

**APRIL SHOWERS BRING...  
TOO MUCH CONFLICT:  
COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES  
FOR MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD**

LEILA PETERSON



**SchoolTalk**

# CONFLICT

What does the word  
“conflict” bring to mind?

# IS THE NATURE OF CONFLICT...

Normal ? Wrong? Inevitable? Helpful?



“How we view conflict will largely determine our attitude and approach to dealing with it.”

Bernard Mayer, *Dynamics of Conflict*

# METAPHORS IMPACT OUR FEELINGS & BEHAVIORS



Conflict is a  
minefield



Conflict is a  
mess



Conflict is a  
Garden

*What metaphors for conflict are part of your experience?*

# WHEN A CONFLICT ESCALATES, RESOLUTION BECOMES MORE DIFFICULT

- Tactics go from light to heavy
- Positions become more polarized and risk averse
- Number of people involved expands
- Issues expand
- Specific issues move to general issues
- Motivations change:
- *Doing well → winning → hurting other*

D. Pruitt and S. H. Kim, *Social Conflict* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2003).

# **PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGES OCCUR IN INDIVIDUALS**

- **Ambiguous actions are seen as threatening**
- **Inhibitions against retaliation diminish**
- **Communication is reduced**
- **Empathy is reduced**
- **Zero-sum thinking increases**  
(problem-solving won't work)



**TOOL #1:**

**POSITIONS & INTERESTS**



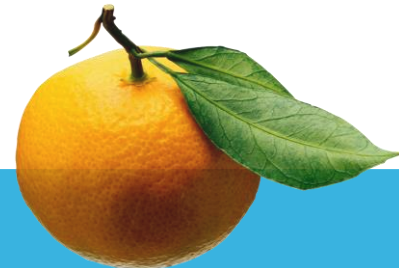


# **Position – the “WHAT”**

**Specific solution proposed to resolve problem**

# **Interest – the “WHY”**

**Underlying real need or desire that gives a position its life (i.e., beliefs, expectations, values, fears, priorities, hopes, concerns)**



# **SURFACING INTERESTS:**

**What do you really want?**

**What is motivating you?**

**What are you trying to achieve?**

**What are you afraid will happen if your demand is not met?**

**TOOL #2:**  
**CHANGE**  
**COMMUNICATION**  
**PATTERNS**



# BE CREATIVE


## Vary the method of communication

- If you are emailing, arrange an in-person meeting
- Listen rather than speak (or vice versa)

## Change the subject

- Work on the relationship, find common goals, etc.

## Challenge assumptions (yours and the other's)

- What information is relevant?
  - What is possible?
- 

# A SMALL AND POWERFUL CHANGE

*Change*

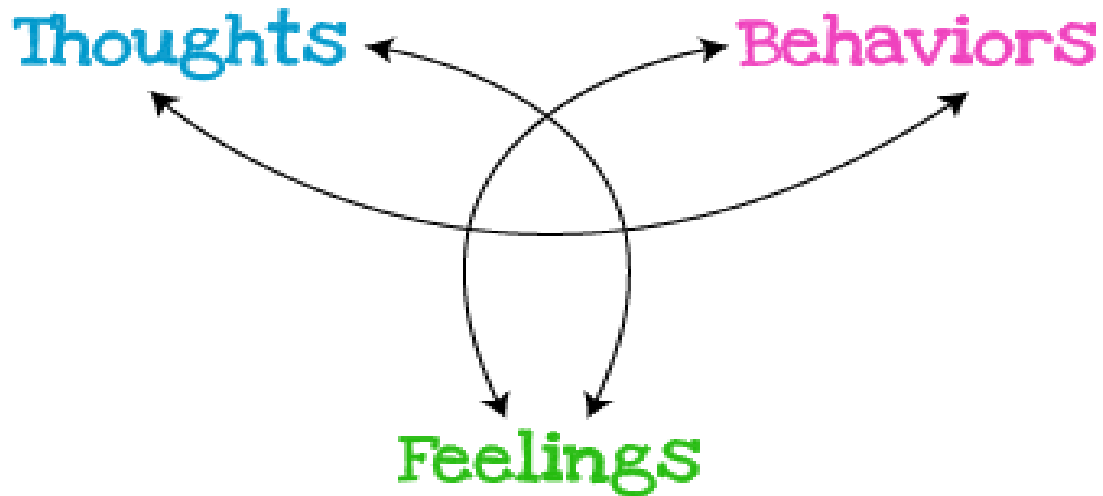
...BUT...

*To*

... AND ...



# THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND BEHAVIORS ARE ALL CONNECTED.



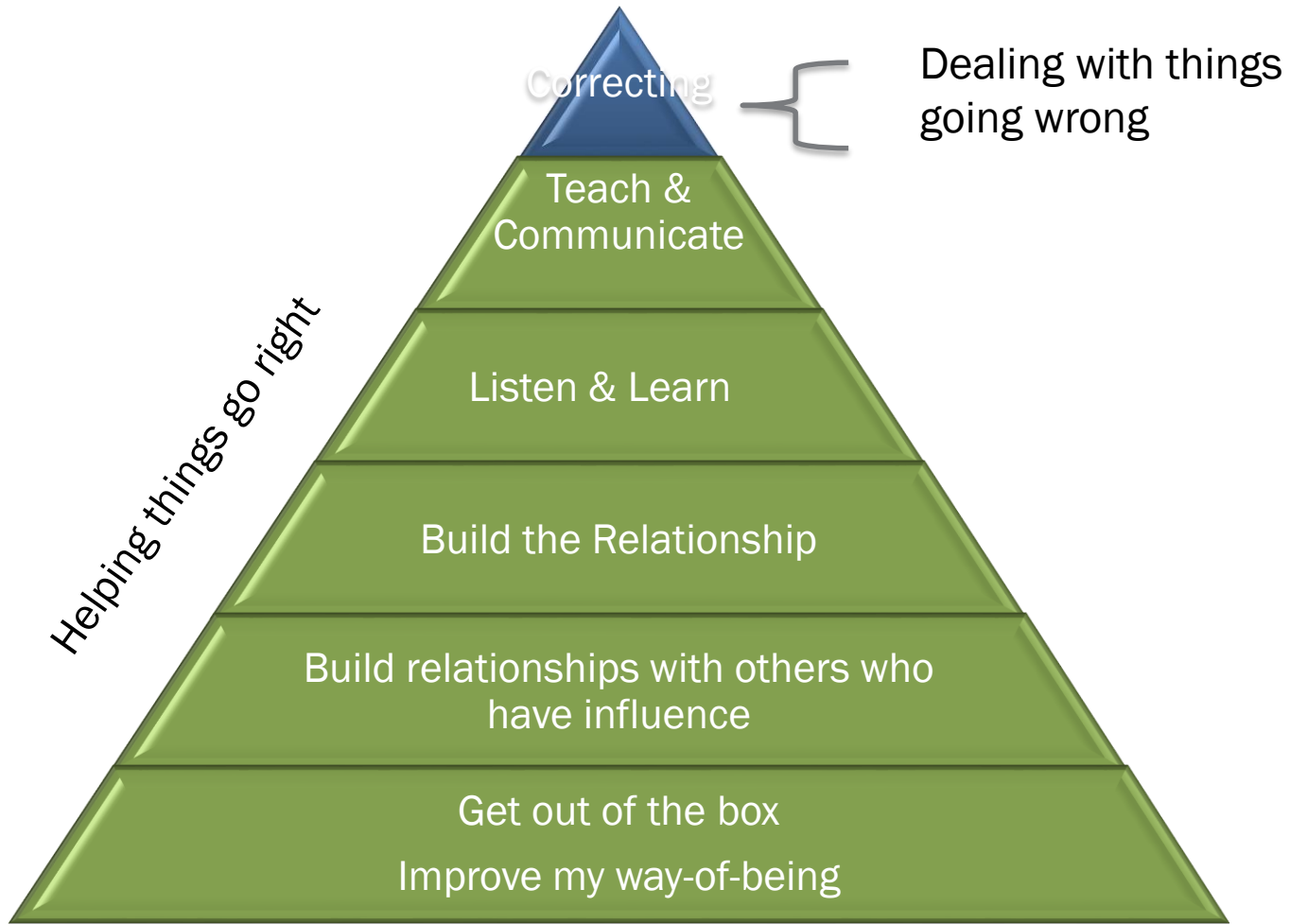
Making one change

- to thoughts, feelings, or behavior -  
can make a big difference.

**TOOL #3:**

**HELPING THINGS GO  
RIGHT**

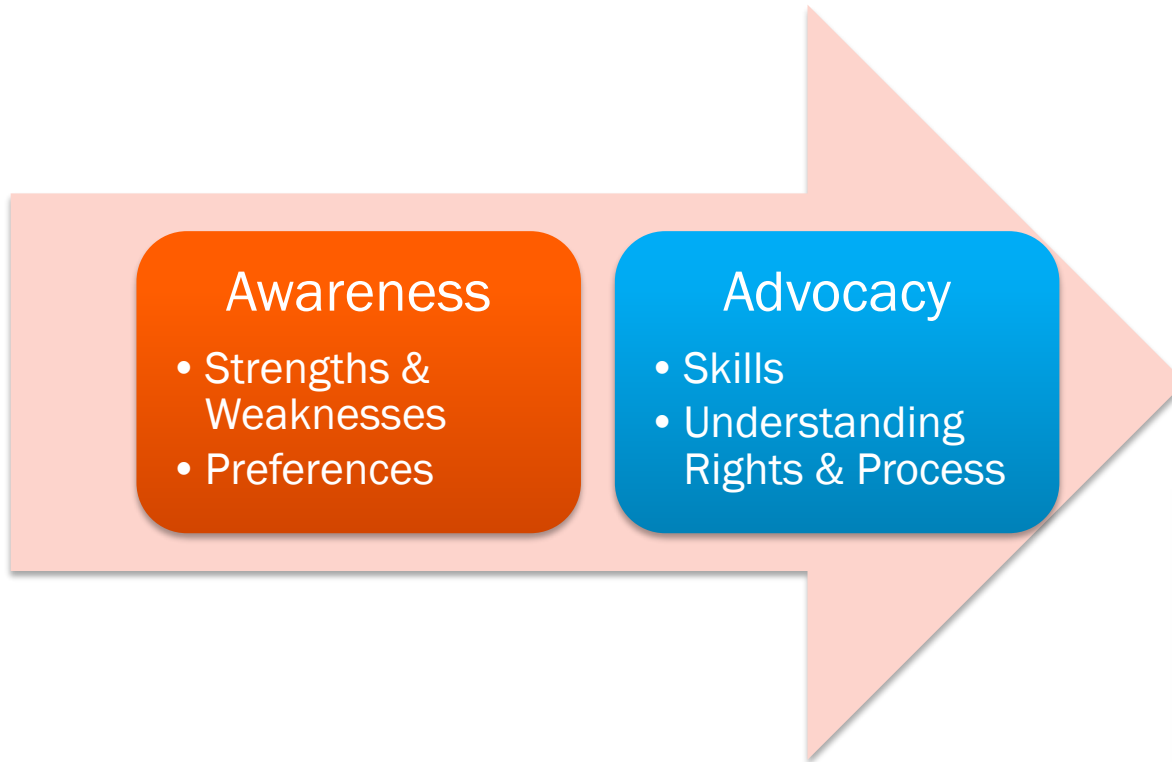




The Pyramid of Change, Source : Arbinger Institute



# SELF ADVOCACY



Student-led IEP activities enhance communication between **parents and students and schools**

# WHOLENESS

*“Are there wheel chairs  
in heaven?”*

– Ben Mattlin



**...curing and healing are not the same thing. To cure is to remove disease. To heal is to make whole, and wholeness can belong as much to the infirm as the healthy.**

**- James Carroll**



## BONUS TOOL: ONE PAGE PROFILES

- Include pictures & other visual elements
- Details about strengths, preferences, needs
- Developed by individual

### Resources

- I'm Determined ([www.imdetermined.org](http://www.imdetermined.org))
- The Learning Community ([www.learningcommunity.us](http://www.learningcommunity.us))

# Rachel (from the Learning Community)

## What others like and admire about Rachel

Wicked sense of humour

Her ability to make friends and connect with people

Her taste in men, music and DVD's!

Her long eye lashes and expressive eyes

She is a funky babe!

## Important To Rachel

Having fun and getting messy – like water fights in the bath;

Loves having her hair and nails done – 'girlie pampering'

Her mobile phone to keep in touch (calls and texts) with what is happening!

Not to be in her chair any longer than she has to be – must get out of it as soon as possible, prefers to lie on the floor or on her tummy on her bed

That everyone who supports Rachel understands her communication (see communication charts)

That only female staff support her around her personal care

## Important For Rachel (support needs)

Rachel has complex needs and these must be fully understood before you can properly support her. You need to read the details of her file (including her health action plan) before supporting her as it contains vital, detailed information around staying healthy and safe

Having the right equipment on hand to meet her needs – e.g. Day-bed, hoist fully charged, suction machine

Rachel needs to stay calm and cool. If she gets upset she becomes hot and finds it difficult to control her saliva and manage her swallow – you need always to have suction equipment with you. She also must wear cool, loose-fitting clothes







**I WISH YOU MANY PRODUCTIVE CONFLICTS  
AND THE RIGHT TOOLS WHEN YOU NEED THEM.**



# THANK YOU!

Leila Peterson

Executive Director

SchoolTalk

[Leila.peterson@schooltalkdc.org](mailto:Leila.peterson@schooltalkdc.org)

202-907-6887

