

Willingness to Resolve

Objectives: To explore reasons for being unwilling to resolve conflict.

Session Times: 3 hours: Sections A–E.
1 ½ hours: Sections A, B.
1 hour: Sections A and C

Recommended Background: The Win/Win Approach
Managing Emotions

Sections:

A. Exploring Our Unwillingness to Resolve	7.2
B. Projection	7.4
C. Resentment and Acknowledgement	7.8
D. Forgiveness	7.11
E. Managing Unwillingness to Resolve in Others	7.12
F. Concluding Comments	7.13

Activities:

Desert Island Exercise	A.7.1
Forgiveness Process	A.7.4

Handouts:

Section B: Desert Island Exercise	H.7.1
Projection and Shadow	H.7.2
Ssection E: Managing Unwillingness to Resolve in Others	H.7.3



Willingness To Resolve

Unlocking Our Part of the Problem

A. Exploring Our Unwillingness to Resolve

(30 minutes)

Faced with conflict, we are frequently successful at applying the skills we've acquired to deal with it effectively. And yet, at times, our skills seem almost irrelevant because we don't even want to attempt to deal with the conflict. We may not even want to communicate with the other person. We are just not willing to resolve the problem.

Try to recall a time when you felt so hurt, so angry, or so resentful that you didn't want to resolve the conflict. Think if there is anyone currently in your life who really angers you, but you haven't sorted out. Why? Or think if there is a situation about which you feel unhappy or resentful, but you haven't taken steps to remedy it.

Question: What stops us from wanting to resolve the conflict?

Discussion: Draw out participants' responses. In addition, you might consider:

- fear of further hurt
- need to be right (the other person is wrong)
- identification of the other person as the enemy
- belief that it won't be any use
- enjoyment of conflict as an ongoing pastime or focus of attention
- desire for revenge
- need for apology
- anger
- resentment
- pride
- principle
- unfairness.

Question: What are the pay-offs from not fixing the problem? What do we get by not resolving the conflict?



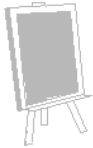
Discussion: *Draw out participants' responses. In addition, you might explore:*

- we don't have to reconsider our interpretation of the problem
- we don't have to admit error or take responsibility
- we can continue blaming the other person
- we can maintain self-righteousness
- we don't need to take risks – by staying with the problem at least we know where we stand
- we don't have to look at ourselves to see the part that we've contributed to the conflict.

We may find ourselves stuck saying "As long as they do... (or don't do...) nothing can change for me".

We cannot often directly influence others, so a starting point is to look at ourselves.

Write on the board:



**FOR THINGS TO
CHANGE
FIRST I MUST
CHANGE**

While we blame the other person we:

- keep distant
- are unable to resolve
- gather allies
- inflate conflict.

Question: **Why might we be unwilling to look at ourselves?**

Discussion: *Draw out participants' responses. In addition, you might consider:*

- it may cause discomfort
- we may feel guilty as a result
- we may not want to acknowledge something about ourselves
- we may not be able to see how we contribute to the conflict.

It is this last point about not acknowledging ourselves and our part in the conflict that we will look at now. We'll be trying to understand what "hooks" us into conflict.



B. Projection

(1 ¼ hours)

Question: Have you ever been so irritated by someone else's behaviour that your reaction has increased the conflict?

You may have noticed how a particular person or behaviour really irritates you but that same person or behaviour doesn't really irritate others. Or you've watched someone else get very upset by something that doesn't bother you very much, and you wonder what all the fuss is about.

Question: What causes us to have different reactions to people and their behaviours?

Discussion: Draw out participants' responses. In addition, you might consider:

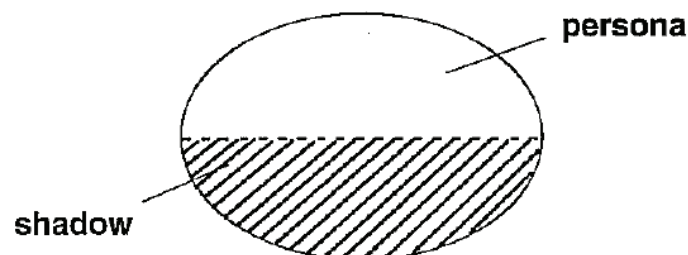
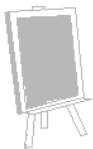
- our values
- our beliefs
- the partial information we have
- our upbringing
- our past experiences.

These are the filters through which we interpret experiences, so our reaction to a situation or a person or a behaviour has as much to do with who we are as it does with the external event. It's as if we're looking through coloured glasses: all of us view the world differently. We project our interpretation and feelings onto people and events.

Question: Who has heard of projection?

The psychologist, Carl Jung, describes two parts of our personality.

Draw a circle on the board:



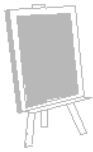
Those qualities and emotions that we acknowledge in ourselves are what Jung calls persona. Whether these qualities are good or bad, the significant point about the **persona** is that it is known to us. It is the conscious part of self. It includes things which we accept as true about ourselves. It is our self-image.



The part of ourselves which is unknown to us, Jung calls **shadow**. Just as few of us acknowledge all the bad things about ourselves, nor do we acknowledge all the good things about ourselves. Our shadow includes all our unconscious desires, feelings, intentions, and beliefs: all the aspects of ourselves that we are not ready to know about, and emotional responses too painful to express. Suppression of the material in our shadow can cause long term emotional tension.

Projection occurs when this unconscious part of ourselves seems to us to be the conscious motivation in the minds and behaviours of others. We see in other people and their behaviour our own unconscious thoughts and feelings. It's as if their behaviour is a mirror reflecting for us things about ourselves that we don't acknowledge.

A clue to whether or not projection is operating rests in our reaction to a person or situation. If our reaction is extreme, if we are:

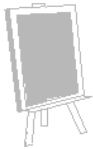


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INFLAMED

by the situation, it's worth looking at ourselves. Our inflammation is an indicator that we are probably caught in a projection from our own shadow.

If, instead, we are:



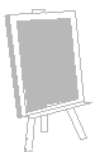
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INFORMED

by the situation, we may still express our anger or dislike but we are not so emotionally engaged or caught up as we are when we're inflamed. Understanding the projection process is about taking the focus off the other person and what that person "should" or "should not" be doing; and instead exploring our part of the conflict so that we can "choose" a less reactive response. Once we acknowledge the part of our shadow which has us in its grip, we can do something more constructive with ourselves and with the other person.

There are three steps to projection.

Write on the board:



THE HOOK

THE SYMPTOM

THE PROJECTION



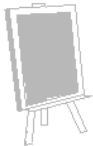
The **hook** is the behaviour that upsets me.

The **symptom** is my reaction, usually an over-reaction.

The **projection** is what I need to become aware of in myself (my shadow) that causes this strong reaction.

Why might I be over-reacting? What part of my shadow has me in its grip? I can look to three main areas.

Add bolded words to board:



THE HOOK

THE SYMPTOM

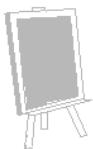
THE PROJECTION: **Suppressed Need**

Question: What might we mean by suppressed need?

Discussion: *Draw out participants' responses. Include the following comments:*

Sometimes we don't acknowledge a need that we have, and then we blame the other person if it's not fulfilled. Or we resent, or are annoyed by that person when we perceive that he or she is getting what we actually want. For example, if I would really like to be popular, to receive a lot of attention from others, I may be very irritated by someone who is the "life of the party". My need for attention is unacknowledged and only shows as irritation against the other person.

Add bolded words to board:



THE PROJECTION: **Suppressed Need**

Unresolved Personal History

Question: What might we mean by unresolved personal history?

Discussion: *Draw out participants' responses. Include the following comments:*

When we have some unresolved stress or pain or anger from a past event, we may react strongly to people or situations who touch on those feelings.

For example:

- at work there may be a manager who tends to be very critical. No-one likes it, but I am extremely distressed by the criticism. Why is that? Is it because he reminds me of someone in my past who criticised me excessively?



It seems odd that we don't acknowledge positive qualities. However, if we did, then our self-image would need to change. In the wake of that, so would the dynamics of our relationships with others. For example, if I admit that I'm very competent, then I can't expect others to do things for me. So if I want to maintain a dependent relationship, with all its accompanying pay-offs, I have to continue claiming incompetence.

Or it may be that I don't want to acknowledge a strength because in doing that I might unveil a weakness. For example, if I claim my failure at school or in exams is that I'm just not very bright, then I never have to face up to the possibility that I'm disorganised and lazy. In other words, it may be better to deny a strength if, in doing so, we avoid the pain of uncovering a weakness.

Group Activity: ***Desert Island Exercise:** participants complete a handout to explore their own projections. (See *Willingness to Resolve Activities p. A.7.1.*)
Note: as participants may explore their feelings deeply in this exercise, allow adequate time to debrief, including the opportunity for them to raise concerns individually with the trainer. Be available to active listen, to acknowledge insights and to refer for further counselling if required. (45 minutes)*

Give out the handout: "Projection and Shadow".

Concluding Comments:

Getting to know ourselves better and better means reducing the amount of unconscious material that is motivating our behaviour. This gradual reduction of the shadow can occur as a natural part of the maturing process, and is often the goal of personal development activities. It can certainly be the by-product of aware conflict resolution.

As we seek out the root causes of our over-emotional reactions, the light of consciousness is cast into the shadow. Once these motivations are known and explored they are less likely to dictate future reactions to new conflict situations. Once fully understood, they stay available to our awareness and do not tend to form the subject-matter for future projections – or at least are spotted quickly, acknowledged by us and don't get in the way of a resolution.

C. Resentment and Acknowledgement

(15 minutes)

Resentment often arises from projection, or it may be linked to some unresolved previous conflict. It's sometimes identified as "frozen anger". It, too, can lead to being stuck in a conflict – neither wanting to, nor being able to resolve it.

Question: Why do we hang onto resentment?



Discussion:

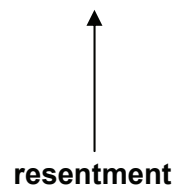
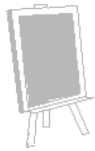
Draw out participants' responses. In addition, you might consider:

- initially, it may protect us from too much hurt
- it gives a sense of self-righteousness – a feeling of superiority
- it keeps the other person inferior
- it simplifies feelings, responses and situations which are, in fact, very complex.

Often, when we hang onto resentment, it means we're not forgiving the other person. And that, in turn, means we don't really have to consider all of who that person is, nor do we have to acknowledge anything good about that person.

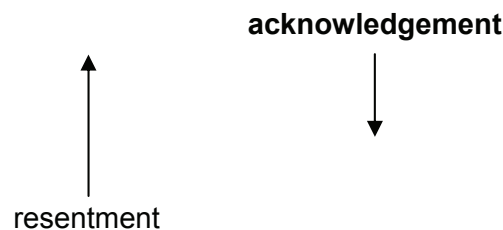
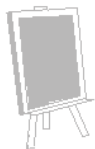
Often when we have a high level of resentment,

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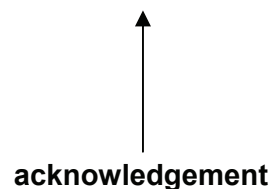
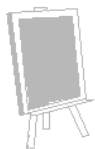
we have a low level of acknowledgement.

Add bolded word plus arrow to board with a different colour:



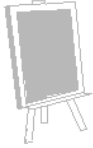
If we can increase our level of acknowledgement,

Draw on the board:



then we can decrease our level of resentment.





Draw on the board:

resentment



↑
acknowledgement

Question: What do we understand by acknowledgement?

Discussion: *Draw out participants' responses. In addition, you might explore:*

- thinking well of the other person
- seeing the good intention
- recognising particular skills, qualities
- knowing that the picture I have of that person is coloured by the conflict between us and the discomfort I feel around him/her.

When we're feeling resentment towards another, we can shift the resentment to some extent by thinking of a number of qualities, or skills, or behaviours, for which we can genuinely acknowledge him or her, and focus on those.

Group Activity: **Acknowledgement Process:** *participants think of qualities that they can acknowledge in others. (See below for details.) (8 minutes)*

Ask participants to think again of the three people they considered in the Desert Island Exercise. (If the Desert Island exercise hasn't been done, they should think of three people towards whom they feel resentment.)

Then, ask them, for each of those three people, to think of three things which they can acknowledge about them.

Allow 3–5 minutes.

Discussion: *Ask participants for any comments.*

If we can't acknowledge a person for anything, then we can at least become aware of our own high level of resentment. We may then be able to focus on ourselves and on understanding our projection in relation to that person.

As well, we could try to focus on what might be that person's best intention in the situation. It's worth remembering that mostly people are doing the best they can in the situation – given the choices and resources available to them.



D. Forgiveness

(40 minutes)

Sometimes when we feel resentment towards someone, or if we've been deeply hurt, we need to go further than acknowledgement. Sometimes what is needed is a conscious act of forgiveness.

(Some people may feel discomfort with the word "forgiveness". By exploring what is meant, they may feel more at ease. Or for some groups it may be more appropriate to use the words "letting go" or "acceptance")

Question: **What is forgiveness? What are some of its dimensions?**

Discussion: Draw out participants' responses. In addition, you might explore:

- letting go of anger against the other person
- ceasing to feel resentment toward that person
- feeling like a barrier between us and the other person has been lifted
- being ready to start fresh with that person, to trust and be trusted

The extent to which we are able to forgive varies with the relationship, the context and how deeply or repeatedly we've been hurt. Sometimes the most we can do is to let go of our anger against the other person. To place our trust in them again requires a much deeper level of forgiveness, accompanied by a belief that the other person won't hurt us so badly again. Sometimes this would be unrealistic and would involve too great a personal risk on our part.

Question: **If we're feeling resentment towards someone else, who benefits from our forgiveness?**

Discussion: *Draw out participants' responses. In addition, you might consider:*

- the other person, to the extent that we might have a better relationship with that person
- us ourselves. We need to feel forgiveness toward the other person to free ourselves in order to move on. Very often, we need to forgive ourselves, as well, to deal with whatever guilt we feel in relation to the other person.

It takes a lot of emotional energy to maintain resentment towards another and to punish ourselves through guilt.

Forgiving ourselves and others is often a critical step in breaking the pattern in which old emotional tapes are played over and over again.

Group Activity: ***Forgiveness Process:*** *participants are led through a guided meditation to help them tap into their emotions, to evaluate, and to finally forgive. (See Willingness to Resolve Activities, p. A.7.4.)*

(20 minutes)



E. Managing Unwillingness to Resolve in Others

(30 minutes)

Just as we are sometimes unwilling to resolve conflict, so too are others, for all the sorts of reasons that we've already discussed.

Question: How do people behave that indicates that they are unwilling to resolve a conflict?

Discussion: Draw out participants' responses. In addition, you might consider:

- refuse to listen
- deny a problem exists
- shift blame to another person or circumstance
- deny any responsibility for the problem
- refuse to have any further contact
- avoid the issue
- claim that the issue is in the past and doesn't need further attention
- pick on the other person for all manner of small issues

Question: If you were unwilling to resolve what could someone else do that might help you to become more willing?

Ask participants to write down their responses.

Allow 2 minutes.

Group activity: **Managing Unwillingness to Resolve in Others:** working in small groups, participants consider what they could do to relate effectively to another person who is unwilling to resolve a conflict. (See below for details.) (15 minutes)

Using our ideas on how someone else could help us to become more willing to resolve a conflict, we're going to develop a list of appropriate ways for managing someone else's unwillingness to resolve.

We'll divide into small groups of three or four to do this. We'll share our lists with the entire group at the end.

Allow 10 minutes.

Ask participants to return to large group.

Question: What are some appropriate things we could do to manage someone else's unwillingness to resolve?



Discussion: *Draw out participants' responses. In addition, you might also consider:*

- show that we are keen to get on well with the other person and we want to resolve the conflict
- try to maintain friendly contact on other issues
- consider giving a small appropriate gift or doing a special favour
- be willing to praise him/her for something he/she does well
- be prepared to help when he/ she has an obvious difficulty.

Question: **How might we ensure that our attempts to manage someone else's unwillingness to resolve are not, and don't appear to be, manipulative to the other person?**

Discussion: *Draw out participants' responses. In addition, you might consider:*

- Examine our own intentions. If we're wanting the other person to resolve the conflict with us just so we don't feel discomfort, and we don't look at ourselves, the other person may feel manipulated.
- Let the other person know we want to resolve the conflict. In our personal life, it is likely that we want to have a relationship with the other person; at work, the most honest reason may be so that work is not disrupted and productivity is not impaired.
- Show a willingness to examine our part in the conflict, and not to blame the other person.
- Chose gestures of good intentions appropriate to the circumstances and relationship. Giving a bunch of flowers could be exactly the right thing to do, or it could be the wrong thing to do.

*Give out the **handout**: "**Managing Unwillingness to Resolve in Others**".*

F. Concluding Comments

(5 minutes)

When we're confronted with particularly difficult conflicts, it can be extremely valuable to explore our motives, our intent, and the relationship of this particular conflict to other areas of our life, both past and present.

Focusing on our own reaction for a time does not mean condoning an injustice, or relinquishing a right, or denying our needs in the situation. On the contrary, looking inwards to uncover a quality, a need, or a hurt previously unknown to us may, in fact, help us to identify an appropriate and effective strategy to resolve the conflict rather than being immobilised by its enormity, or being locked into a continuing unsuccessful pattern for dealing with it.



Willingness to Resolve Activities

Desert Island Exercise

Trainers' Information Only

Context:	Projection occurs when our own unconscious thoughts and feelings seem to be in the minds and behaviours of others, not in ourselves. Seeing these behaviours in others may cause us to over-react, resulting in, or inflating, conflict. (See <i>Chapter 7: Willingness to Resolve: Section B</i>)
Time:	45 minutes
Aims:	To learn a process for exploring our projections To become aware of one or more projections currently operating in our relationships.
Handout:	<i>“Desert Island Exercise”</i> . Prior to the session, fold this handout four times, concealing all but the first column. Start with a fold down the centre of the right hand column and then fold along the lines of the next three columns. As participants progress through the exercise, they unfold it, one column at a time.
Requirements:	CD player or cassette recorder and instrumental music, suitable as background for reflection

Instructions: This is a process through which we will have the chance to explore one or more projections. It's an introspective and personal process to be done alone. Whatever we write is for our eyes only, so try to be honest with yourself. There will be music playing quietly in the background. At the end, there'll be the chance to share something of the process with a partner, if you choose.

We're going to imagine what it would be like to be stranded on a desert island alone, with each of three people.

We'll choose three people who are significant to us, and who we know would irritate us after a while. It is beneficial to choose people from different areas of our lives.

Why the desert island? No escape... We'd have to "put up with" each of these people.

So now think of three people: perhaps a family member, a friend, a work colleague, a neighbour...



Give out the **handout: "Desert Island Exercise"**. Ask participants to keep it folded until asked to open it.

It's folded so that we can concentrate on one area at a time. We'll trace the roots of our feelings to gradually build up a picture as if creating a jigsaw.

Write down the names of the three people in the spaces in the left hand column.

There's no hurry in this process. There's plenty of time to consider and explore our responses.

Ask participants to open the first fold.

Think about each of these people. If you were isolated with them for a long time, what about them would you find irritating or upsetting? Write something down in the column for each person.

Start the music. Allow 5–10 minutes. Be guided by what you observe in the room. If participants seem to have completed the section, move on. If not, allow more time.

Ask participants to open the second fold.

Think now about your reaction. Exactly how do you feel about each of these irritations? You may want to write several words until you settle on one that seems just right.

Allow 5–10 minutes.

Ask participants to open the third fold.

Try to understand why you react in the way you do. Why do you feel this way in reaction to these people? Consider reasons to do with you, not with them.

Are your reactions arising from:

- suppressed needs
- unresolved personal history
- personal qualities that are currently unacceptable to you.

Allow 5–10 minutes.

Ask participants to open the final fold.

Try to summarise these three columns into one statement for each row.

The hook is what the other person does... **when he/she...**

The symptom is my reaction... **I feel...**

The projection is the part of myself which is in shadow... **because I'm projecting...**



For example:

When she gets all the attention at meetings

I feel insignificant and overlooked

because I'm projecting my needs to be liked and to be noticed.

Allow 3–5 minutes.

Pair Share: *Ask participants to share anything significant in that process, that they choose.*

What did you notice?

What did you learn?

Allow 10 minutes.

Discussion: What sorts of things did you notice?

Were your projections towards the three people the same or different?

Important Points to Cover:

When we learn a new process it can be tempting to over-use it.

Exposing our projections is one of a number of tools to use when trying to resolve conflict.

It is particularly appropriate when we find ourselves over-reacting and, maybe, out of control. If we feel "inflamed" by the situation then perhaps our feelings are a signal for us to explore our projections. It's also very valuable when there is a long running conflict, when we seem locked into permanent irritation with another person.

Looking at our part in the conflict doesn't mean always taking full responsibility for it. We may have legitimate reason to feel upset by another's behaviour and we may want to communicate this to them with an "I" Statement or to use a problem-solving tool such as mapping. It may be, also, that the other person is projecting onto us and that's adding to the conflict.

Finally, sometimes we may know projection is playing some part in the conflict. We may choose not to examine it more thoroughly, and yet just being aware that we're projecting can help us manage our over-emotional reaction and choose another appropriate conflict-resolving tool.

Follow this exercise with the acknowledgement process in Willingness to Resolve Section C: Resentment and Acknowledgement.



Willingness to Resolve Activities

Forgiveness Process

Trainers' Information Only

Context:	Forgiving ourselves and others is often a critical step in completing conflicts, and allowing us to move on. (See <i>Chapter 7. Willingness to Resolve: Section D</i>)
Time:	30 minutes
Aims:	To help participants tap into the emotions of a conflict situation and evaluate the experience To lead participants through the process of forgiving themselves and others.
Requirements:	A CD player or cassette recorder and instrumental music suitable as background for reflection

Instructions: This is a meditative process, to reflect on a recent conflict and tap into feelings of forgiveness. At the end, there'll be time to talk with a partner about it if we choose. During the process, we'll close our eyes. You may occasionally want to make a note of something significant, so have pen and paper ready.

With some groups it is more appropriate to use the words "let go" or "accept" than forgive. (See Chapter 7. Willingness to Resolve: Section D.) The meditation below can be easily altered to include these alternative words.

Suggest to participants that they make themselves comfortable – sitting on their chairs or sitting or lying on the floor.

Read the meditation with a quiet and gentle tone. Use a question roughly each 30–45 seconds. You may like to reduce the questions or add in some that are particularly relevant to your group.

Just close your eyes. (Pause) Think of a time, preferably not too long ago (though it is OK if it was some time ago), when there was some conflict or an argument. It may be that nothing actually was said, but for you the emotions ran high.

Think about that conflict. See if you can get a sense of that conflict – not necessarily all the little details, just remember "the whole thing".

Ask yourself or, better still ask the place within you where you feel that conflict: "What have I learnt from that conflict?" (Pause) "Have I learnt something from what I didn't do?" (Pause) "Have I learnt something from what I did do?"



(Long pause)

Now ask yourself "Have I learnt anything from this conflict about one or more things that caused me, or the other person, to react as strongly as we did"?

(Long pause)

What was the triggering event that started this fight or difficulty or this conflict? *(Pause)*

How well did I, or we, use our skills to resolve conflict? *(Pause)*

In answering the next questions for yourself you may like to write down a brief note about anything that seems important. It is not necessary to write an answer to every question.

Did we both win in this situation? Was the outcome fair to both of us? *(Pause)*

Did we work towards the positive? Did we get stuck in negativity at all? *(Pause)*

Did I feel I ended up understanding the other person better? Did that person understand me better? *(Pause)*

Did I get what I needed? Did I adequately defend myself or stick up for my rights? *(Pause)*

Did I use power inappropriately? Did the other person? Were we able to work co-operatively to solve the problem? *(Pause)*

How well did I manage my emotions? Did I behave appropriately? Was I able to tell the other person how I felt as well as what I wanted? Did I help handle the other person's anger? *(Pause)*

Am I left with any resentment? Are we totally finished with the argument? *(Pause)*

And today, is there anything for which I need to forgive that person? *(Pause)*

Is there anything else for which I need to forgive that person? *(Pause)*

Is there anything I need to forgive myself for in relation to this? *(Pause)*

Is there anything else I need to forgive myself for in relation to all of this?

(Long pause)

The most important thing is not that we forgive but that we are willing to forgive. *(Pause)*

(Speaking very slowly and gently) Sit quietly with your willingness to forgive. To forgive yourself for your limitations, fears, shortcomings, hurts, angers... and sit with your willingness to forgive others for their shortcomings, fears, hurts and angers.



Across the space of our limitations we reach for contact. Across the space... we reach for each other in order, ultimately, that we can love one another... and be at peace.

Take a couple of minutes to come quietly out of your reflective space. When you feel ready, open your eyes.

Allow a couple of minutes of silence in the room.

Pair Discussion: Ask participants to talk with one another.

What surfaced in your thoughts?

In what areas do you feel able to forgive yourself and the other person?

Allow 15 minutes.

Discussion: *Encourage participants to make any comments to the large group about the process.*

What have you learnt about forgiveness?

Important Points to Cover:

When we find we are not yet ready to let go and forgive, it usually indicates that we need to work on ourselves, independently of our relationship with the other person.

It's often hard to let the other person hold different values and beliefs from our own and to respect those differences without needing to make them more like us.

Acceptance of people allows them room to move. It gives space for them to be and to express themselves in just the way they do. Can you give people who have ways that irritate you, just a little more space "to be"? Situations involving family or very close friends are often greater challenges emotionally and affect us more deeply than work situations. As well, we're more often able to walk away from work difficulties. But, as a pattern, walking away can be disruptive, draining, and ultimately unsatisfying. So, this type of process is as relevant to work as it is to home.



Desert Island Exercise

	Focus on their qualities or ways of behaving that you find irritating or upsetting.	Focus on your reaction. Describe how you feel about these irritations. Write several words until you find the right one.	Why do you feel this way? Give reasons to do with YOU rather than them. Focus on your own Suppressed needs Unresolved personal history Unacceptable qualities.	Summarise the three columns by constructing for yourself a statement of self-awareness. You would not normally communicate this statement to another.
A person you work with:				When he/she _____ I feel _____ because I'm projecting _____
A child or someone you know and find difficult:				When he/she _____ I feel _____ because I'm projecting _____
Intimate relationship e.g. spouse or close friend:				When he/she _____ I feel _____ because I'm projecting _____



Projection and Shadow

Does the situation inform or inflame?

The Opportunity

The more someone inflames me, angers or upsets me, the more I know I have something to learn about myself from that person. In particular, I need to see where projection from my shadow side has interfered with my willingness to resolve.

Projection

Projection is when we see our own thoughts and feelings in the minds and behaviour of others and not in ourselves. We push something about ourselves out of our awareness and instead see it coming towards us from others. We see that X is angry with us and we feel hurt. We don't recognise that we are angry with X and would like to hurt X. It's very similar to film projection. The movie going on in our heads is projected out onto the people around us. Each of us builds, in this way, a highly personalised world. Greater self-awareness is necessary if we are to see reality.

Persona and Shadow

Psychologist, Carl Jung, used the word "Persona" to describe the conscious aspects of personality – good and bad aspects which are known to the person. Jung called the unknown side of who we are "shadow".

Persona: *My self-image. Things I accept are true about myself. My conscious desires, wants, feelings, intentions and beliefs.*

Shadow: *Potential I have not unfolded. Aspects of myself I'm not ready to know about. My unconscious wants and dislikes. Emotional responses that are too painful to fully experience. Abilities/talents I'm not ready to accept or express.*

Shadow Hugging and Boxing

Extreme attachment or rejection are both signs that our shadow has us in its hold. If we are overly attached to someone because of desirable qualities that we see in him/her and deny in ourselves we are SHADOW HUGGING. If we are overly rejecting of undesirable qualities in someone or something that we deny in ourselves we are SHADOW BOXING.

The hook *the behaviour in the other person that inflames me, in itself a neutral event. My projection gets caught on this hook.*

The symptom *my emotional reaction (usually variations on anger or hurt).*

The projection *the part of my shadow that is causing my strong reaction.*

Acknowledgement

To be willing to resolve, we need to acknowledge our projection. Consider:

Suppressed needs e.g. Failing to recognise my need for companionship, I am deeply hurt when a friend postpones time we'd planned to be together.

Unresolved personal history e.g. If I was seriously let down as a child I may become really wild when people don't do what they promised.

Unacceptable qualities e.g. Because I don't accept my own anger, I don't accept it in others.



Managing Unwillingness to Resolve in Others

Discuss the benefits of resolving the situation.

Consider e.g. increased harmony, decreased stress, greater productivity and effectiveness, lower costs.

Explore the "cost" of not resolving the conflict.

Explore blockers to further discussion.

Consider whether he/she is backed into a corner. Is there something that can be done to help him/her save face?

Identify areas of misinterpretation (e.g. objectives, motives, points of view, values, feelings, requirements, outcomes, needs, concerns). How can these be clarified?

Consider the relationship with the other person. Could a relationship of greater trust be developed, independent of solving the problem?

Divide the conflict-resolving process into smaller steps.

Define the Issue clearly.

Explore both the other person's needs and yours.

Explore both the other person's concerns and yours.

Identify areas of common ground.

Clarify the outcome(s) towards which you're both aiming.

Evaluate your part in the conflict

Am I using my power appropriately?

Have I tried to build empathy with this person?

Have I communicated my perspective, my needs and my concerns clearly and cleanly?

Consider your own resolution to the problem, if the other person remains unwilling to resolve.

Remember the other person may be getting more out of having the problem than solving it (e.g. having a high investment in being right, having the final say, taking the credit, some financial gain).

Consider "stepping back" emotionally, or even physically distancing yourself to recognise the part of the problem that belongs to the other person.

Work towards your own resolution, knowing that you have done all that you can. (This may involve practical steps such as looking for a new job, moving house etc. and also emotionally focused steps such as grieving, meditating, letting go, seeking counselling, finding new directions and relationships. It is sometimes a long process.)

