



# Conflict Resolution through Effective Communication and Professionalism

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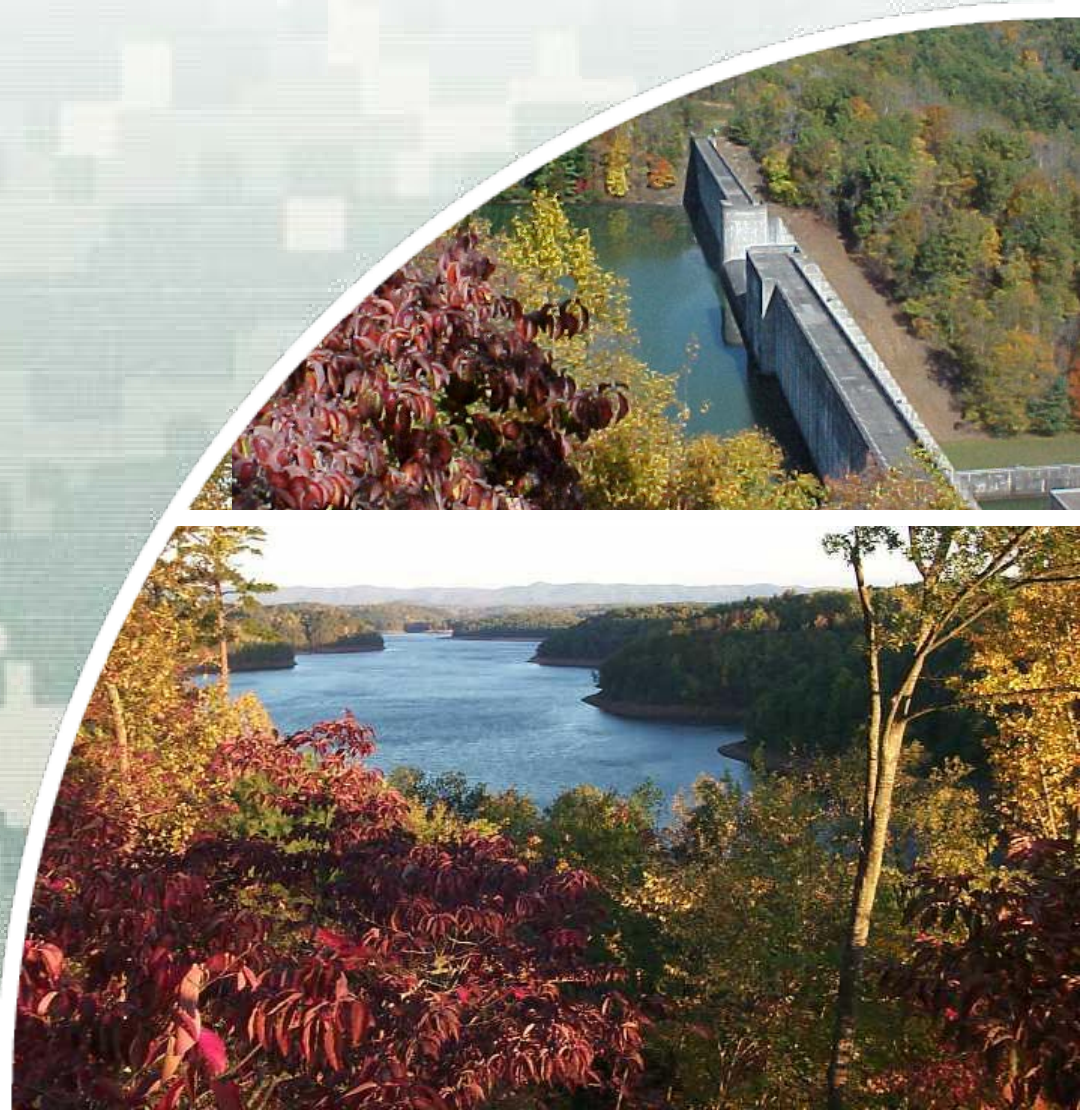
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to see and scroll through notes for each page in the presentation.



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US Army Corps of Engineers  
**BUILDING STRONG**®





# Our Learning Objective for Today:

- *“To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the highest skill.”*





# Our Learning Objective for Today:

- *“To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the highest skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the highest skill.” – Sun-tzu*
- As Public Servants, our goal is to achieve management objects without fighting with our customers  
**(who are also our bosses...)**





# Conflict Resolution through Effective Communication and Professionalism

- This Class combines elements from:
  - ▶ Verbal Self-Defense  
(most well-known: Verbal Judo – Thompson & Jenkins)
  - ▶ Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement  
(Harvard Negotiation Project)
  - ▶ Monkey Management (Oncken & Wass)
  - ▶ The Power of Hobnob (ancient Rocky'ism)
  - ▶ Various other References



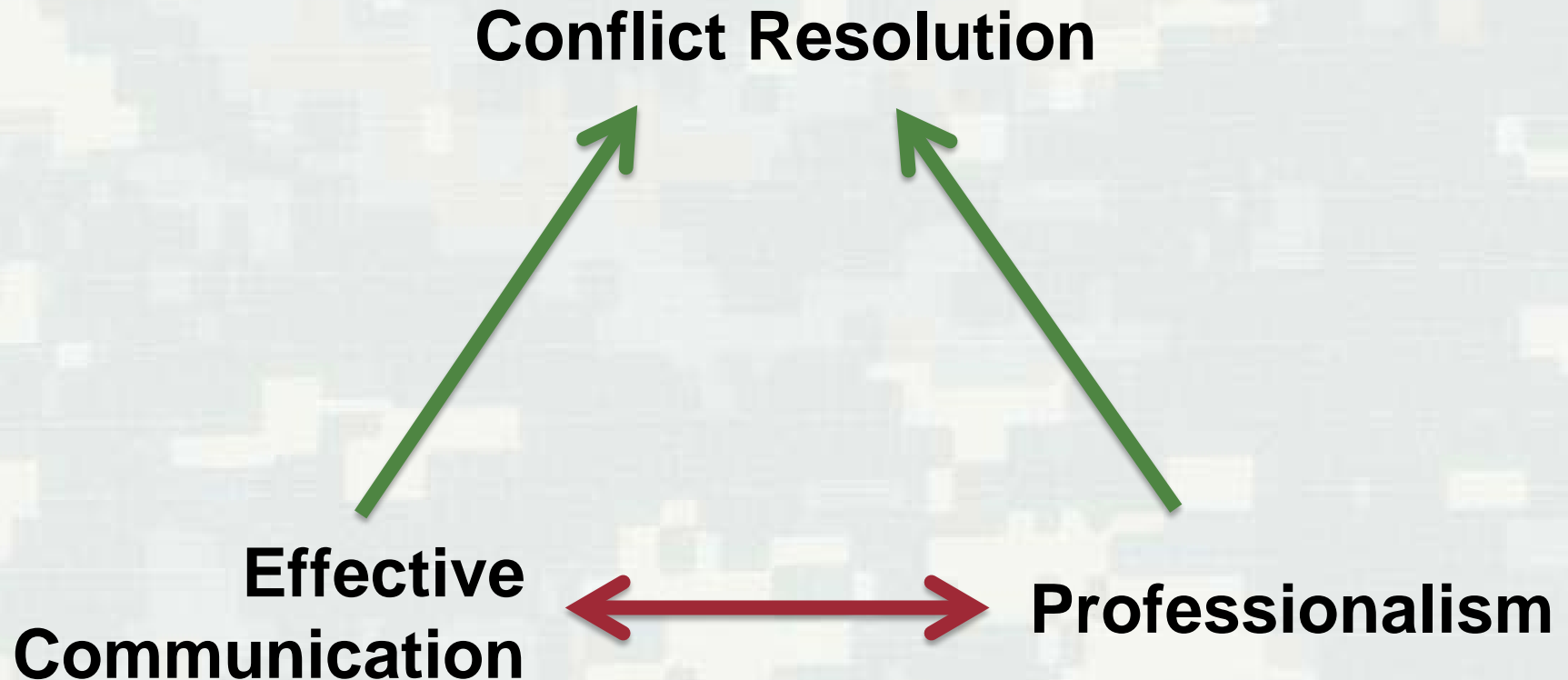


# Conflict Resolution through Effective Communication and Professionalism

**Effective Communication**  **Professionalism**



# Conflict Resolution through Effective Communication and Professionalism



- **These 3 concepts are inextricably linked**





# What IS Professionalism?

- ▶ What is meant by saying someone is “very professional?”
- ▶ According to Merriam-Webster: **The skill, good judgment, and polite behavior expected from a person who is trained to do a job well.**



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- ▶ What is meant by saying someone is “very professional?”
- ▶ According to Merriam-Webster: **The skill, good judgment, and polite behavior expected from a person who is trained to do a job well.**
- ▶ Rocky’s Definition of Professionalism For Public Servants:

**Conduct and poise  
In dealing with people  
that assures them  
you have the ability and desire  
to perform your duties effectively,  
with a balance of authority and courtesy  
that elicits appropriate behavior in response.**





# Professionalism

- We Encounter Many People Daily – different types of people
  - ▶ Customers
    - Some Compliant and Some Not-so
  - ▶ Maintenance Personnel
  - ▶ Law Enforcement Personnel
  - ▶ Peers from within USACE and other agencies
  - ▶ Volunteers
  - ▶ Bosses
- **Conflict is Inevitable**
  - ▶ Or Is It?



# Traffic Cop Video Discussion

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=ErASUGL00gQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=ErASUGL00gQ)

Click link or  
'copy and paste'.

- What does this officer do right?
  - ▶ Authoritative, but not demeaning
  - ▶ Cordial, but not buddy-buddy
  - ▶ Does not think of himself as above drivers
  - ▶ Understanding that 'stuff' happens
  - ▶ He isn't just a cop, he is a person
- How can we use this information?





# What is Conflict

- **A disagreement where there is a perceived threat to needs, interests or concerns**
- **Is Conflict Always Bad?**
  - ▶ Do we want customers to bring problems to us?
  - ▶ The Alternative is Conflict Avoidance
    - Resolution is not possible
    - We cannot taking care of business
  - ▶ Allows us to provide Customer Care
- **What do we do with problems brought to us?**
- **Conflict can be an OPPORTUNITY**



# Causes of Negative Conflict

- ▶ When **our** duties require change in **their** behavior
  - They might resist
- ▶ They come to you with a problem
  - Perceive problem as YOUR fault (your agency's)
  - Perceive that you can't or won't help them
- ▶ For those who wear a Badge = ENEMY
- ▶ Simple Misunderstanding
- ▶ Wrong Perception
  - They see us as the AGENCY – cold, uncaring
  - We see them as CUSTOMERS – demanding, nuisance





# Examples: How Do You Feel About :

- DMV
- The Phone/Internet Company
- The Police





# Examples: How Do You Feel About :

- DMV
  - ▶ A person who gives you license plates
- The Phone/Internet Company
  - ▶ A person who gets your connection set up
- The Police
  - ▶ A person who responds to your emergency





# Examples: How Do You Feel About :

- DMV
  - ▶ A person who gives you license plates
- The Phone/Internet Company
  - ▶ A person who gets your connection set up
- The Police
  - ▶ A person who responds to your emergency
- Don't be The Corps of Engineers
  - ▶ Be a person who helps people





# The Power of Hobnob

an Ancient Rocky'ism

- Where did this come from?
  - ▶ African Concept
    - Relationships trump current endeavor
  - ▶ Works in USA, too
- We are not an agency working with customers
  - ▶ We all have customers . . . . . right?
- We are people working with people
- Let customers see the person behind your title
- See customers as people/families







**The Power Of Hobnob**  
**Relationships Are Important**  
**People don't**  
**Care** how much you **Know**  
**Until they**  
**Know** how much you **Care**

**Relationships are MORE important  
than whatever you are doing right now.**





# Getting To Yes: The Art of Negotiation

- All Interaction is a Negotiation
- Basics of Good Negotiation
  - ▶ Both sides honest and put cards on table
  - ▶ Negotiate from INTERESTS not POSITIONS
  - ▶ Have an alternative in mind (BATNA)





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  - ▶ Look for THE THIRD ALTERNATIVE
    - I want **RED**, you want **BLUE**
      - ▷ If **RED**: I win, you lose
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    - I want **RED**, you want **BLUE**
      - ▷ If **RED**: I win, you lose
      - ▷ If **BLUE**: You win, I lose
      - ▷ Compromise: **PURPLE** – We BOTH LOSE
      - ▷ But, both like **GREEN**





# Effective Conflict Resolution

- Butting Heads? Going Round and Round?



# Effective Conflict Resolution

- Shift from fighting each other to fighting a common problem



Step 1 – Identify your common problem



# Effective Conflict Resolution

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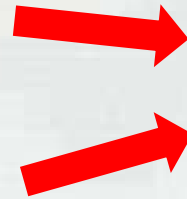
Step 1 – Identify your common problem

Step 2 – Focus on the problem, not each other



# Effective Conflict Resolution

- Shift Position from Head-to-Head



Step 3 – Join forces to  
attack the problem

- To Side-by-Side

Make Your Opponent  
Into an Ally







# Getting Voluntary, Willing, Compliance/ Cooperation

- Start with a little Hobnob
- Tell them what behavior needs change
  - ▶ As politely as the situation will allow
  - ▶ Explain the rule and why compliance helps
  - ▶ No condescending attitude
- Saving Face – It's Important to Everyone
  - ▶ Separate person from their group
  - ▶ Give them time to comply
  - ▶ Other face-saving steps?





# Avoid Getting Into a Verbal Fight

- Basic Parenting Rule:
  - ▶ Never get into a power struggle with a child over 3
  - ▶ You Will LOSE (KidsAreWorthIt.com - Barbara Coloroso)
  - ▶ Why?
    - You Have to Be an Adult and Follow the Rules
    - Your Child Does Not
  - ▶ How does this relate to Public Service/Customer Relationship?
    - We are the professionals, and have to follow the rules if we expect the public to.
    - This does not mean that you should treat customers like children





# Avoid Getting Into a Verbal Fight

- Know Yourself - What Pushes Your Buttons
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKosmXx1gkc&list=RD449D49b6\\_a28l](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKosmXx1gkc&list=RD449D49b6_a28l)

Click link or  
'copy and paste'.
- Avoid Getting Duped Into a Fight
- Remember that this is true of others, as well.



# Handling Verbal Attacks

- Side-Step Angry Statements
  - ▶ They are not angry with you, personally, they are angry at the agency and/or the situation.
    - Allow them to be angry
    - But, don't take it personally
  - ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRzwmrU3L7g>
  - ▶ What did the Park Ranger Do Wrong?
  - ▶ How does a boxer score?
    - not every blow counts
    - Let blows glance off





# Handling Anger as Part of Request for Help

- Voice Desire to Help
  - ▶ Show empathy and willingness
    - “I want to help.”
    - “I need to hear your concern. But, I can’t hear through your anger.”  
(Frontline Leadership)
    - Help them calm down,
      - ▷ **CAUTION:** AVOID saying, “You Need to Calm Down.”
  - ▶ Reflect the issue – to assure THEM that you heard
    - “I hear you saying...”
    - “Is that correct?”
  - ▶ Once you understand
    - work on resolution TOGETHER
    - OR redirect them to someone who can help.





# Not Every Issue is YOUR Problem

- **Monkey Management**
  - ▶ Don't take THEIR problems onto YOUR shoulders
  - ▶ HELP others with THEIR problems
  - ▶ **CAUTION:** Avoid saying “That’s not my problem.”
- **Don't Take On Problems if They are:**
  - ▶ Beyond Your Authority
  - ▶ Outside of Agency Purview
  - ▶ Phony Problems
- **Direct Visitors to POSSIBLE Resources**
  - ▶ Example of electrical issue
    - Visitor thought it was our problem
    - Our electrical system was fine
    - Gave list of electricians that could help



# Choice of Words

<b>Words to Avoid</b>	<b>Better Word Choices</b>
<b>What's your problem?</b>	Help me understand the problem.
<b>Those are just the rules.</b>	Explain reason for specific rule
<b>You wouldn't understand.</b>	That would be difficult to get into here and now.
<b>Calm down.</b>	Let's see if we can't find a solution
<b>That's not my problem.</b>	Specify issue and tell why it is beyond your scope.
<b>What do you want me to do about it?</b>	I can try to help you find someone who can help
<b>Be Reasonable.</b>	There are some limits to how we can handle this
<b>Always avoid absolutes - absolutely.</b>	Give reasonable defining terms



# Practice Professionalism

**Conduct and poise  
in dealing with people  
that assures them  
you have the ability and desire  
to perform your duties effectively,  
with a balance of authority and courtesy  
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Conflict Resolution

~~QUESTIONS?~~

Effective  
Communication



Professionalism

