

CONFLICT SOLUTIONS PRESENTS:

# DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Presented to

**ENFORM PETROLEUM  
SAFETY CONFERENCE**





# DEFINING CONFLICT

- **A state of tension due to an incompatibility of intention;**
- **A state of opposition between people, ideas or interests;**
- **An expressed struggle between at least two independent parties, who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards and interference from the other party in achieving their goals.**





# PERCEPTIONS

- Is anyone here a bad driver?
- If we are all such great drivers, why then are there so many boneheads on our roads?

- What date is this: **03/02/97**





# COMPONENTS OF THE CONFLICT

- The **ISSUE** is the basis for the conflict.
- The **POSITION** is the stance you and the other person take respecting a particular issue or point of discussion.
- The **INTERESTS** are the reasons or motivations a person holds that drives their behavior or supports their position.





# INTERESTS ARE DEFINED AS:

- Concerns, Hopes, Expectations, Assumptions, Perceptions, Beliefs, Fears, Values and Needs.
- The apartment example
- Interests are uncovered by the application of the “**why**”, “**why not**” and “**what else**” process.





# “WHY” SUCH A BIG DEAL?

- The question “Why?” is often construed as a personal challenge to us.
- The “Why” question can be the most powerfully constructive or powerfully destructive word in our language.
- It represents an opportunity to bring clarity to those we interact with.





# PROFESSIONALISM

- Your **professionalism** is your **power**.
- You become more professional as they become more difficult.
- **Professional** Language vs: **Natural** Language
- Your “Professional Face”





# TONE; YOUR BEST FRIEND OR WORST ENEMY

- **TONE** is the most powerful word in the English language. **Tone equals attitude** and attitude is the words THEY add to what YOU say.
- **EMPHASIS** is the other aspect of communication that gets us in trouble.
- “I never said you weren’t good at your job”.





# MANAGING YOUR OWN EMOTIONS

- Anger is the most misunderstood and overused of the human emotions.
- Anger is a response to an inner emotion and not a planned action.
- Feelings that underlie that anger tend to make us feel disempowered and anger helps us feel empowered.





# MANAGING YOUR OWN EMOTIONS continued

- Many people use anger as the default emotion; regardless of the emotion, we label it anger.
- It is safe to tell people we are angry.
- Do men and women experience or express anger differently?





# I SEE YOUR POINT

- In conflict, always try to **acknowledge** the point the other person makes.
- One of the most basic **human needs**.
- Important to add some **“substance”** to this statement; some reference to what their point actually is.





# NICE, BUT...

- Connecting word versus cancelling word.
- “But” sets up an **adversarial** relationship.
- “But” is the great eraser.
- “But” often precedes a **negative message**.
- Use **“And”** to cover your **“But”**.





# THE SKILL OF DEFUSING

- Many different people use many different strategies.
- “Calm down” and “You had better relax”
- Other terms to avoid:
  - “Chill out”
  - “Simmer down”
  - “Take a valium”
  - “Let it go”
  - “Are you through yet”
  - “What’s your problem”
  - “Whatever”





# DEFUSING AND DE-ESCALATING

- **Highly inflammatory.**
  - Represents a criticism of the other person's behavior.
  - Implies they have no right to the feelings and emotions they are experiencing.
  - Creates a second problem as well.





# EMOTION / REASON BALANCE

EMOTION

EMOTION

REASON

REASON





# DEFUSING

- A series of paraphrases, one or two...
- Move with the angry person, not against them as they would expect.
- Once emotion is calmed, reason returns.





**THANK YOU**

**FOR YOUR TIME AND  
ATTENTION**

**Gary McDougall  
Facilitator- Conflict Solutions**

