insecurity
- Time (lack of)
- Culture
- Other differences (resources)
- Discomfort with change
- Communication – we think we are doing it, but are we?
- Others?

# Addressing Conflict

## Some General Themes

- Be Intentional – chose to engage
- Engage productively – know what you need (your interests) from the interaction and the best way to get there (relationship, substance and procedure)
- Approach the conversation/dialogue from the center – not the sides
- Balance inquiry and advocacy – Be curious!
- Remember it is journey (and it doesn't end)

# Model for Difficult Dialogue

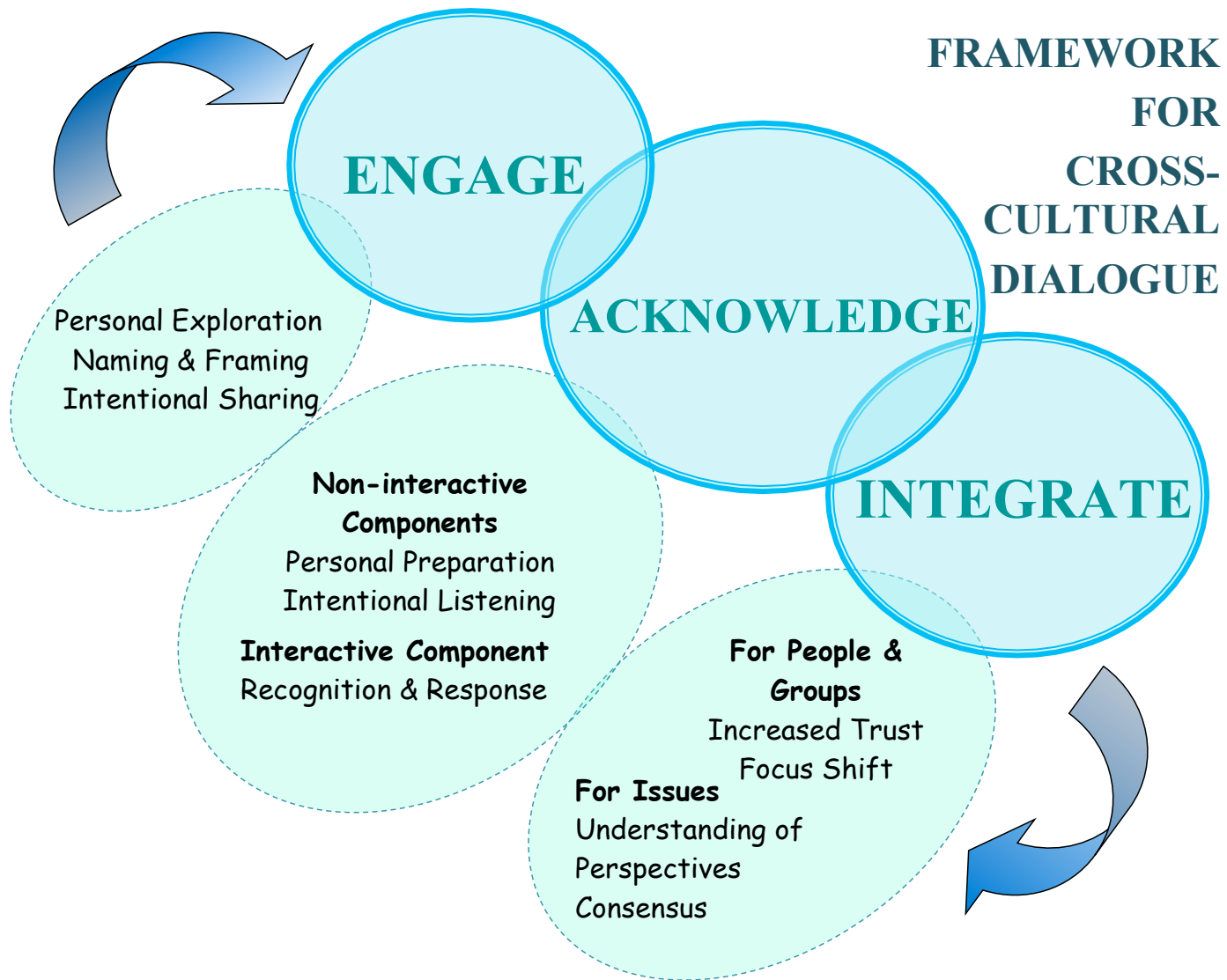


- **Engage**

- Decide to engage – what do you really need to communicate
- Frame your interests – how to communicate

- **Acknowledge**

- Listen with courage and curiosity – investigate the differences
- Help the speaker feel heard – acknowledge does not necessarily mean agreement



source: Sockalingam, S. and Waetzig, E. (2009) A Framework for Cross-Cultural Dialogue



# The Power of Questions



- What we ask, how we ask it, the spirit with which we ask, all invite certain responses and discourage others.
- The very act of asking questions influences people. Acts of asking and answering alter experiences and generate experiences.
- Questions have the power to shape meanings and restrict or expand possibilities for action.

# Intentional Inquiry

- Is intentional and purposeful
- Is born of genuine curiosity.
- Causes both the inquirer and the responder to “ponder.”
- Broadens the range and opportunity for response.
- Creates openings rather than closings.

# Crafting Intentional Questions



- What work do I want this question to do?
- What kinds of responses might this question invite? Restrain?
- Is this question likely to stimulate fresh thinking?
- Do I have an answer in mind?
- Are my own assumptions imbedded in this question?

# Asking the Right Questions

- **Closed Questions**

- *Are restrictive*
- *Limit the range of answers from the responder*
- *May imply a particular answer is wanted*

- **Open Questions**

- *Are broad in nature*
- *Invite a range of answers from the responder*

# Questions to move a group forward

- What would it look like if...?
- What happens if we stay where we are?
- What can we accomplish on our own if collaboration is not possible?
- If we could do anything we want, what would it be?

- For when you get stuck
- It happens to every group
- It deserves our attention and effort
- Outside support may be useful



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*The LAB is where individuals and groups  
convene to  
increase their capacity to*

Develop

Examples:

- ✓ Training on collaboration, shared decision making and conflict engagement
- ✓ On-site planning/ development of collaborative structure

Maintain

Examples:

- ✓ Facilitated dialogue
- ✓ Individual and organizational development
- ✓ Coaching

Repair

Examples:

- ✓ Mediation for individual parties
- ✓ Multi-party mediation

# Collaboration



# Contact Us



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