

Ombuds Outlook — November 2018

Ombuds/Dispute Resolution Services for Faculty

<http://ombudsfac.unm.edu>

November Ombuds Workshop

What Do I Do Now? Responding to Microaggressions

In this workshop we will consider microaggressions and biased comments from the points of view of the person making the statement and the person hearing the statement. As a person making the statement, how can you reframe your words; as a person hearing a biased statement, how can you address the comment? What role might a bystander play? While an angry interaction leading to further divisiveness is often the result, we wish to explore ways we can each work to move toward understanding and empathy, particularly during divisive times.

“Interrupting biased comments is one important way to foster equality and inclusion. Yet, one of the more challenging moments can be when we hear a prejudiced or stereotypical comment. Often, there is the momentary “freeze” and an anxious feeling of “what do I do now?” To do nothing generally leaves them feeling angry, guilty or disappointed in themselves. If we have a repertoire of different responses, and have practiced them, we are more likely to be able to say something in the moment.” – Diane Goodman (2011). *Promoting Diversity and Social Justice Educating People from Privileged Groups*. New York: Routledge.

Presenter: Margaret Menache, Ph.D., Faculty Emerita

Date: Monday, November 12, 2018

Time: 11:00 - 12:30pm

Location: Dane Smith Hall, Room 232 (Bldg. #48 on main campus map)

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

Difficult Conversations: Nine Common Mistake

By: Sarah Green

Based on *Failure to Communicate* by Holly Weeks

From: Harvard Business Review Center

<https://hbr.org/2010/10/difficult-conversations-9-common-mistakes>

Mistake #1: We fall into a combat mentality.

Mistake #2: We try to oversimplify the problem.

Mistake #3: We don't bring enough respect to the conversation.

Mistake #4: We lash out—or shut down.

Mistake #5: We react to thwarting plays.

Mistake #6: We get “hooked.”

Mistake #7: We rehearse.

Mistake #8: We make assumptions about our counterpart's intentions.

Mistake #9: We lose sight of the goal.

The Trifecta of Conflict

In his book *Negotiating the Nonnegotiable*, Daniel Shapiro offers advice for resolving emotionally charged conflicts. He notes that we sometimes fall prey to situations that leave us angry, frustrated, and virtually paralyzed—and as hard as we may try to work things out—the situations and circumstances we find ourselves in could seem unresolvable. Shapiro goes beneath the surfaces of conflict to reveal hidden emotional forces that put a strain on our relations and sabotage cooperation towards resolving conflicts. For Shapiro, there are three dimensions of conflict resolution that must be understood and dealt with in order to move resolution forward: rationality, emotions, and identity. Though Shapiro notes that scholars often treat these three dimensions independently, neuroscience suggests that they are interrelated. He contends that only by addressing all three can we hope to arrive at a satisfying resolution to an emotionally charged conflict and avoid amplifying our tribal differences.

The first dimension of conflict resolution is **rationality** (Shapiro terms this *Homo economicus*). It regards people as rational actors. Subscribing to the *Homo economicus* model of human behavior implies recognizing that individuals seek to meet their own interests as efficiently as possible. However, Shapiro explains that satisfying the interests of the other party while meeting your own maximizes the *Homo economicus* model of human behavior. Ultimately, the defining feature of this paradigm is a search for agreement that maximizes mutual gains, or, at the very least, satisfies your interests without worsening those of your counterpart.

The second dimension of conflict resolution is **emotions** (what Shapiro terms *Homo emoticus*). He describes a recent generation of research suggesting that emotions play a much larger role in conflict resolution than previously thought. Emotions can hinder conflict resolution through anger, pride, and resentment. This role of emotions emphasizes that the emotional domain extends beyond reason; it animates actions and thoughts. Identifying our emotional needs is crucial to conflict resolution because emotions alert us to unmet psychological needs. According to this model, emotions can also facilitate resolution if, of course, we listen to these messages. For Shapiro, emotions are messengers, signaling whether a situation is unfolding in your favor and it is up to you to make use of those signals to adjust your course accordingly.

Lastly, Shapiro highlights the dimension of **identity** (what he terms *Homo identicus*). Here, he argues that the realm of identity lies beyond reason and emotion and is rooted in the principle that human beings seek meaning in their existence. Though we can never fully know ourselves, self-reflection is an imperative part of conflict resolution because the role of identity in our toughest conflicts are hidden forces fueling both destructive relation as well as new possibilities for resolution. Shapiro notes that “an emotionally charged conflict gets its ‘charge’ because it implicates fundamental aspects of your identity: who you are, what you hold important, and how you conceive of meaning in your life. In other words, it threatens *you*.” Recognizing the role of the *Homo identicus* is crucial to conflict resolution because it entails not just valuing your identity and the reflection of yourself, but also, places value in the *space between* you and the other side. This space is important because the emotional space between you and the other person defines your relationship as “friends or enemies, lovers or traitors”.

Shapiro, D. (2016). *Negotiating the Negotiable: How to Resolve Your Most Emotionally Charged Conflicts*. NY: Viking.