

# **Third Side Workshop Participant Guide**



By

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# Third Side Workshop Participant's Guidebook

## Foreword

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The Third Side is a concept whose time has come. As the people of the world move into increasing contact a systematic mechanism is needed to handle conflicts from the local to the global community. The work of handling conflict cannot be left to professional negotiators and mediators – it is work that requires all people to become involved to solve some of the biggest problems that confront humanity.

This workshop is devised to help people who want to take the Third Side, but don't know how or have fears about doing so. The design is focused on some of the key ideas needed to take the Third Side as well as skills based primarily around perspective taking, listening, and questioning.

We hope that you find this useful and use the information herein to become an active Third Sider. If you have questions, comments, or concerns that you would like to express to the developers of the training please email us at [info@thirdside.org](mailto:info@thirdside.org) and one of us will respond.

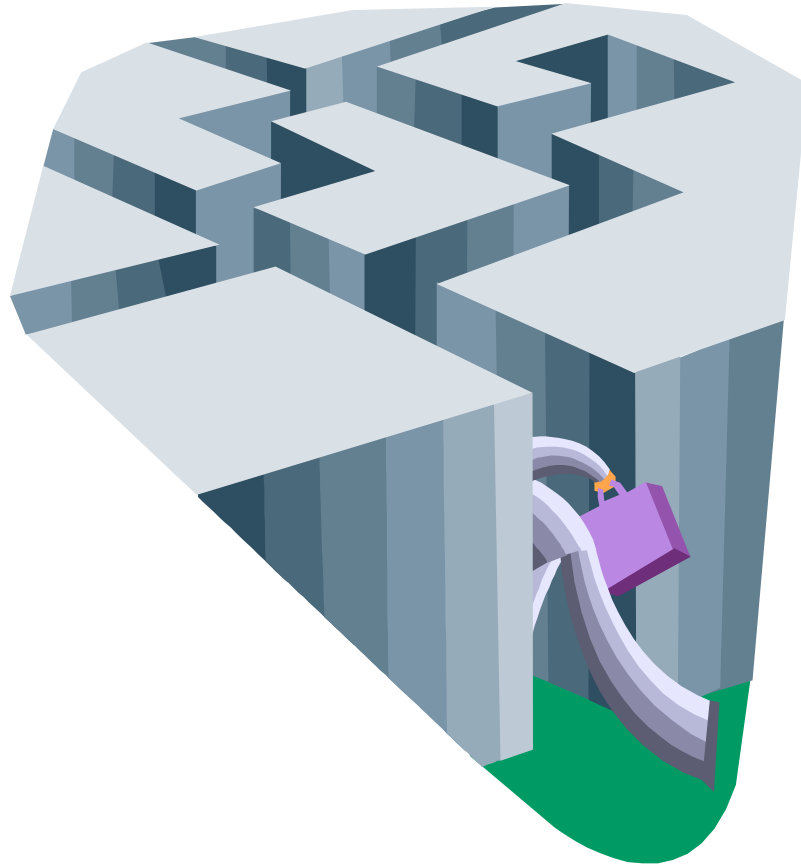
Good luck with the training!

Sincerely,

Joshua Weiss and Carolyn Gellermann



# *Introduction to the Workshop*



# Workshop Purposes

The workshop is designed to provide you, the participant, with an introduction to the Third Side and to convey key skills and perspectives associated with taking the Third Side. This will be done through a mixture of conveying information, stories, and experiential exercises where you can try the skills out for yourself.

A note on expectations is important. A one day training is only enough time to introduce these ideas and concepts to you. To really master the skills presented practice is the key. You must try to employ these skills as much as possible until they become second nature. If you are interested in further analysis and explorations there are many routes you can take. Please discuss with your facilitators or email Joshua and Carolyn at the email provided above.

In this workshop we are going to begin by focusing our attention on understanding the Third Side and impediments to taking action as a Third Sider. After that we will shift to developing a Third Side **Perspective**, which entails going to the **Balcony**. The balcony is a place to stop and pull yourself back from the situation. When on the balcony you will want to focus on the emotional components of the conflict. As such, you will learn perspectives and skills to look and listen to the *emotions* of all involved, as well as the emotions of the whole community. The next step is **Uncovering Interests**, which helps you as a third sider to really understand what the parties and the surrounding community need in order to deal with the issue in question. Finally, once you, as a third sider, understand the varying interests you may need to help the parties and the community think creatively about the problem. Here is where you will help all involved **Generate Creative Options**.

Finally, we will conclude the workshop with a brief assessment of actions you can take to be part of the Third Side.



## WHAT IS THE THIRD SIDE?

The Third Side is a way of looking at the conflicts around us not just from one side or the other but from the **larger perspective** of the surrounding community.

### Taking the Third Side means

- **Seeking to understand both sides** of the conflict
- **Encouraging** a process of **cooperative negotiation** and **speaking out against** any **abuse** or **violence**
- **Supporting an inclusive solution** - one that fairly meets the essential needs of both sides and the community

You can have natural sympathies for one side or the other and still choose to take the Third Side.



**Any of us can take the Third Side anytime  
at home, at work, in the community,  
and in the world.**

**For more information, go to [www.thirdside.org](http://www.thirdside.org)**



## Impediments to Taking the Third Side



# Why people DON'T take the Third Side

## **Why do people hesitate to take the Third Side?**

Why do people who observe destructive conflicts hesitate to act or get involved, sometimes even when they are directly affected by that behavior?

There are both personal and societal reasons for not coming forward. The following are some of the more dominant reasons people do not take Third Side acts:

### **Personal reasons**

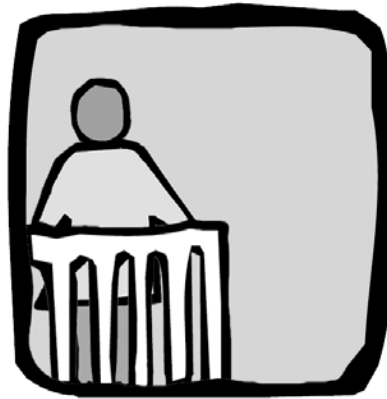
- **Fear of retaliation or punishment**
- **Fear of losing a relationship**
- **Fear of losing face or being embarrassed**
- **Lack of moral courage**
- **Lack of skills about how to get involved**
- **Feeling like it won't make a difference**
- **General fear of conflict**
- **It takes too much effort**
- **Denial about the problem and whether it really exists**

### **Societal reasons**

- **Fear of losing face or being embarrassed**
- **Someone else will handle it – Genovese syndrome**
- **It is someone else's problem – don't want to be a busy body**
- **General fear of conflict**



# I. Go to the Balcony and develop a Third Side Perspective in yourself and others



**Musashi, the great samurai, called going to the balcony taking "a distanced view of close things."**

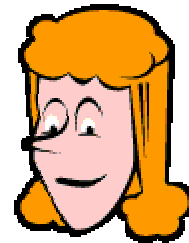




## Develop a Third Side “Balcony” Perspective in yourself and others

### Focus on Emotions

*Recognize and suspend your emotional reactions such as anger, frustration, hurt, fear, etc. Calm yourself. Be able to see the conflict and subsequent emotions from the other party’s perspective and the perspective of the Third Side.*



## **The balcony is a place to:**

### **Stop:**

- Take time to prepare
- Take a time out
- Count to 10
- Take a deep breath

### **Look (inside yourself):**

- Look at your natural reaction: take sides, ignore, escape
- Name your emotions
- *Have* your emotions (rather than *be* them)
- Distinguish your emotions from their triggers

### **Listen:**

- Hear out your feelings so you don't have to act them out
- Listen to understand

Use a partner as your “balcony”

## **Dealing with emotions requires you to manage yours first**

What words, situations or conditions cause you to react with strong emotions?

What physical cues does your body give you?

What effective methods do you use now to help you stay calm (“on the balcony”)?

## **Guidelines: Manage your emotions**

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**Be aware of how your body responds to conflict.** Notice physical changes.

**Know your “hot buttons”** words or situations that trigger your emotions.

**Reframe the situation internally,** control the story you tell yourself.

**Focus on your ultimate goal** and purpose for the conversation.

**Slow the process down.** Buy time to think ... take a break.

**Don't try to guess** the other person's intent. Tell yourself “a new story” about their intention

### **Guidelines:**

#### **How to Defuse Others Emotions and Rationalizations**

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**Empathize** - step into their shoes. “I can appreciate why you feel like that – If I were you, I might feel like that also.”

**Show interest** in how they feel. Encourage them to tell you about their emotions. I am curious in your statement – Please go on.

**Inquire further** – “Tell me more about it.” “Anything else?” “How do you see it?”

**Summarize** - Show that you understand their point of view— you are not stating that you agree with it. “Did I understand you?” “Did you mean...?”

**Offer your best guess** at how they might be feeling, if they are silent, and ask if it is accurate.

**Avoid the “Verbal Eraser”** Say “Yes ... and ...”, instead of “but”

**Make it safe** for them to be honest by restating and summarizing how they feel.

**Agree when you can.** Say “I can see how you might feel that way.”  
Write down what they say.

**Thank them.**



## Uncovering Interests



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**Positions:  
What you say you want**

- The “only” solution
- Often concrete and tangible
- A stubborn, strongly held view
- The “bottom line”
- A demand

**Interests:  
The reason behind your position**

- The reason(s) for a position
- Tend to be intangible
- The answer(s) to the question “WHY?”
- The source of the other's motivation
- Your key to developing a creative solution

**Guidelines: Discover Underlying Interests**

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Underlying interests are the motivations that cause a person to take a position. The following statements and questions will help you uncover the underlying interests of another person:

- What will it achieve for you if we...?
- As I understand your interests, they are ...
- Have I misunderstood your interests? What am I missing?
- What are your key concerns?
- Help me understand why this is really important to you ...
- You say ... Tell me more about that.
- Could you walk me through this step by step?



## **Listening for Interests**

### **Skills:**

**Summarize**—Let them know they are understood.

“Let me make sure I understood you. Your interest is \_\_\_\_\_. Am I right?”

“From your perspective we should \_\_\_\_\_. Is that accurate?”

“Let’s see if I can review the key points we have discussed. Did I understand you correctly?”

**Encourage**—Give them a full and respectful hearing.

“Yes, please go on.”

“Then what happened?”

“Is there anything else you would like to add?”

**Clarify**—Ask questions to help get below the surface of an issue.

“How much of a concern is this?”

“How does this compare to other situations?”

“Can you give me an example?”

**Acknowledge their Point**—Recognize their point of view.

“If I were in your shoes, that is how I might see it also?”

“I can understand why you believe that?”

“I see what you mean.”

**Acknowledge their Feelings**—Don’t ignore their emotions.

“I can see why you would feel that way.”

“I appreciate how you feel?”

“I respect your right to feel that way.”



# Tree of Positions and Interests

**Your Position**

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**Your Interests**

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## Generate Creative Options





## **Guidelines: Getting yourself focused on the creative perspective**

*Remind yourself to let go of your inhibitions and constraints to your thinking.*

The following questions will help you get focused on your creative perspective:

- What are all the options to solve this problem no matter how wild or outlandish they may seem?
- What have I seen succeed in similar situations?

## **Guidelines: Helping others to take a creative perspective**

Types of questions to get people thinking creatively:

- What are all the possibilities?
- What else might we try?
- What are some ways we could deal with this problem?
- Let's get all of the options on the table.
- What if we...?
- Do you have any ideas on that?
- If we work together, how might we make this better for all?



# Third Side Large Group Exercise



## Purpose

1. Demonstrate how Third Siders can use the power of questioning to help the parties re-think the situation from a Third Side perspective that incorporates all the interests involved
2. Understand a sequence of asking questions that acknowledge the emotions people are experiencing; explore interests below feelings and positions and finally begin to generate options
3. Simulate what it means to be the Third Side might in a given conflict situation

## Directions

1. Introduction and overview of exercise
2. Form three smaller groups – each to create a set of questions (use handout below for help in creating questions in your context)
3. Practice First set of questions and debriefing
4. Practice Second set of questions and debriefing
5. Practice Third set of questions and debriefing
6. General comments, questions, and debriefing wrap up



# Third Side Large Group Exercise



## Handout

### Examples of Emotionally Based Questions

- When X happened to you what were you feeling?
- How did it feel when...?
- From what you have told me, am I correct in stating that you are feeling...?
- What phrases or other statements are hot button issues for you?
- Emotionally, what is the most difficult part of this conflict for you? Why is that?

### Examples of Interest Based Questions

- What will it achieve for you if we...?
- If your position is X, what is your interest?
- You have told me what the solution is (state that here), but what is the problem you are dealing with?
- What are your key concerns?
- Help me understand why this is really important to you ...
- You say X matters ... Tell me more about that.
- Could you walk me through your interests step by step so I make sure I am clear?

### Examples of Creativity (Option generation) Questions

- What are all the possibilities around X issue?
- What else might you/we try around X issue?
- What are some ways you/we could deal with this problem?
- What if we get all of the options on the table and then worry about deciding later?



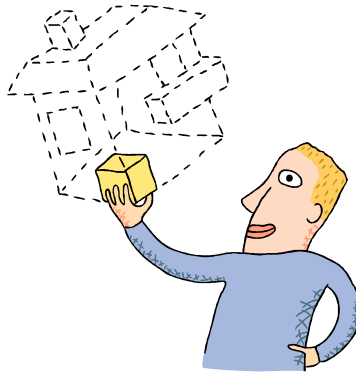
- Do you have any ideas on X issue that are different than what we have discussed thus far?
- If we work together, how might we make this better for all?



## Next Steps: Third Side Conversations



# Third Side Conversation Planning Sheet



## From the Balcony<sup>1</sup>

### Dealing with Emotions

How will I manage my emotions?

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- The questions I might ask myself are:

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How will I defuse their emotions?

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that this sheet assumes you are one of the primary parties to the conflict. If you are not please just substitute one primary party for yourself and you should look at it as a Third Sider.



- The questions I might ask the others are:

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## **Uncovering Interests**

What are my interests?

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What are the other party's interests?

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What are the interests of the surrounding community?

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## **Generative Creative Options**

What are the options for mutual gain for all parties, including the surrounding community?

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How will I encourage others to think creatively?

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## Third Side Roles

What third side roles need to be played in this situation?

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What third side roles will I play?

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- What specific actions will I take in that/those role(s)?

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Who else can play one of the third side roles needed in this conflict?

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## Next steps

How will I introduce the topic? How will I get started?

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What will I listen for?

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What questions will I ask?

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