

# 8 Conflict – Managing it Creatively

## Responding to Conflict

We all have emotional, cognitive and physical responses to conflict. It is important to pay attention to these responses as they often tell us more about what the true source of the ‘threat’ is. By noticing emotional, cognitive and physical responses to conflict, we may get better insights into how to resolve the problem.

- **Emotional responses:** feelings ranging from fear to anger to despair to confusion. Emotional responses can be misunderstood because people think that other people feel the same way they do. Differing emotional responses can be confusing and even threatening.
  - What emotional responses to conflict have you experienced?
  - What emotional responses to conflict have you witnessed?
  - What techniques do you find helpful in managing your emotional responses to conflict?
- **Cognitive responses:** thoughts and ideas, sometimes in the form of self-talk. (What does he think he is doing? How selfish!) Cognitive responses can contribute to emotional and physical responses.
  - How do your inner thoughts and ideas influence your emotional and physical responses to conflict?
  - What techniques do you find helpful in managing your cognitive responses to conflict?



- **Physical responses:** heightened stress, bodily tension, increased perspiration, tunnel vision, shallow or accelerated breathing, nausea, rapid heartbeat, etc. Biologically, we are programmed for flight or fight. These responses can be controlled to a certain degree by using stress management techniques. If physical responses are controlled effectively, a calmer emotional environment may result.
  - What techniques do you find helpful in managing your physical responses to conflict?

Adapted from: Webne – Behrman, H. (Ed.) (2006). *The practice of facilitation: Managing group processes and solving problems*. Quorum Books.