



IDENTITY-BASED CONFLICTS

THE DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTER

ADMINISTERED BY:

BERKSHIRE COUNTY
REGIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

Agenda

- Defining Identity
- Activity: Mapping Your Own Identity
 - *Identity Quakes*
 - *Grounding Your Identity*
- Identity-Based Conflicts
- Identity in your work

Opening Activity

How would you define the term **identity**?



Opening Activity

How would you define the term **identity**?

■ Personal Identity:

- *Develops over the course of your life*
- *Includes things you have no control over (where you grew up, color of your skin)*
- *Choices you make in life, how you spend your time, what you believe*
- *Demonstrate your personal identity outwardly through clothes you wear and how you interact with others*
- *You may also keep some elements of your personal identity private*

Activity

- Begin thinking about what contributes to who you are - Things you do that define YOU!

Mapping Your Identity

- Roles (in society)
- People or groups you are connected to
- Ethnic/racial/national/geographic/cultural/class/sexual orientation
- What is really important for you to be seen as being “Good at”
- Values/cherished beliefs

Questions to think about:

- How do you want to be seen?
- How do you worry you might be seen?
- What's the most important to who you are?



Group Affiliations

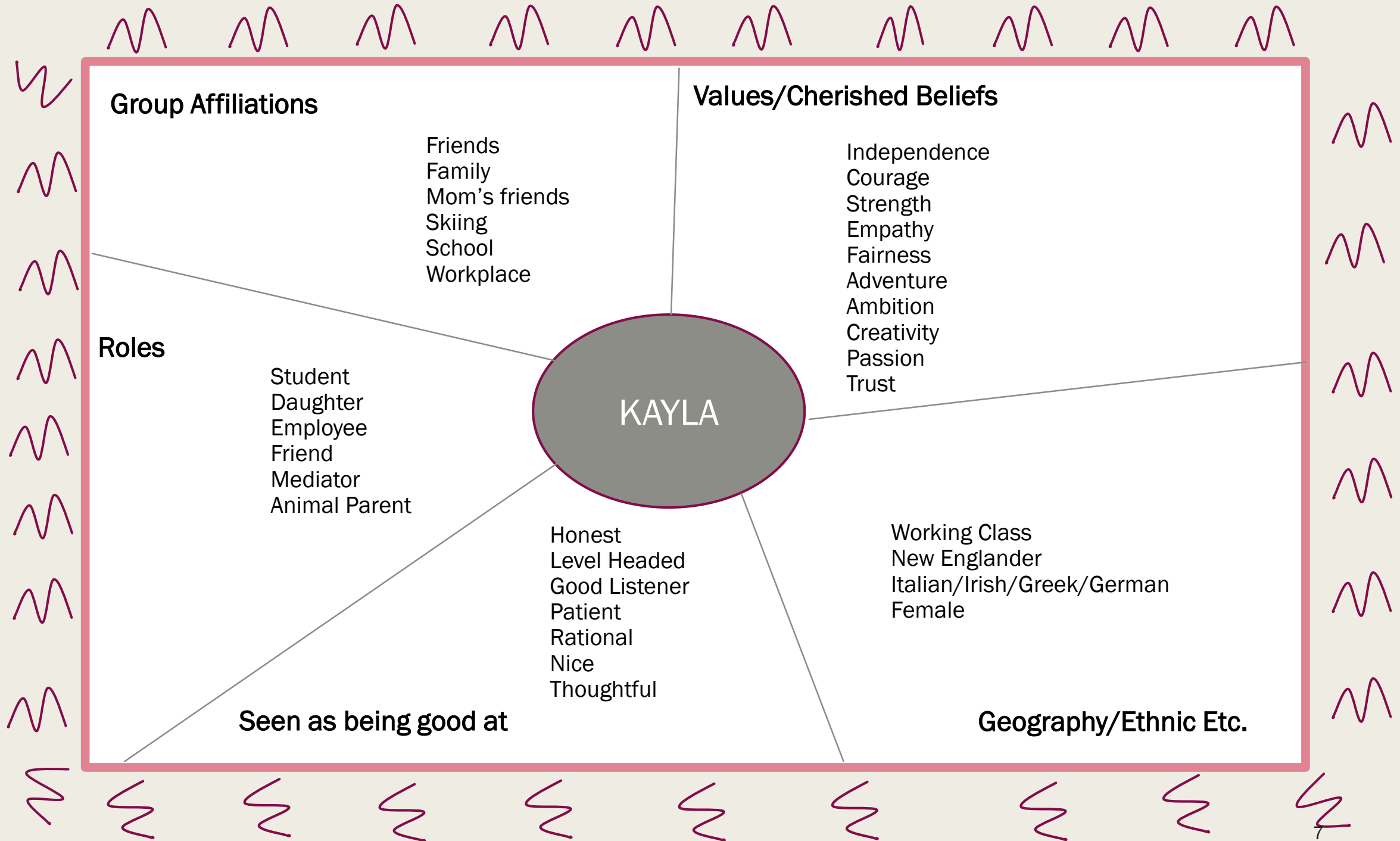
Values/Cherished Beliefs

NAME

Geography/Ethnic Etc.

Seen as being good at

Roles



Activity

- Think of a time when someone said something about your identity (pointed out something in your map) in a negative way
 - *For example: You pride yourself on being a good listener and your friend said “You aren’t hearing anything I’m saying. You’re a terrible listener!”*
 - *Write down*
 - What was going through your mind
 - How your body felt
 - Anything else you can remember about that moment

What is an Identity Quake?

- Conversations that have the potential to disrupt our sense of who we are in the world
- Conversations like this pose a threat to our identity
- Can cause an emotional or physical response- anxiety, anger for example
- An identity quake offers valuable opportunity for self-reflection

Takeaway: What we are experiencing in a conflict is an interaction with ourselves. We have to look at that interaction and try to learn from it.

Identity Quakes

- *Am I competent?*
- *Am I a good person?*
- *Am I worthy of love?*



GROUNDING YOUR IDENTITY

Grounding Your Identity

Become Aware of Your Identity Issues

- Everyone has their own particular sensitivities.
- To be aware of yours, observe whether there are patterns to what trends knock you off balance and ask why.
 - What about your identity feels at risk?
 - What does this mean to you?
 - How would it feel if what you fear were true?

Grounding Your Identity

Complexify Your Identity

A self-image that allows for complexity is healthy and robust; it provides a sturdy foundation on which to stand.

- Once you've identified which aspects of your identity are most important, you can complexify your self-image.
- Moves away from “I am perfect” or “I am worthless”
 - Gets a clear picture about what is true about you
 - With everyone there is a mix between good and bad, noble and not noble- embracing both sides
 - No one is always anything
- We don't always respond as competently or compassionately as we'd like.
 - You can feel good about many of your actions or choices and regretful about others
 - life is too complex to feel otherwise

Grounding Your Identity

- **Acknowledge that you will make mistakes**
 - We are reliably imperfect around things important to us.
 - If you are busy with a “no mistakes, no failures” identity, you won’t be able to engage in a meaningful learning conversation.
- **Your intentions are complex**
 - Think if your intentions are purely positive and be honest with the complexity of your motivations.
- **You’ve contributed to the problem**
 - Take responsibility for what you’ve contributed – remember this isn’t all or nothing, you are still competent.

Identity and Conflict

What does identity have to do with the work you do?

Identity-Based Conflicts for RSCs

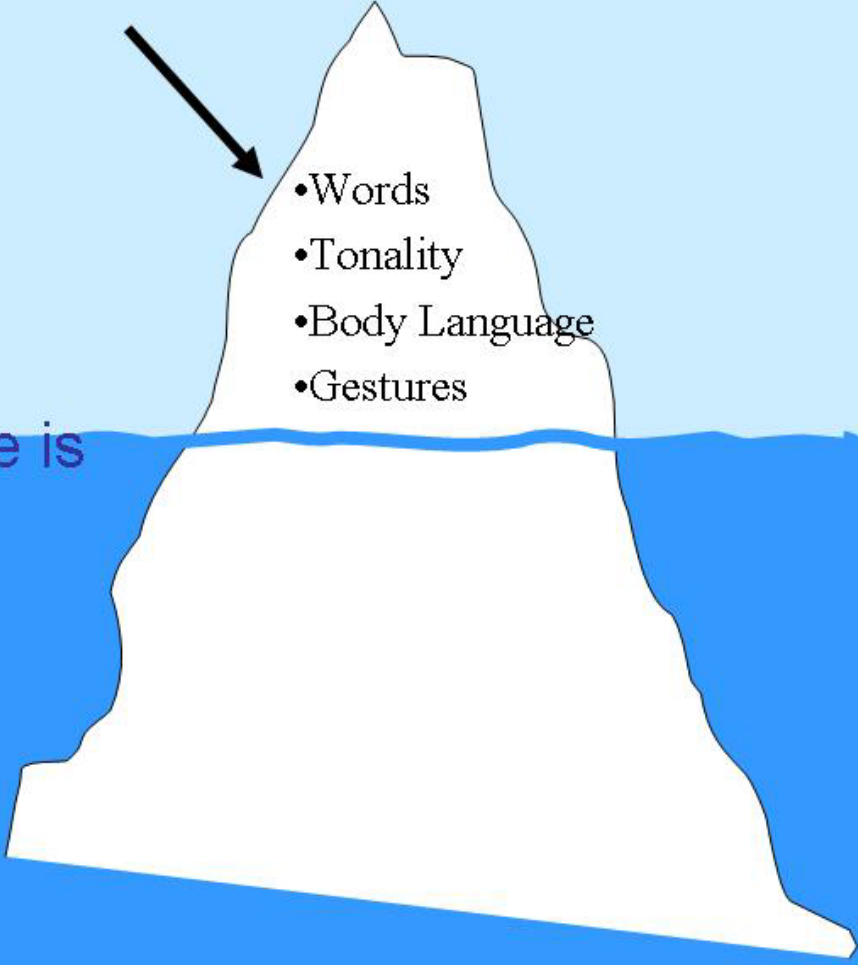
What you can do as an RSC to help with identity quakes when they are happening to parties?



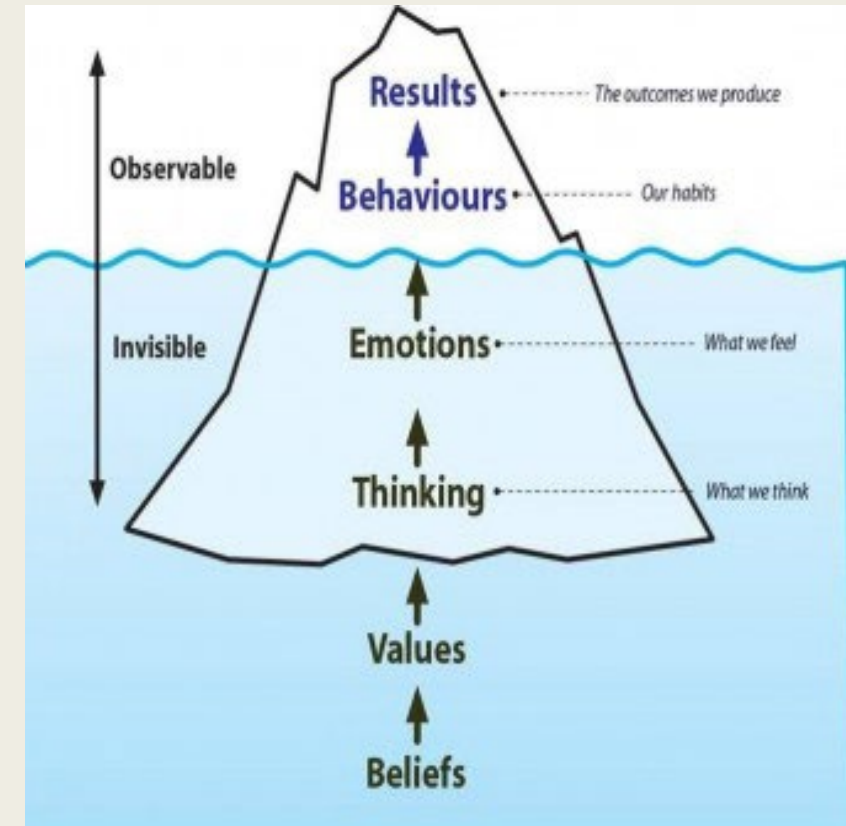
Identity-Based Conflict Support

- Understand the identity issue for each party
 - Listen to understand how the conflict impacts their self-image, self-esteem, future, and well being
 - Reframe
- Tend to what is in front of you
- Complexify their identity
 - Acknowledge the piece of identity that is important to them **and** also acknowledge what's happened (Adopt the And Stance)

What you see

- 
- An iceberg floating in blue water. The tip of the iceberg is above the water line, and the rest is submerged. An arrow points from the text 'What you see' to the tip of the iceberg.
- Words
 - Tonality
 - Body Language
 - Gestures

- Deep Structure is**
- Beliefs
 - Values
 - Biases
 - Prejudices
 - Experiences
 - Fears
 - Dreams
 - Feelings





Q&A

Works Cited

- Patton, Bruce, Douglas Stone, and Sheila Heen. *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*. London: Penguin, 2011. Print.
- Rothman, Jay. *From Identity-based Conflict to Identity-based Cooperation: ARIA Approach in Theory and Practice*. London: Springer, 2014. Print.