

2012 MOWAA Annual Conference

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Difficult Conversations: Understanding and Leveraging Conflict in Volunteer Organizations

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Outline for Workshop:

- I. Introductions & Activity - Why “effective communication” can be so challenging
 - a. Interpersonal Communication 101
- II. Communication Competence – we can only seek to improve ourselves

“Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced.”
– James Arthur Baldwin (Novelist and Playwright)

- a. Knowledge – By understanding communicative behaviors (our own and others) and the environmental impact, we are better positioned to shape the outcomes of difficult conversations.
 - i. Communication styles
 - ii. Context & Culture
 - b. Motivation – By continually increasing our self-awareness and renewing our commitment to dialogic communication, we can potentially reduce the frequency of personal conflicts.
 - i. Sensitivity & Commitment
 - ii. Approach/Avoidance
 - c. Skills – By practicing communicative skills that are appropriate and effective for the given context, we are more likely to experience positive outcomes and improved relationships following conflict.
 - i. Verbal and non-verbal messages
 - ii. Active & Empathic Listening (Listening barriers)
 - iii. Adaptability
- III. Reframing Conflict – Challenge or Opportunity?

“Peace is not the absence of conflict but the presence of creative alternatives for responding to conflict -- alternatives to passive or aggressive responses, alternatives to violence.”
– Dorothy Thompson (Renowned Journalist)

- a. Conflict styles
- b. Identifying and Managing conflict (DICE)
 - i. Discover
 - ii. Interpret
 - iii. Clarify
 - iv. Explore solutions
- c. Tips and tactics for preventing conflict

IV. Recap and Discussion