

# Not Just for the Patrons: Conflict Resolution

Tammy M. Hines

Head of Collections & Information Services

Longwood University

# What is conflict resolution:

Listening, responding, and resolving differences

Conflict

When you hear this word what comes to mind?

Or should I ask who?

Conflict is unavoidable...It is part of Life.

You...

- Each day, I am guessing you start out with clean clothes/Happy attitude.
  - Things happen....
    - Think of conflict like dirty clothes

# Conflict is like Laundry



- Always around
- Wash it, dry it, and put it away
- Problem solved
- Pile it up
- It gets bigger and it stinks
- Leave it long enough, it will mold and smell
- Then it starts to spread

# Costs of conflict in the workplace:

- 42% of manager's time
- Lost revenue due to unproductivity
- Excessive employer turnover
- 65% of performance problems
- High levels of absenteeism
- "Presenteeism" employee present but not productive
- Sabotaging of processes and management

(Shearson, p. 6-7)

# Personal costs of conflict in the workplace

- Morale-You no longer like to come to work
- Decreased customer service-Your unhappiness shows
- Reputation of individuals –You have to talk to someone or People notice
- Health—Stress/ You spend at least 8 hours in an unhappy environment
- Personal Peacefulness---Stress/ Conflict follows you or replays in your mind
- Loss of
  - Sleep
  - Friendships
  - Trust

(Scott, p. 63-4)

# What causes conflict:

- Communication (and miscommunication)
- Employee attitudes
- Honesty
- Insubordination
- Treatment of others
- Work Habits

(Scott, p.6)





Does this sound familiar to you:

- I didn't get as much done today as I usually do because I don't feel well.
- He didn't answer my email because he was too busy on Facebook.
- I am having a rough week. I will complete this next week.
- John's report was due two days ago. He just can't meet a deadline.
- I can't get X done because I have too much on my plate.
- She spends a lot of time talking. She must not have anything to do.

Don't believe everything you think....

- **We justify if we feel we are lacking.**
- **We assume if we see someone doing less than we would expect that it is a character flaw.**

**For ourselves it is circumstance, for others it is character. (Webb, p. 132)**

- “We have all experienced times in our lives when we lacked the skills needed to communicate honestly and empathically with others.
- “We have all been aggressive, judgmental, and hypercritical or passive, apathetic, and defensive.”
- “Separate what matters from what is in the way” ....Unresolved conflicts block us from acting intelligently, strategically or with commitment 135-6

(Cloke, p. 3)

# Stumbling blocks for conflict resolution

- Fear
- Blame
- Assumptions
- Habits....Let's discuss habits

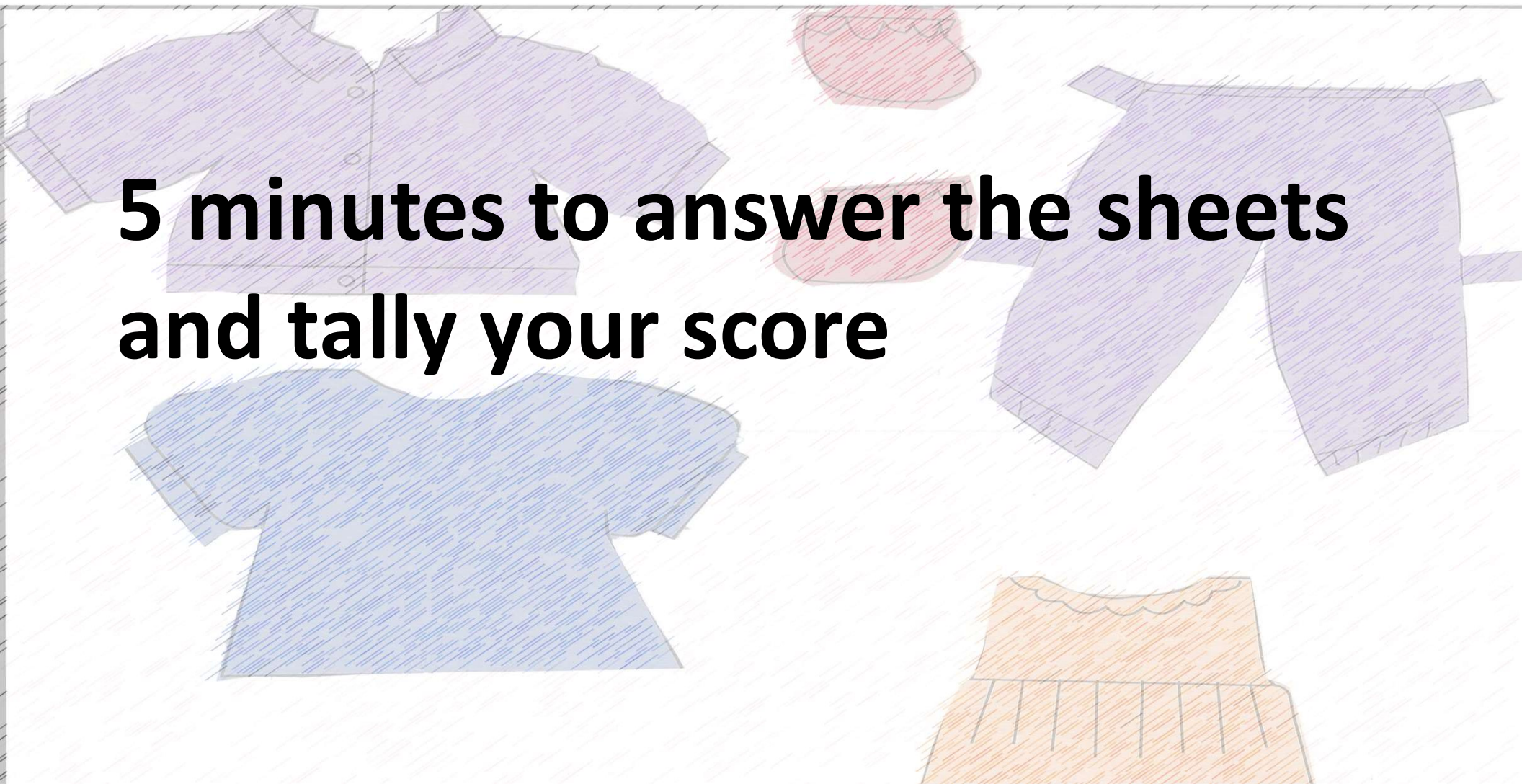
(Shearouse, p. 4)

## Conflict Management:

- We all learned at a young age how to deal with conflict....
  - Who did we learn from?
    - What was the style?
      - Did it work? Does it still work?
      - Test time....



**5 minutes to answer the sheets  
and tally your score**



# Your style:

- **Compromising:**

You will try to find the middle ground.

You will back off of some issues to gain in other issues.

- **Competing:**

You will achieve your goals at all costs and quickly.

You insist that others let you have your way regardless.

- **Avoiding:**

You will give up your goals to maintain relationships.

You will hide from or ignore conflict.



- Giving-In:

You will give up your goals to allow others to achieve their goals.

The goal is not important but the relationship with others is of high importance.

- Collaborating:

You want to meet the needs of all people involved.

You are assertive but willing to cooperate to get the best solution for all.

(Leutenberg, p. 43-49)

So, If conflict resolution is a combination of:

- Personality
- Habit
- Differences
- Life

HOW can we tackle it successfully?

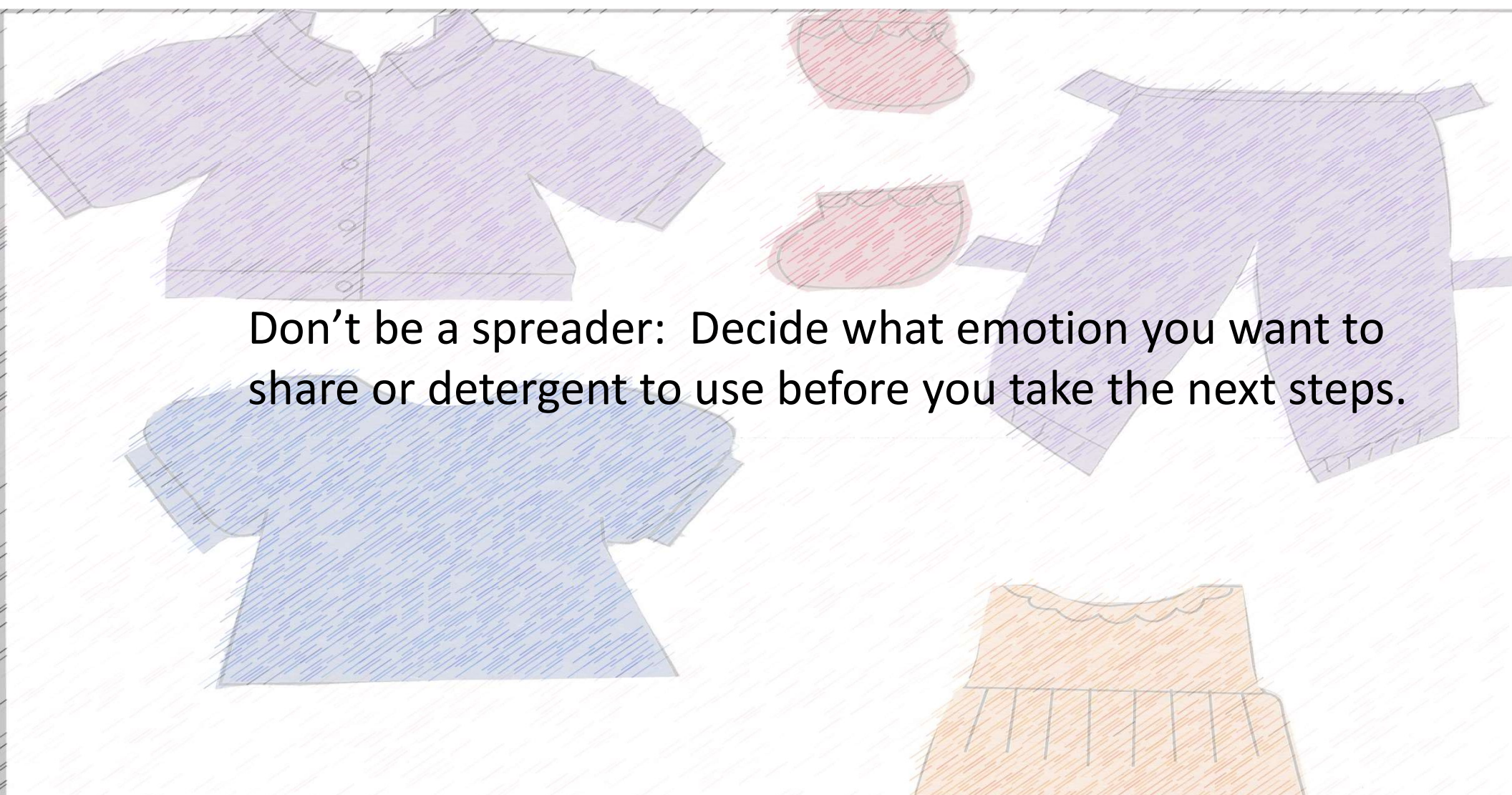
# Acknowledge---Admit your part/your dirt

- Did you stir the pot?
    - Not communicate clearly
    - Make an assumption
    - Bring up topics in a public forum that makes people uncomfortable
    - Pit people against each other
    - Ask others to critique co-workers
    - Use sarcasm to make a point
    - Use belittling or shaming language
    - Allow bad behaviors to become the norm
    - Ignore tension
    - Play favorites
- (Scott, 46)

OR.... Are you the hard to get out Dirt?

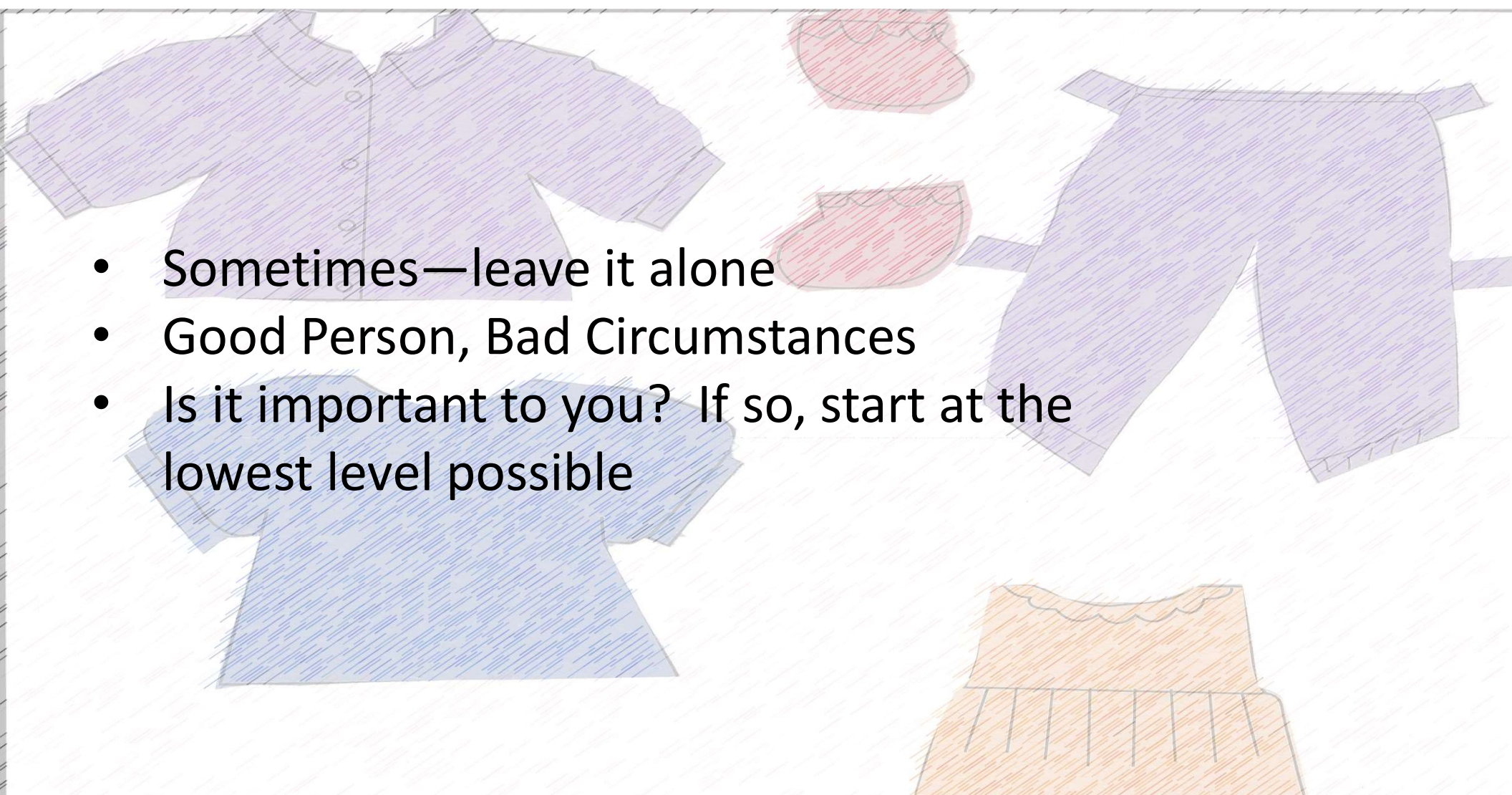
- Are you the member of a clique or the negative group
- Bullying someone you or others don't like
- Gossiping or not stopping it....
- Build armies for your side of an issue

(Scott, 40)



Don't be a spreader: Decide what emotion you want to share or detergent to use before you take the next steps.



- 
- Sometimes—leave it alone
  - Good Person, Bad Circumstances
  - Is it important to you? If so, start at the lowest level possible

Don't believe everything you think....

# Step back and Reset: CONSIDER/SORT

- Don't believe everything you think –Clear Facts or CLEAN Water only
- How to get to a win/win
  - Agree on your differences
- Your own baggage or DIRT
- Focus on Needs, not positions
- Possible Solutions
  - What are our options
  - A compromise I could accept is \_\_\_\_\_
- Consider where you meet or talk

(Webb, p. 151)



# Find a common ground ---LISTEN/CYCLE

- Pick the ???/Detergent for your situation
  - What is your understanding of the situation?
  - What is most important to you in this situation?
  - Why is it important?
  - What do you think the outcome might look like?
  - What are the obstacles to reaching that outcome?
  - What would you like to see happen now?

(Caspersen, p. 7)

# Time or Softener

- Time can be the best conflict resolution
  - Time allows you to cool down and provide an opportunity for a different conversation
  - Allows people to change their minds
  - Allows wounds to heal
  - Allows an apology to sink in and allows us to forgive
  - Allows us to save face
  - Allows us to check to make sure solutions are possible (Shearouse, 182)
- Allows you to determine if the solution is working



**Positive Outcomes of Conflict or Put a New Spin on it:**

- Growth
- Potential
- Progress
- New energy
- Learning....

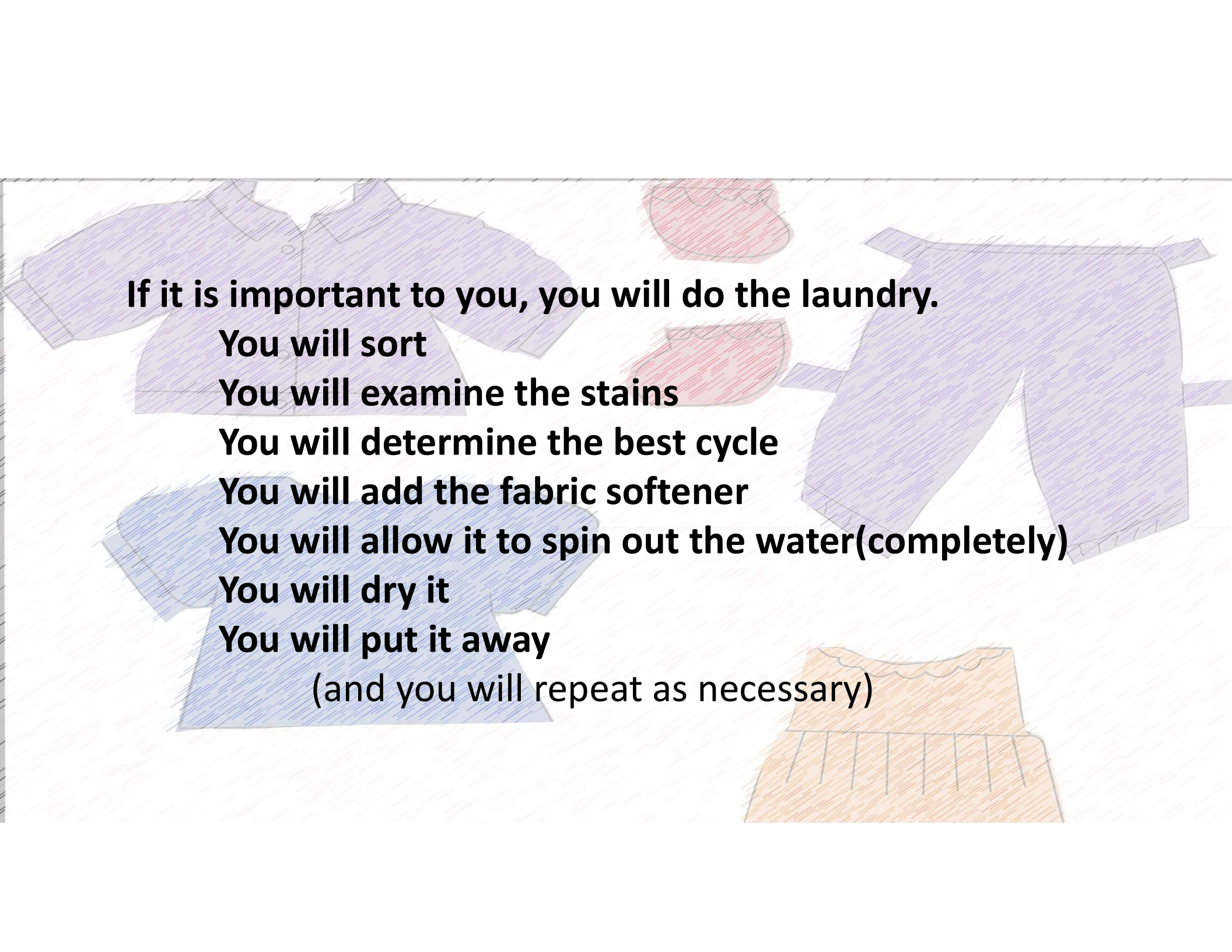
Others?

# Benefits of Conflict

- Conflict can clarify
  - clarify who you are
  - clarify what you value
  - clarify what you care about
  - Identify potential problems in your life
  - Teach you to be creative in your problem solving
  - Help you express your feelings
  - Enhance your relationships
  - Highlight things that you need to change in your life

Leutenberg and Liptak, 27-28





**If it is important to you, you will do the laundry.**

**You will sort**

**You will examine the stains**

**You will determine the best cycle**

**You will add the fabric softener**

**You will allow it to spin out the water(completely)**

**You will dry it**

**You will put it away**

**(and you will repeat as necessary)**



**If the stains can't be removed or the conflict resolved, buy new clothes.**



# Five things you can control when in an unresolved conflict

- Your plan for the future: consider what is important to you and follow a strategy for a time that feels comfortable.
- Your perspective: instead of staying wrapped up in a conflict, ask yourself if you can find a learning opportunity in the situation or mindfully examine the situation to determine if it important to you
- Your responses: you can't control someone else's actions, thoughts or feelings. You can control your reaction to what is happening—look for ways to respond that won't escalate your anxiety or anger
- Your investment: Reduce your investment in the drama. Spend less time thinking about it, talking about it and engaging in it
- Your role in the conflict: Step outside your thoughts and feelings and consider how your actions and reactions look to others. Honestly, identify your role in the conflict---are you willing to change (Scott)

## References:

- Caspersen, D. (2010). *Changing the conversation*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Leutenberg, E. & Liptak, J. (2010). *The Conflict management skills workbook*. Minneapolis, MN: Whole Person.
- Scott, V. (2015). *Workplace conflict resolution for dummies*. Singapore: Wiley.
- Shearson, S. (2011). *Conflict 101*. New York, NY: American Management Association.
- Webb, C. (2016). *How to have a good day*. New York, NY: Crown.





[hinestm@longwood.edu](mailto:hinestm@longwood.edu)

**Tammy Hines**

**Thank you.**