

## Ombuds Outlook — September 2016

Ombuds/Dispute Resolution Services for Faculty

<http://ombudsfac.unm.edu>

### Ombuds Open House

We look forward to seeing you!

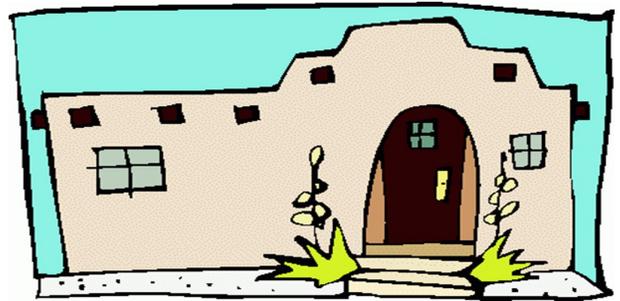
The third Thursday of October is International Conflict Resolution Day!

Stop by and visit with colleagues

Learn more about our services for faculty and staff

Enjoy refreshments

**Day/Date:** Thursday, October 15th  
**Time:** 11:00 am - 1:00 pm  
**Location:** Ombuds/Dispute Resolution Services  
1800 Las Lomas  
Bldg. #29 on main campus map  
SE corner of Las Lomas and Buena Vista



### Upcoming Workshop

#### Communication Patterns of Dyadic Interactions

Teaching and managing involve interacting with others in complicated social settings. We can easily fall into patterns of interactions that have unintended and negative consequences. Learning to see the dynamics before or soon afterwards can help avoid making the situation worse.

Jonathan Bolton MD will present some common patterns of dyadic interaction. He will describe how these patterns arise, their outcomes, and ways to avoid/repair them.

This workshop will also include information/discussion about:

1. Symmetric and asymmetric dyads.
2. The concept of dyadic distance.
3. The distance/pursuer dynamic.
4. Double bind.



**Presented by:** Jonathan Bolton MD; Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry & Director, Office of Professionalism, UNM Health Sciences Center

**Day/Date:** Thursday, October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015

**Time:** 11:30 – 1:00

**Where:** UNM Business Center, Room 1007 (SE Corner of Lomas and University)

**RSVP:** [jcivikly@unm.edu](mailto:jcivikly@unm.edu)



## Creating Psychological Distance during Conflict

In the midst of a conflict we might find ourselves stuck and unable to move forward. Getting stuck can occur for many reasons, such as our emotions creating a barrier, or different ideas about how to tackle a problem. Tammy Lenski (2016) proposes that one response to this common conflict situation is to create some psychological distance between yourself and the conflict. According to Lenski (2016), “Psychological distance is the mental distance you create by detaching from what you’re experiencing and stepping outside yourself in your mind’s eye” (para. 2). This distance is important because it can “help with emotional self-regulation, decision making, and problem solving” (Lenski, 2016, para. 2).

Lenski offers five ways to create psychological distance:

**Mental Self-View** – mentally shift your focus from your anger or hurt by mentally stepping outside yourself and picturing yourself in a calmer state of being.

**Spatial** - picturing a change in physical location or position. An example of creating spatial space is stepping outside of the situation by leaving the room or stepping to the balcony or watching like a fly on the wall. Lenski (2016) also comments that leaning back in your chair can be an effective way to create psychological distance through space.

**Social** - picturing a wider gap between yourself and others, and imagining *movement* away from you. “Imagine whatever is stimulating your angst moving off into the distance, shrinking as it gets further away” (para. 13).

**Temporal** - picturing a change in time from present to future (or past). This type of distance requires that you imagine how you might respond at a future time or how you would have responded in the past.

**Hypothetical** - imagining something different than what you’re experiencing.

To practice hypothetical distancing, switch your frame of reference from your current state to the state you’d like to be in. Lenski (2016) suggests the “As if” theatrical improv exercise where you respond to a stimulus as if you are something else than what you currently are” (para. 19).

Creating psychological distance can be a useful tool in your conflict management toolbox -- one that has the potential to get you “unstuck” during the sticky points of a conflict situation.

### References

Lenski, T. (2016). *5 uncomplicated ways to gain psychological distance during conflict (and why you should)*. Retrieved from: <http://www.mediate.com/articles/LenskiTb120160805.cfm>

Prepared by: Lindsay Scott, Graduate Assistant, Ombuds/Dispute Resolution Services for Faculty, 2016.