Ombuds Outlook — October 2016

Ombuds/Dispute Resolution Services for Faculty
http://ombudsfac.unm.edu

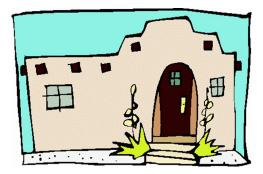## Open House - Take a Break and Join Us!

The third Thursday of October is **International Conflict Resolution Day.**

This global event is intended to promote the concept of peaceful conflict resolution.

Stop by and visit with colleagues. Learn more about our services for faculty and staff.

Enjoy refreshments! We look forward to seeing you!

Day/Date: Thursday, October 20, 2016
Time: 11:00 am - 1:00 pm
Where: Ombuds/Dispute Resolution Services
                   1800 Las Lomas
                   Bldg. #29 on main campus map
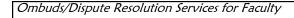   SE corner of Las Lomas and Buena Vista

October Workshop—Let's talk about Mindfulness

Mindfully Navigating Difficult Conversations

Difficult conversations can present many challenges. When the conversation seems impossible, the principles of mindfulness can help to create space for change and resolution. In addition to discussing how to move from mindlessness to mindfulness, we will identify what makes some conversations difficult, discuss how awareness of self and other can help navigate these conversations, and present mindfulness tools to improve conversation skills.

Presented by: Lindsay Scott & Andrew West
                             Graduate Assts., Ombuds Services for Faculty

Day/Date: Friday October 21st
Time: 12:30—2:00 PM
Where: Dane Smith Hall, Rm 234

RSVP: Jean Civikly-Powell, Faculty Ombuds
                             jcivikly@unm.edu

Mindfulness: Overcoming Intractable Conflict

Intractable conflict, according to Horton-Deutsch and Horton (2003), arises from "reoccurring patterns of ineffective communication in which issues are not resolved and build over time" (p 187). The authors explored processes where people can take intractable conflict or "impossible situations" and develop means to create change and resolution. Horton-Deutsch and Horton present a series of phases people experience as they work through impossible situations. The development of mindfulness over mindlessness is the overarching theme that informs these phases.

Phase I: Growing Awareness of Self and Other – In this phase of a conflict, participants become aware of how the conflict is making them feel, especially if they feel treated differently than others.

Rational cycling – This is where participants attempt to solve the conflict with what had worked in previous conflicts using problem-solving skills of past experiences.

Perceived failure of rational reasoning – A point when participants realize rational actions were not leading to rational responses. The "old ways of responding" did not help to mitigate the situation.

Phase II: Accepting Reality – This may be when the participants realize they cannot change the other party. This is the first time participants start to consider the conflict from the other's perspective.

Collateral damage – This is the point where the conflict may start to negatively impact participants' personal lives. The impact on the personal life is what brings participants to their threshold.

Reaching your threshold – The threshold is the point where one can go no further and something must change. It is here participants accept the impossibility of the situation and decide to approach it with new perspective and tactics and focus on changing themselves vs. changing the other.

Phase III: Regaining Equilibrium – Once participants focus on themselves and release themselves from the responsibility to fix the situation, participants regain a balance within themselves.

Physical space and distance – Participants put distance between themselves and the conflict.

Cognitively regaining internal control – The distance participants create from the conflict allows them to ponder their own values and develop new ways to communicate and handle the conflict.

Emotionally regaining internal control – Here, participants feel emotionally balanced and less reactionary and most importantly, separate the behavior of the other from their own response.

Throughout these phases, mindfulness was the "continual creation of new categories, openness to new information and different points of view, and increasing control that helps to change the context" (Horton-Deutsch & Horton, 2003, p 192). These impossible conflicts require a more open attitude of inquiry and understanding and the ability to accept that we cannot always control or change another person (Horton-Deutsch & Horton, 2003).

Reference

Horton-Deutsch, S. L., & Horton, J. M. (2003). Mindfulness: Overcoming intractable conflict.

Archives of Psychiatric Nursing, 17(4), 186-193.

Prepared by: Andrew West, Graduate Assistant, Ombuds/Dispute Resolution Services for Faculty, 2016.