

Welcome to Part 3 of Maintaining Effective Relations with your Supervisor for Graduate Students. This third module complements Part 2 - Green Zone Tools by allowing you to apply the tools introduced there so that you can consider how they might work for you in the future.

If you have not yet viewed Parts 1 and 2, please take the time to do so as the content of this module builds on what was learned in the earlier modules.

Before we begin, feel free to download and print off the Module 3 worksheet. Consider pausing this video to jot down your answers as we go through the module.

## Seek Understanding & Communicate Impact



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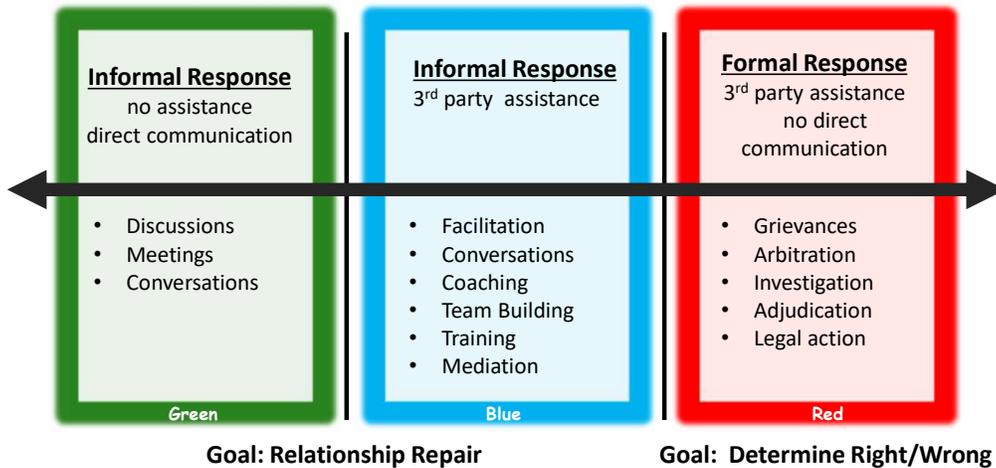
» CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE



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Remember that the two tools we are considering are Seeking Understanding & Communicating Impact. These tools can be used separately, or they can be used together as a communication power duo. If you are having trouble remembering what these tools are and how they might sound, feel free to go back and review view Part 2.

# Continuum of Conflict Management Processes



Adapted from: Moore, Christopher et. al. Effective Mediation.  
Boulder: CDR Associates, 1989.

For each scenario, you will be asked to consider where you would place it on the Continuum of Conflict Management processes. If you are having trouble remembering how to assess impact, feel free to go back and review Part 1. Also remember that the tools we are discussing in this module are intended for use in Green Zone scenarios.

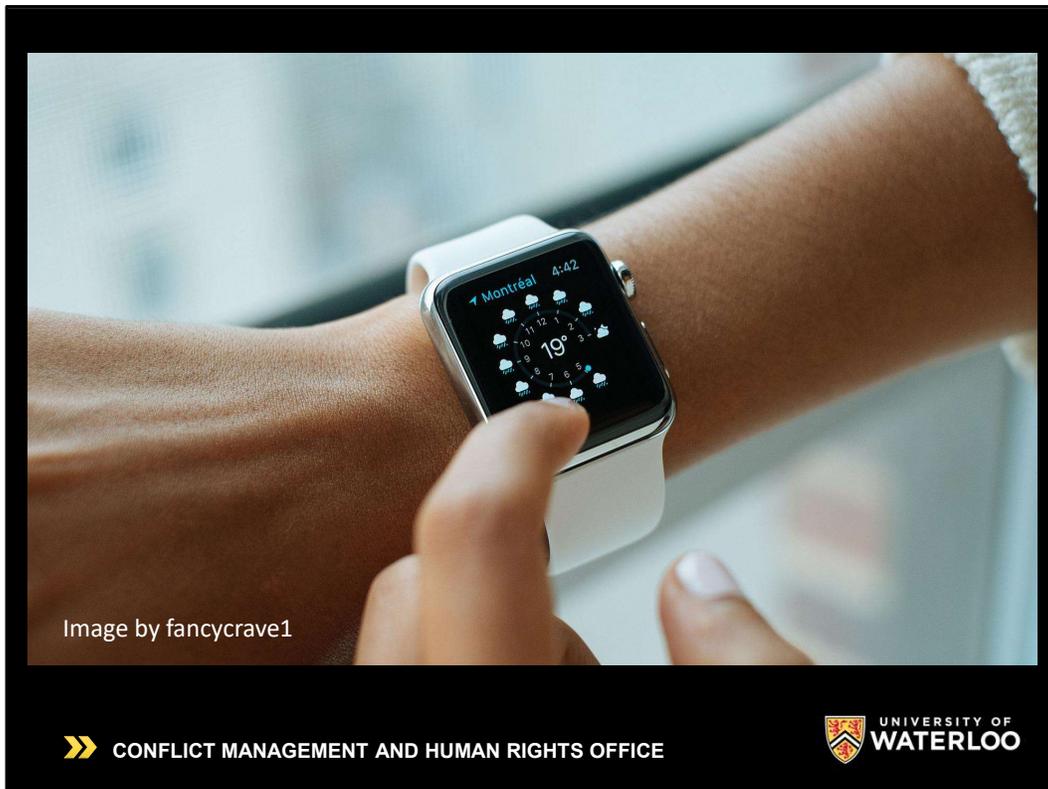
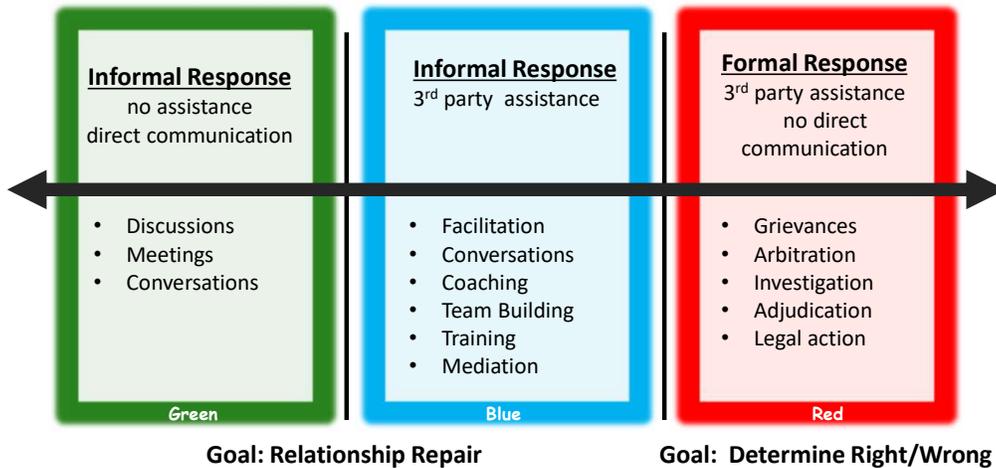


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Let's consider a scenario.

At Tania's very first team meeting in her new position, she had trouble finding the room and arrived late. Since then, her supervisor, Dr. Adams, has called her "Tardy Tania". Every time she hears this nickname it upsets her. Worse yet, he uses this nickname in front of others which is embarrassing and humiliating. She is not sure how to bring it up or if she should at all.

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If you were in Tania's situation, where would you place this on the Continuum of Conflict Management Processes? Would it be in the Green Zone? The Blue Zone or the Red Zone? If it is in the Blue or Red Zone, feel free to reach out to the Conflict Management and Human Rights Office for help and advice.

If it would be in the Green Zone, then consider how you would respond? Would you seek understanding, communicate impact, both or neither?

Take some time to jot down your thoughts on the worksheet.

### **Communicate Impact:**

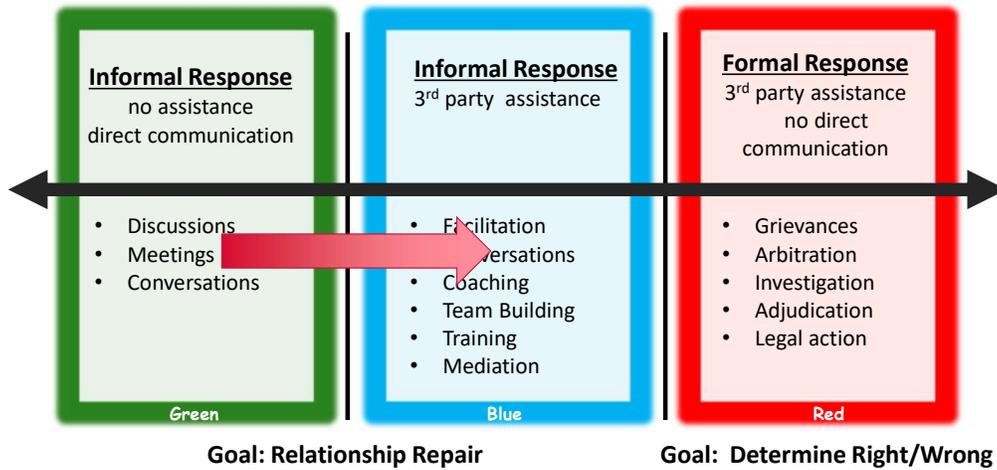
“Dr. Adams, I am sorry that I arrived late to the team meeting. I will make sure that it does not happen again. I wanted to let you know that I find it quite embarrassing to be referred to as ‘Tardy Tania’ in front of my colleagues. Could you please just call me Tania from now on?”

In this scenario, it could be very beneficial to communicate impact. Tania’s supervisor may have no idea how embarrassing Tania finds this nickname. He will only know if she tells him. That could sound like this:

“Dr. Adams, I am sorry that I arrived late to the team meeting. I will make sure that it does not happen again. I wanted to let you know that I find it quite embarrassing to be referred to as ‘Tardy Tania’ in front of my colleagues. Could you please just call me Tania from now on?”

It might feel awkward to address this situation and she might be tempted to just put up with the nickname but consider how that continuous embarrassment and humiliation would impact Tania in the long term. She may start to resent Dr. Adams and that could negatively impact all of their work in the future. This would be unfortunate when the issue could be addressed simply and easily if done right away. She would feel even sillier bringing it up a month or two later, so it is best to take action early on.

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What if Dr. Adams ignores this request? Well, that would mean that it is time to reassess the situation. If Tania has communicated impact and Dr. Adams intentionally continues to do something that she has told him is having a negative impact, it is time to seek help. Consider setting up an appointment with staff in the Conflict Management and Human Rights Office.

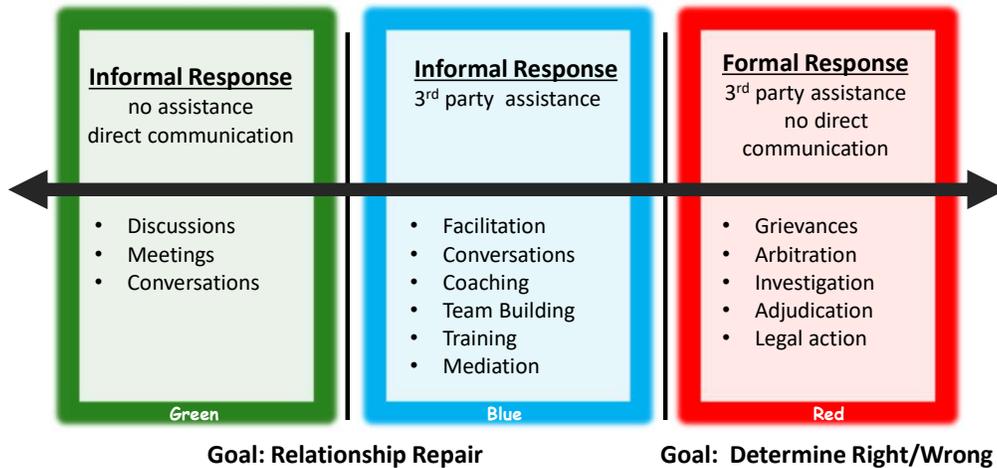


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Now, let's consider Jo's situation.

Jo is a graduate student in the lab of Dr. Anna Bartholemew. So far, Jo's time working for Dr. Bartholemew has gone well. Yesterday, while they were discussing plans to attend and present at an upcoming conference, Jo was concerned when Dr. Bartholemew seemed put off by a comment that they made. Jo was not sure what to say at the time, so they said nothing. All day today, Dr. Bartholemew has seemed a bit distant, and Jo is concerned that she may have been offended by the comment or may have misinterpreted it. Jo is worried that if they say something, it might seem like they are making a big deal about nothing at all, so they are not sure what to do.

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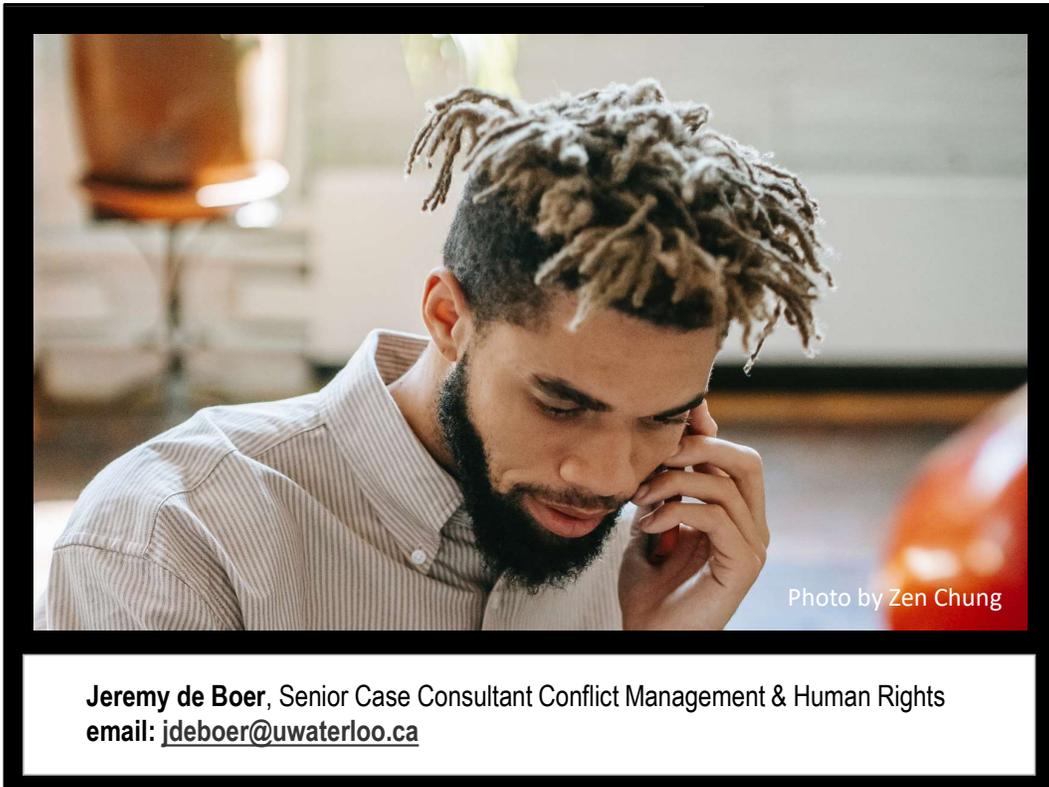
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If you were in Jo's situation, where would you place this on the Continuum of Conflict Management processes? Would it be in the Green Zone? If you answered "no", who could you reach out to for advice and assistance?

If you answered "yes", how might you respond? Would you seek understanding, communicate impact, both, or neither? Would you do something else completely?

Take some time to jot down your thoughts on the worksheet.



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Photo by Zen Chung: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/a-man-talking-on-the-phone-while-taking-notes-5749154/>

If you decided that this was not a Green Zone scenario, and that you needed help and advice prior to responding to this situation, you could connect with Jeremy de Boer in the Conflict Management and Human Rights Office. He could help you consider what options are available to you.

**Communicate Impact (in reverse):**

“Dr. Bartholemew, I’m concerned that the comment I made yesterday may have offended or upset you. Is that the case?”

**Seek Understanding:**

“I would appreciate hearing more about how the comment offended you. It’s important to me to understand so that it doesn’t happen again.”

Jo might be tempted to do nothing in this situation in hopes that it will just go away, but they can save themselves some worry and turmoil by simply assessing how their words impacted the other person.

That could sound like this: “Dr. Bartholemew, I’m concerned that the comment I made yesterday may have offended or upset you”. Is that the case?

If Dr. Bartholemew answers “yes”, but does not explain, they could follow up by seeking understanding. That might sound like this: “I would appreciate hearing more about how the comment offended you. It’s important to me to understand so that it doesn’t happen again.”

By addressing this early Jo has an opportunity to prevent future further misunderstandings.

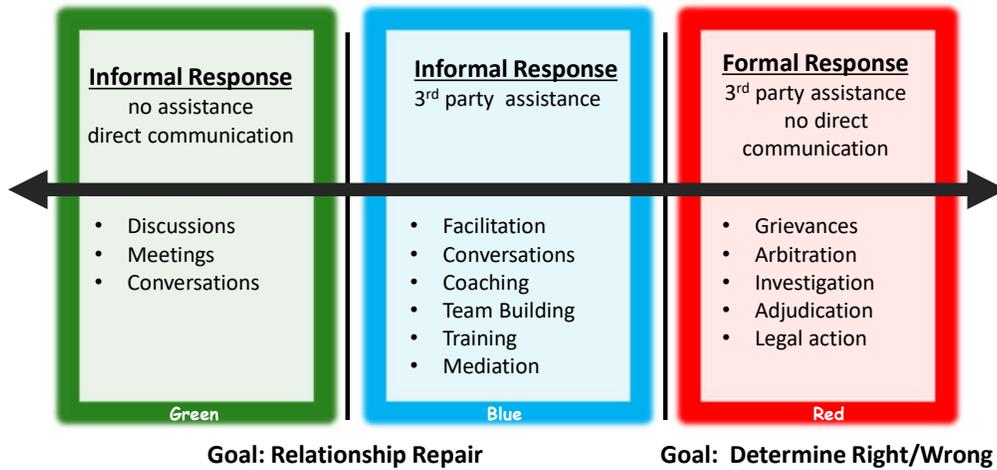


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Finally, let's consider Pat's situation:

Pat is a graduate student who works with Dr. Matthias Pinaris. Pat and Dr. Pinaris have been working together for months on a research project that Pat is very excited about. Today, at a virtual departmental meeting, when Dr. Pinaris was discussing the work, he presented it as if it were all his own work and did not acknowledge the role that Pat had played. Pat is concerned and wants to ensure their contribution will be acknowledged moving forward. Pat did not want to put Dr. Pinaris on the spot during the meeting but is not sure how to bring this up now.

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If you were in Pat's situation, where would you place this on the Continuum of Conflict Management Processes? Would it be in the Green Zone? The Blue Zone or the Red Zone?

If it would be in the Green Zone, then consider how you would respond. Take some time to jot down your thoughts on the worksheet.

### **Communicate Impact:**

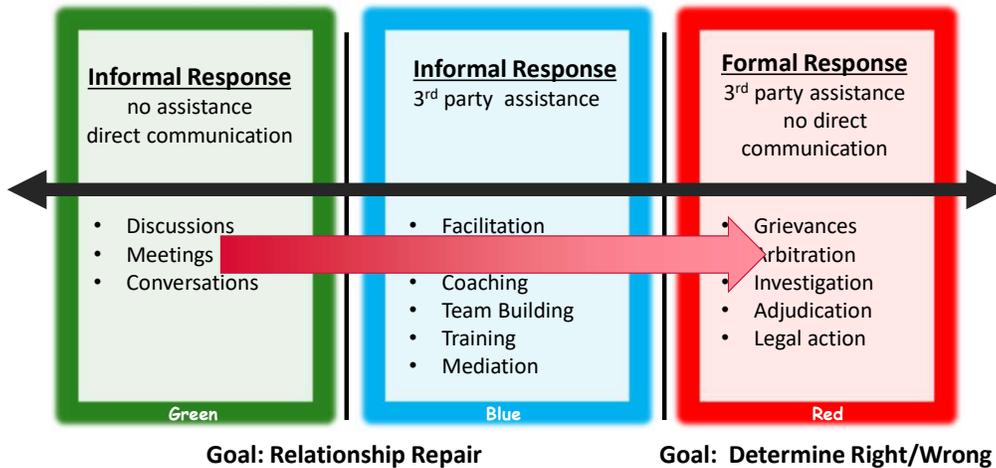
“Dr. Pinaris, I was a little disappointed that I did not get to share in today's meeting about the role I played in this project. I wonder if there might be an opportunity in the future for me to do so?”

In a situation like this, it would be easy for Pat to make assumptions about Dr. Pinaras' motives. Those assumptions could lead Pat to then begin to view all of Dr. Pinaras' future words and action through a lens of mistrust and suspicion.

Pat could take steps to resolve the situation early by communicating impact. That could sound like this:

“Dr. Pinaris, I was a little disappointed that I did not get to share in today's meeting about the role I played in this project. I wonder if there might be an opportunity in the future for me to do so.”

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Remember that any of these situations may change over time. Just because you have determined that a situation belongs in the Green Zone initially does not mean that it will stay there. As you seek understanding or communicate impact, the other person may respond in a way that pushes the situation down the continuum from the Green Zone to the Blue Zone and even into the Red Zone.

That's when it is important to reassess the situation and adjust your response as needed. If the situation begins to impact you more severely or if you believe it is having a significantly negative impact on the other person, seek help.



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Photo by Olya Kobruseva: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/question-marks-on-paper-crafts-5428836/>

If you have any questions or concerns or if you would like to access any of the services offered by our office, contact Jeremy de Boer.

In our next module we will be discussing Blue Zone strategies.