

How to Engage Conflict Productively

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KRESA
Transforming Futures

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOCUS AREAS AND GOALS



Approved and Adopted by the KRESA Board of Education on 10/17/19 and revised on 10/2/20

CULTURE/CLIMATE IMPACT

Focus Area #1: KRESA cultivates a positive, welcoming, safe, and inclusive environment for all built upon Anti-Bias/Anti-Racist principles.

Goal 1a: 95% of staff remain engaged and satisfied in their work environments measured by the HUMANeX Ventures Cultural Assessment Index.

Goal 1b: Increase training opportunities for staff professional learning of Anti-Bias/Anti-Racist principles as measured by process and demographic data.

INSTRUCTIONAL IMPACT

Focus Area #2: KRESA prepares students for their next phase of learning and life by maximizing cognitive, physical, emotional, and social growth.

Goal 2a: 90% of 4-year-old children will meet or exceed the widely held expectations for cognitive, physical, emotional, and social growth as measured by TS Gold assessments.

Goal 2b: Increase the number of students earning industry recognized credentials/certificates as measured by demographic, perception, and process data.

Goal 2c: Increase students' competencies with program identified core skills as measured by local assessments.

Focus Area #3: KRESA provides opportunities for parents, families, and educators to build their competencies to support students' positive, sustainable outcomes.

Goal 3a: Increase meaningful opportunities for parents to engage in their child's education and development as measured by demographic and perception data.

Goal 3b: Increase the implementation and impact of internal and external professional learning as measured by perception, process, demographic, and achievement data.

SYSTEM IMPACT

Focus Area #4: KRESA provides innovative, high quality, and efficient services to support all stakeholders.

Goal 4a: Analyze partnerships to increase and/or maintain innovative, high quality, and efficient services as measured by demographic, process, and perception data.

Goal 4b: Ensure good stewardship of resources as measured by financial, demographic, process, and perception data.

Goal 4c: Increase customer satisfaction and meet customer needs as measured by demographic, process, and perception data.

Collaboration

We work together.

Innovation

We find a better way.

Compassion

We lead with heart.

Respect

We value all people.

Integrity

We maintain trust.



Today's Purpose and Goals:

1. **I can give feedback that is helpful and respectful**, including recognizing when it is better to pause or stay quiet instead of reacting.
2. **I can notice when I am starting to feel frustrated** or resentful and **use self-reflection** to decide what is my responsibility to address and what is not, so I don't overstep or hold onto resentment.
3. **I can handle disagreements by staying curious**, using a learner mindset and rumble language, and sharing my perspective without blaming, freezing, or shutting down others.



Community Agreement

Listen to Understand	Rather than listen to formulate our argument/rebuttal, practice deep listening
Respect	Treat others as THEY want to be treated
Allow Ambiguity	Make space for wonder and both/and thinking
Make Space, Take Space	Monitor our own airtime and claim the courage to speak our truth
Take Responsibility	Use “oops” and “ouch” when we make a mistake or feel hurt by something others say
Make Room for Silence	Welcome silence as a valuable part of the process for reflection and learning





How does this connect to engaging conflict and feedback productively?



Background Info

Feedback and Conflict



The Brain

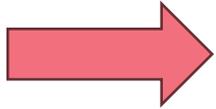
- We process approximately 11 million bits of information every second
- 2 systems: conscious and unconscious



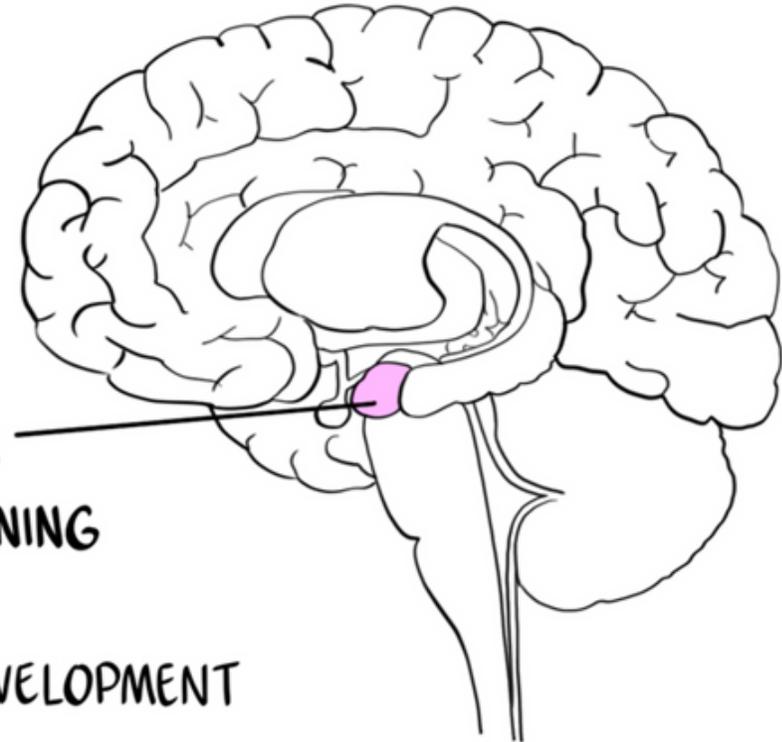
Hardwired for Survival...and

Parts of the Brain That Make Meaning in the World

- Brain Stem
- Hippocampus
- **Amygdala**
- Frontal Cortex

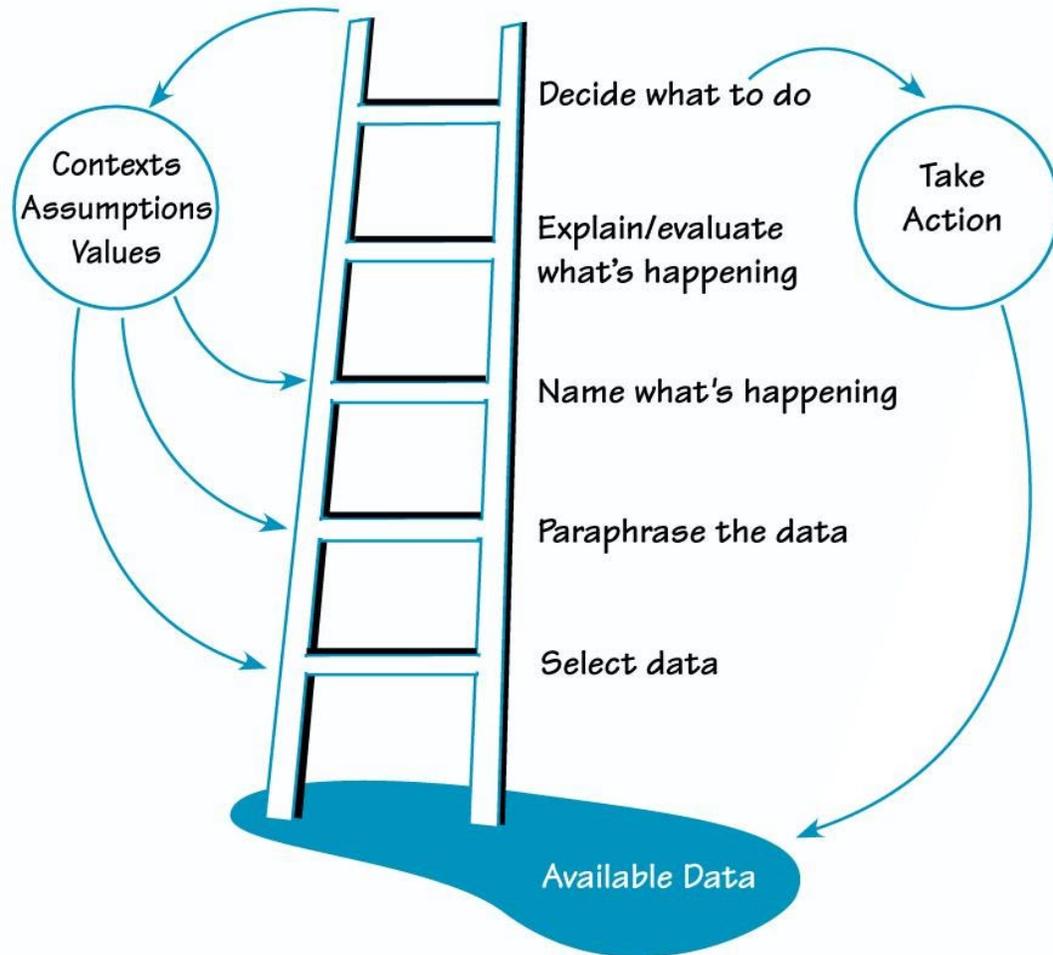


**Fight or
Flight**



...Unconscious Bias

The Ladder of Inference



The Brain

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Source article: www.aft.org/ae/winter2015-2016/staats

Source: <https://thesystemsthinker.com/the-ladder-of-inference/>

What do you think?





Where does conflict come from?

Unchecked assumptions

- judgement - “shoulds”

Do you think people are doing the best they can?





Things to consider to engage conflict and provide feedback in a productive way:

1. Are you emotionally regulated?
2. How might I promote *psychological safety*?
 - a. The shared belief within a team or organization that it's safe to speak up, ask questions, admit mistakes, or challenge the status quo without fear of punishment, humiliation, or negative repercussions, fostering an environment for learning, innovation, and high performance
3. Am I showing respect?
4. Do roles or systems need to be clarified?
5. Is my feedback timely?
 - a. within 24 hours, no more than 1 week later





What is your goal for engaging and providing feedback?

- Shared understanding
- Repair of relationship
- Identify what to do next collectively

It is not about blame, shame, or “winning”

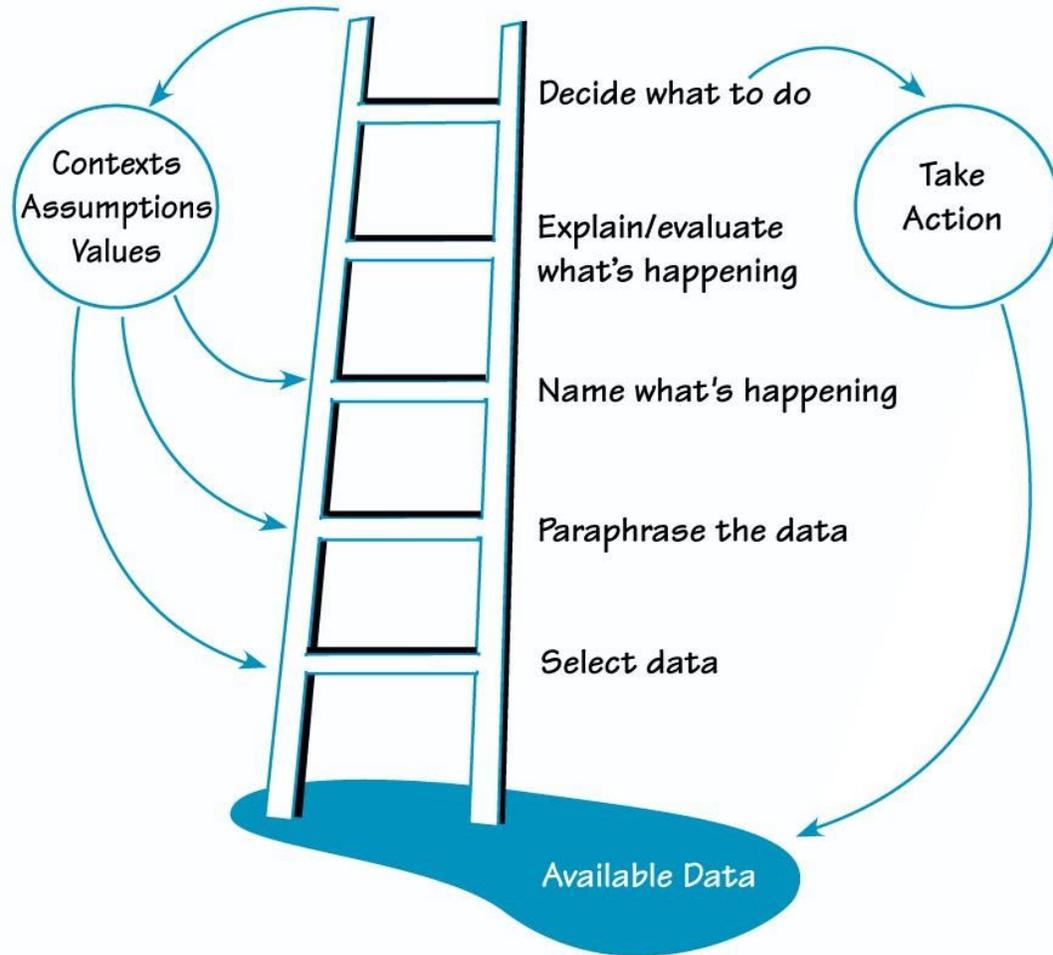


Building Our Collective Toolbox

Engaging Conflict and Feedback
Productively



The Ladder of Inference



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The story I'm telling myself...



S

SITUATION

ABOUT THE CONTEXT

- Describe the situation.
 - Be specific. The goal is for the receiver to be clear about the time, place, and circumstances.
-

B

BEHAVIOR

ABOUT THE FEEDBACK RECIPIENT

- Describe the observable behavior. Keep it simple and descriptive.
 - Here's what I saw and / or heard — what a video recording would capture.
 - Avoid judgment. Do not talk about what you assume the other was thinking, or the motivation for the behavior.
-

I

IMPACT

ABOUT THE FEEDBACK GIVER, OTHERS, OR COLLECTIVE RESULTS

- Impact on you — what you thought and / or felt.
- Impact on others — how others reacted. Keep it factual.
- Impact on the results of the team, project, and / or organization.





Let's have a real conversation, even if it's tough.

A rumble is a discussion, conversation, or meeting defined by a commitment to lean into vulnerability, to stay curious and generous, to stick with the messy middle of problem identification and solving, to take a break and circle back when necessary, to be fearless in owning our parts, and, as psychologist Harriet Lerner teaches, **to listen with the same passion with which we want to be heard.** More than anything else, when someone says, “Let’s rumble,” it cues me to show up with an open heart and mind so we can serve the work and each other, not our egos. ... I try to remember that the antidote to armoring up is **staying curious.**

FEEDBACK TOOLBOX

Rumble Language

- ___ The story I make up
- ___ I'm curious about
- ___ Tell me more
- ___ That's not my experience
- ___ I'm wondering
- ___ Help me understand
- ___ Walk me through that
- ___ What's your passion around this
- ___ Tell me why this doesn't fit/
work for you





What
would
YOU?
DO



As a group:

1. Read your scenario - **Chat GPT Disclaimer -**

these are not REAL stories

1. Identify what is happening
2. Select potential next steps and strategies you could use to engage conflict and provide feedback productively
3. Prepare to report out





Scenario #1 “Payroll Didn’t Tell Us”

Conflict Type: HR ↔ Business Office (internal team conflict)

Situation

HR hires several new paraprofessionals for mid-year placements and submits paperwork to payroll late Friday afternoon. The following week, payroll staff discover missing information and cannot process checks on time. Payroll expresses frustration, saying HR “always waits until the last minute.” HR staff feel blamed because they were responding to urgent student needs and thought payroll understood the timeline pressures.

Tension grows during a cross-department meeting, with both sides feeling unappreciated.





Scenario #2: “You Changed the Process Without Telling Us”

Conflict Type: HR Staff ↔ School Administrator (internal partner conflict)

Situation: HR recently updated the hiring process for long-term substitutes to improve compliance and documentation tracking. A building principal becomes frustrated after learning that a candidate they selected cannot start because required onboarding steps were incomplete under the new process. The principal emails HR and copies cabinet leadership, writing:

“These constant changes are slowing down hiring and hurting students. We need flexibility, not more barriers.”

The HR specialist feels blindsided and defensive because they had shared the updated process in a district newsletter and at an admin meeting. They believe the principal did not review the communication. The principal believes HR makes decisions without understanding building -level urgency.

Tension escalates, and both parties feel the other doesn't understand their pressures.





Scenario #3: “Finance vs. Buildings - Who Owns This?”

Conflict Type: Business Office ↔ Facilities (cross -department conflict)

Situation

A facilities supervisor submits a purchase request that finance denies because required approvals were missing. The supervisor feels micromanaged and sends an email copying several administrators stating finance is “blocking student needs.” Finance staff feel publicly undermined and believe procedures were ignored.





Scenario #4: “You Didn’t Loop Us In”

Conflict Type: Business Office Team Members (internal conflict)

Situation

A business office staff member develops a new spreadsheet to track grant spending and shares it directly with leadership without consulting colleagues. Other team members feel blindsided and worry their work is being replaced. The staff member thought they were being proactive and helpful.



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Conflict is inevitable, the source of all growth, and an absolute necessity if one is to be alive.

-Jean Baker Miller

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Ticket Out

1. What is one key take away you have from this morning's session?
2. What is one thing you wished we had talked about?

