Info Sheet – Conflict Resolution Tools

Conflict is a normal part of life – both at work and at home. This does not make it right, correct or justified. It just is that way. What to do about it is the challenge.

Here are two tools to help you resolve conflict.

A. The “At Stake” Test

1. Ask yourself what the other side has at stake here?
2. Ask yourself what YOU have at stake here?
3. Ask if these issues are totally incompatible?
4. If they are not incompatible, look for areas of mutual interest (eg. both parties may be trying to achieve a similar goal, but in different ways).
5. If they are not incompatible, look for a way of resolving the conflict that fits in with both parties “at stake” issues and interests?
6. If you cannot come up with any possibilities for either 4. or 5. above, seek the advice of someone impartial (i.e. who is not involved in the conflict and has no allegiance to either party) to assist you with answers to this test.
7. If, after talking with that third party the two of you cannot come up with any possibilities for either 4. or 5. above, it is time to seek professional assistance and you should raise this with XXXXX.

B. The Listening Exercise

This is very simple yet powerful. It helps if you have an impartial person to facilitate the process. The steps are as follows:

1. The two people who are in conflict sit down facing each other.
2. The impartial third party selects one person to go first.
3. The first person explains how they see the problem, what the issues are, what they have at stake, and so on. The second person listens but is not allowed to talk or interrupt.
4. Now the second person summarises in their own words what the first person has just said.
5. Swap over. The second person explains how they see the problem, what the issues are, what they have at stake, and so on. The first person listens but is not allowed to talk or interrupt.
6. Now the first person summarises in their own words what the second person has just said.
7. The third party asks each of the following questions of both parties:
   * How do you feel now?
   * How do your see the problem now?
   * What areas of common ground are there?
   * What ideas do you have now for resolving the conflict?