



THE UNIVERSITY of
NEW MEXICO

Ombuds Outlook — October 2013
Ombuds/Dispute Resolution Services for Faculty
<http://ombudsfac.unm.edu>

Join Us for the Ombuds Open House!

The third Thursday of October is *International Conflict Resolution Day*.
Come to our open house to celebrate!
Visit with colleagues & friends. Enjoy some light refreshments.
We look forward to seeing you!

When: Thursday, October 17th 11:00am-1:00pm
Where: Ombuds/Dispute Resolution Services for Faculty & Staff
1800 Las Lomas, SE corner of Las Lomas & Buena Vista,
Bldg. # 29 on main campus map.



Ombuds Services for Faculty — Workshop on Professionalism

What does “professionalism” mean? And how to make sense of “unprofessionalism”

Jonathan Bolton, MD will describe an approach to professionalism that is being put into practice at the UNM Health Sciences Center. In contrast to approaches that consider professionalism as a species of ethics, this model draws on the social sciences (including G.H.Mead, Durkheim, Bourdieu, Goffman) and sociolinguistics, and considers professionalism to be an ethnolinguistic description of relationship-management that combines two elements: competence and disposition. Jonathan will describe how the model is put into practice in assessing instances of unprofessionalism by asking *where* a problem is occurring — in which work-related relationship(s), and *what* is the nature of the problem, i.e. whether it is a Can't, a Won't or an Oops.

Jonathan Bolton MD; Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry
Director, Office of Professionalism, UNM Health Sciences Center

Please RSVP to jcivikly@unm.edu

When: Friday, November 1st, 11:30—1:00

Where: Mitchell Hall, Room 202

Mitchell Hall is Bldg. #23 on main campus map

Ombuds Services for Faculty—Website has Information and Resources

ombudsfac.unm.edu

Please visit the Ombuds Services for Faculty website for:

Information on services, including consultations, workshops,
article summaries, department chair resources, respectful campus policy,
and details on how the process of mediation works.

Working the Conflict Narrative

Chapter 4, Mayer, B. (2009) *Staying with Conflict: A Strategic Approach to Ongoing Disputes*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Hale, K. (1998). *The Language of Cooperation: Negotiation Frames*. *Mediation Quarterly*, 16(2), 147-162.

When dealing with conflict, especially in the workplace, the way that people approach a conflict can also determine the narrative that they use to describe the individuals and interactions involved. When polarizing and rigid narratives are used, a polarizing overall interaction is also more likely to take place. In this chapter of *Staying with Conflict*, Mayer (2009) presents ways to first identify a conflict narrative and then gives suggestions for navigating that conflict narrative in a dispute with techniques that do not limit and polarize a dispute even further between the parties involved. Within a workplace dispute, the goals should be to construct narratives that do not exclude vital parts of the story, and to adjust our own stories in ways that facilitate constructive engagement (Mayer, 2009).

What is a conflict narrative?

Telling a story is a common way to make a point or describe a situation. Mayer notes that people who are in a dispute incorporate the most difficult and enduring aspects of their conflict into the narratives (stories) that they tell. When a conflict narrative is created, we use our story as a way to organize the events and characters involved in a dispute. For example, when you go and tell a co-worker about the encounter that you had with your boss (explaining how unreasonable her demands and treatment of you were), you have created a conflict narrative. Mayer (2009) explains that the problematic issue with conflict narratives is that they can be very limited in scope.

Those who are involved in the narrative are often portrayed according to hero, victim and villain characteristics, which restricts the range of motives and actions that individuals might have. The focus within the narrative is concentrated on what we can get from a person or circumstance, a view that only conceives of benefits for one side of the dispute.

Dramatic theory (Hale, 1998) is employed when constructing this narrative, implying that the course of the conflict is inevitable and something that the participants have no control over.

How can we expand the scope of the conflict narrative?

Do not limit characterizations to the victim, villain and hero format. There is enough room for everyone to have a part of all of those associated traits.

Instead of focusing on what you should get out of the dispute, engage a perspective that looks for mutual gains for all parties involved in the dispute.

Be aware of the fact that one side does not operate in a vacuum. There are external factors (social, cultural, systemic) and internal factors (individual personality, morality) that each side has to work with.

A hopeful perspective (as opposed to a fatalistic one) allows for more choice and agency, and allows for the potential to work towards improvement.

Mayer argues that the narrative we use to describe and engage in a dispute can significantly influence the course of that dispute. When the conflict narrative is rigid, with strict roles and potential outcomes, the interaction between the disputants can be rigid and unaccommodating. Try to evolve your conflict narratives in such a way that you account for fluid roles, mutual gains, multiple influencing factors, and a hopeful perspective in order to have constructive engagement about, and during, disputes.