

## **LESSON FIVE: STORYTELLING: IDENTIFYING THE REAL ISSUES AND NEEDS**

*Disputants typically bring to mediation strong feelings and emotions that need to be recognized and acknowledged in order for the mediator to be able to identify underlying issues and each person's specific needs. Students in this fifth lesson will practice listening to a disputant's story for feeling and content in order to identify the real issues and needs in a conflict.*

**Objective:**

- To understand the difference between issues and needs.
- To better identify underlying issues and each person's specific needs in a conflict.
- To apply this understanding in the mediation process.

**Duration:** 2 blocks

**Materials:** Emotion slips for Body Language Charades  
Handout: Issues and Needs  
Worksheet: Issue Vs. Need  
Role-Play

**Warm-up:** Body Language Charades--students select a slip of paper with an emotion on it. Volunteers will act out the emotion/feeling using body language with classmates guessing the answer.

**Procedure:**

1. Review the handout, "Issues and Needs."
2. Have the students complete "Issue Vs. Need" worksheet. Discuss responses.
3. Eliciting four volunteers, role-play a mediation from welcome and introductions through storytelling. Process the mediation session identifying underlying issues and needs.
4. Debrief by stating that underlying issues and needs stay surface level in some mediations and in others go very deep to values. What values did the students hear expressed in the role-play?

**Assessment:** Teacher evaluation of "Issue Vs. Need" handout.

Teacher observation of student's ability to identify issues and needs.

**Suggested Assignment:**

Talk to a friend having a conflict. Help them identify the issues involved.

## HANDOUT: ISSUES AND NEEDS

Clarifying the Conflict's Issues and the Parties' Specific Needs:

1. **Begin to analyze the conflict by focusing on the broader issues both parties have in common and the specific needs that underlie those issues. (Note: issues and needs are usually, but not always, similar.)**

*For example,*

*The conflict arose because Sasha (student) missed two weeks of classes. When she returned to class Ms. Jones (teacher) yelled at her in front of the entire classroom.*

2. **Consult with your co-mediator to come up with 2-3 broader issues that both parties can agree on.**

*Examples of Issues:*

*Respect*

*Safety*

*Communication*

*Acknowledgment*

*Power*

*Recognition*

*Control*

*Trust*

*Privacy*

*Acceptance*

*Belonging*

*Friendship*

3. **Begin this stage by asking each party if these issues are important to them. Go over one issue at a time. Write the issues on chart paper only after gaining agreement from both parties.**

*For example,*

*"Sasha and Ms. Jones, it sounds like there are three main issues that are important to both of you: communication, respect, class attendance and participation, is that right? I would like to write them here on chart paper for all of us to see. Is that okay?"*

4. **After clarifying the issues ask each person what their specific needs are related to each of the issues. Write the needs on chart paper only after gaining agreement from the party expressing the need. Reframe needs as necessary.**

*For example,*

*"Sasha what is it that you need related to the issue of respect?"*

*Sasha - "Not to be embarrassed in front of other people and to be listened to in class."*

*"Ms. Jones what is it that you need related to the issue of respect?"*

*Ms. Jones - "To be listened to in class, to have all students arrive to class on time and prepared to participate in class."*

5. **Make sure you find out both parties' underlying needs before moving on to the problem solving stage. Meet in separate sessions as needed to further explore each party's issues and needs.**

**WORKSHEET: ISSUE VS. NEED**

*Use your imagination to consider the various possibilities. Then fill in what you think the issue and need related to the position stated might be.*

**Position:** You lost the video that I loaned to you and now I owe Blockbuster for the tape. I can never depend on you to return things that you borrow.

**Issue:**

**Need:**

**Position:** Now that we're not going together anymore, the ring that I gave you for your birthday belongs to me. Give it back!!

**Issue:**

**Need:**

**Position:** He's my boyfriend and I saw you talking and laughing with him at lunch. Just understand one thing--he's off limits!

**Issue:**

**Need:**

**Position:** You know my CD player that you borrowed over the weekend; well now it doesn't work. Why couldn't you have been honest enough to tell me that you broke it?

**Issue:**

**Need:**

**Position:** I'm the one that did all of the work on our science project--just admit it!

**Issue:**

**Need:**

**Position:** You are my best friend and I thought I could trust you with my secret. Now there are rumors all over the school about me having a crush on Chris.

**Issue:**

**Need:**

**Position:** You always come in well after curfew, yet you expect to be treated as an adult.

**Issue:**

**Need:**

**Position:** No kid of mine will have a tattoo or body piercing.

**Issue:**

**Need:**

**Position:** When I give the wrong answer to a problem in class, you always embarrass me with your sarcasm. I'm not stupid!

**Issue:**

**Need:**