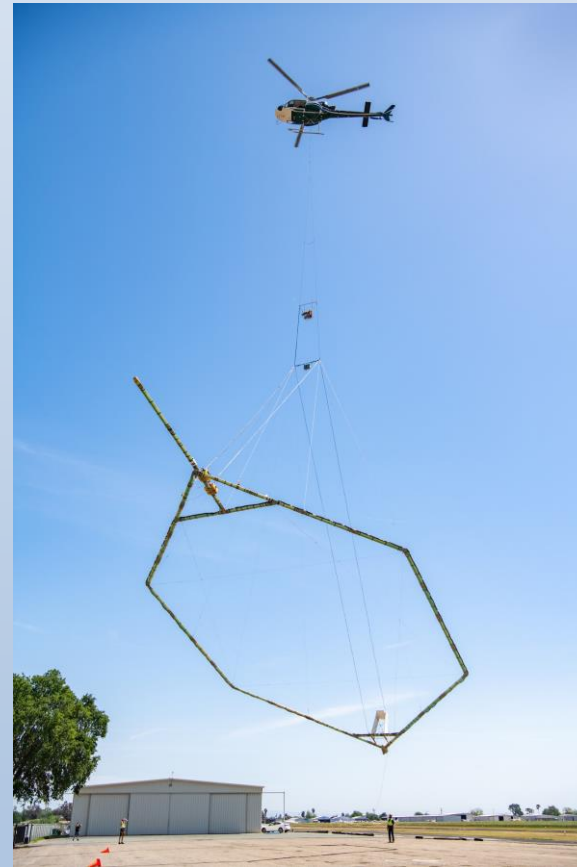


CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

# Groundwater Awareness Week 2024



03/13/2024

# OPENING REMARKS

*Heather Shannon*

*California Department of Water Resources*



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SUSTAINABLE GROUNDWATER  
MANAGEMENT OFFICE

# Day 3 **Speakers**

**Sarah Rubin, *Department of Conservation***



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# How to Have the “Hard Conversations”

*Sarah Rubin*

*Department of Conservation  
Outreach and Engagement Advisor*



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MANAGEMENT OFFICE



California  
**Department of  
Conservation**

# Challenging Situations

## Tools for Navigating Difficult Dialogue

DWR Sustainable Groundwater Management Program -  
Training for Groundwater Sustainability Agencies

**Day 2 of 2: Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

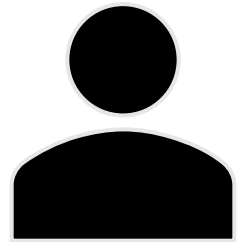
Sarah Rubin, Outreach and Engagement Advisor  
[sarah.rubin@conservation.ca.gov](mailto:sarah.rubin@conservation.ca.gov) | 916.214.5731

# An Example of a Challenging Experience

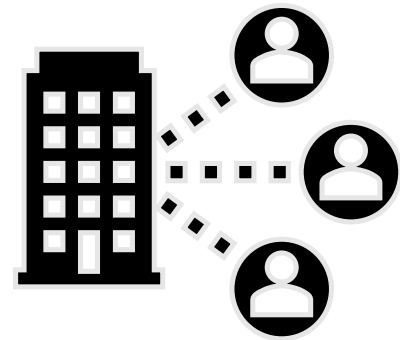


<http://municipalmagazine.com/2015/07/our-local-government-model-its-broken-so-lets-fix-it/>

# Ice Breaker In Pairs



Name



Where you work



When it comes to engaging with others, what is most challenging for you (internally, sister agencies, externally)?



# Today's Topics

**01 Why this work is challenging**

**02 Understanding your own conflict style & conflict dynamics**

**03 Tools you can use in challenging situations**

- Active listening
- Scenario Planning
- Rehearsing / Role Play



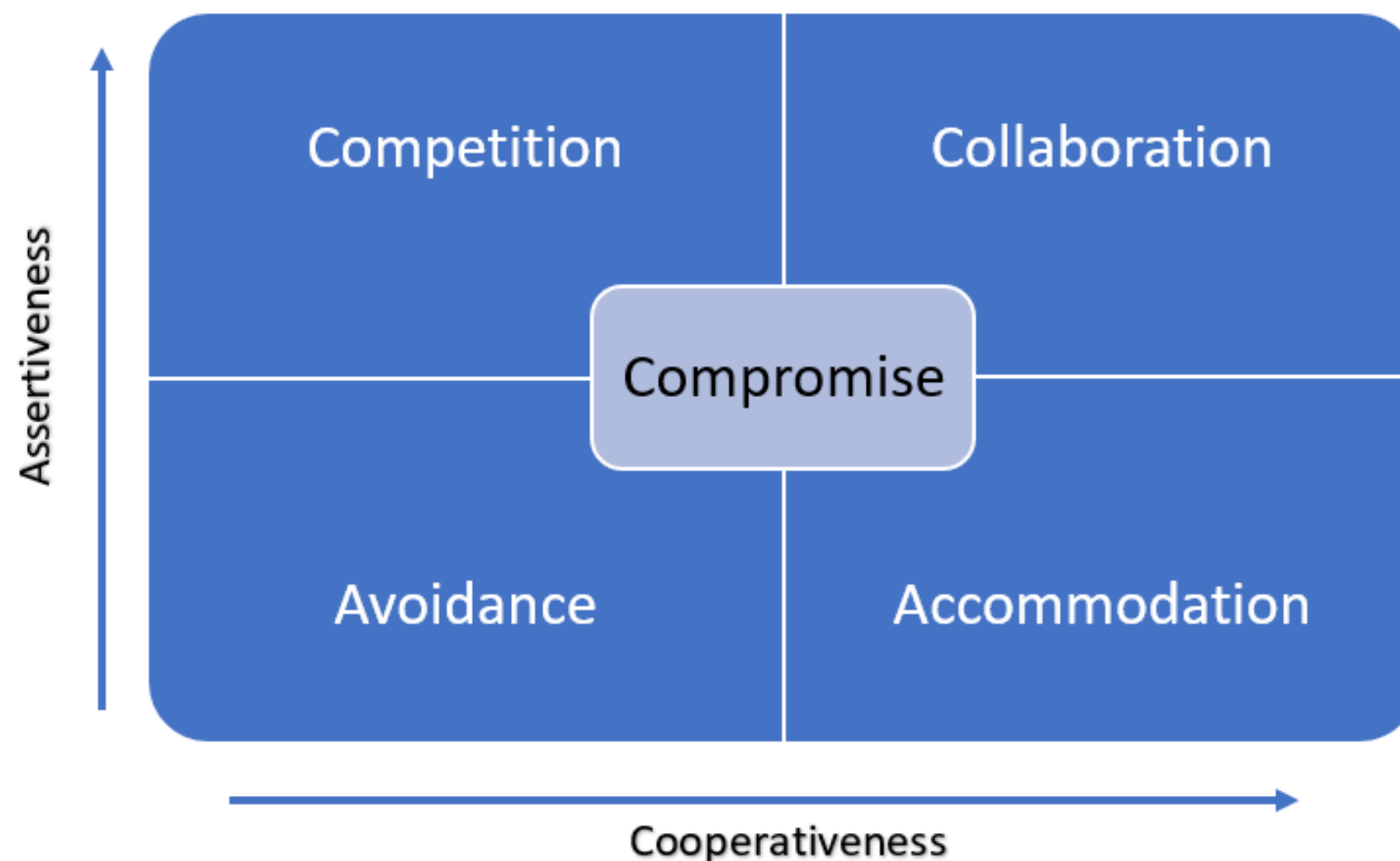
# Context



What is in your control?

Conflict is normal and conflict can be really challenging to navigate.

# Conflict is normal & can be challenging



The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Model, reproduced from "Peacebuilding: A Caritas Training Model," Caritas Internationalis, 2002.

# Discussion: Your Conflict Style

Competing

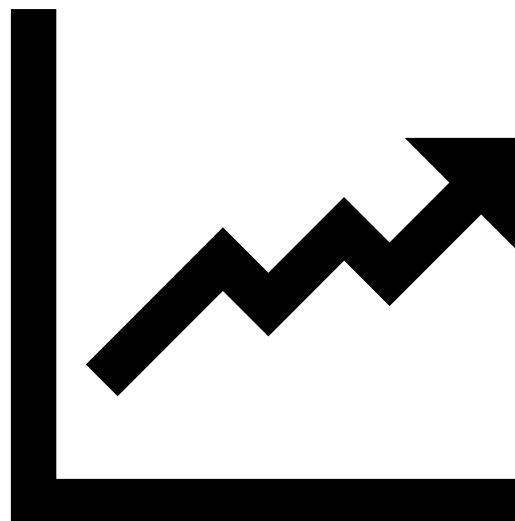
Collaborate

Avoiding

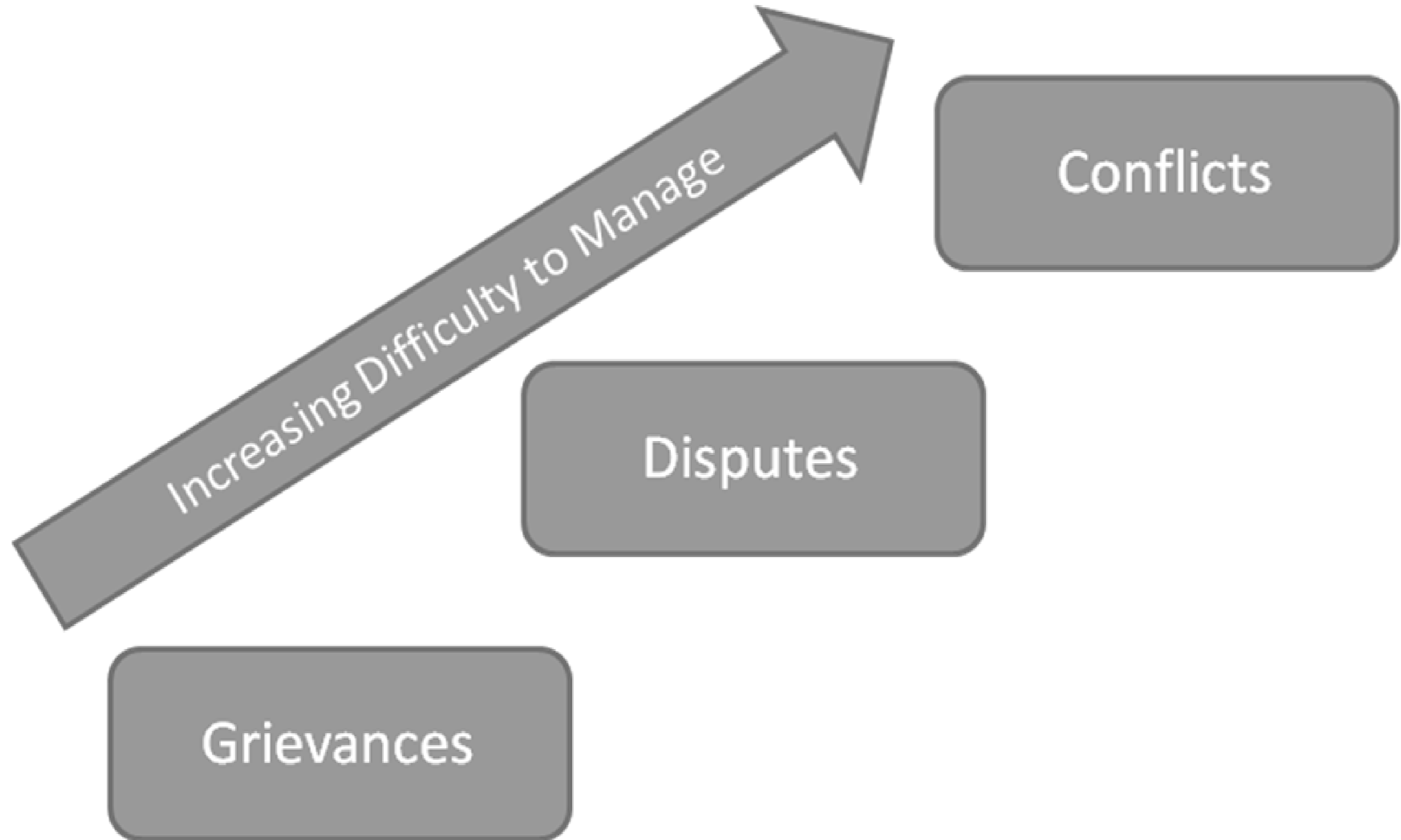
Compromising

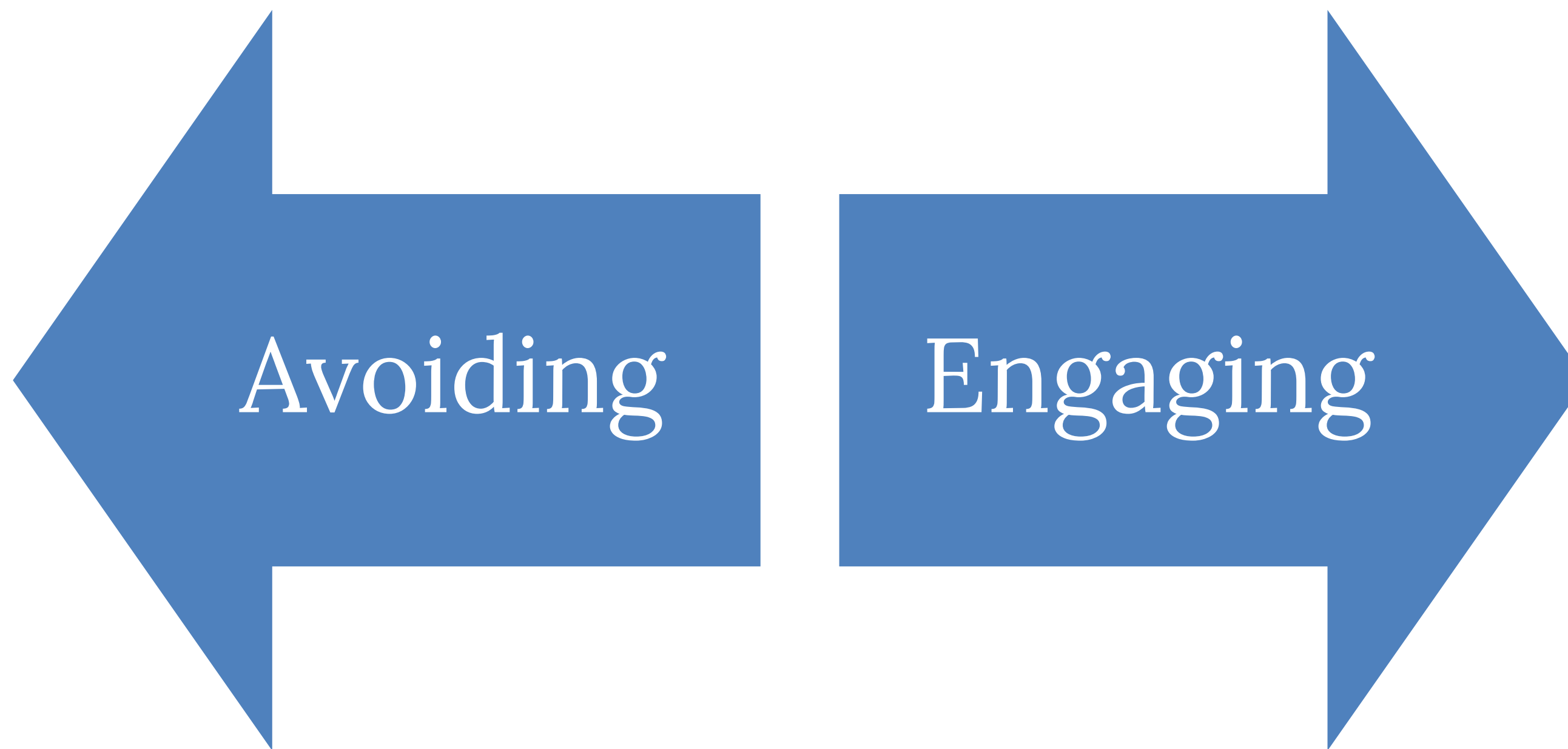
Accommodating

# Conflict Escalation



# Escalation Increases Complexity and the Cost of Conflict





# Causes of Conflict

- **Facts:** Strong differences over data or its interpretation
- **Interests:** Difficult to negotiate reasons, values, and physical and psychological needs
- **Relationships:** Troubled historic or current personal, social, or political connections
- **Identity:** negative beliefs, discrimination, or oppression about who and how the world views you and people like you, loss of face

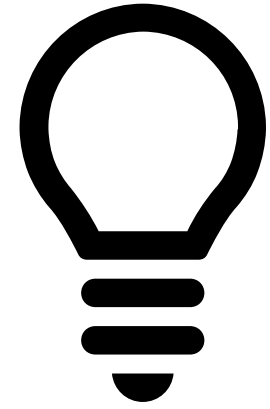
# Causes of Conflict Continued

- **Structures:** Unequal or destructive organizations, social, or economic institutions
  - Past and current unequal or unfair situations create grievances
  - Over time grievances create powerful in-group and out-group divisions
  - In group/out group divisions create distrust in others, leaders, and organizations
  - Distrust, and prejudice can lead to overreaction and susceptibility to manipulation



# Facing Our Public Image

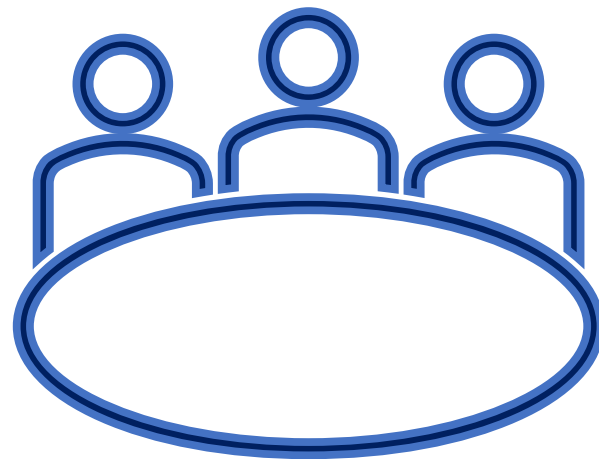
- Our self-image, our consciousness of our status, dignity, and worth
- People work to present themselves as worthwhile, in social situations we try to enhance and maintain face in social interactions
- Losing face equates to losing respect, and dignity for yourself
- The importance and meaning of face differ dramatically in different cultures
- 'Saving face' and 'losing face' can be more important than substantive issues



# Key Takeaways

# Part 2: Strategies for Responding

## Active Listening & Communication Skills



# Managing Emotions and Difficult Situations

- **Acknowledge** the legitimacy of emotions in yourself and others
- **Determine** source of emotions
- **Manage** your response
- **Empathize** with the other
- **Reframe** using less emotionally-charged words

# Communication Skills

- Listen actively
- Express strong feelings appropriately
- Ask open ended questions
- Check information and assumptions
- Review and summarize what you heard
- Acknowledge differences

# Speak Assertively

- Express concerns clearly
- Speak calmly
- Speak simply
- Do not blame, switch topics, or avoid the problem
- Speak your heart and mind

# Listen Actively

- Encourage the speaker to share information
- Check your understanding of what you've heard
  - Paraphrasing
  - Reflecting meaning and feeling
- Base questions on what you have already heard
- Do not judge what is being said

# High Emotion Speaking & Listening

- Understand physiological reactions
- Breathe deeply
- Take stock of the situation –what is going on for you?
- Address the current issue calmly
- Invite the other person to share their issues
- Listen to the other person until they are done speaking
- Acknowledge the others strong feelings (verbally or non-verbally)
- Create a safe space or time to talk it through



# Disagreeing Respectfully

Listen carefully  
and actively

Ask person how  
they came to  
their viewpoint  
or decision

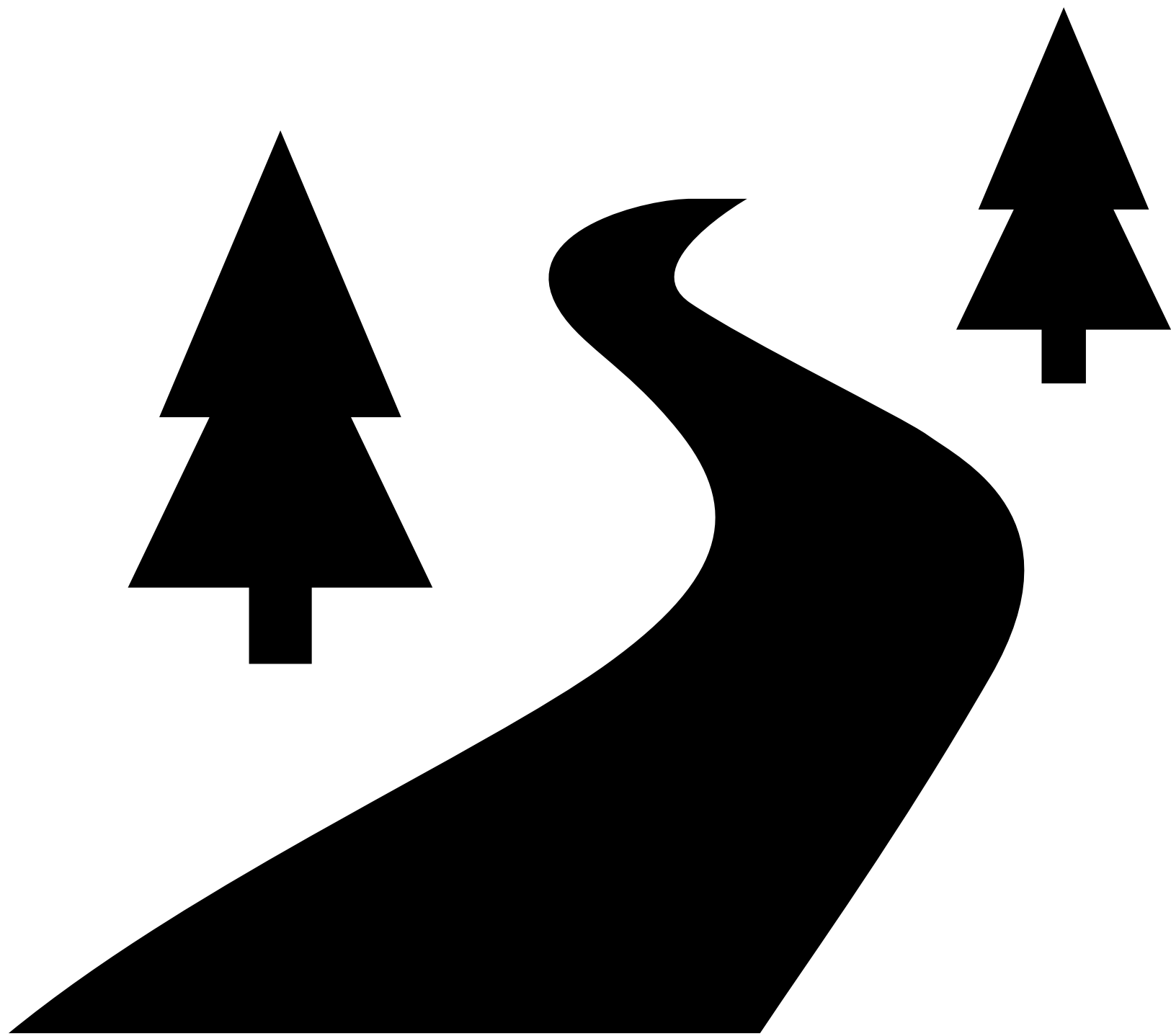
Tell person that  
you disagree  
with them

Clearly, directly,  
and calmly tell  
them your point

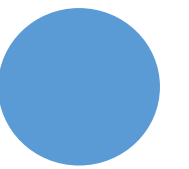
Succinctly tell  
them the reason  
for your point

Thank them for  
listening

# **Small Group Reflection**



**Charting a Path  
Forward in Tough  
Situations**



# Preparation

- Analyzing the Situation
- What is negotiable?
  - All aspects? Given 'pieces'
  - Negligible amount?
- Who makes the (final) decision?
  - Political nature of issue?
  - Real world implications?
  - Personal implications related to a negotiated decision

# Tips

- Look for small “wins”
- Confirm any agreements (in writing as appropriate)
- Build upon agreements
- Generally, tackle easier items first
- Take breaks (minutes or days)
- “Shuttle diplomacy” a key tool
- Use of allies
- Consider the “messenger” in various situations

# More Tips for Preparation: Delineating What is Negotiable

Strong questions

Variety of perspectives to  
check assumptions

“Reality Check” path ahead  
(aka worst-case scenarios)

# Tool: Scenario Planning

Ideal

Likely/  
Status Quo

Worst Case

**Rehearsing**



**What are your key takeaways?**





**THANK YOU**

Contact: Sarah Rubin  
[Sarah.Rubin@conservation.ca.gov](mailto:Sarah.Rubin@conservation.ca.gov)  
916-214-5731

# CLOSING REMARKS

*Heather Shannon*

*California Department of Water Resources*



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# What's Next

- 3/14 - GSA Reporting: Annual Reports, Periodic Evaluations, and Amendments to GSPs; Time: noon -1:00 p.m.
- 3/15 - Planning Ahead: Data Collection and Groundwater Modeling; Time: noon – 1:00 p.m.



# GWAW 2024 Next Steps

- Attend virtual talks and webinars later this week!
- Questions? Contact [sgmps@water.ca.gov](mailto:sgmps@water.ca.gov)





**THANK  
YOU**