

# Communication and Conflict Management for Postdocs



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Spring 2012

# Who are we? ISSIS and CAPS

- Mission and services
- CAPS Info
- ISSIS Info
  - Scholar Caseload division:
    - Online at:  
[http://www.issis.uga.edu/images/docs/for\\_departments/sisscholarcaseloadaddivision.pdf](http://www.issis.uga.edu/images/docs/for_departments/sisscholarcaseloadaddivision.pdf)
  - Statistics

# GROUND RULES



- Authentic and strategic communication
- Responsible use of information after workshop

# Possible Issues

- Pre-Arrival
- Arrival
- Employment
- Taxes
- Driver's License woes and Social Security head-aches
- Family
- Visa renewals and program extensions
- Faculty sponsors and supervisors
- Transfers to other institutions and positions

# Sources of Conflict



- Scientific disagreement
- Bullying
- Workflow
- Competition for resources
- Misinformation
- Power imbalances
- Role/authority confusion
- Personality differences
- Inconsistency
- Inequities
- Negative emotion contagion
- Poor communication
- Assumptions about intentions

# Price of Unresolved Destructive Conflict



- Decreased productivity
- Poor morale
- Wasted time and resources
- Dysfunctional relationships with colleagues
- Compromised research
- Reduced opportunities for teamwork, learning, synergy, change
- Stifling rules and regulations
- Career stagnation

# Why People Engage in Difficult Behaviors



1. Ingrained patterns developed in childhood
2. Personal problems at home
3. Poor self-esteem
4. Repressed anger over past injustices
5. Feeling that no one likes them

# Why People Engage in Difficult Behaviors, *cont.*



6. Unfair criticisms from teachers, supervisors
7. Lack of respect from peers
8. Resistance to change
9. Topics they feel unable to discuss directly
10. Job and resources do not meet expectations

# Personalities...

- Many different types, with differing communication styles
- No one “right” or “wrong” type
- We must all be able to effectively deal with these differences

# Focus on Behavior



## Personality as Problem

- Permission to dismiss them
- Absolves us of any responsibility
- Rationalization for doing nothing
- Keeps us in conflict

## Behavior as Problem

- Possible for us to become more skillful in our responses
- We stop rewarding behaviors we see as problematic
- We can ACT rather than REACT

# Principles of Conflict Management



- Analyze the situation
- Understand your role
- Understand your legitimate and extraneous self interest
- Reframing
- Limit setting
- Seeking help when you need it

# *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*

- Don't bargain over positions
- Separate the people from the problem
- Focus on interests, not positions
- Invent options for mutual gain
- Insist on using objective criteria

By Roger Fisher and William Ury, 1991

About to scream?



Feeling stuck?



# Dealing with Workplace Challenges

- Proactive
  - Engaging in behaviors to change the work environment
- Reactive
  - Engaging in behaviors to change self for a better fit with work
- Tolerant
  - Learning to cope when change is not feasible

# Proactive

## Solve problems in new ways

- Use new approaches
- Openness to different options
- Create new ideas
- Be creative with existing resources

## Address crises

- Analyze the crisis quickly and make an appropriate response
- Maintain focus and control

# Opening Dialog with a Problem Person



- Identify the difficult person(s)'s behavior
- What functions are being interrupted?
- What relationships are being damaged?
- Plan and practice your approach
- Choose the appropriate time and place
- Follow up with person if appropriate
- Determine what you can improve
- Accept feedback about yourself

# Reactive

- Learn new information
- Modify interactions with others
  - More flexible
  - actively listening to others
  - willing to receive criticism
  - changing behavior to work better with others

# Reactive

- Adapting to different culture
  - Adjust behavior to comply with customs and norms of others
  - Understand how others might interpret your behavior and the impact that might have
  - *Actively* learn about others' culture

# Tolerant

- React to challenges by
  - Learning skills to remain calm
  - Practicing acceptance
  - Engaging in self care
  - Use resilience skills, such as relationships, humor, independence

# Tolerance

- Deal with uncertainty
  - Taking action with the best knowledge available
  - Make appropriate changes to plans, goals, priorities
  - Create structure for yourself

# Where to Go for Help

*Colleagues and Friends*

*Postdoctoral Association:*

<http://pda.uga.edu/>

*International Student, Scholar & Immigration Services*

Robin Catmur 706 542-6099 / cell: 706 202-2546

*UGA Faculty / Staff Relations:*

[http://www.hr.uga.edu/emp\\_relations/emprelations.html](http://www.hr.uga.edu/emp_relations/emprelations.html)

706 542-2222

*Referrals from CAPS: : <http://www.uhs.uga.edu/caps/index.html> and <http://www.uhs.uga.edu/caps/resources.html>*

706-542-2273

# Online Resources

- National Postdoctoral Association:  
<http://www.nationalpostdoc.org>
- Postdoc Survival Guide:  
<http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/publications/international-postdoc-resources/international-postdoc-survival-guide>
- Visa guide for Post-docs:  
<http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/publications/international-postdoc-resources/quick-guide-to-visas>
- National Academies: <http://www7.nationalacademies.org/visas/>

# Questions?

...And Answers??