

ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

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OUTCOMES / OBJECTIVES

1. Foster knowledge regarding conflict management
2. Identify different “elephants”
3. Cultivate skills to effectively manage conflict/difficult conversations
4. Discuss key components to active listening



CONFLICT RESOLUTION CONCEPTS

- We can grow through conflict
- A problem may have more than one RIGHT solution
- How we define a problem relates to how we will solve that problem
- Feelings are important
- People want to be heard
- Sometimes we all can win

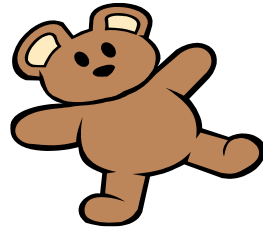


CONFLICT RESOLUTION STYLES

Avoider



Accommodator



Competitor



Compromiser



Collaborator



Relationship
vs.
Goal



WHOLE PERSON CONCEPT

Positions Vs. Interests

POSITION/WANTS

20%

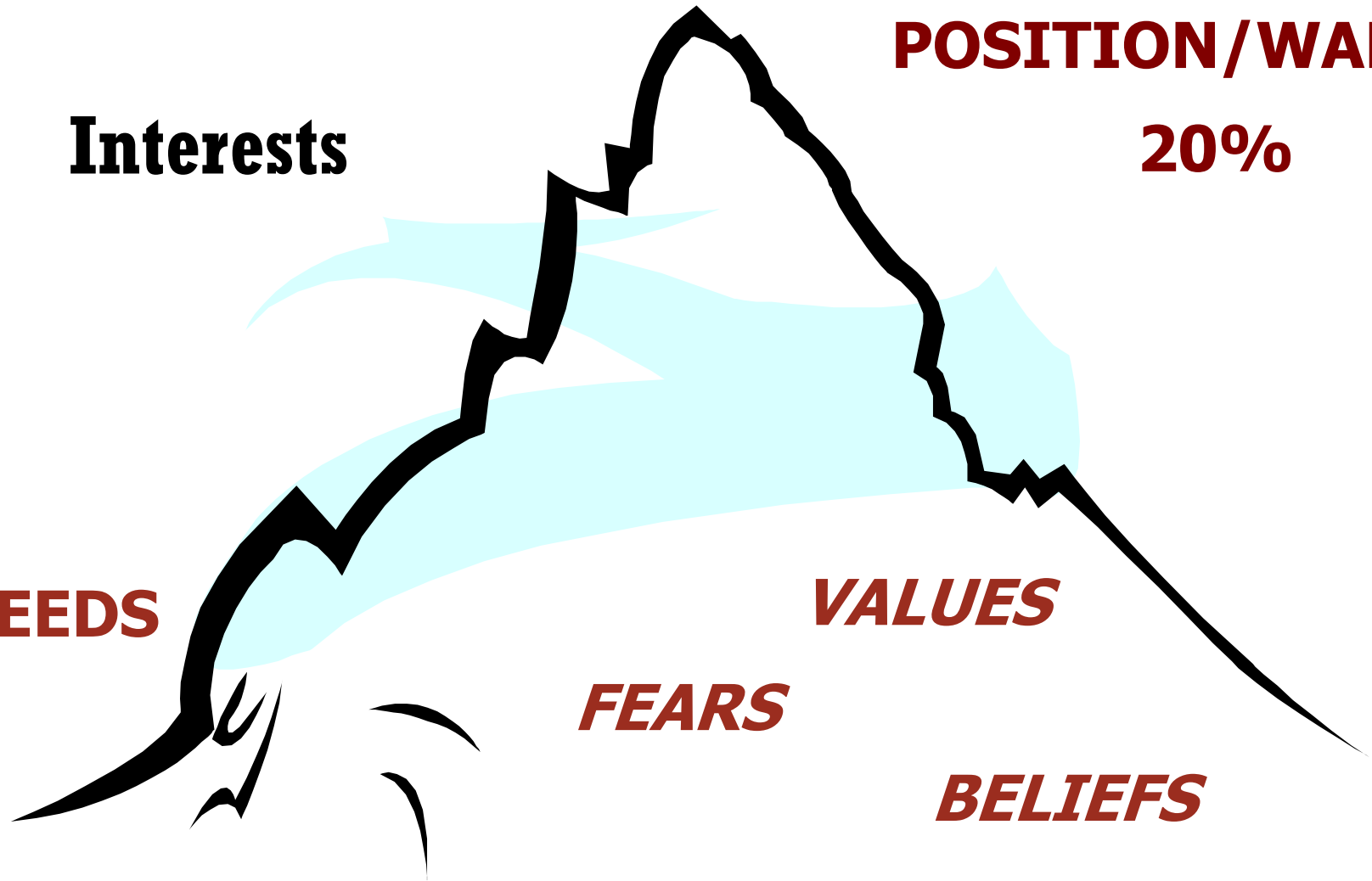
INTERESTS/NEEDS

80%

VALUES

FEARS

BELIEFS





DYSFUNCTIONAL TEAMS

- Lack trust
- **Fear conflict**
- Ignore results
- Lack commitment
- Avoid accountability



ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM DEFINED



A major problem or controversial issue that is obviously present but avoided as a subject for discussion because it is more comfortable to do so.



WHAT ARE YOUR ELEPHANTS?

Personal

Professional

Relationships



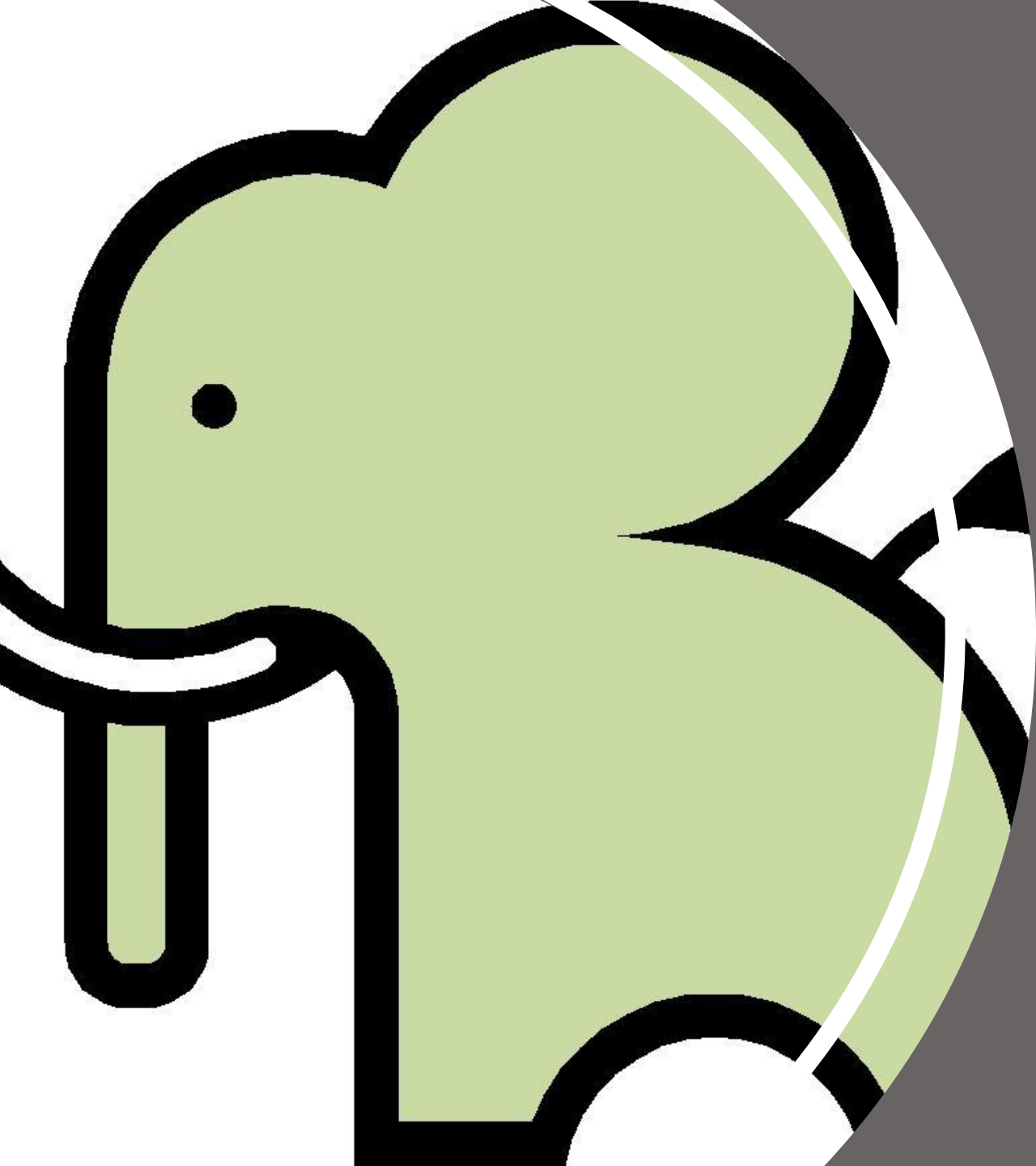
Professional

Personal

Intimate Relationships

General Relationships





TYPES OF ELEPHANTS

- **Ignored**
 - Obvious
 - Solvable
- **Imagined**
 - Individualized
 - Fear-based
- **Insistent**
 - Well known
 - Woven in the fabric

TYPES OF ELEPHANTS

- Ignored

- *Implication: Call out ignored solvable problems and either tackle them then and there or defer them to another time.*

- Imagined

- *Implication: Let those imagining elephants in the room discuss their fears so others can help them get over those fears.*

- Insistent

- *Implication: Deal with insistent elephants either by resolving the issue or by letting their owners take them away with them.*



COMMON ELEPHANTS

Workplace

- Conflicts between people or teams
- Distrust of the leader
- A broken process or product
- An underperforming staff member
- A manager who never gives feedback
- A major difference of opinion about an issue or an organizational stance



Personal

- Family politics
- Alcoholism
- Abuse
- Marriage
- Kids
- Environmental factors



**MENTAL ARGUING IS
AN INDICATOR THAT
ELEPHANTS ARE
PRESENT**

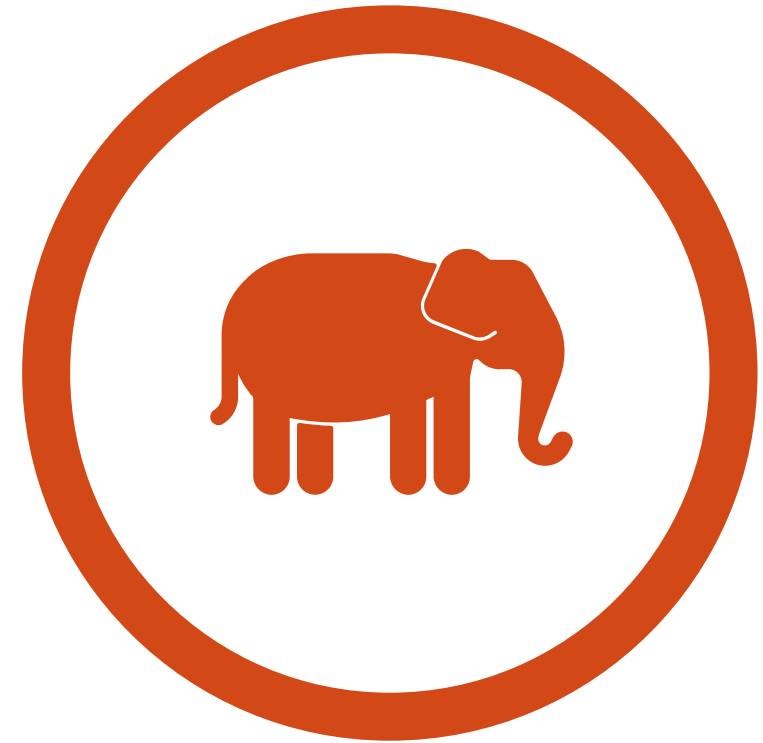


TO CONFRONT OR NOT TO CONFRONT

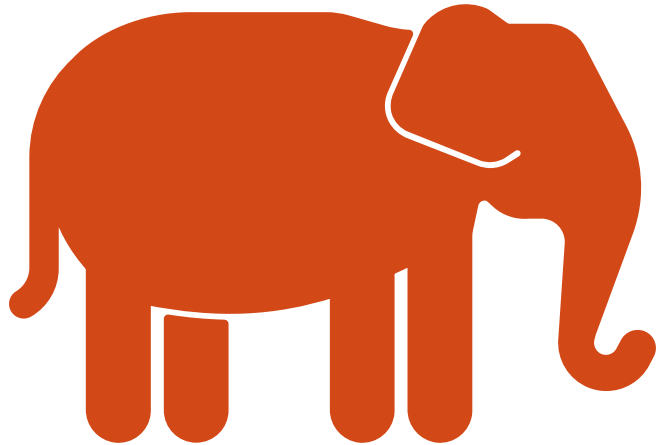
There are times when the elephant is present in a group situation and, at other times, it might be with an individual person. Each of these requires a different approach.

When working with a group, IF the Elephant affects the whole group, it is better to deal with it in a special meeting.

If the Elephant is (or with) an individual, it is usually better to deal with it personally in a one-to-one meeting behind closed doors and away from inquisitive ears!



EFFECTS OF NOT TALKING ABOUT THE ELEPHANT



1. If you don't deal with the Elephant head-on you are pretending it isn't in the room. This is unrealistic and unproductive.
2. If not dealt with, it grows bigger, and the leadership appears weak, ineffective, and lacking in management skills – the needs of individuals.
3. It de-motivates the rest of the group, so productive and meaningful contributions and relationships are reduced.
4. It multiplies hidden suspicions, whispered conversations, rumors, gossip, frustration, and the possibility of favoritism within the team/organization. It also reflects on other decisions made by leadership.



EFFECTS OF TALKING OPENLY ABOUT THE ELEPHANT



1. Shows the leadership is sensitive to what is happening in their organization.
2. Shows that they are in control of the situation and demonstrate their ability to resolve the problem with the elephant without fear thereby displaying their skills.
3. Reduces stress/worries for other members of the team.
4. Allows for a resolution of the situation rapidly.
5. People might feel bad/worried in the short-term for discussing it, but they will grow out of it.
6. Creates a positive precedent for talking openly about other possible/future Elephants.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How many elephants do you have in the room concerning your relationships – personal and professional?
- Have you felt there is something you want to express or discuss but are afraid to approach the topic with another?
- What is your level of professional engagement? What keeps you from being more engaged?
- What discussions are you avoiding? How has avoiding those discussions caused you unnecessary pain?
- How connected do you feel in your relationships? How important is connection for you?
- Is intimacy and being authentic of great value to you?



ELEPHANTS BEFORE ADDRESSING THE ELEPHANT

- Acknowledge the power in the room
- Manage individual expectations
- Ask for help
- Explore expectations vs. reality
- Recognize resentment
- Promote positive intentions



HOW TO TALK ABOUT IT: PREPARATION

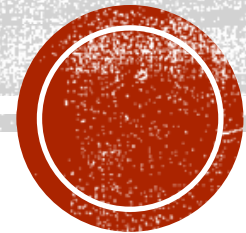
1. Know **EXACTLY** what the Elephant in the room is. **OR...**
2. Understand how it affects the others in the room: professionally and emotionally.
3. Be the person to raise the topic. Be brave.
4. Plan in advance what you're going to say and how.
5. Be direct, honest, and thorough.
6. Prepare a range of different alternatives to resolve the problem with the benefits and drawbacks of each one.
7. Speak **ONLY** for yourself. Unless you are a mind reader you cannot know what the others are thinking.





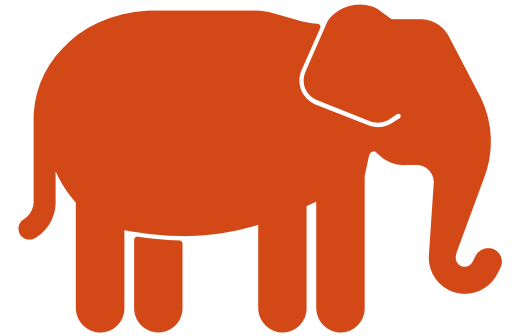
REALITY CHECK

How do you eat
an elephant?



ADDRESSING THE ELEPHANT: STEPS

- **Step 1: Identify and Name It.**
 - When you identify the elephant and give it a name, it stops becoming problematic, intimidating and controlling, because it is now out in the open and people are able to openly discuss it, it becomes easier to resolve.
- **Step 2: Consult the Group.**
 - Ask members of the team to propose possible solutions BEFORE you outline your ideas. **Collaborative problem-solving!!**
- **Step 3: Reach Agreement.**
 - Agree on the next steps to be taken: Who will do what, when, how, etc., and ensure that the people involved agree and are committed to doing what they have agreed!



ONGOING AWARENESS

- **Step 4: Feedback.**
 - Arrange for feedback from the other people in the team or who are affected by this problem and solution.
- **Step 5: Help the Group Envision a Better Future.**
 - The leadership should always express confidence that the agreed plan will be successful and that the Elephant is now tamed.
- **Step 6: Reward Success and Inform the Group about the Consequences of Failure.**
 - The team needs to know the benefits of a successful solution and the consequences of failure.

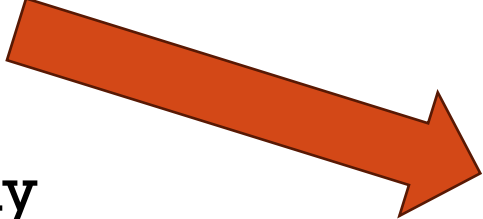


FACTORS THAT IMPACT COMMUNICATION

- Values
- Perceptions
- Assumptions
- Communication styles
- Comfort level and fluency with the language used
- Level of trust
- Cultural practices
- Use of gestures
- Spatial comfort



ESSENTIALS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Check your ego
 - Mean what you say
 - Counter defensiveness with humility
 - Don't stoop to another level
- 
- Set the emotional tone
 - Be willing to not be totally right...possibly wrong
 - It is not about winning



COMMUNICATION: SEEKING SAFETY

- Be observant
- Non-threatening
- Personal space
- Tone, rate, cadence of voice
- Setting
- No surprises
- Mutual Respect
- Mutual Purpose



LISTEN!



Avoid the impulse to argue mentally while the other person is speaking. The average speaking rate is one hundred and forty words per minute, while the average thinking rate is twelve hundred words per minute (**140 vs. 1,200**). When your attitude toward the speaker is already flawed by conflict, you may be tempted to use the difference between thinking and speaking time to compete with the speaker's message. Still that internal voice and focus on the other's words. Listen for unspoken as well as spoken words.



ACTIVE LISTENING

Guidelines:

- Listen attentively without interrupting
- Try to understand
 - How the person feels
 - What he/she wants
 - Why he/she wants it
- Tell the person what you heard



ACTIVE LISTENING IN PROBLEM SOLVING

Pay Attention To...

- Spoken words
- Body language
- Voice intonation
- Facial expression
- Silence

Don't...

- Interrupt
- Offer advice
- Judge
- Ridicule/criticize
- Bring up your own experience
- Look bored, disinterested or disbelieving
- Console



TO SHOW YOU HAVE BEEN LISTENING

Restate

- Basic ideas and facts

**So, what I heard
you say...**

Summarize

- Major ideas expressed and feelings

Reflect

- Basic feelings



The more honest and upfront you are with your team (your people), the more they will be the same to you.

Once you are sure the elephant is present, DON'T ignore it. Elephants grow, so at the very least acknowledge that the problem exists.

Give it a name so that you can stay focused on what needs to be solved.

