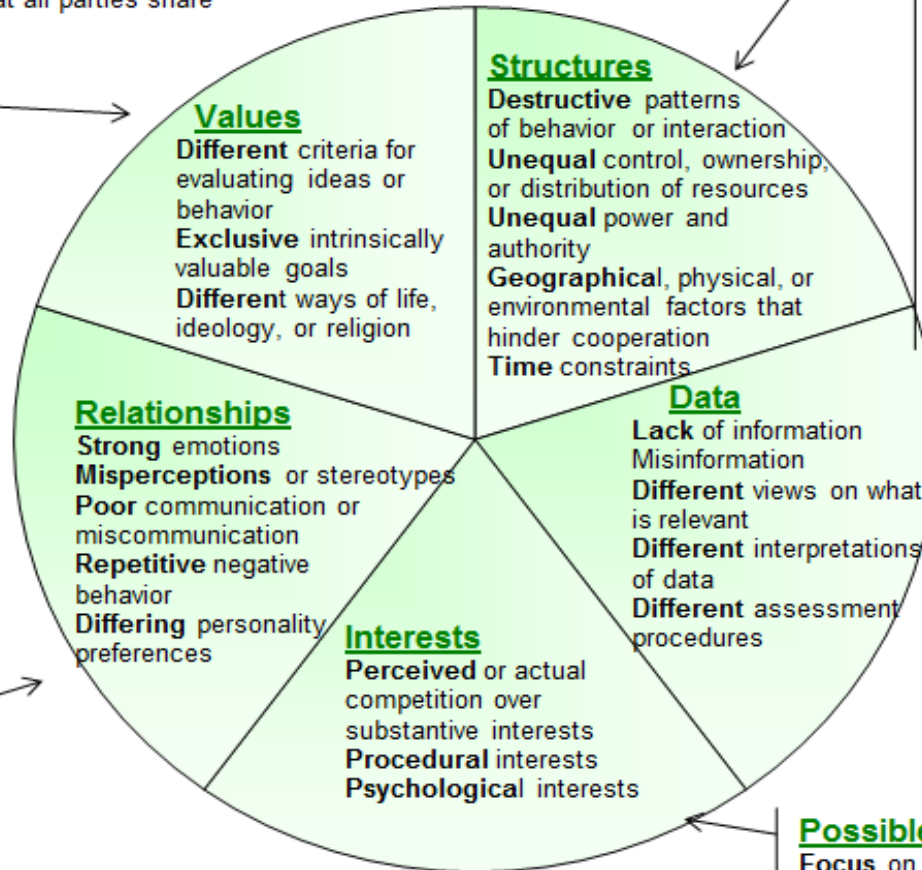# Circle of Conflict: Causes and Possible Interventions

Causes of Conflict

Value-Related Interventions
Avoid defining problem in terms of value
Allow parties to agree and to disagree
Create spheres of influence in which one set of values dominates
Search for superordinate goal that all parties share

Structural Interventions
Clearly define or change roles
Replace destructive behavior patterns
Reallocate ownership or control of resources
Establish a fair and mutually acceptable decision making process
Change negotiation process from positional to interest-based bargaining
Modify means of influence used by parties (less coercion, more persuasion)
Change physical and environmental relationship of parties (closeness and distance)
Modify external pressures on parties
Change time constraints (more or less time)

Relationship Interventions
Control expression of emotions through precedure, ground rules, caucuses, etc.
Promote expression of emotions by legitimizing feelings and providing a process
Clarify perceptions and build positive perceptions
Improve quality and quantity of communication
Block negative repetitive behavior by changing structure
Encourage positive problem-solving attitudes
Understand personality preferences

Values
Different criteria for evaluating ideas or behavior
Exclusive intrinsically valuable goals
Different ways of life, ideology, or religion

Structures
Destructive patterns of behavior or interaction
Unequal control, ownership, or distribution of resources
Unequal power and authority
Geographical, physical, or environmental factors that hinder cooperation
Time constraints

Relationships
Strong emotions
Misperceptions or stereotypes
Poor communication or miscommunication
Repetitive negative behavior
Differing personality preferences

Interests
Perceived or actual competition over substantive interests
Procedural interests
Psychological interests

Data
Lack of information Misinformation
Different views on what is relevant
Different interpretations of data
Different assessment procedures

Data Interventions
Reach agreement on what data are important
Agree on process to collect data
Develop common criteria to assess data
Use third-party experts to gain outside opinion or break

Possible Interest-based Interventions
Focus on interests, not positions
Look for objective criteria
Develop integrative solutions that address needs of all parties
Search for ways to expand options or resources
Develop trade-offs to satisfy interests of different strengths

Adapted from: Moore, D.W. 1996. **The Mediation Process**, 2nd Edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.