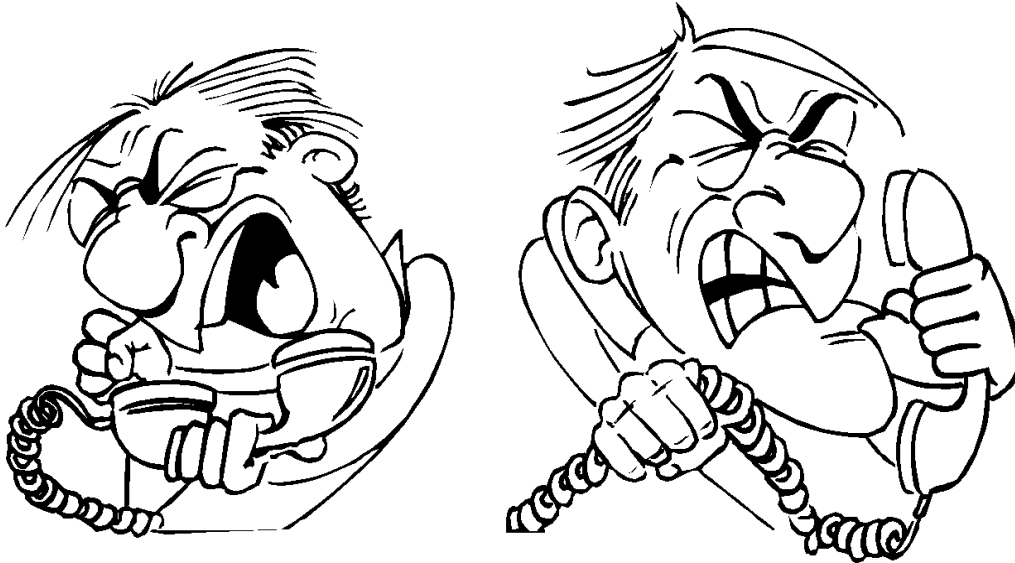


Getting Through the Barrier

Understanding & Solving Problems
with Hard-to-Serve Customers



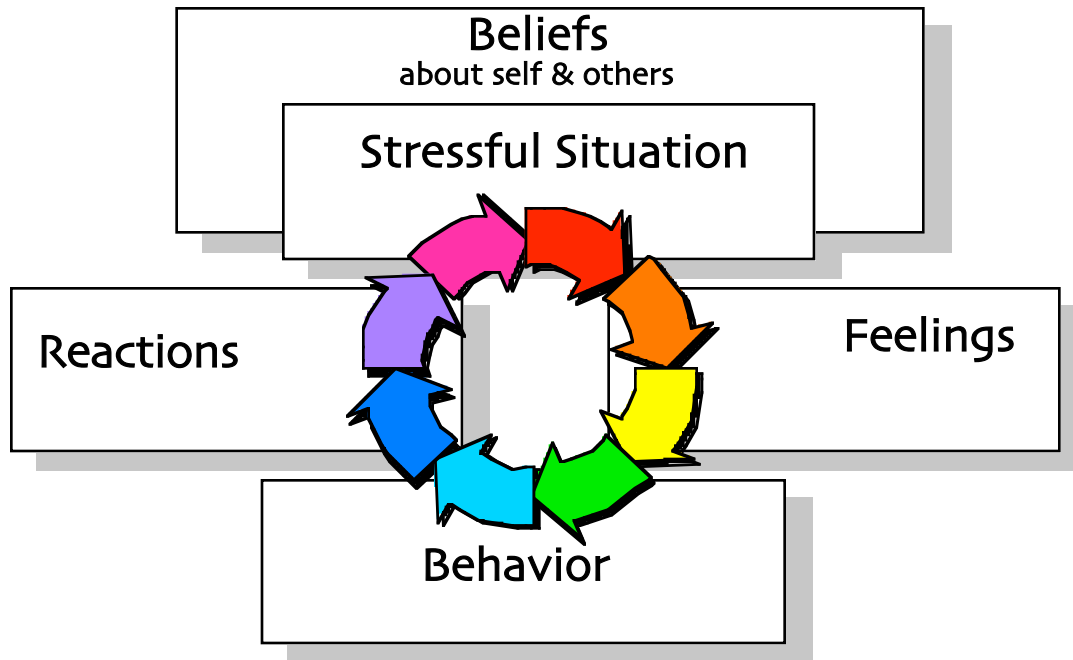
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CONFLICT CYCLE



Erin felt a little stressed as Mr. Massery dropped the box on her desk. She believed that men were often looking for ways to run her life, so she wasn't surprised when her boss stopped and said: "Look... now that you're working here, you may want to rethink your wardrobe a little?"

Erin could feel her face flush in embarrassment. She thought, '*What's wrong with the way I dress?*' Then raising her eyebrows, Erin innocently asked out loud: "Oh? Why is that?"

"Well, I think some of the girls are a little uncomfortable because of what you wear," Massery replied.

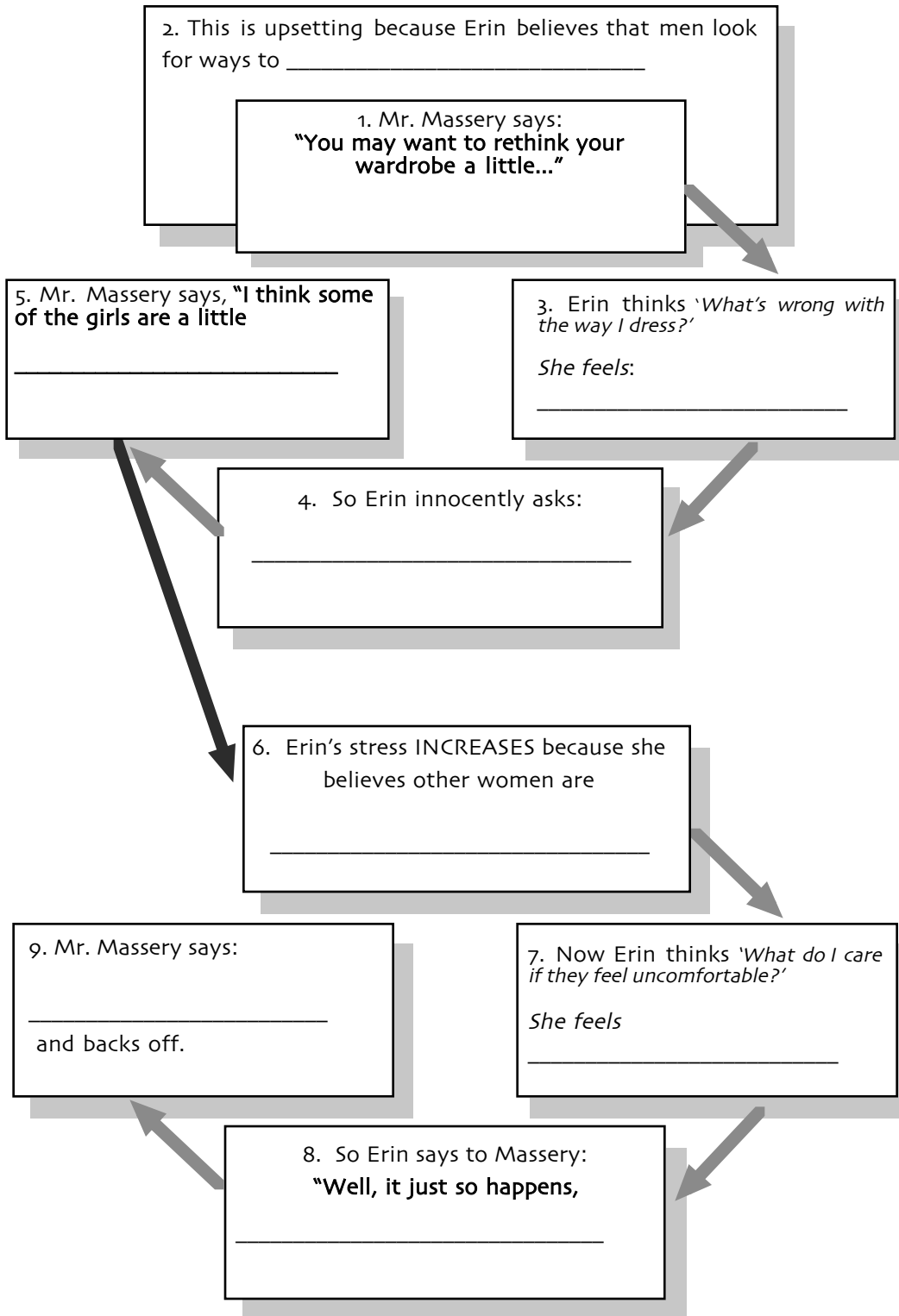
Erin could feel her jaw tightening. She believed that most women were jealous of her, and wouldn't like her no matter WHAT she did. '*What do I care if those fats cows feel uncomfortable?*' she thought to herself angrily.

"Is that so?" she answered, crossing her arms and smiling cynically. "Well, it just so happens I think I look nice. And as long as I have one @\$ instead of two, I'll wear what I like. If that's all right with you?"

"Ah, well.... yes... sure..." Massery stuttered and began to back out.

As her mind raced, Erin felt furious. '*And just who the @#% is HE to criticize my clothes anyway??*' she thought. So before her boss could leave, she gave him a cynical parting shot: "YOU might want to rethink those ties, Ed..."

CONFLICT MAPPING



EMPATHETIC PROBLEM SOLVING

Hard-to-serve individuals often overreact emotionally to their problems. They can benefit greatly from a skillful listener and problem solver. Focus on finding solutions, not assigning blame!

STEP 1. LISTEN CAREFULLY

“What’s happening?”

Listen carefully, using encouraging verbal and nonverbal communication techniques. Allow the individual to vent and help him/her explore the problem fully.

STEP 2. IDENTIFY SOLVABLE PROBLEM

“What is really wrong?”

Help the individual describe the immediate problem, as s/he sees it. Use the format:

“I feel (emotion) because (factual situation).”

STEP 3. IDENTIFY REASONABLE GOAL

“What would be better?”

Help the individual describe a positive outcome to the problem, temporarily avoiding strategies to attain it.

Use the format:

“I want (positive outcome) without (negative outcome).”

STEP 4. FIND WORKABLE SOLUTION

“What can you do?”

Together, identify various strategies which might reach the goal, and select the best solution.



STEP 1. LISTEN CAREFULLY

Use encouraging verbal and nonverbal communication techniques to listen carefully. This helps the individual vent and gets us information needed for accurate problem solving.

Directions: First, put a G next to GOOD LISTENING HABITS, and a B next to BAD LISTENING HABITS.

Things we do

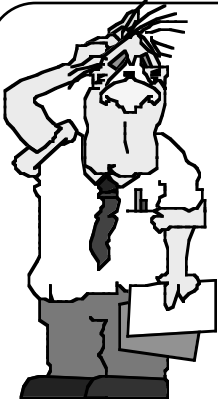
- ___ Interrupting
- ___ Making eye contact
- ___ Nodding at the right times
- ___ Shaking your head in disagreement
- ___ Getting distracted by people walking past
- ___ Looking at your watch
- ___ Staring at the person
- ___ Rolling your eyes
- ___ Tapping a pencil
- ___ Turning off the TV
- ___ Turning or looking away
- ___ Dozing off

Things we say

- ___ "Tell me more..."
- ___ "That's nothing! Wait till you hear what I did..."
- ___ "That must have been upsetting..."
- ___ "What happened next?"
- ___ "Let me tell you what you SHOULD have done..."
- ___ "I see where you're coming from..."
- ___ "But you have to look at it from MY point of view."



STEP 2. WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?



Rules of Problem Statements

- Start with "I" and avoid "you"
- Explain how you FEEL and WHY

"I feel _____ because / about _____."
emotion *factual situation*

Example: "I am so frustrated because I can't find affordable childcare anywhere."

Directions: Read the situations and write PROBLEM statements for each.



1. Jonathan works at a call center. He is talking to you about a caller who yelled at him today. He says:

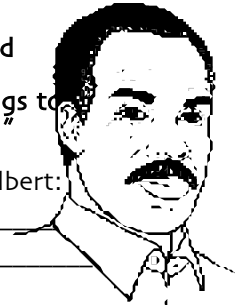
"I'm sick and tired of these rude people! I TRY to help them as much as I can, but today I just lost my temper. This guy had a problem with his washer, but he was being so nasty to me that I started being nasty back. He said he was going to call my supervisor, but at this point I just don't care."

Write a simple "I feel ___ because ____" problem statement for Jonathan:

2. Albert works at your office, and frequently leaves dirty dishes in the sink. Today, one of your co-workers actually put his dishes in a plastic bag and left them on his desk. Albert sounds confused about the situation as he says:

"What's the big deal? A dirty plate or coffee cup once in a while and people gotta be like this? It's not like I don't do LOTS of extra stuff around here to help out. You'd think people would have better things to do with their time than worry about MY occasional dish in the sink!"

Write a simple "I feel ___ because ____" problem statement for Albert:

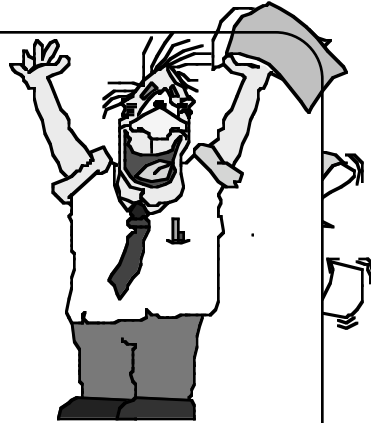


STEP 3. WHAT'S THE GOAL?

Rules of Goal Statements

- Be Specific & Positive
- Be Self-Focused

"I want _____ (but not _____)."
positive *negative*



Example: "I want to find a decent child care place without spending over \$35/day."

Directions: Read the situations and write GOAL statements for each.



1. Jonathan agrees that his main problem right now is that he is worried about what will happen if the guy calls his supervisor. When asked about his goal, he says:

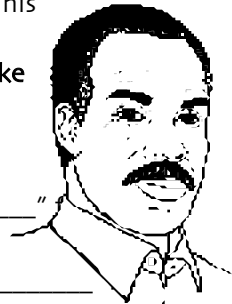
"I just want to go home and forget all about it. Whatever happens, happens."

Write a goal statement for Jonathan using "I want ___ but not ___" format. Be sure it matches the problem statement underlined above:

2. Albert agrees that his main problem is that he feels confused about why people make such a big deal over his dishes. When asked about his goal, he says:

"It would be great if people could stop overreacting to petty stuff like this."

Write a better goal statement for Albert using "I want ___ but not ___" format. Be sure it matches the problem statement underlined above:



STEP 4. WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

Together, identify various strategies which might reach the goal, and select the best solution.



1. Imagine that Jonathan set a goal to "Find out if I'm in trouble with my supervisor." What could he do to accomplish this?

2. Imagine that Albert set a goal to "Understand why people have a problem with me so often." What could he do to accomplish this?



More about "Workin' It Out"

Soft Skills Training for Customers

The culture of the workplace can often seem like a foreign land to those with little experience or exposure to its unspoken rules. Lacking an intuitive understanding of employer expectations, many entry-level workers react personally rather than professionally to issues with coworkers and supervisors.

The "Workin' It Out" training series addresses this problem by helping workers develop the self-awareness and skills to successfully meet the interpersonal demands of the workplace.

On-Site Workshops for Staff

Because burnout is a constant threat for human services staff, we provide a number of dynamic 1-day workshops specifically designed to develop energy, insight, and skills in struggling case managers and their supervisors. Call for a list of workshop topics.

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