

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION:

Managing Conflict in the Library

# QUESTION

Nothing is more \_\_\_\_\_ than working  
with the public.

# AGENDA

- Differences between Good and Bad conflict
- Types of conflict.
- Ways to defuse conflict
- How to move past conflict



# GOOD AND BAD CONFLICT

# BAD CONFLICT

- Avoidance
- Self-protection
- Complaining rather than managing conflict
- Acceptance
- Discipline



# GOOD CONFLICT

- Agree to learn from conflict
- Be creative
- Be flexible
- Be responsive
- Encourage idea sharing
- Look for win-win situations
- Listen



LET'S TALK ABOUT LISTENING...

# UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT



# LEVELS OF CONFLICT

## Intrapersonal or Intrapsychic Conflict

- Conflict that occurs within an individual

## Interpersonal Conflict

- Conflict that occurs between individuals

# PERSONALITY CONFLICTS

## Types of Conflict

- Work style differences
- Background differences
- Attitude differences
- Competitive vs cooperative



# BEHAVIORAL CONFLICTS

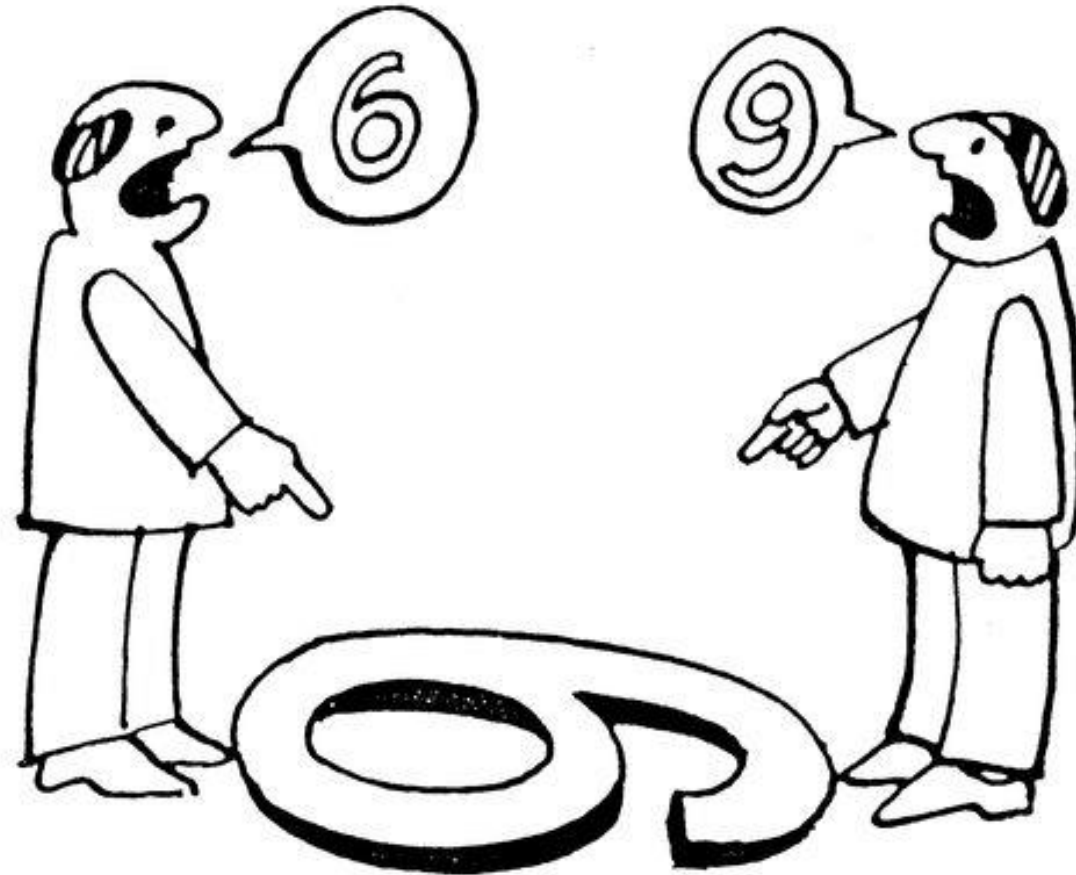




# SITUATIONAL CONFLICT



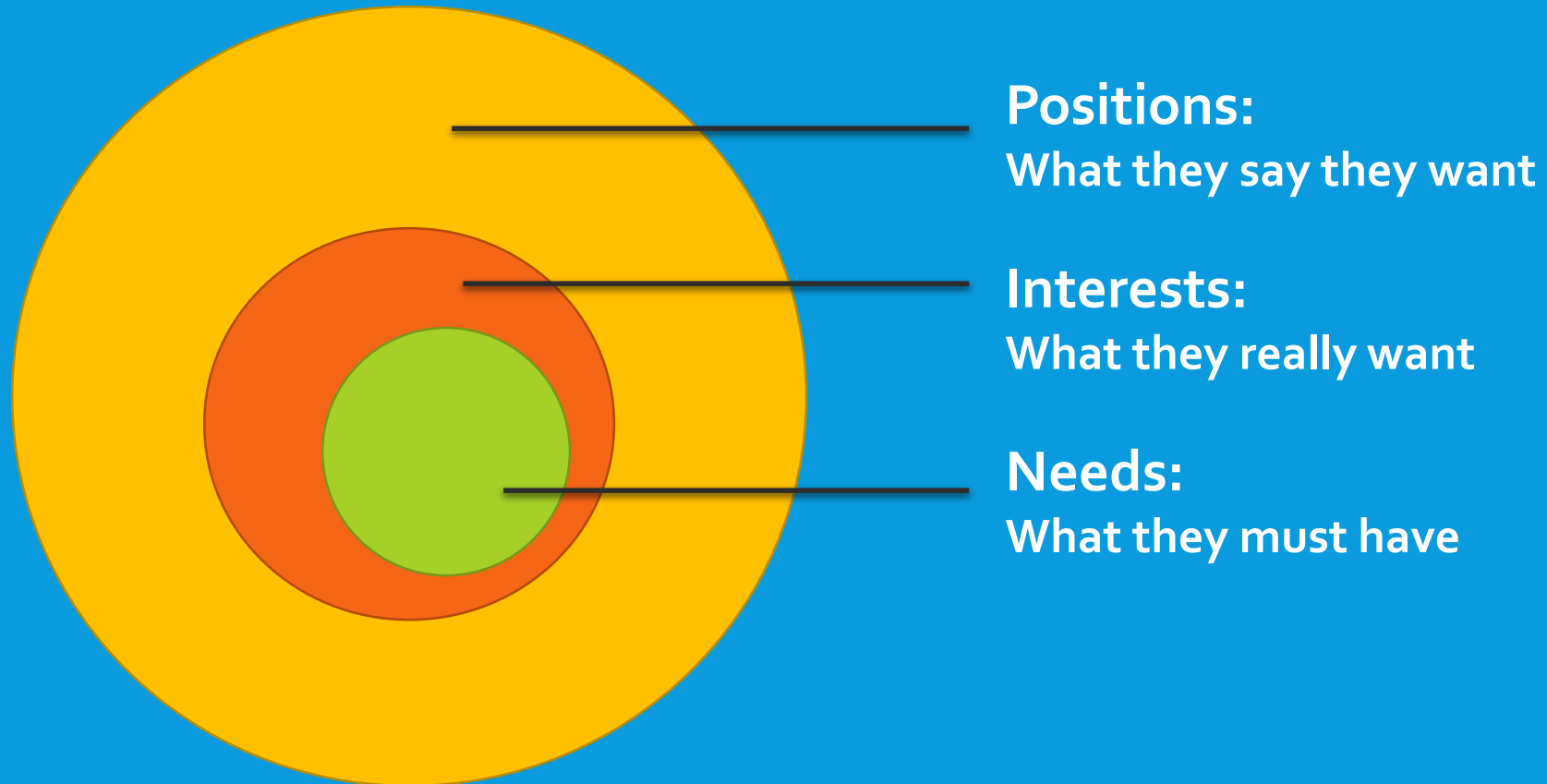
# PERSPECTIVE CONFLICTS



# COMMUNICATION CONFLICTS



# CONFLICT DIAGNOSIS





# 4 KEYS TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- Quickly relieve stress
- Recognize and manage your emotions
- Improve your non-verbal communication
- Use humor and play





# RESOLVING CONFLICT BY LISTENING

## **L –Listen**

Don't talk. Unhappy patrons need to be heard before you can help

## **A-Apologize**

Don't excuse or admit guilt, but sincerely apologize for the misunderstanding

## **S-Solve the problem**

Provide an immediate response. Work together with the patron to find a solution

## **T-Thanks**

Sincerely thank the patron for this opportunity, for their patience, for allowing you to serve them better

LET'S TALK ABOUT LISTENING...

...AGAIN

SITUATIONS...

# SCENARIO 1

A patron is upset because of overdue fines. They insist they turned an item in, but you can't find it. Later, a staff member finds the item on a co-worker's desk. How do you explain this to the patron?

# SCENARIO 2

A drunk patron is talking very loudly on his cell phone and you have a 'no cell phone' policy. When you ask him to be quiet, he gets into your face and verbally assaults you. What do you do?

# SCENARIO 3

A regular patron, that no one likes, is coming in and she's headed to your desk. She complains about everything: your service, selections of materials, library policies, etc. Today she complains that you're not dressed professionally enough. What do you do?

# SCENARIO 4

A mom comes in with her toddler and the child is running around the library knocking books off the shelves and going behind the desk. Mom says nothing. What do you do?

# SCENARIO 5

A regular patron comes in and asks you about the latest Judy Blume novel. While you're talking, you notice bed bugs crawling on the patron. What do you do?



# MOVING BEYOND CONFLICT

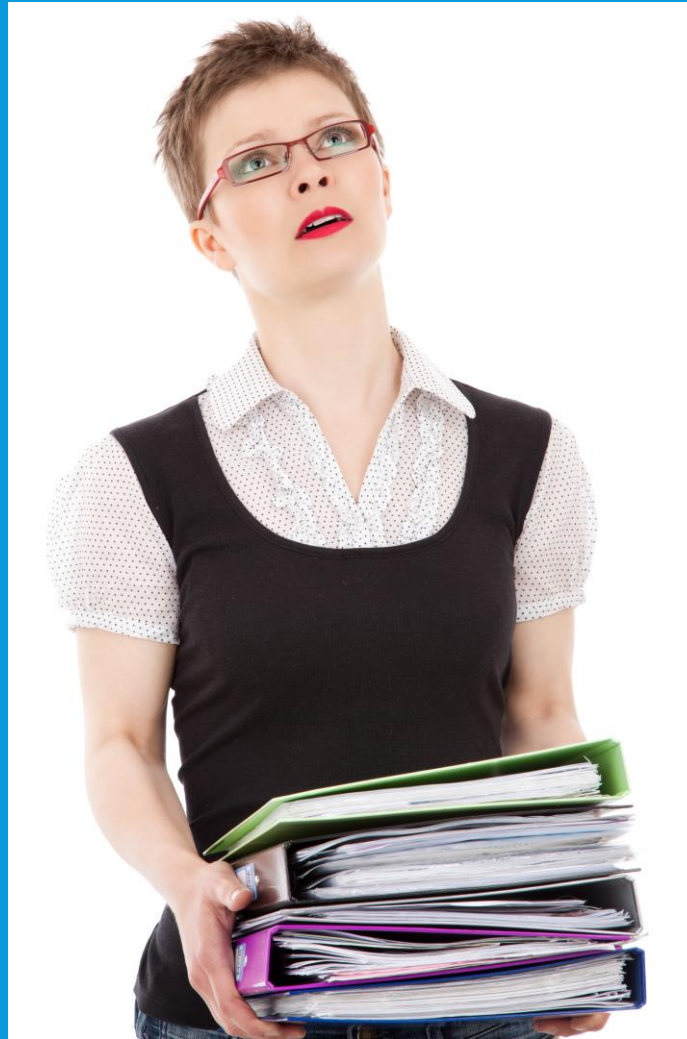
# FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN NEEDS



Every human has the same basic needs that are required to maintain a basic level of happiness.

Developed by Manfred Max-Neef

# CONSEQUENCE OF CONFLICT



# COGNITIVE REFRAMING



# REMINDERS AND TIPS:

- People are people
- Teens are people, too
- You are in control!
- Acknowledge patron concerns
- Positive vs. negative
- Policies!!!

# USEFUL TIPS FOR SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

## Angry patron who is dissatisfied with a service or policy

Speak calmly, ask clarifying questions, and paraphrase the issue. See if there is a way to resolve the problem, e.g., payment plan for overdue materials. If there is nothing to be done, re-state the current policy and inform the patron that you will bring his/her concern to the attention of your supervisor.

# USEFUL TIPS FOR SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

## Incessant conversationalist who is lonely

Always respond to their request for information in a calm and pleasant tone of voice. As they continue to talk, listen and when you feel it is appropriate, interrupt the conversation and say. "Is there anything else I can help you with today?" If they don't ask another question or just continue talking, say I have to assist another customer, or I have to check for something for someone who is waiting on the phone, etc. and turn away.

# USEFUL TIPS FOR SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

## Hygienically challenged

This can be tricky, as you don't want to violate anyone's civil rights. Here is where a policy is essential. The policy should be cleared with your jurisdiction's legal counsel. In addition, you may want to have made arrangements with a local homeless shelter or health department to have someone on-call to come get the individual and take them somewhere for bath or shower. Explain that they are welcome in the library as long as they are hygienically clean. When they have had a bath and cleaned-up, they are welcome to come back. If all else fails, call the police to remove the patron.



# USEFUL TIPS FOR SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

## Drunk and disorderly

Treat the same as a disruptive patron. Explain that library policy does not allow people who are inebriated to be in the library. Ask them to leave and tell them when they are sober, they are always welcome. If they refuse to leave, call the police.

# QUESTIONS?

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