Guidance for Physically Safe Conflict Resolution: A Bias-Resistant Approach

Physical safety is important and often overlooked by conflict resolution practitioners (hereinafter conflict resolvers.[1]). The desire to avoid or diminish the likelihood of violent incidents is not enough. Conflict resolvers need to plan for safety and establish their boundaries and contingencies in advance. When a plan is developed, conflict resolvers need to look for what bias it may contain and utilize this guidance to help improve the plan and make sure it is not discriminatory towards any protected classes. Conflict resolvers must account for how to maintain compliance with their legal obligations and how their in-the-moment reactions may carry more bias than intended.

This guidance was specifically designed to help conflict resolvers better serve their participants and themselves by structuring processes that address and support bias-resistant[2] physical safety best practices. This document describes a safe and bias-resistant approach that conflict resolvers can use in their practices. It addresses site and general safety, weapons, process safety, techniques to safely address challenging behaviors, and translating intuition and "gut feelings" into appropriate action.

I. Physical Safety Is Relevant to All Conflict Resolution Practitioners

All conflict resolvers have an obligation to ensure safe processes. For example, mediators have an ethical responsibility to ensure their process is safe for the parties, the mediator, and all other participants.[3] Standard VI of the Model Standards of Conduct for Mediators,[4] provides that a mediator has an obligation to provide a quality process that is safe and procedurally fair. Safety is not limited just to mediators following the Model Standards. This responsibility extends to all mediators, arbitrators, conveners, and other dispute resolution professionals as well as any court, school, business, nonprofit, government or other entity offering conflict resolution services. Despite this wide consensus of the universal need to protect the safety of parties, conflict resolvers, and other participants in an unbiased manner, there is confusion and a lack of guidance about how to create safe spaces for conflict resolution and respond to challenging behaviors that may arise.

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[1] The term "conflict resolver" in this guidance should be interpreted broadly to include all dispute resolution practitioners.

[2] Bias-resistant practices are designed to mitigate the impact of implicit or unconscious biases. The goal is to have procedurally fair processes even if someone has any kind of known or unknown bias. See BiasResistantCourts.org Trauma-Informed and Bias-Resistant Resource System for Courts.

[3] In this guidance, the term "party" refers to a person whose consent is required to resolve the dispute, and the term "participant" refers to anyone other than a party or a conflict resolver who participates in the process.

[4] https://www.adr.org/sites/default/files/document_repository/AAA-Mediators-Model-Standards-of-Conduct-10-14-2010.pdf. Endorsed by the Association for Conflict Resolution, the American Bar Association, and the American Arbitration Association in 2005.

This guidance focuses on protecting physical safety in conflict resolution processes. While it is imperative that conflict resolvers also be concerned about protecting the mental and emotional well-being of the participants in their conflict resolution processes and making the process accessible to people who have experienced trauma, live with temporary or permanent disabilities, have neurodivergence, or experience other accessibility needs, that is not the topic of this guidance. Similarly, it does not address being alert to other harmful dynamics including the impact of domestic abuse and coercive control,[5] or protecting safety in online processes.[6]

II. Why Safety Planning Is Important

A. Benefits of Advanced Planning

All conflict resolvers expect a certain amount of disruptive behavior during a mediation – yelling, insults, or going off on a tangent. Disruptive behavior can be upsetting, disorienting, and even put conflict resolvers in fear for their safety. There may also be emergencies – medical emergencies, weather emergencies, or the rare occasions where conflicts erupt into violence. At the extreme, violence can result in injury or even death.[7] Many conflict resolvers do not have clear criteria or protocols for how and when they will act in the face of behavior challenges or emergencies in a conflict resolution process.

There are many important benefits to advanced planning. Conflict resolvers can be more comfortable that they are prepared for whatever situations they encounter when they perceive challenging behaviors or urgent situations. They can also avoid second-guessing themselves after an event and wondering if they should have handled the situation differently or if their reactions were uninformed or informed by their biases rather than by what was needed in the situation.

Advanced planning also makes the process safer. In-the-moment ad hoc decisions are often reactionary and may be based on incomplete or possibly inaccurate information. Plans created in advance are usually more comprehensive, better developed, and faster to execute, thus protecting the safety of the participants and the conflict resolvers. Another benefit of advanced planning is it gives conflict resolvers the ability to be transparent about how they address behavior issues, both through upfront guidelines before the process and in referring to policies when intervening.

When conflict resolvers make advanced plans, they can focus on both safety and the core values of mediation and other conflict resolution processes while maintaining impartiality and where

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[5] Coercive control is a "pattern of behavior that in purpose or effect unreasonably interferes with a person's free will and personal liberty." Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46b-1 (b), as amended by 2021 Conn. Acts 21-78.

[6] While conflict resolvers must be vigilant about cybersecurity and protecting participants from technological threats in video conferencing and online dispute resolution, those are separate topics, and not the subject of this document. Additionally, while this guidance is intended to be helpful for all conflict resolvers, it refers to American legal context, e.g., the Americans with Disabilities Act and the U.S. Constitution.

[7] A tragic incident occurred in January 2013 as parties were leaving a mediation in Phoenix, Arizona. One party shot and killed the other party and the other party's attorney and then died by suicide.

appropriate, party self-determination. Advanced plans can also be based on bias-resistant best practices that create a more equitable and effective process for participants.[8]

B. Blending the Conflict Resolver Mindset with the Safety Professional Mindset

Conflict resolvers may see safety planning as something that does not comport with their core practices of trusting collaboration, open validation, and reflective listening. The idea of taking a safety professional's (e.g., public law enforcement officers and private security staff) perspective and seeing people as potential threats may seem contrary to conflict resolution values. However, this is a misconception for three key reasons.

1. Conflict resolvers have a responsibility to provide a safe process and a quality process, as provided in the Model Standards of Conduct. Therefore, they are required to develop systems for ensuring their practice is as safe as possible for all participants.

2. Conflict resolvers help others in difficult situations and, similar to safety professionals, they can expect to encounter escalation and challenging behaviors from participants. It is important to create a general safety plan to be ready for potential escalation from all participants, while being careful to avoid discriminatory profiling or assumptions that participants with certain backgrounds are more likely to become a risk for violence or other challenging behaviors.

3. Bias can result from a conflict resolver's response to challenging behaviors. Challenging behaviors themselves, if unchecked, can create bias by undermining the other party's self-determination and can lead to coerced outcomes. Additionally, bias can occur when a conflict resolver does not respond to challenging behavior with some participants, and then takes action with different participants who exhibit similar challenging behaviors. If conflict resolvers do not develop plans to consistently manage threats, risks, and challenging behaviors from all participants then they may become biased in the times they selectively take action or do not take action. By contrast, routine safety planning gives conflict resolvers tools to address challenging behaviors appropriately and impartially.

III. General Safety Protocols

An essential component of a safe conflict resolution setting is a safety plan which is a list of protections and procedures to maintain a safe environment. A safety plan can be tailored to the conflict resolver's work environment and customized to meet the needs of all participants and others in the vicinity. If a conflict resolver operates within a larger organization, safety plans should be designed in consultation with administrators in the organization with input from staff

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[8] See BiasResistantCourts.org for free resources on bias-resistant best practices. The American Arbitration Association - International Centre for Dispute Resolution Foundation (AAA-ICDR Foundation) funded this 2023 project of the CUNY Dispute Resolution Center and MH Mediate. This project drew on survey data from courts around the country and a panel of diversity experts to create twelve skills-focused resource guides to help conflict resolvers be trauma-informed, accessible, and bias-resistant.

and others as appropriate. If there are security personnel in the organization, they should be involved in the safety planning.

An important benefit of safety plans is that they are developed in advance when there is time for careful planning and forethought. These plans should be trauma-informed[9], applied consistently, and not perpetuate any systemic biases against specific groups, cultures, or ability backgrounds.

A. Site Safety

Conflict resolvers need to provide participants with a location that is as safe as possible for sessions and are encouraged to regularly assess the safety of their location by checking the following:

1. Entrances and exits. Are they controlled? Are individuals allowed access to the building unescorted? Are security doors locked? Can someone observe people entering or exiting the building? Are there emergency exit plans for individuals with disabilities?

2. Reception areas. Can someone observe people in the reception area? Does the reception staff have visibility of the entire waiting area? Are there separate waiting areas for people who should not sit together?

3. Hallways, stairways, storage areas, and elevators. Is there adequate lighting? Are these areas shared with other building occupants? Are they monitored by cameras?

4. Restrooms. Are the entrances and exits to the restrooms in high-traffic areas and observable by others? Is there adequate lighting? Are the restrooms shared with other building occupants?

5. Telephones. Are telephones readily available to summon assistance? Are important telephone numbers posted in prominent locations? Are people with disabilities provided these telephone numbers in a format accessible to them?

6. Security equipment. Are there security cameras, alarms, panic buttons or other security devices? Does someone monitor them? Are they checked regularly to be sure they are working?

7. Telephone and internet connections. How reliable is the internet connection? How strong are the cell phone signals? What other issues of connectivity need to be considered? What happens if power is lost?

8. Hiding places. Are there places someone could hide? Can they be eliminated or locked?

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[9] In this situation, trauma-informed means to recognize the pervasiveness of trauma and the many personal and societal consequences of trauma, to anticipate how trauma survivors may respond to words and actions, (without trying to guess who specifically has experienced trauma,) and to use care to avoid causing further harm. See SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-informed Approach | SAMHSA p.9 (2014)

9. Safe places. What are immediately accessible safe places in the building? Do they have solid doors that can be locked from the inside? How can they be accessed generally and by people with disabilities?

10. Emergency equipment. Is emergency equipment such as fire extinguishers, AEDs, first aid equipment, etc. available and readily accessible?

11. Trained personnel. Are there people in the building trained in CPR, AED, or first aid? Is there a readily available list of who they are and the fastest way to reach them?

If conflict resolvers have concerns about their ability to protect the safety and well-being of all participants in their usual meeting location, they should look for safer and/or more accessible alternatives. For example, conflict resolvers should consider using a more secure location, such as a courthouse with weapon screening, if they have concerns about violence. In addition, conflict resolvers should consider using a more accessible location for participants with disabilities.

B. Meeting Room Safety

Conflict resolvers should evaluate the safety of the rooms where they conduct sessions and eliminate items that could be safety risks by doing the following:

1. Keep the meeting space free of extraneous clutter, office equipment, and furniture.

2. Consider limiting, removing, or securing everyday items that could potentially be thrown or otherwise used as improvised weapons. (coffee mugs, scissors, staplers, etc.)

3. Use a room that is of adequate size for the number of participants. Avoid overcrowding the room or blocking exits.

4. Arrange safe locations for participants to wait while the mediator is caucusing with other participants. Needs for privacy may need to be balanced with needs to monitor or observe the participants who are not involved in caucus.

5. Conflict resolvers may want to protect the safety of their families and themselves by not having family photos or mementos in meeting spaces.

C. Seating Arrangements

Affirmatively determine seating arrangements in the session considering the following:

1. Does the placement of tables and chairs promote safety? Can participants leave safely? Are the participants who might need to leave the session room quickly seated near the door?

2. Can the conflict resolver rapidly access the nearest exit?

3. If there are interpreters, do the seating arrangements protect both communication and safety needs.

4. Can the participants and the conflict resolver go between the session room and caucus rooms safely?

D. Presence of Other People

Are there other people in the immediate vicinity who can help the conflict resolver if needed? Are they familiar with the safety plan, and do they know what to do in an emergency?

E. Protocols for Emergency Situations

Conflict resolvers should establish or be aware of the protocols in their building for emergency situations such as fire, medical emergencies, power outages, weather emergencies, and physical violence or serious threats of violence. These plans should address the following:

1. Under what circumstances should the conflict resolver activate a panic button?

2. What should the conflict resolver do while waiting for medical assistance, i.e., begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or first aid or start an automated external defibrillator (AED), if trained?

3. How should the conflict resolver safely guide the participants out of the building in case of fire, earthquake, bomb threat or shooting or to a safe location in the building in case of a tornado or sudden storm?

4. How can participants be separated and moved to separate rooms quickly, if needed?

5. What is the safest way for the participants to exit the building separately? Is it accessible for participants with disabilities?

F. Emergency Communication Plans

An important part of safety planning is identifying people who can help in an urgent situation and planning in advance how they can be reached and what they can do. Conflict resolvers should develop an emergency communication plan which at a minimum includes the following:

1. Prominently post the address of the building and emergency numbers including 9-1-1, building security, poison control, child protective services, and other important numbers in languages commonly spoken by conflict resolvers and participants.

2. Specify who conflict resolvers should call if urgent medical care or law enforcement is needed. For example, should they call 9-1-1 directly or should they call a security officer

in the building who will then call and coordinate with the 9-1-1 dispatcher?

3. Use a landline, if possible, to call for emergency assistance. This allows for immediate transmission of your location.

4. Program emergency numbers into office phones and cell phones.

5. If there are interpreters, orient them to building safety features and emergency exits.

6. Develop emergency code words.
   - Determine the meaning of the code words.
   - Determine who should know these code words.
   - Determine how the code words will be communicated to others.
   - Outline what actions should be taken once the code words have been given.

7. Train all staff members and others in the vicinity about safety protocols and the meaning of the code words and the actions that should be taken if they are given. Instruct them to report unusual or suspicious behavior, i.e., "see something, say something." Incorporate safety training for new personnel as part of the onboarding procedure.

8. Provide consistent and ongoing training about the emergency communication plan and how to use code words so that the reactions of all staff members and others in the vicinity are as immediate as they would be if they heard a police siren.

9. Rehearse the established plan for emergency situations and what to do in different circumstances to condition crisis responses and avoid mistakes and delays in implementing the plan when needed.

G. Weapons Policies

The presence of a weapon can enable a participant to turn a conflict resolution process violent or even deadly. Without a weapon, the possibility of a physical confrontation exists, and a weapon increases the potential harm exponentially. Conversely, if weapons are not present, the risk is diminished. In the interest of safety, it is best to conduct conflict resolution processes in settings that do not permit weapons.

When developing a no-weapons policy, conflict resolvers should first think about typical weapons, such as guns and knives. Conflict resolvers should keep in mind that even if they have a "no weapons" policy they will not necessarily know if a participant is carrying a concealed weapon unless all participants are screened. This would include going through a metal detector or other screening device operated by trained personnel - although no screening is foolproof. This can be an important consideration for conflict resolvers when they are deciding where to hold their sessions.

Conflict resolvers should also take into consideration other objects that could be used as improvised weapons, which a metal detector will not identify. Indeed, a participant could throw a laptop, swing a cane or splash hot coffee. These improvised weapons, however, will not be able to do as much damage as quickly as a gun or even a knife. Conflict resolvers need to consider the entire range of weapons when developing and implementing their policies.

One issue that can arise when implementing a "no weapons" policy is what to do about participants whose employer requires that they be armed. One way to address this is to permit participants who are attending in their official capacity to be armed, e.g., a police officer representing the police department, but not those attending in their personal capacity, e.g., a police officer participating in their own divorce mediation.

Some conflict resolvers believe a "no weapons policy" impinges on their constitutional rights and those of the participants. Indeed, some conflict resolvers may choose to bring their own weapon to their sessions.[10] If so, the conflict resolver should determine in advance in what situations they would use their weapon and how they would do so effectively, safely, and legally. Whatever weapons policy a conflict resolver adopts, it is important that it be clear, unambiguous, and applied uniformly, and that participants are notified of the policy prior to the first session.

IV.   Process Safety Protocols

In addition to developing general safety protocols, conflict resolvers can also structure their process to promote physical safety. Due to the wide variety of conflict resolution practices, and the different potential safety challenges they each present, the types of appropriate safety measures will vary. The following are some process protocols that may help promote physical safety in many conflict resolution settings.

A. Individual Preliminary Meetings

Individual meetings with parties and their counsel provide an opportunity for the conflict resolver to not only learn about the issues in the case, but also to inquire if the party has any safety concerns and/or accessibility requirements. Individual meetings may be held in-person, by videoconference, or by telephone. During these meetings, the conflict resolver should inform the party if the process is confidential and/or privileged, and if so, also describe the exceptions to confidentiality and privilege such as direct threats and any mandatory reporting obligations. These meetings are an opportunity to review safety protocols such as weapons policies, set expectations about safety, and make inquiries into the safety dynamics of the presenting situation.

Screening for domestic abuse and coercive control is often a component of preliminary individual meetings in divorce, family, and other domestic relations conflict resolution processes

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[10] While the idea of permitting weapons in mediation may feel antithetical to some conflict resolvers who see mediation as a peacemaking process, this guidance is intended to be useful for multiple venues and situations.

and is required in some jurisdictions. Conflict resolvers frequently use an established screening tool or protocol[11] in these screenings to ensure consistency and thoroughness.

To avoid bias, conflict resolvers should take a consistent approach in all preliminary individual meetings. As part of the individual meetings, conflict resolvers may ask questions about safety and the behaviors of participants. While behaviors can be discussed, asking about disabilities, including mental health diagnoses or neurodivergence, can constitute undue inquiry or disparate treatment and be discriminatory under disability rights laws[12] unless they are self-disclosed by a participant (and even then, there are often limits of what is appropriate to ask upon such disclosures).

Safety and access considerations are closely linked. Conflict resolvers should ask all participants how best to ensure their access to and effective participation in the conflict resolution process, for example whether there are any concerns or requests with respect to architectural access, reasonable modifications to the process to address a participant's needs, concerns or wishes, or auxiliary aids and services. For people with disabilities, access can also be a safety consideration.

B. Process Adjustments

There are dispute resolution techniques and protocols that a conflict resolver can follow to make the process physically safer for all involved. In situations where the conflict resolver or a party has concerns about behaviors of one or more parties, but all parties wish to participate in the process, the conflict resolver can make process adjustments to promote safety. These adjustments should be based on behavior-based criteria to avoid the risk of unconscious bias leading conflict resolvers to make decisions based on the parties' background.

Possible adjustments include conducting the process in a courthouse or other location with a high level of security and/or having the parties in separate rooms or locations throughout the process. The conflict resolver could also conduct the process by video conference using separate breakout rooms for some or all of the process. Other possibilities are for the parties to have a friend, representative, advocate, or attorney in the process as a support person, and/or to have a co-conflict resolver to help manage the process.

If the parties will be in joint sessions, the conflict resolver can promote safety by controlling the process and having strict ground rules such as no interrupting, no abusive language, no yelling, etc. and enforcing the ground rules equally with all parties. The conflict resolver can also schedule shorter sessions or have a more structured agenda that is developed with the parties. If tensions rise or if one or more of the parties appear to be having trouble participating in the

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[11] Examples of screening tools include the Michigan Domestic Violence Screening Protocol (October 2023), domestic-violence-screening-protocol-for-mediators.pdf, the Battered Women's Justice Project SAFeR instrument compiled-practice-guides-may-2018.pdf, MASIC-S: Mediator Assessment of Safety Issues and Concerns - Mediate.com, among others. When screening, conflict resolvers should focus their questions on behaviors exhibited by parties and avoid asking about mental health problems.

[12] In the United States this includes the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, As Amended | ADA.gov (United States Code Title 42) as well as state laws.

process at that time, the conflict resolver can quickly caucus and meet with the parties separately or end the session for that day. The conflict resolver can also promote safety by having staggered arrivals and departures, separate waiting rooms and termination of sessions from caucus or individual rooms.

These safety measures must be applied to all parties to maintain impartiality even if the conflict resolver is only concerned about the behavior of one party. Bias can occur when a conflict resolver has a general policy – for example, no yelling – but is lax in enforcing it with some participants and not with others. A consistent protocol can reduce the likelihood that a conflict resolver's implicit bias causes them to react more strongly to yelling when the person who is yelling is of a certain gender, race, age or has a health condition.

C. Decision to Not Mediate or Terminate

Individual conflict resolvers and conflict resolution provider organizations have the responsibility to determine their own competence and ability to work with the parties and to provide a safe, accessible, and appropriate process for them. Conflict resolvers may decline or withdraw from cases if they do not believe they can provide such a process for the parties. They may also have policies that they will not handle certain categories of cases.[13] To support this and in alignment with bias-resistant best practices, conflict resolvers should predetermine the criteria that would cause them to recuse themselves from a process. Additionally, they should be aware that terminating or declining a case with participants who are in a protected class raises the question of whether discrimination is occurring.[14] Therefore, it is essential that conflict resolvers ensure that their decisions to not mediate or terminate a case are based on uniform criteria that are not based on a participant's physical or mental health diagnosis and do not profile different groups.

V. Addressing Challenging Behaviors

While some challenging behaviors may be a surprise, many can be anticipated. Procedures and protocols for addressing these situations, including the following, can be developed in advance.

A. Establish Boundaries

It is helpful for conflict resolvers to establish their own boundaries. This reduces the need for conflict resolvers to make "on the spot" decisions, which may not necessarily be the best decisions, and which may also be impacted by implicit biases or personal prejudices. It is important that conflict resolvers have advance plans for how they will respond to challenging behaviors in a fair, impartial, and effective way. It is also valuable for conflict resolvers to

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[13] For example, some conflict resolvers will not mediate cases where there is an order of protection.

[14] For example, conflict resolvers practicing in the United States are either covered by Title II (State and Local Government) or Title III (Public Accommodations) of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, As Amended | ADA.gov. Even sole practitioners are considered public accommodations, and so have the burden of making their goods and services accessible to individuals with disabilities. Decisions to not initiate or end a process can fairly or unfairly prompt participants to allege discrimination on the basis of disability, especially if they are based on the conflict resolver's assessment of the capacity or physical or mental health diagnosis of a participant.

determine prior to the conflict resolution process how they will communicate these boundaries if necessary.

B. Use Appropriate De-Escalation Techniques

Techniques that are already incorporated in many conflict resolution practices and routinely used by conflict resolvers can keep sessions from intensifying and help participants de-escalate if emotions start to heighten. De-escalation is an outcome and not any specific tool or tactic. It is the use of communication and other techniques to help reduce the intensity of a potentially violent situation and create an environment which allows a person to de-escalate themselves, while simultaneously maximizing the safety of the others in the vicinity.[15] Conflict resolvers can help many participants de-escalate themselves using the following strategies:

1. Separate the upset participant from the other participants, especially those who appear to be triggering them. Maintain a calm demeanor and project control over the situation while smoothly moving participants to different rooms.

2. Listen empathetically, giving the person your full attention. Use active listening, paraphrasing, mirroring, emotional labeling, and summary, as appropriate.

3. Do not give information or suggestions until the person has had an opportunity to explain their concerns and perspectives.

4. Communicate from a position of safety being mindful that the person could become violent. If possible, keep a barrier, such as a table or desk, between yourself and the upset person. Pay attention to their body language as well as to what they are saying. Speak with them privately, but in a location with access to other people, panic buttons, telephones, and/or other protections.

5. Avoid the following commonly used statements and approaches that are not helpful and may even cause a person to escalate further:
   - "Calm down" or "Relax." These statements do not encourage anyone to calm down, and to the contrary, they tend to be dismissive, counterproductive and make the person feel disrespected.
   - "I understand how you feel" or "I know what you are going through." No one can fully know how a situation impacts another person or know how they feel, especially someone they do not know well.

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[15] For example, see De-Escalation: How You Can Help Defuse Potentially Violent Situations De-escalation techniques are not appropriate in situations where violence has occurred. Conflict resolvers should implement their safety plan protocols if a party is violent or threatening others with a weapon.

- "Things could be worse" or "at least . . ." The person is upset with the current situation. Describing more catastrophic scenarios could be interpreted as minimizing their current situation."

VI. Translating Intuition and "Gut Feelings" to Appropriate Action

Our instincts, intuition, and "gut feelings" can help us avoid or deal with potentially dangerous situations. There is value in validating our instincts and respecting intuition, especially when there is a need for a quick decision or there is no data to rely on. At the same time, "gut feelings" can also lead to problems including acting impulsively, causing unnecessary emotional escalation, and acting in biased manners due to unconscious, systemic, and implicit biases that influence our assumptions and affect our reactions. Intuition can also be informed by unacknowledged or unprocessed trauma.

Being able to discern what is an instinct, intuition or "gut feelings" that should not be ignored and what is a response informed by an implicit bias or trauma can help a conflict resolver create a bias-resistant safety plan. This work needs to be done in advance of a challenging situation, when quick action is not needed, and the conflict resolver has time to analyze their initial reactions.

The following are some techniques a conflict resolver can use in analyzing their instincts, intuitions and "gut feelings."

A. Notice Feelings
Notice when you are responding to feelings or intuitions versus considered processes. Stay with what you feel in your body and with what emotion the feeling or intuition is connected. Consider where else have you experienced this. Is this something directly related to the parties, or something older – independent from them?

B. Distinguish Feelings from Responsibilities
Label your feelings and compare them to your professional role and fair procedures. Discern your usual responses and their source. Do not focus on self-judgment; just allow yourself the clarity of the moment with a recognition that we all have impulses, biases, and idiosyncrasies.

C. If Possible, Follow Fair Procedures
Consider when you can defer to your preparation, and unbiased procedures, to pursue a path of impartial, consistent responses to challenging behaviors. Channel your intuition to be reflected within your policy-driven actions. Strive for a 'both and' outlook that honors your intuition and your bias-resistant planning.

D. Acknowledge When Emotions Take Over
If you become very emotional or are otherwise unable to follow your procedures in some situations, be open to the possibility that this is a situation where you are following your feelings and implicit biases, and your "gut feelings" may be biased. Try to identify the trigger for these "gut feelings."   Reflect if they are really about this current situation or if you are responding to something unrelated to the participants, but rather about your own family history or past

traumatic experiences. Take measures to address the potential inequities that arise from your emotional reactions.

This type of analysis can help a conflict resolver determine when to trust intuition, instincts and "gut feelings" and when to realize that these reactions might be triggered by their own implicit biases or past trauma and not be related to the situation in the conflict resolution process.

After the session, the conflict resolver should reflect alone or with a mentor on the approaches that they took to deepen their understanding of their own triggers and reactions and to improve for the next conflict resolution situation.

VII. Conclusion

Every conflict resolver has their own personal philosophy of safety best practices, their own lived experiences, and their own "gut feelings." This guidance encourages all conflict resolvers to consider the following core principles as they design their own safety systems:

1. Advance planning is absolutely necessary and should include general protocols and plans to respond to challenging incidents as they arise. Planning allows conflict resolvers to be comfortable, prepared, and effective in addressing safety challenges that may occur and prevent them from acting on bias.

2. Respond to observed behaviors instead of profiling individual people, and focus on procedurally fair, consistent ways to do that to mitigate your biases.

3. Trust your instincts while also being responsible and aware that they can lead to biased actions. When possible, channel your "gut feelings" through a fair procedure.

4. There is no perfect plan or completely unbiased person. Conflict resolvers need to review their own practices and vet any guidance to ensure they are continuing to grow, learn, and improve.

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Appendix

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