

Leading Groups through Conflict

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“Once a society loses this capacity [for dialogue] all that is left is a cacophony of voices battling it out to see who wins and who loses. There is no capacity to go deeper, to find a deeper meaning that transcends individual views and self interests. It seems reasonable to ask whether many of our deeper problems in governing ourselves today, the so-called ‘gridlock’ and loss of mutual respect and caring...might not stem from this lost capacity to talk with one another, to think together as part of a larger community.”

*From Reflections on Leadership
by Peter M. Senge*

- ✓ People *enter* a conflict *through a* particular *perspective*
- ✓ People are *willing to participate* if they see their perspective is going to be *considered*
- ✓ Putting a *name* to a perspective allows people to see the *legitimate* reasons for other peoples' perspectives
- ✓ Perspectives are *not mutually exclusive*

The Transformative Power of Conflict



Conflict can transform our *relationships*

Groups can become stronger

Can lead to *constructive change*

Normal in human relationships

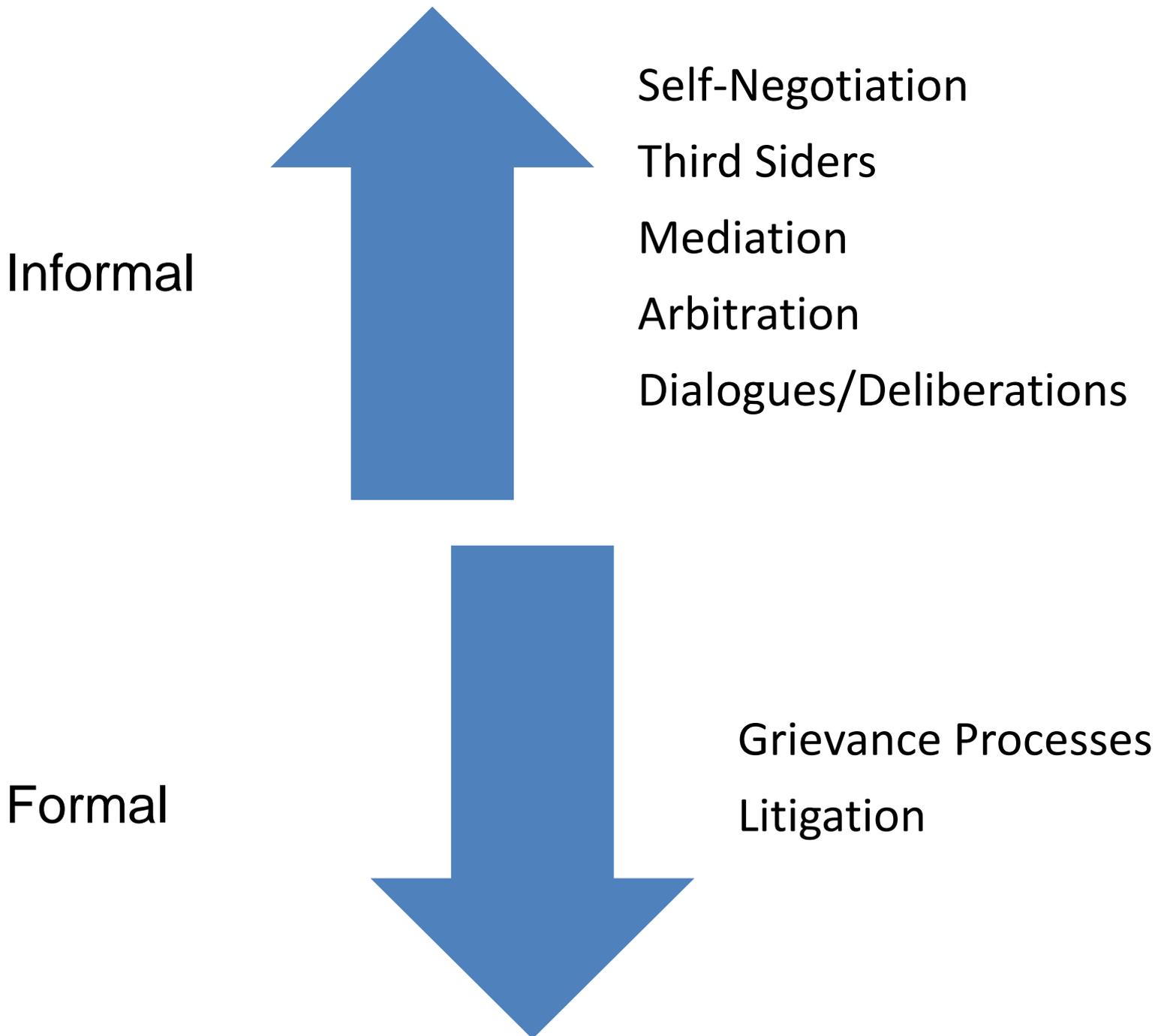
Is an *orientation—an approach*—a willingness to engage— seen not as a threat but a valuable *opportunity*

Goal—not to find quick solutions but to *change underlying* causes

Transformative Practices

- Safe spaces
- Multiple points of access
- Appropriate exchange
- Develop capacity of others.....
 - Issues as opportunity
 - Integrate multiple perspectives
 - Conflict as dilemmas
 - Complexity is a friend, not a foe
 - Hear other's identities

Types of Conflict Resolution



Factors That Contribute to Conflict Resolution Success

The People

- Interdependence
- Something to give
- Personal power
- Right people
- Will to resolve

The Organization

- Encouragement to resolve
- Support system

The Issues

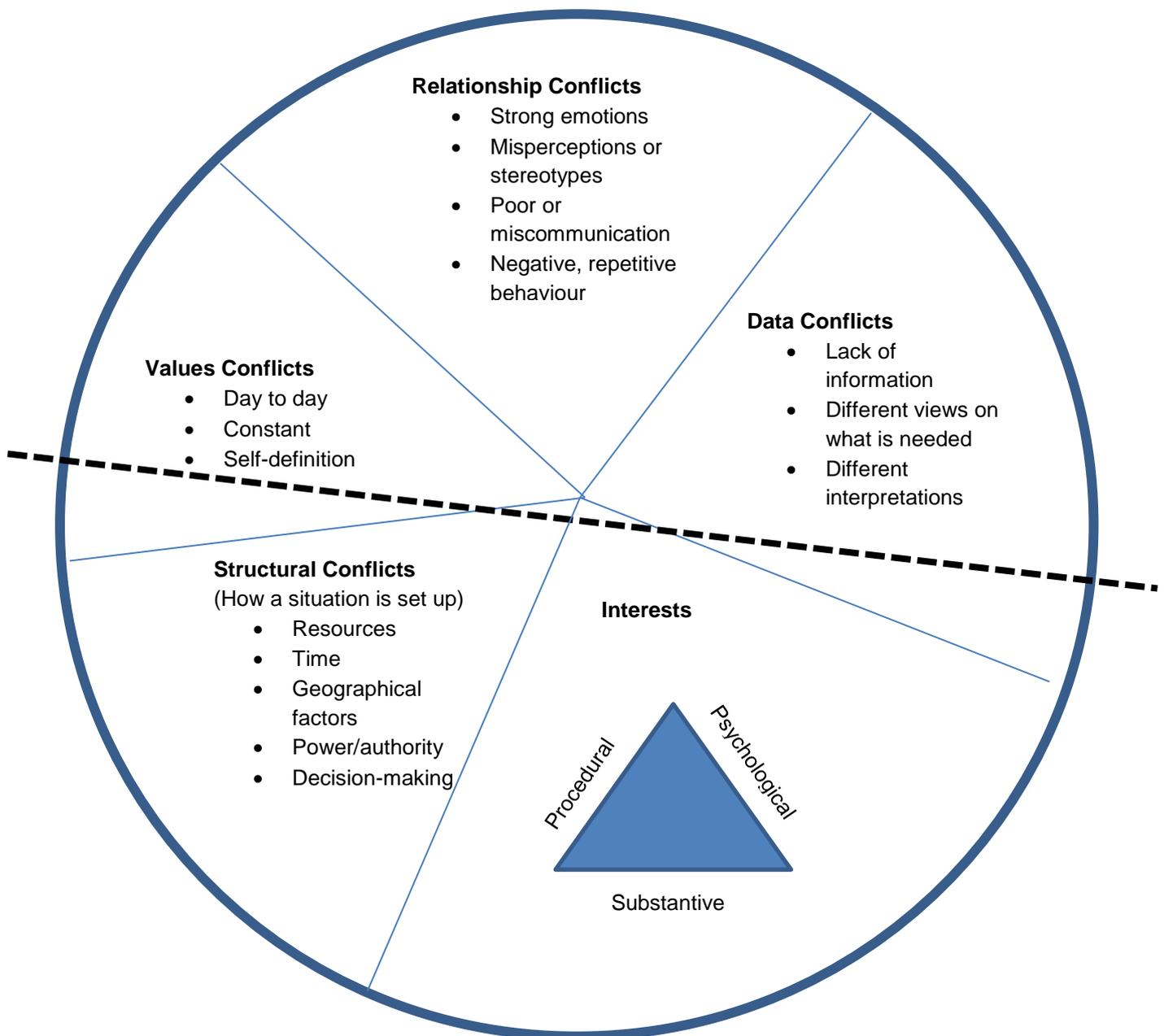
- Clear issues
- Multiple issues

The Process

- Time pressure
- Honest, good faith efforts

The Circle of Conflict

Source: Chris Moore with CRD (Communications, Results, Decisions).
Boulder, Colorado, U.S.A



Frames

Identity Frames

Disputants view themselves as having particular identities in the context of specific conflict situations.

Characterization Frames

Disputants view others in the conflict as having particular characteristics—either positive or negative. Closely related to stereotyping.

Power Frames

Disputant's perceptions of power, including what types of power are legitimate and what types are useful, influences the conflict.

Conflict Management or Process Frame

Conflict over how best to manage or resolve differences is central to many conflicts.

Risk and Information Frames

Disputants construct beliefs about the level of risk, uncertainty and potential negative impact associated with a conflict.

Loss Vs. Gain Frames

Disputants focus on threats of potential loss rather than on opportunities for gains.

Conflict Analysis and Frames

Select a conflict for which you are familiar and identify two of the main people involved in the conflict. For each party identified, complete the analysis of frames below.

	Party One	Party Two
	_____	_____
	(name)	(name)
How would each party describe his/her identity in the context of the conflict?		
What characteristics or stereotypes (positive or negative) does the person have of the other party?		
What type of power does each party feel is legitimate?		
What does each party believe about the best way the conflict should be managed or the process used to handle the conflict?		
What outcomes(s) or potential future events would each party view as risky or threatening?		
What potential losses does each party feel is possible in the context of the conflict?		

Framing; the manner in which a conflict situation, issue or interest is conceptualized or defined

Reframing: the process of changing how a person or a party to a conflict conceptualizes his, her or another's attitudes, behaviors, issues, interests, or how the situation is defined.

Steps to Reframing

- ▶ Listen to the statement
- ▶ Work to understand the speakers' feelings, messages and underlying interests
- ▶ Ignore/remove toxic language
- ▶ Re-state the problem beginning with
 - “So what is important to you is...”
 - Or
 - “So what you are concerned about is...”
- ▶ Check to see that your reframed statement accurately reflects the person's feelings and interests

Note: Framing is NOT paraphrasing

Framing Errors

The statement is...

- ▶ layered in toxic or value laden language
- ▶ stated in a way that makes it seem hopeless to solve
- ▶ stated in global terms
- ▶ presented in a positional way

Reframing

For each of the following pairs, one statement is framed correctly, the other incorrectly. Circle the item (A or B) that is framed correctly.

1. During a performance evaluation, an employee says to you:
"You obviously have favourites and I am not one of them. You are not capable of evaluating me fairly because you don't know the first thing about my job."
 - A. So what is important to you is that all employees are evaluated fairly based on an understanding of their job duties and performance.
 - B. So what is important to you is that I stop playing favourites and being ignorant.
2. In a meeting, a colleague says:
"This organization is full of people who are short-sited and bull headed. There is a complete lack of vision and some people are just cowards who are too afraid to change."
 - A. So what is important to you is that we recognize that we are not going to be able to effectuate positive change.
 - B. So what is important to you is that we work toward open-mindedness and comfort with change.
3. In a one-on-one meeting, an employee, whom you supervise, says:
"This new software is just one more piece of junk you technology geeks keep shoving down our throats. There is no way I am going to waste my time learning it when what I have works just fine."
 - A. So what is important to you is that technology is valuable.
 - B. So what is important to you is to know the advantages of new software before investing time in learning it.
4. A client says:
"You either are on board with what we want or we will take our business to someone else."
 - A. So what is important to you is we either stick to our guns or give in to you.
 - B. So what is important to you is we recognize how serious you are about getting your needs met.

Reframing

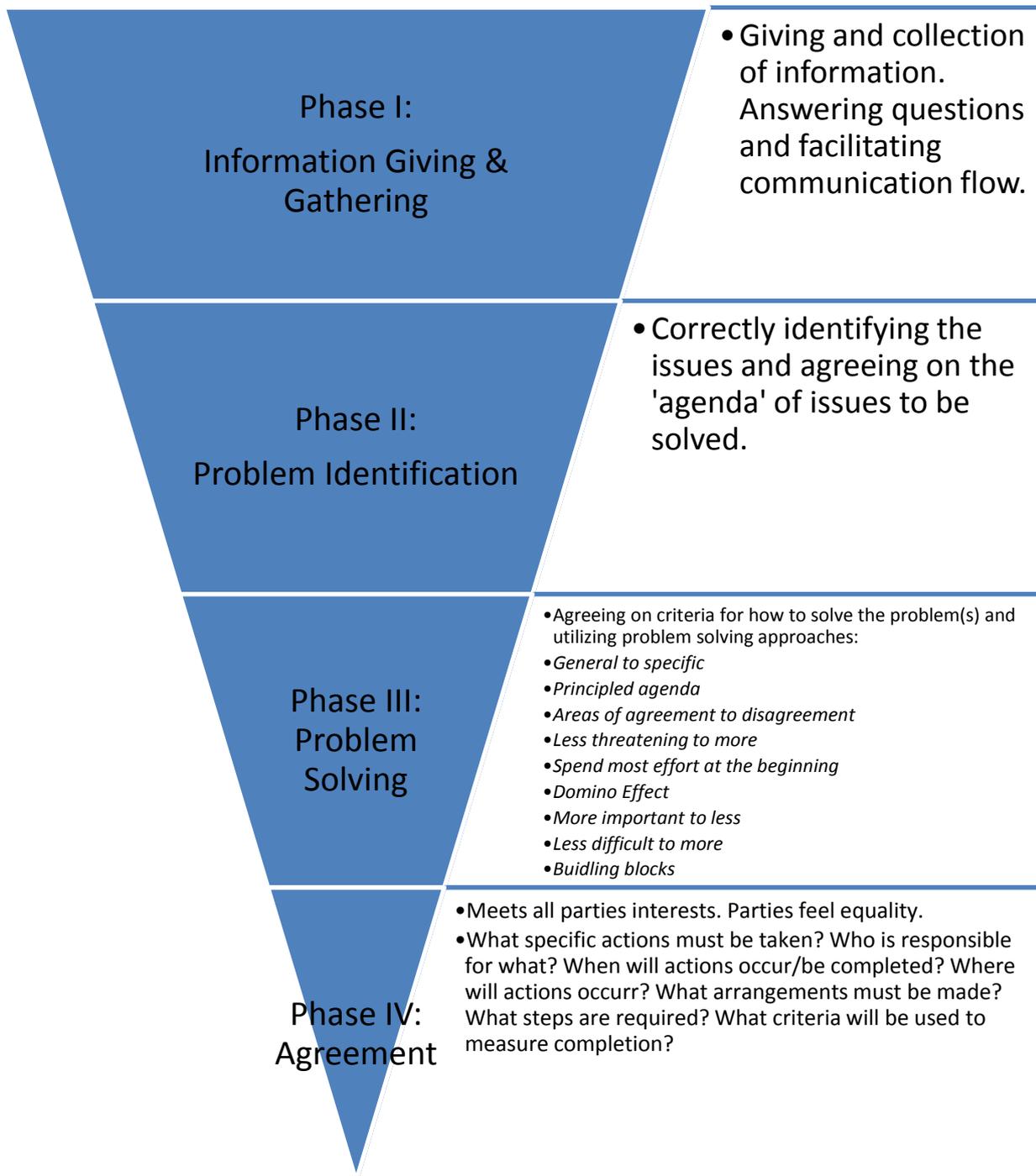
Review the following paragraph and identify a) the toxic elements, and b) the issues that are important to the speaker. Then write a statement (or several) that frames the issues without toxicity.

Scenario: A conversation between a manager and an employee is turning into an argument. The employee says:

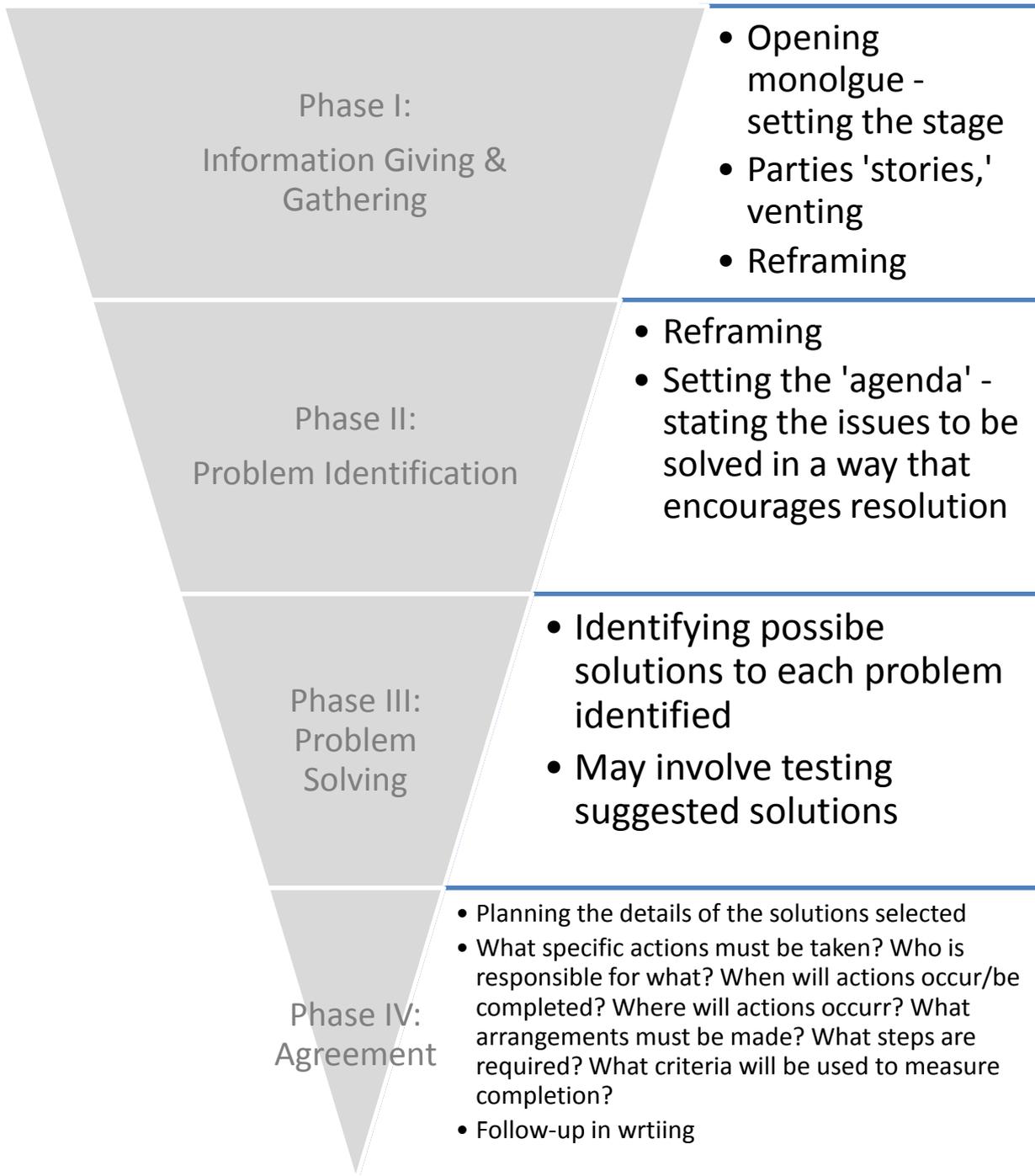
I don't think you are qualified to evaluate my performance. I have so many more years of experience than you do and you cannot possibly appreciate or understand the level of knowledge and expertise that I have. You young people today want to move to the top without working your way up and you want to be paid a huge salary without doing much work. You are all alike. All you want is status and to look important. Even though you are an administrator, I really do not feel that you have much authority over me. It is important that we continue to do all of the things that have made our department prestigious and people like me are going to have to be the ones to make that happen. I'm not sure you really appreciate the history of this organization. It is difficult for me to trust someone who does not know as much about the organization as I do. You have a lot of lofty ideas but your head is in the clouds. Everyone thinks the same thing I do. You are just too immature and ignorant to handle this job. And you don't know as much as you think you do.

So what is important to you is....

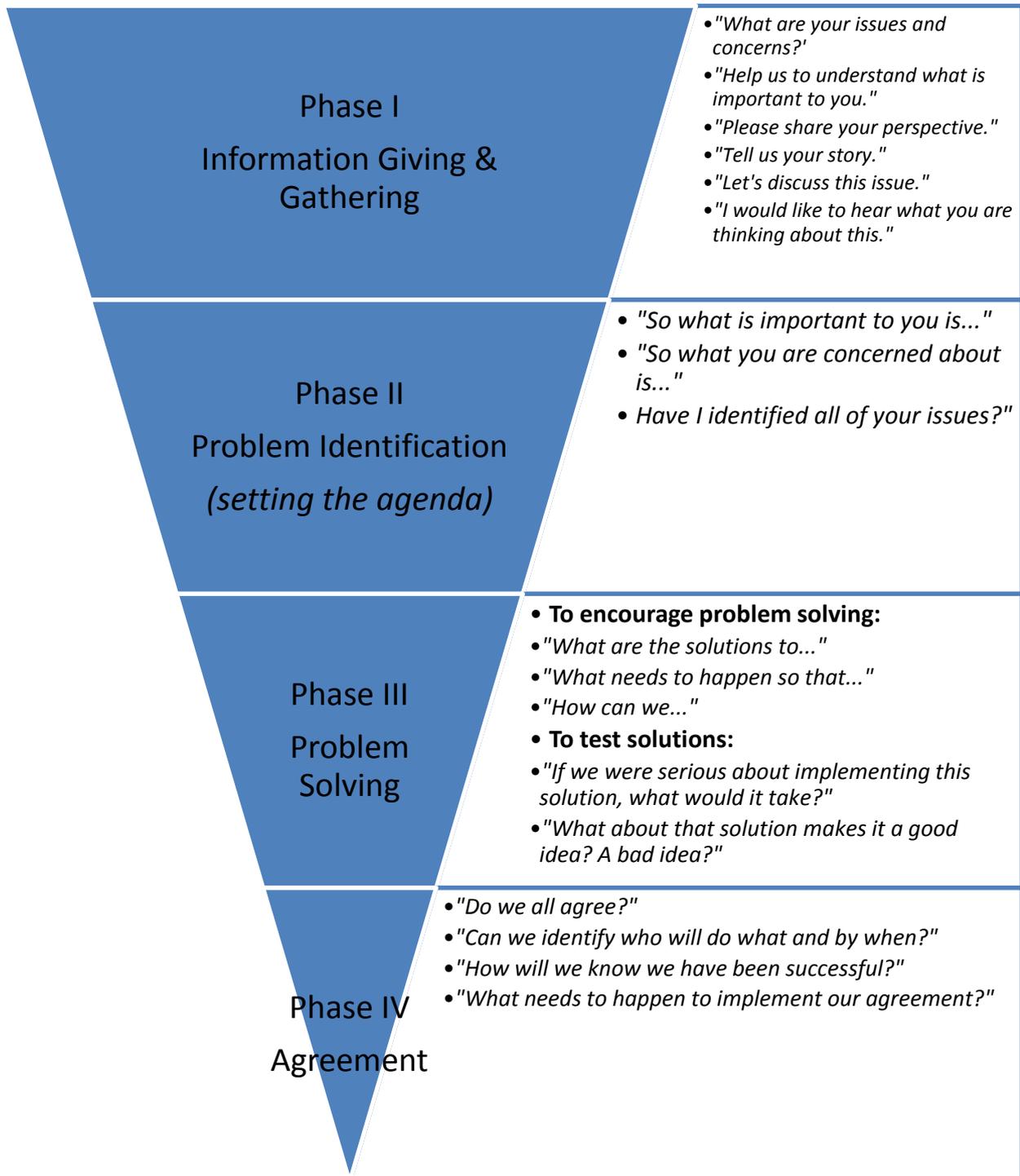
Pyron's Funnel



Tasks and the Phases of Pyron's Funnel



Language That Moves Us Through Pyron's Funnel



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At its essence, every organization is a product of how its members think and interact. Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross and Smith. *The Fifth Discipline Field book*.