



123rd Annual Conference
October 2021

**Leading through
Conflict Management:
A preconference workshop**



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**I AM EXCITED TO BE
HERE TODAY!!!**

A photograph of wooden blocks spelling out the word 'CONFLICT' in a row on a light-colored wooden surface. Several other wooden blocks with letters are scattered around the main row, some lying flat and some on their sides. The lighting is soft, creating gentle shadows.

C O N F L I C T

**What's on
your mind?**

- When you think of conflict related to your work, what is the biggest challenge?

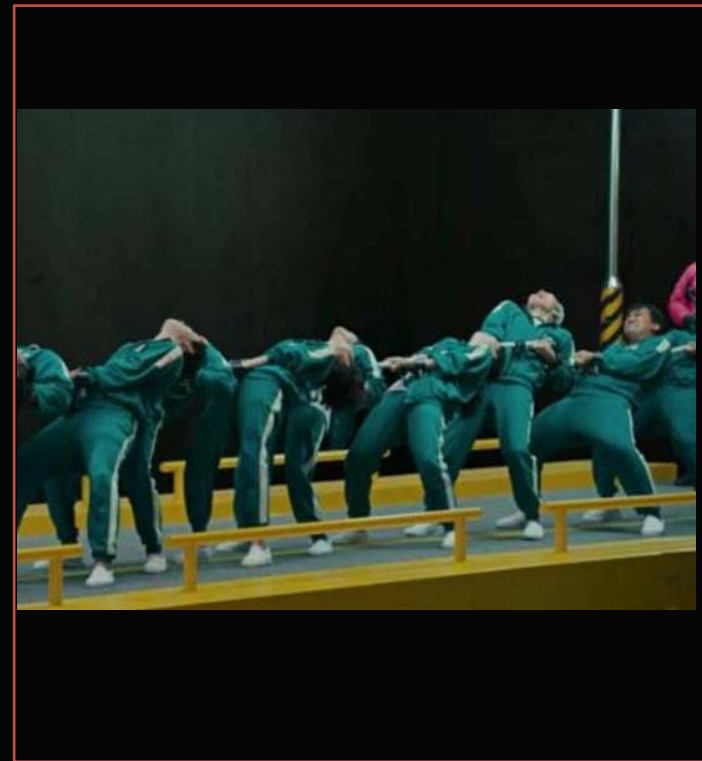
Conflict is normal

- ◆ It can be a springboard to action
- ◆ It can help us refine policy ideas
- ◆ It is a reflection of real tradeoffs among value propositions

BUT . . .

If conflict escalates ...

- Tears apart relationships
- Does violence to ourselves and others
- Impedes our ability to do our jobs
- Detrimental effects on policy-making
- Creates a toxic community or workplace



SQUID
GAME



Two Basic Assumptions

- Conflict involves people
- We can control ourselves

Implications

- Transforming conflict is rooted in the quality of relationships.
- Ending conflict is ongoing, evolving, and intentional. It is about transforming ourselves and others.



Pragmatic strategies



1. **Limit binary thinking**
2. **Build feedback mechanisms**
3. **Avoid reactionary decisions**
4. **Bring people along**
5. **Embrace policy debate**
6. **Acknowledge mistakes**



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1. Limit binary thinking

- We crave certainty and consistency at the expense of truth
- We are predisposed for good vs. evil narrative
- We are tribal (prefer like-minded)
- We filter and cherry pick evidence to support our views
- We avoid value dilemmas, tensions, and tough choices

How to . . . limit binary thinking

Be Aware

- Information Cocoons
- Echo Chambers
- Thought Bubbles

You are not immune

**Information
Challenge**





2. Build feedback mechanisms

How to . . . build feedback mechanisms

Discussion

- *Who do you turn to for help?*
- *Who are your thought partners?*
- *Who is most helpful? Why?*





3. Avoid Reactionary Decisions

How to . . . avoid reactionary decisions

- Slow down, pause
- Reflect
- Control urge to point out hypocrisy
- Avoid mental violence
- Talk with sounding board(s)
- Trust your judgment





4. Bring People Along

How to . . . bring people along

Discussion

- *What do you do that works?*
- *What should you NOT do?*
- *Why does this matter?*





5. Embrace Policy Debate

How to . . . embrace policy debate

- **Better articulate arguments**
- **Refinement of ideas**
- **Sparks engagement**
- **Opportunity to gain allies**
- **Try hard not take policy defeats personally**





6. Acknowledge Mistakes



Discussion Questions

- When you have faced serious conflict, what is your biggest takeaway (either positive or negative)?
- Is compromise in your repertoire?
- Do the ends sometimes justify the means? (Does ethical behavior matter?)

WIPPS

WISCONSIN INSTITUTE *for*
PUBLIC POLICY *and* SERVICE



THANK YOU!

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