

# WIPPS

WISCONSIN INSTITUTE *for*  
PUBLIC POLICY *and* SERVICE

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Adapt, Emerge, Thrive  
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## Key Principles of Conflict Management: Begin with Ethical Communication

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**I AM EXCITED TO BE  
HERE TODAY!!!**

# What is there to be excited about?

- ◆ Global pandemic
- ◆ Hyperpolarized country and state
- ◆ Politicization of values (freedom v. health)
- ◆ The rise of extremism
- ◆ Worst economic conditions since Great Depression
- ◆ Most social unrest in nearly 50 years
- ◆ Most momentous election since . . .
- ◆ Will there be a peaceful post-election transition?

**We have become a society “that has forgotten its civics lessons or, remembering them still, has decided they don’t matter.”**

Carlos Lazado

# I am excited because:

- ◆ In this next hour we are going to unlock the door to personal and societal rehabilitation
- ◆ We will learn the nuts and bolts of a critical conflict management strategy that will get all of us back on track
- ◆ Today we will learn how to significantly improve your relationships, your workplace, your communities, your state and the nation.

**and . . .**

**Thank you 2020 for the best memes ever!**



# IF 2020 WAS A BAG OF CHIPS



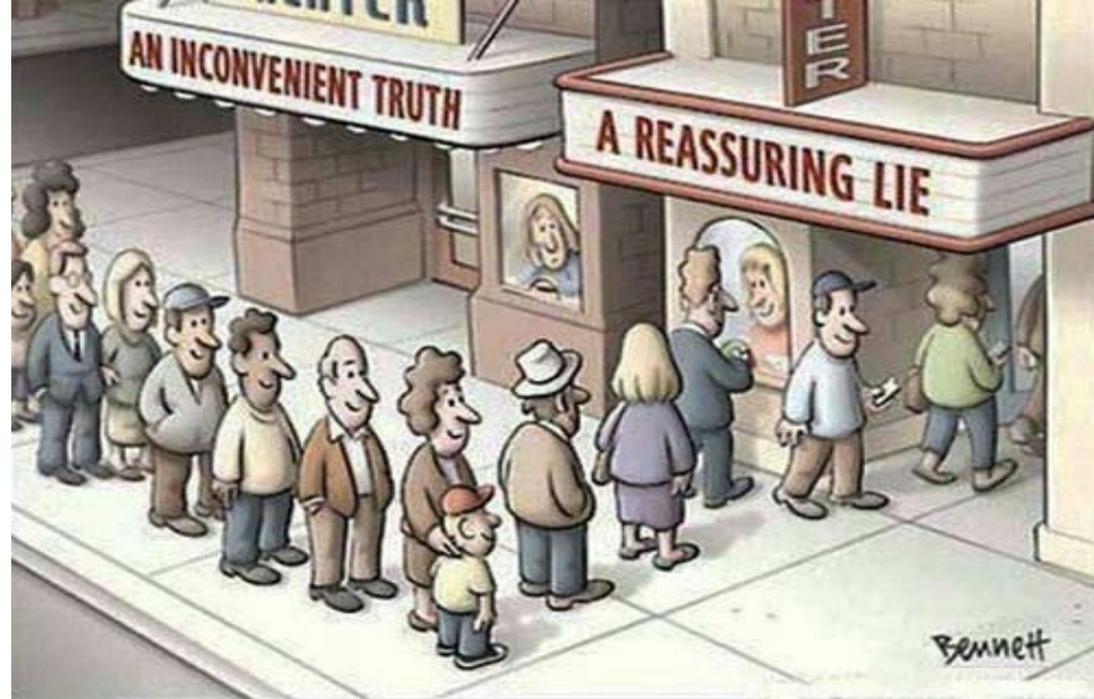
**Me being prepared for 2020:**



**2020:**



# What Brain Science Tells Us

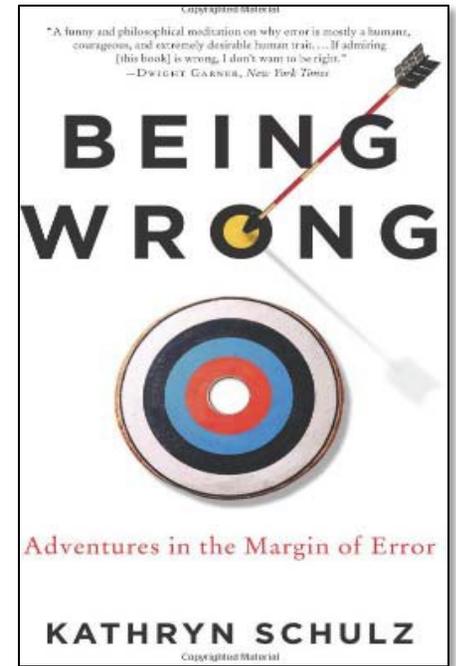


## The Negative:

- ◆ We crave certainty and consistency at the expense of truth
- ◆ We are suckers for the good vs. evil narrative
- ◆ We are tribal (prefer like-minded)
- ◆ We filter and cherry pick evidence to support our views  
(We ❤️ information cocoons, echo chambers, preference bubbles)
- ◆ We avoid value dilemmas, tensions, and tough choices

# Negative Interaction Effects

*Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margin of Error*  
by Kathryn Schulz



First step



**Ignorance assumption**

Second step



**Idiot assumption**

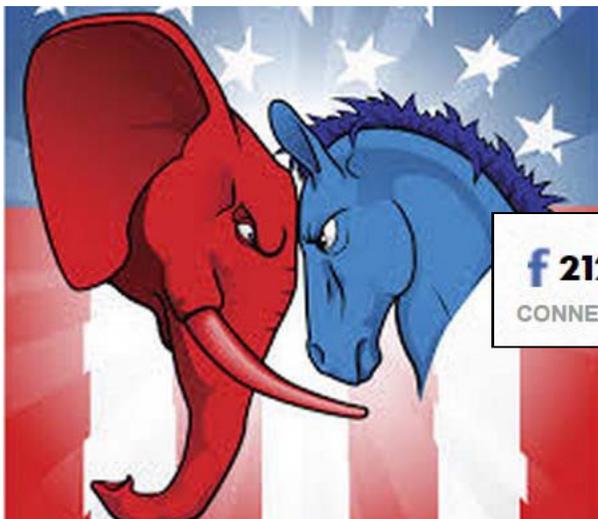
Third Step



**Evil assumption**

# The Problem We Face

- We spend most of our lives being unconsciously trained not to speak ethically to one another
- Instead, our experience with difficult conversations activates the negative aspects of human nature and rarely taps into or nurtures the positive.



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# The Heart of Conflict

**The problem isn't conflict—the problem is poorly managed conflict.**

**Poor communication is at the heart of most conflict.**

**Managing  
Conflict = Improving  
communication**

# What Brain Science Tells Us



## The Positive:

- ◆ We are inherently social and seek purpose and community
- ◆ We are inherently empathetic
- ◆ We are inherently pragmatic and creative
- ◆ We are capable of overcoming our bad tendencies and building better habits

# What Drives Behavior

## Key Theories

**Moral Foundation Theory (Haidt)** - We are not reasoning beings but are driven by gateway emotions (Authority, Sanctity, Loyalty or Care, Fairness and Liberty). We are manipulated by “trigger” emotions.

**Choice Theory (Glasser)** - Regardless of what got us to where we are, we can make choices that pro-actively help us create and maintain loving and caring relationships.

## Takeaway

**Successful human interaction requires attention to both cognitive and emotional needs**

# The Power of Choice Theory

- Human beings need to love/be loved; be free; belong/feel secure; be powerful; have joy/fun
- We are motivated by the things that we believe we want and need
- We have the ability to choose how we **think** and how we **act**
- Our thoughts and actions can take on positive or negative tendencies
- We cannot control others, we can only give them information
- Relationships will continue to both inspire us and frustrate us
- We cannot change the past, but we can satisfy our needs today
- Choice theory helps us balance decisions to account for both reasoning and emotion



# 7 Caring Habits vs. 7 Deadly Habits

<b>Seven Caring Habits</b>	<b>Seven Deadly Habits</b>
Supporting	Criticizing
Encouraging	Blaming
Listening	Complaining
Accepting	Nagging
Trusting	Threatening
Respecting	Punishing
Negotiating differences	Bribing/rewarding to control

# Ethical Communication Model

## Problem Definition

1. Actively listen
2. Identify concerns

## Understanding & Choice

3. Assert needs
4. Share values

## Solution

5. Make decisions
6. Plan actions

# Identifying the Problem

## Problem Definition

### **1. Actively listen**

- What is the problem?
- My view/your view
- How do we feel? (sad, angry scared, etc.)

### **2. Identify concerns**

- What if no change?
- What concerns us?
- What is greatest fear?

# Understanding & Choice

## Understanding & Choice

### **3. Assert needs**

- What do I want?
- What do you want?
- What would that look like?

### **4. Share values**

- Why do we want that?  
(freedom, security,  
power, relationship, etc.)

# Solving Problems

## Solution

### **5. Make decisions**

- What is best outcome?
- What can we live with?
- What are we willing to do to achieve it?

### **6. Plan actions**

- Who will do what, when, where and how?

# When to Use Ethical Communication

- **When trust exists or is sorely needed**
- **When future relationships and interactions matter**
- **When shared ownership and responsibility is desired**
- **When the people involved are willing to change (or when we believe they can change)**
- **When there is a need to find creative solutions**
- **When there is a need to work through animosity and hard feelings**



# Why Is It Ethical?

**B** **eneficence** - desires good for all parties; does no harm

**E** **mpathy** – awareness/understanding of others' feelings

**F** **airness** - promotes just, equitable, balanced solutions

**A** **gency** - allows freedom to choose

**I** **ntegrity/Honesty** - seeks out and adheres to truth

**R** **espect** - listens to and recognizes others' viewpoints

# When NOT to Use Ethical Communication



- **If the tension or conflict is within you, not between you**
- **A threatening or unsafe situation**
- **When dealing with a known bad actor**
- **During crises and highly time-sensitive situations**
- **When there is another way to resolve the tension that is fair, clear and straightforward (such as a technical fix or solution)**

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# Why Ethical Communication Matters

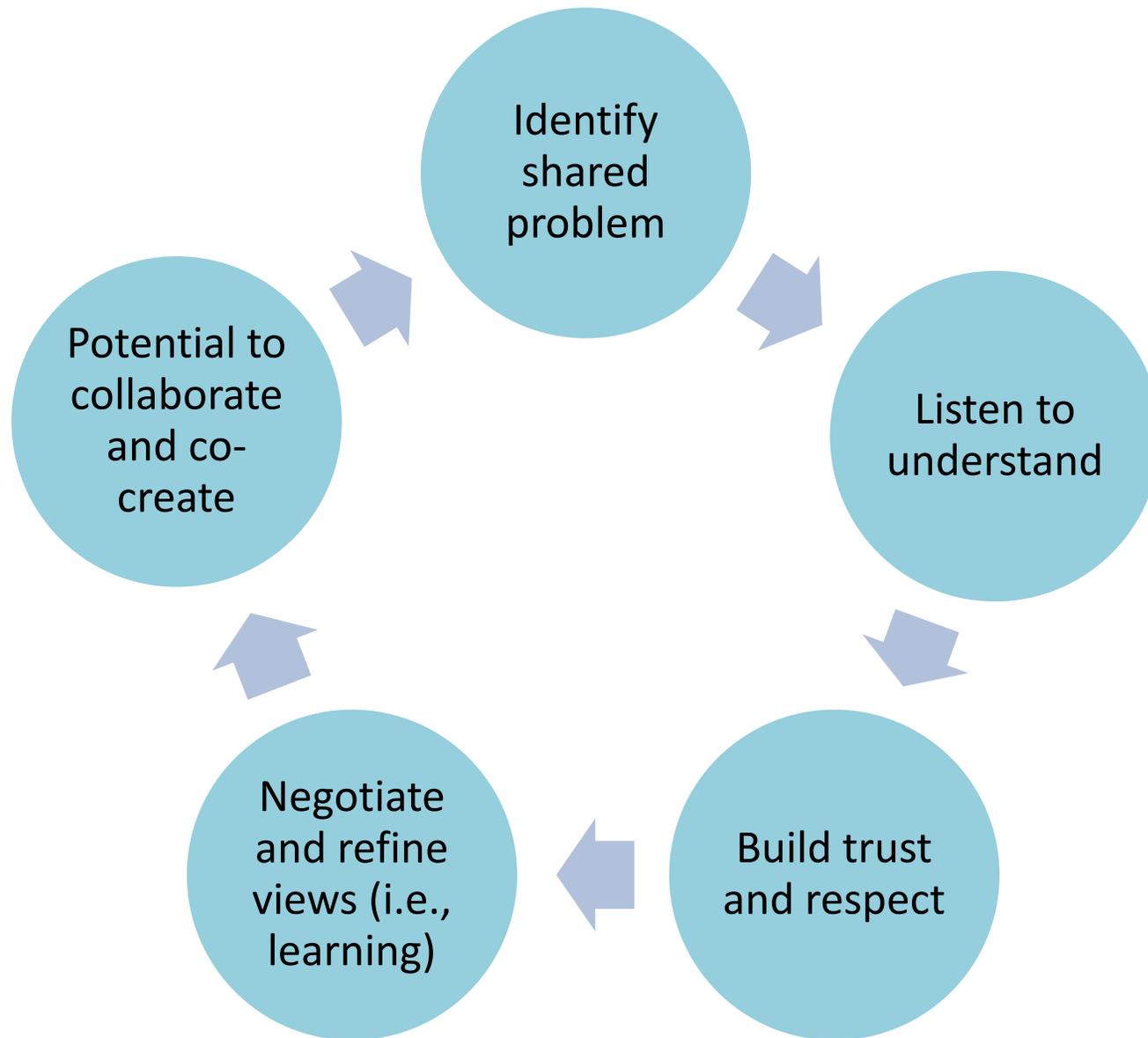
- ✓ **Untreated wounds don't heal; conflict will return--unresolved conflicts can cause long-term damage**
- ✓ **People need the opportunity to make good choices, Pigeonholing, stereotyping, and assuming people are unchangeable closes doors**
- ✓ **If ethical communication fails, we still gain valuable information to help us find a better strategy**
- ✓ **Provides peace of mind and personal integrity**
- ✓ **Develops caring habits in our personal and professional lives**
- ✓ **Resists assuming motives and assigning blame too quickly**
- ✓ **Works against the effects of motivated reasoning**
- ✓ **Builds trust and cultivates relationships with people, including those who are different from us**
- ✓ **Improves how we talk as a community, not just how we talk individually**

# Preparing for an Ethical Conversation



- To know thyself is the beginning of all wisdom
  - Know what you want, what you need, and how you feel beforehand
  - Consider whether or not ethical communication is the right strategy
- 
- Consider sharing the ethical communication model with your counterpart
  - The steps of the ethical communication model can form the basis for an agenda

# Ethical Communication is a building block of effective group conflict management



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# THANK YOU!

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