

Ombuds Outlook — April 2016  
Ombuds/Dispute Resolution Services for Faculty  
<http://ombudsfac.unm.edu>

April Ombuds Workshops

Complex Listening: Listen Up!

How complex listening leads to improved outcomes  
in the classroom and in workplace interactions

Listening is often assumed, yet *how* one listens to students and colleagues, **especially in the face of differences**, can influence the outcomes of an interaction and improve opportunities for learning and collaborating. This workshop offers the opportunity to learn about three types of listening: **evaluative listening, interpretive listening and generative listening**, and to consider how these different types of listening help you respond responsively and responsibly to students and colleagues in diverse and pluralistic contexts

**Presenter:** Kersti Tyson, Associate Professor,  
Teacher Education, Educational Leadership & Policy

**Day/Date:** Monday, April 18, 2016

**Time:** 12:00 – 1:30

**Place:** UNM Business Center, Room 1016  
SE Corner of Lomas & University

**RSVP:** [jcivikly@unm.edu](mailto:jcivikly@unm.edu), Jean Civikly-Powell  
Ombudsperson for Faculty



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De-escalating Conflict: Why Can't We Be Friends?

Conflict is a routine part of life. It can range from workplace differences in how we expect our colleagues to interact (“She never talks to me at faculty meetings!”) to more confrontational, belligerent scenes we more commonly think of as conflict. Although often stressful, conflict can also be the path to necessary changes and evolution in a group. In this workshop, we will identify signs of burgeoning conflict and steps to funnel that energy more productively. We will also consider lessons that conflict can teach us.

**Presenter:** Margaret Menache, Ph.D.  
Emerita Faculty, Family and Community Medicine  
Faculty Ombuds Representative

**Day/Date:** Thursday, April 28th, 2016

**Time:** 12:30am – 1:45pm

**Place:** Dane Smith Hall, Room 232

**RSVP:** Jean Civikly-Powell, [jcivikly@unm.edu](mailto:jcivikly@unm.edu)  
Ombudsperson for Faculty



## De-Escalating Conflict

Conflict is a normal part of relationships and can be managed before it escalates. At times, however, conflicts may escalate to a point that it becomes difficult to imagine a possibility for resolution. As conflicts begin to escalate, a *perception-anger-behavior pattern* develops. There is a *perceived* threat, which causes person B to become *angry* and self-protective toward person A. This *behavior* is then perceived by person A as a threat, thus the perception-anger-behavior pattern (Harris, 2016). Maiese (2004) adds, “As conflict escalates, adversaries begin to make greater threats and impose harsher negative sanctions” (p. 1). Although this pattern can be challenging to break, de-escalation is possible. At its core, de-escalating conflict is about communication and respect (About Careers, n.d.). Moreover, it involves changing the dynamics of the way the adversaries interact, which takes a serious commitment to the relationship. Scholars caution that the de-escalation process must be approached with the *future* in mind because this mindset encourages a long-term solution.

The following advice is offered to help de-escalate conflict (About Careers, n.d.):

Don't avoid conflict. Avoiding conflict only delays the inevitable, while building tension and stress. This also prevents the possibility of coming to a solution.

Avoid being defensive. Instead of the persons feeling listened to, they will walk away feeling discounted and disrespected. This creates a sense that the other person is not willing to work together toward a resolution.

Avoid overgeneralizations. Statements like “you always” and “you never” usually fuel the fire and are often met with defensiveness. Doing so is an attempt to point the blame in one direction, which makes de-escalation difficult.

Work to see both sides. When multiple ways of doing things are validated, tension can be reduced. Be willing to listen to other perspectives.

Avoid playing the blame game. Take responsibility for your actions and avoid placing blame. When we take responsibility, we demonstrate an interest in finding ways to improve the situation and hopefully the relationship.

Avoid the need to always be right. Let go of the need to be right and desire to “win” every argument. This gives you a chance to develop a stronger and more honest relationship.

Don't attack the other person's character. Communicate about the problem, not any perceived character flaws. This will help make a positive outcome possible.

Don't close down communication by stonewalling. No one wants to feel like they are not being listened to. This creates frustration & has the potential to ruin the relationship.

### References

- About Careers (n.d.). *8 tips for de-escalating conflict*. Retrieved from:  
<http://internships.about.com/od/internshiptip1/a/8-Tips-For-De-Escalating-Conflict.htm>
- Harris, G. (2016). *Conflict resolution insights: Why conflicts escalate*. Retrieved from:  
<http://recoveringengineer.com/resolving-conflict/conflict-resolution-insights-why-conflicts-escalate/>
- Maiese, M. (2004). *Limiting escalation / De-escalation*. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/limiting-escalation>

## Rebuilding Trust in the Workplace

Dennis Reina and Michelle Reina, 2010. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

In their book, Dennis Reina and Michelle Reina frame the experience of betrayal/broken trust as universal. We each may have experienced a break in the trust that we have with a friend, family member, neighbor, loved one, or co-worker. Depending on the severity of an offense, trust can be broken in a single major event like sabotaging others' work to further their own ends, or it erodes over time from multiple small transgressions such as gossiping or not answering email requests. In the workplace when trust is breached, the commitment between those individuals comes into question, and that lack of commitment can seep into other areas such as their work team, department, or even career. Instead of allowing betrayals to jeopardize your work, the authors suggest that breakdowns in trust be considered a teacher. They offer seven steps to heal and transform yourself and your work relationships.

**Step 1: Observe and acknowledge what happened.** The healing process starts with awareness. It is important to first acknowledge the loss that you have experienced. Observe the situation of broken trust and fully acknowledge the impact that it has had on you, others, and your relationships. You can acknowledge by noting the times that you felt disappointed or disengaged, and also inquiring when you see signs of hurt that you may have caused.

**Step 2: Allow feelings to surface.** You cannot heal until you allow time to acknowledge the emotional impact of the situation. Give yourself permission to feel upset and find appropriate ways to express your feelings, whether they are anger, guilt, fear, sadness, or confusion. Expression can be physical exertion (like playing a sport), talking, writing, crying, or self-reflection. If you have betrayed someone else, it is also important that you hear and feel the other person's feelings as well.

**Step 3: Get and give support.** The role of support is to provide perspective (that you might not see in your pain) by helping you to realize when you are stuck or struggling. Support can come from people we are close to and trust, or from yourself. To support others, listen and inquire about their perspective and feelings.

**Step 4: Reframe the experience.** Examine your situation of broken trust and consider the bigger picture of what might be going on with you or the other person. What can you learn about yourself, others, or the relationship? Think about the situation beyond yourself and through reframing you can use your hurt for further professional development, growth and influence.

**Step 5: Take responsibility.** Look at what part you played in what happened. While you are not responsible for what was done to you, you are responsible for how you respond. What could you have done differently, and what actions can you take to change the situation? This step is especially important when you have hurt another person.

**Step 6: Forgive yourself and others.** This does not mean that you excuse offending behavior towards you, but decide to release yourself from the burdens that those damaged feelings caused. If necessary, ask what needs to be done in order for forgiveness to occur.

**Step 7: Let go and move on.** Remember what happened so that you can protect yourself from future breakdowns in trust, in a way that the experience can be put behind you and not weigh your professional experiences with negative emotional energy. When you are stronger and more self aware than when the betrayal happened, you can look forward rather than backwards, and work to integrate what you have learned.