



# Addressing Conflict in Small Rural Programs

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ROBERT GOBBO MD, HOOD RIVER, OR

RANDY LONGENECKER MD, BRIDGEWATER, VA

THE RTT COLLABORATIVE ANNUAL MEETING APRIL 7, 2023, MISSOULA, MT



# Introductions

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**Bob Gobbo MD**



**Randy Longenecker MD**



**Rosie Hunter PhD**



# Objectives

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- ❖ Identify the natural and common experience of conflict
- ❖ Learn potential pitfalls and preventative strategies
- ❖ Understand initial simple steps to resolve, de-escalate, or even transform conflict
- ❖ Consider options when resolution does not come easily

# Format/Schedule

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- ❖ Bob will review the Survey Results – 10 minutes
- ❖ Rosie Hunter will speak via Video on Emotional Concepts of Conflict and provide resources – 5 minutes
- ❖ Randy will focus on the Concept of Conflict Transformation = 20 minutes
- ❖ Group Process: Share your experiences in small groups and then report back to the larger group – 20 minutes
- ❖ Bob will wrap it up with some individual practices and ask about next steps – 10 minutes



# Conflict Definitions

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Definition: Cambridge University Press: an active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles.

Conflicts—be it in teams, at work, or in our personal lives—occur in at least two basic forms: substantive and emotional

- Substantive conflict is a fundamental disagreement over ends or goals to be pursued and the means for their accomplishments
- Emotional conflict involves interpersonal difficulties that arise over feelings of anger, mistrust, dislike, fear, resentment, and the like.

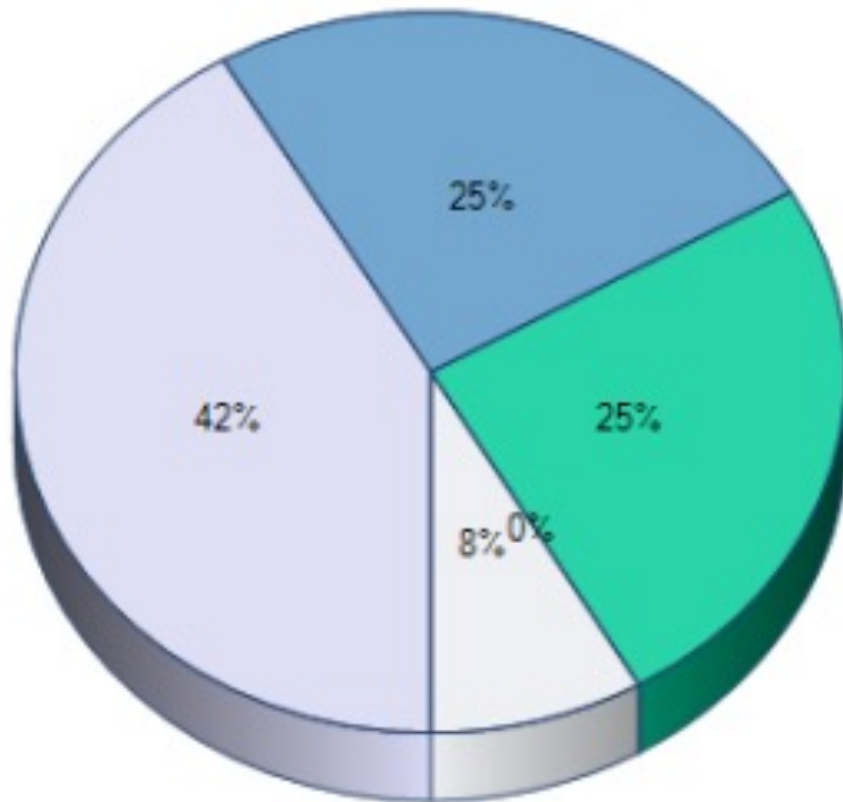







What did the survey say?



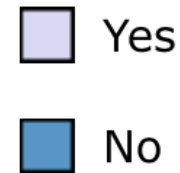
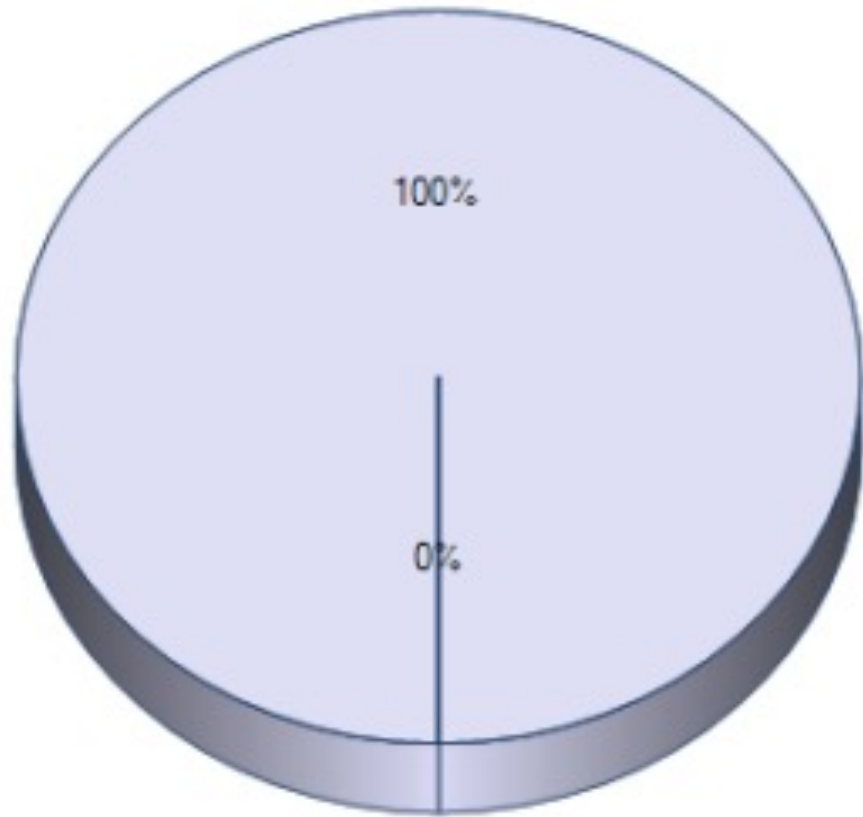
# 1. Please describe your role in the residency

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	Response Total	Response Percent
 Program Director	13	41%
 Faculty	9	28%
 Residency Coordinator	7	22%
 Resident	0	0%
 Other support staff	3	9%
Total Respondents		32
(skipped this question)		155

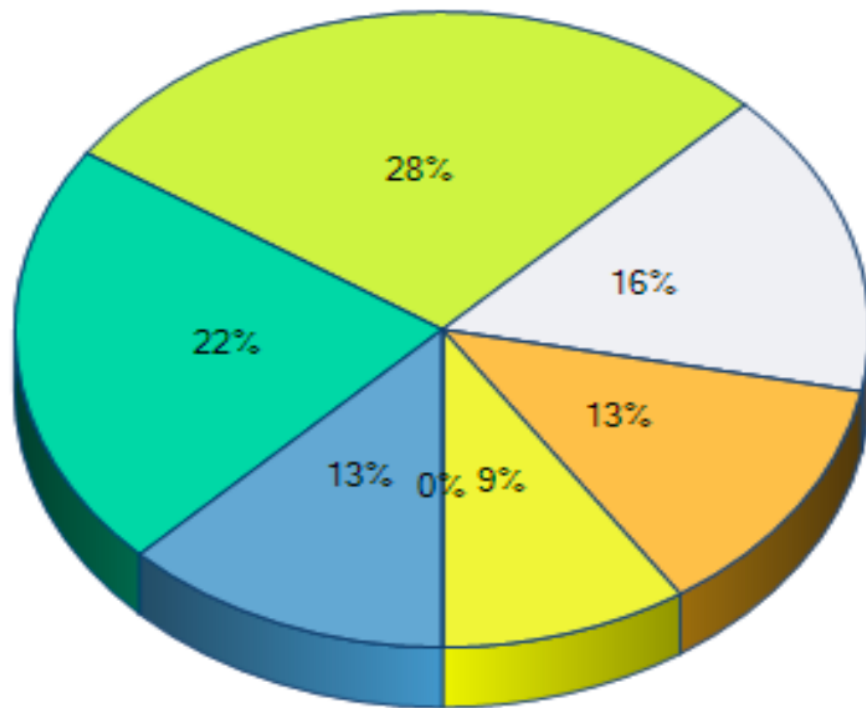
## 2. Has Personality or Interpersonal Conflict affected your residency program in the past 5 years?



Response	Response
Total	Percent
32	100%
0	0%
Total Respondents	
32	
(skipped this question)	
155	

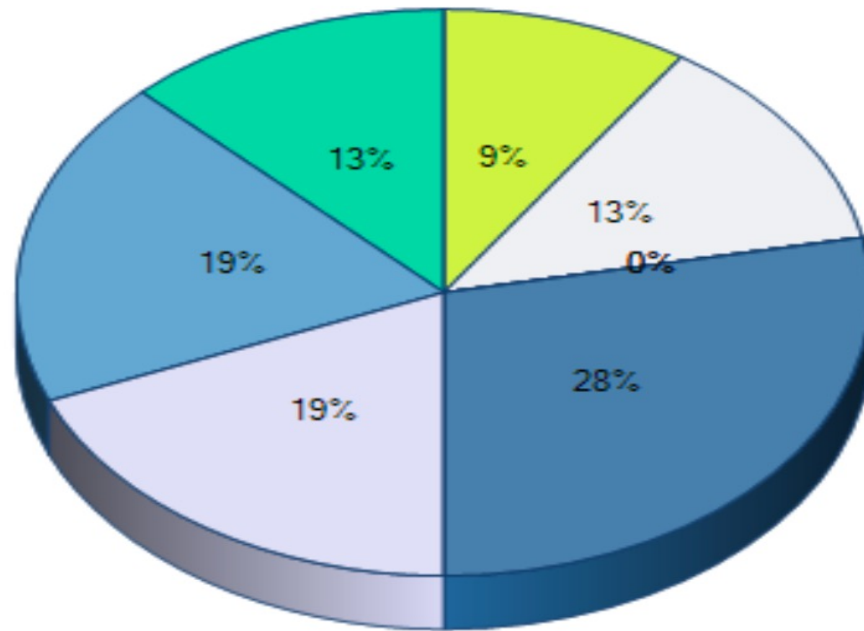


### 3. How Disruptive was the interpersonal conflict to the culture of the residency



	Response Total	Response Percent
1 - Not Disruptive	0	0%
2	4	12%
3	7	22%
4 - Somewhat Disruptive	9	28%
5	5	16%
6	4	12%
7 - Very Disruptive	3	9%
Total Respondents		32
(skipped this question)		155







## 4. Who were the individuals involved in the most recent interpersonal conflict?



	Response Total	Response Percent
Resident & Faculty	6	19%
Resident & Resident	6	19%
Faculty & Program Director	4	12%
Resident & Program Director or APD	3	9%
Faculty & Faculty	4	12%
Resident & Program Coordinator	0	0%
Program Coordinator & Director	0	0%
Other, please specify	9	28%
Total Respondents		32

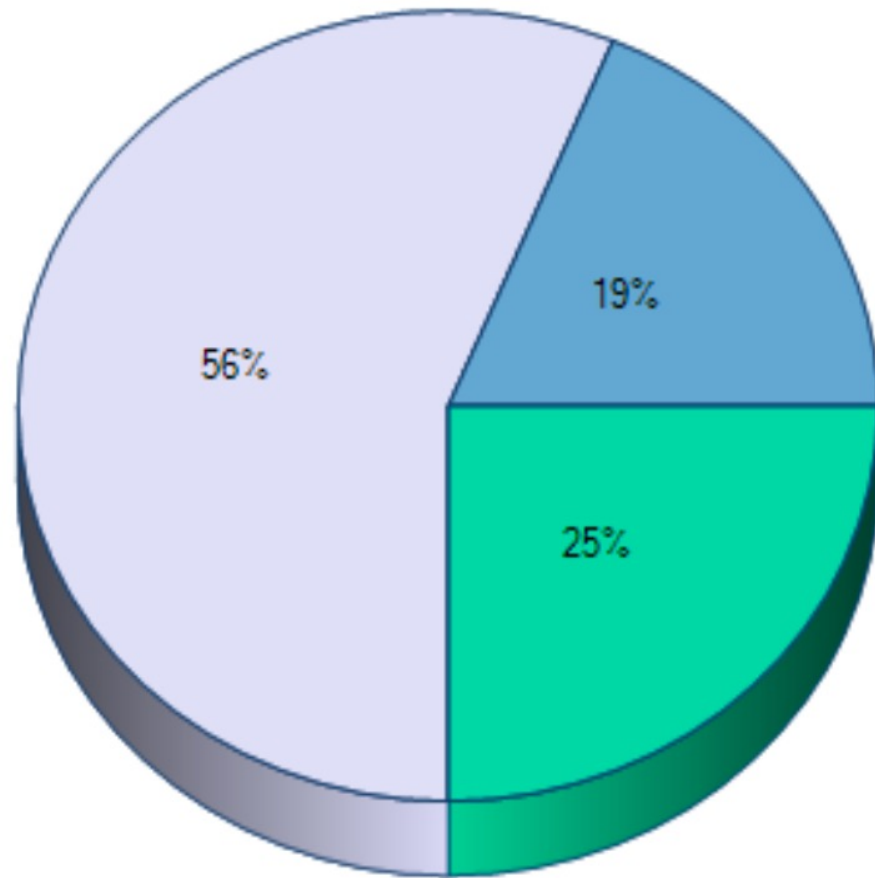
# 5. How do you usually deal with interpersonal conflict

**5.** How do you usually deal with interpersonal or personality conflicts? (Check all that apply)

		Response Total	Response Percent	Points	Avg
Avoid it until I can't anymore		2	6%	n/a	n/a
Seek advice from program leadership or peer mentor		16	50%	n/a	n/a
Raise the issue in faculty meetings, etc.		7	22%	n/a	n/a
Confront the individual in public		0	0%	n/a	n/a
Set up a private critical conversation meeting with the individual		28	88%	n/a	n/a
Allow the group norms and culture address the individual		3	9%	n/a	n/a
Report to Human Resources		5	16%	n/a	n/a
Other, please specify					



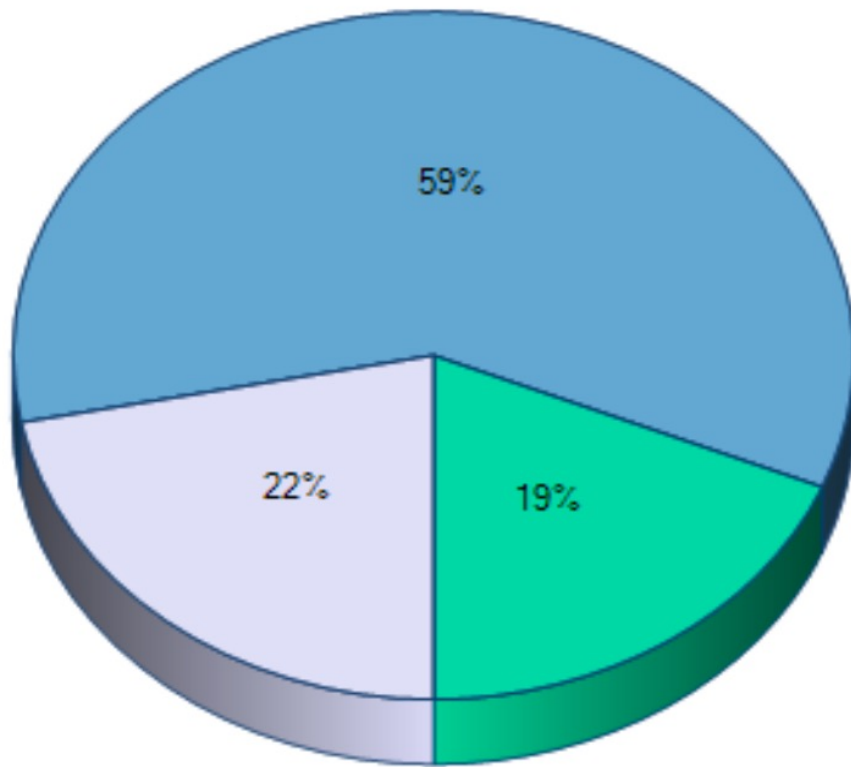
# # 6 Was the interpersonal conflict resolved?



	Response Total	Response Percent
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #d1c4e9; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Yes	18	56%
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #42a5f5; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> No	6	19%
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #00bcd4; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Other, please explain	8	25%
Total Respondents		32
(skipped this question)		155

Resident graduated still problem with PD  
and DIO

## 7. Was the interpersonal conflict transformed?



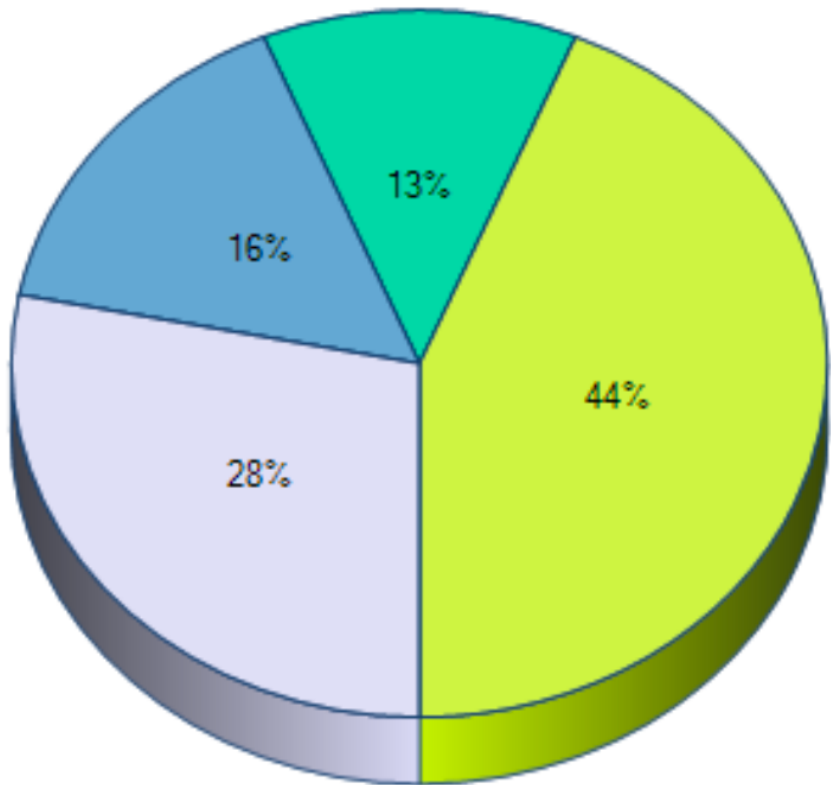
	Response Total	Response Percent
Yes	7	22%
No	19	59%
Other, please explain	6	19%

**Total Respondents**      **32**  
**(skipped this question)**      155

?

Most of the time but sometimes the resident forgot who he was talking to

# 8. How long did the interpersonal conflict last?

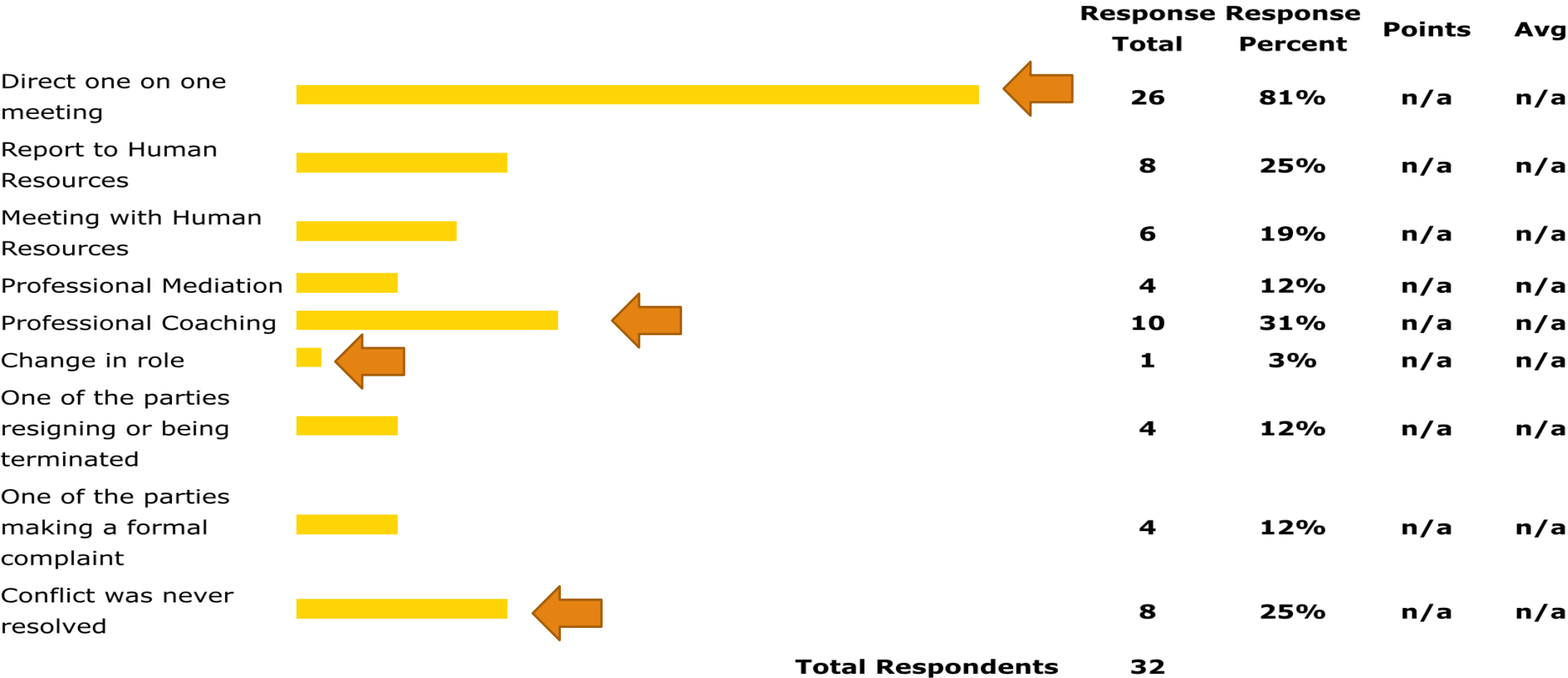


- 1-6 months
- Less than a year
- 1-2 years
- Still exits

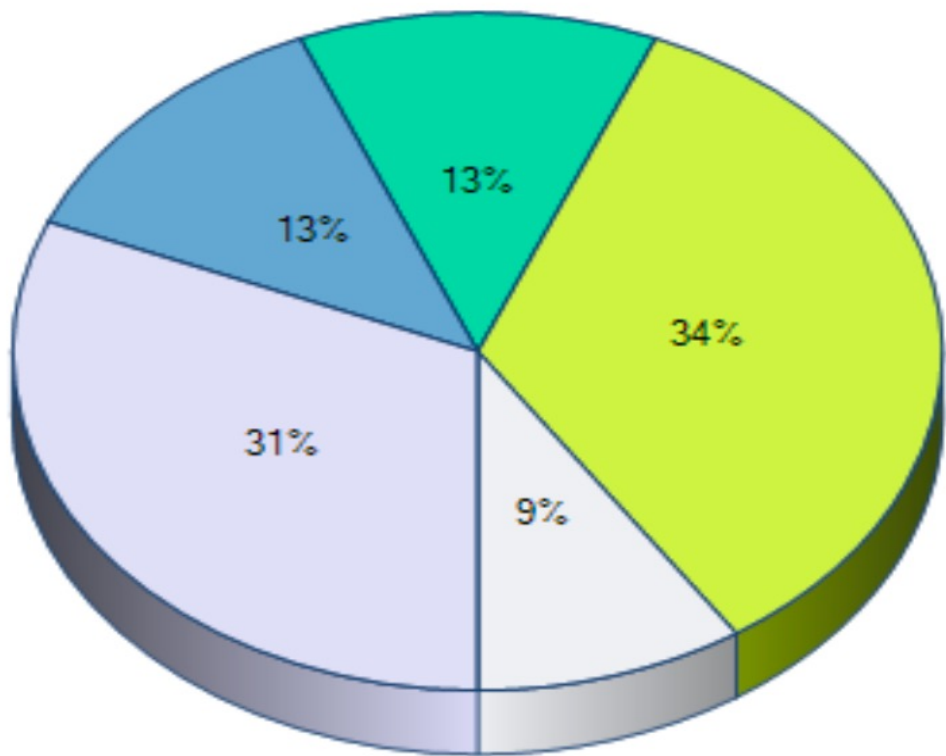
	Response Total	Response Percent
1-6 months	9	28%
Less than a year	5	16%
1-2 years	4	12%
Still exits	14	44%
Total Respondents		32
(skipped this question)		155



# 9. What methods were used to resolve the personality conflict?

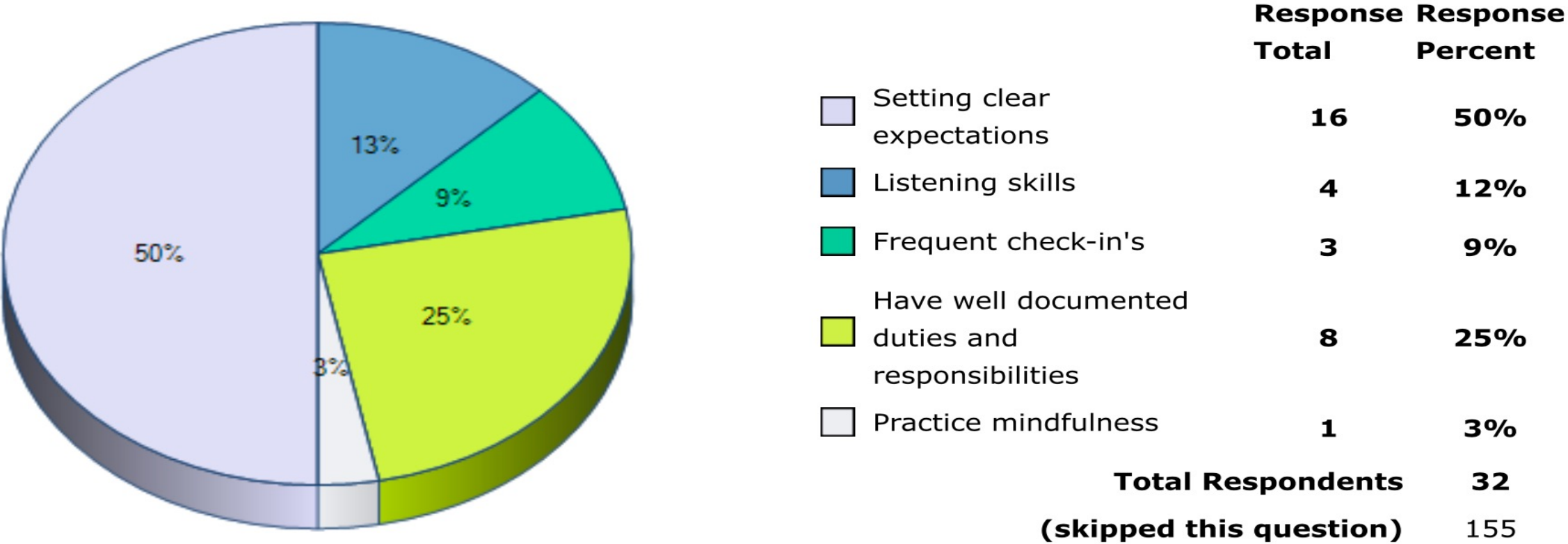


# 10. Which answer best describes the reason for the interpersonal conflict?

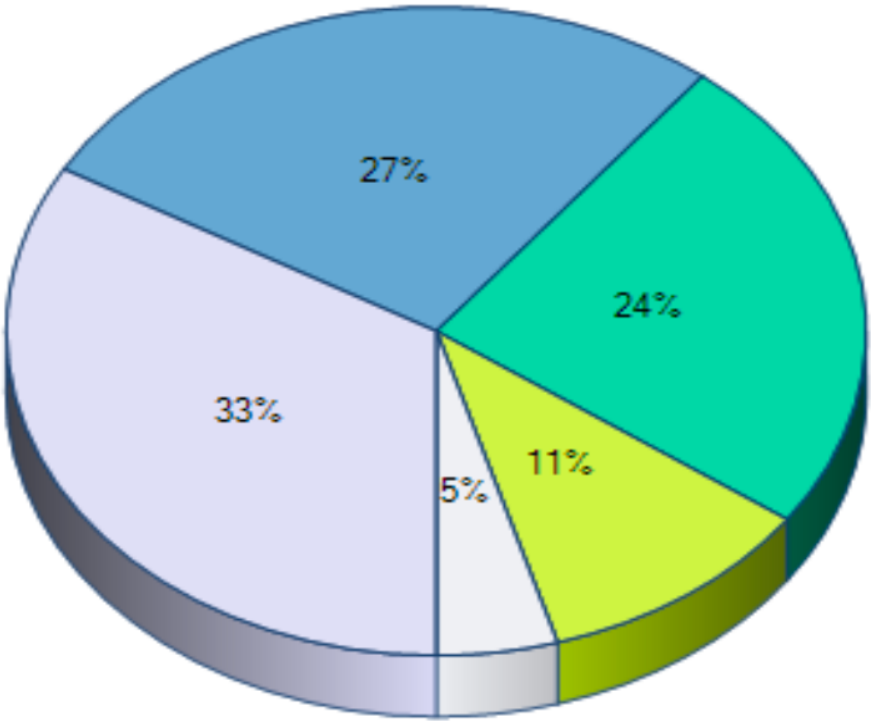


	Response Total	Response Percent
Personality Differences	10	31%
Miscommunication	4	12%
Unclear Expectations	4	12%
Professionalism Lapse	11	34%
Other, please specify	3	9%
Total Respondents (skipped this question)		32 155

12. Which of these elements would be most important in preventing a personality or interpersonal conflict?



14. What about conflict in Small Rural Residency makes it unique or especially important to consider, in comparison to a larger urban program?



	Response Total	Response Percent
Small group size	22	69%
Dual relationships	18	56%
Limited resources	16	50%
Triangulation	7	22%
Other, please specify	3	9%
Total Respondents		32
(skipped this question)		155

# 16. What resources do you wish you had for dealing with interpersonal and personality conflict?

		Response Total	Response Percent
Access to an outside mediator	<div></div>	10	31%
A workshop kit for teaching: Pre-assignment, brief presentation, facilitated discussion or active learning outline	<div></div>	17	53%
Online modules	<div></div>	9	28%
Conflict style inventories (to share in a facilitated discussion)	<div></div>	13	41%
Other, please specify	<div>1. ?</div> <div>31. Consequences for unprofessionalism upheld by the organization</div>		

# For Small Rural Programs: Conflict does Happen!

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- 1) Set very clear expectations and if not met, don't let the small stuff go
- 2) Faculty and resident burnout considered
- 3) Most common source is unmet expectations, then professionalism lapses
- 4) Familiarity and close relationships in a rural program is our greatest strength and greatest vulnerability
- 5) Focus on the tasks and not the individual.

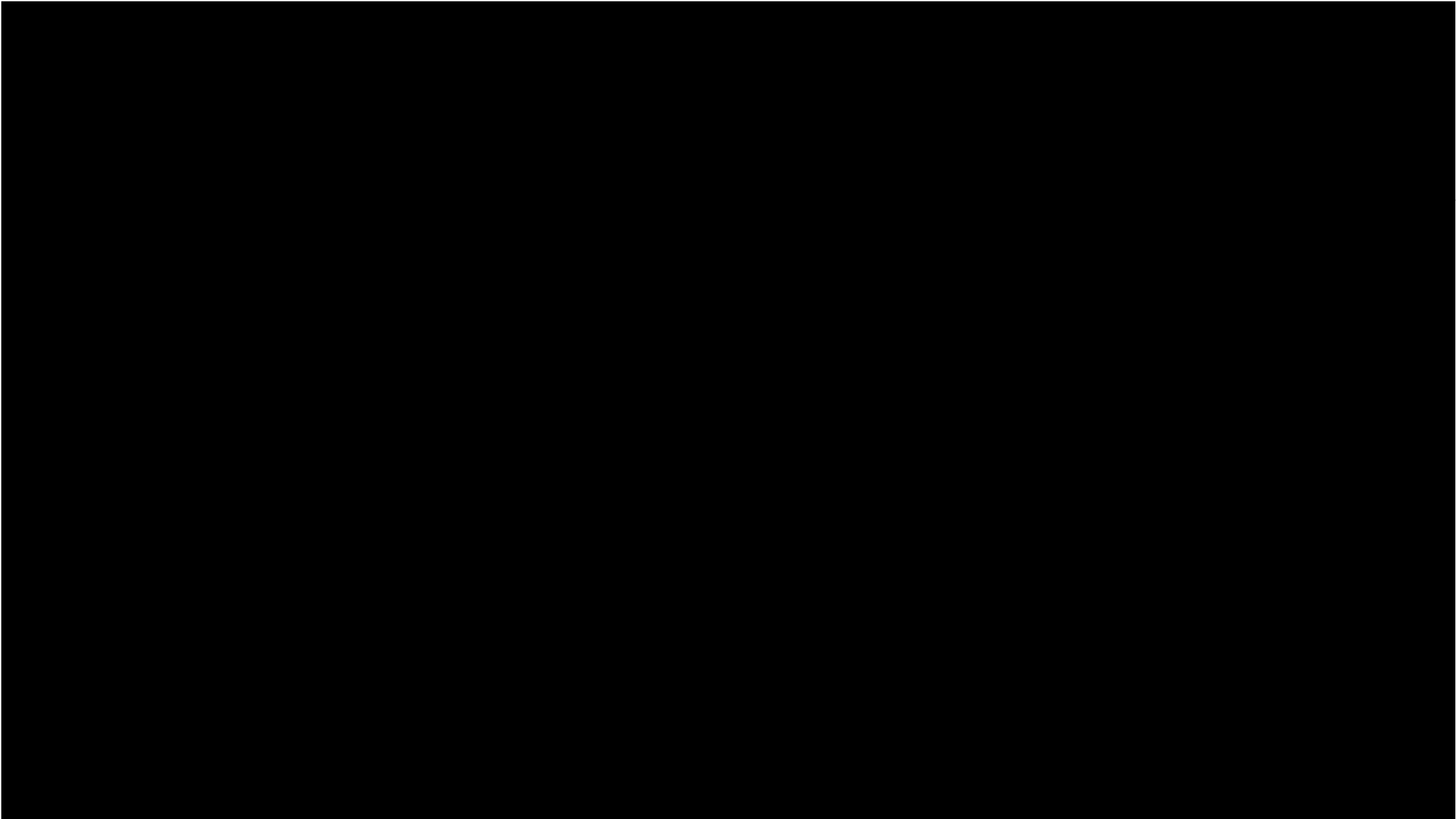


# Dr Rosie Hunter Video

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For contact information:  
Rosie Hunter, PhD  
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# Time for Randy!





# Building Peace: Transforming Conflict

- ❖ Peacemaking is not avoiding conflict
- ❖ Peacemaking is not appeasement
- ❖ Peacemaking is not eliminating conflict
- ❖ Peacemaking is about restoring relationships in the midst of conflict
- ❖ Peacemaking is a habit and a skill, one that continues to be honed through frequent use

# Transformation











# Traditional Approaches

- ❖ Conflict Management – Command and Control, Take Charge
- ❖ Conflict Resolution – Settlement, retribution
- ❖ Conflict Mediation – Compromise, distribution
- ❖ Conflict Arbitration – Imposed peace
- ❖ Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) – Outside the usual judicial system

...the character of conflict and change is framed as predictable, transactional, even formulaic.



# Conflict Transformation

Change is unpredictable, spirit-filled and wild. It is a creative energy force infused with great potential -- potential for good, potential for harm.



Transformative approach focuses on sustaining and restoring relationships; the process based in curiosity and mutual respect; achieving common ground, rather than defending a position



“The transformative framework is based on a relational view of the world, the view that people are autonomous beings who are at the same time fundamentally connected to one another, and who are constantly striving to balance their autonomy with relating to others.”



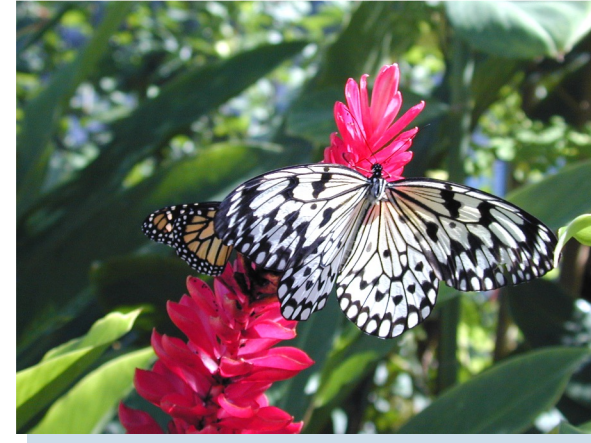
“This worldview can be best understood as a contrast to the prevailing Individualist worldview of our society, in which people are assumed to be separate and self-interested, motivated only by the prospect of maximizing their individual gain.”

The Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation

<https://iftsoct.wildapricot.org>

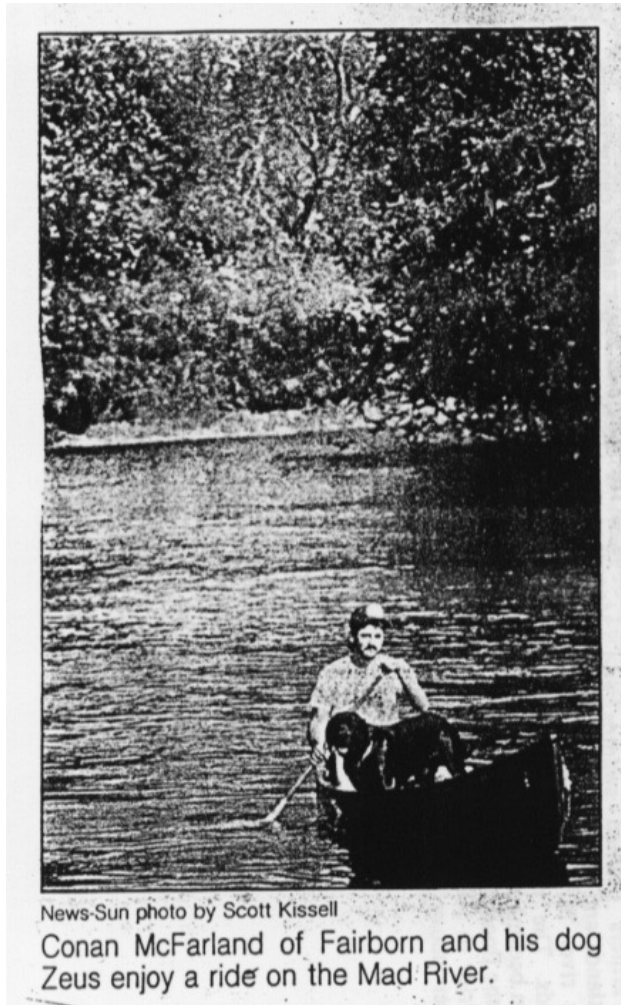


How can I transform this (or any) conflict into something good?



Conflict is something to be navigated, and transformation is an organic and creative process

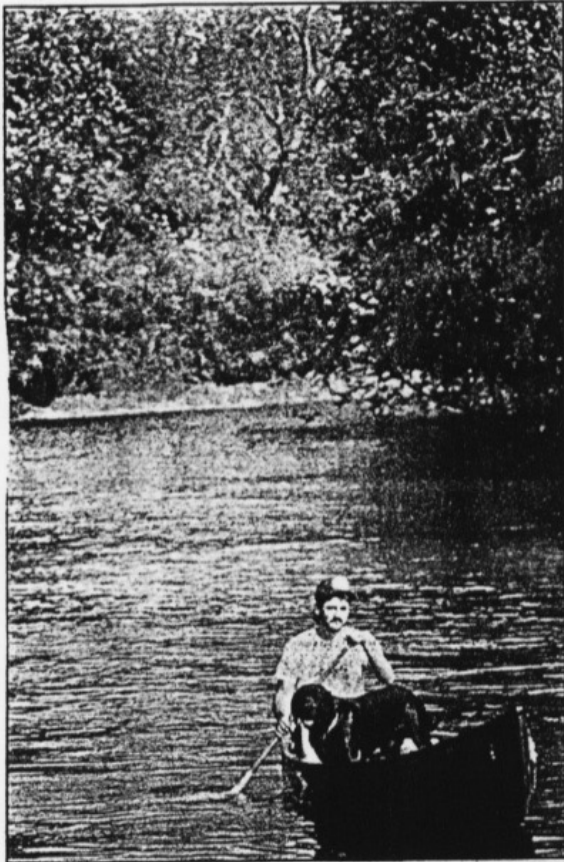
# Navigating a River



- ❖ Life as a river, rather than a battlefield
- ❖ A journey rather than a destination
- ❖ Territory to be traveled and explored, not land (turf) to be defended



# Navigating a River

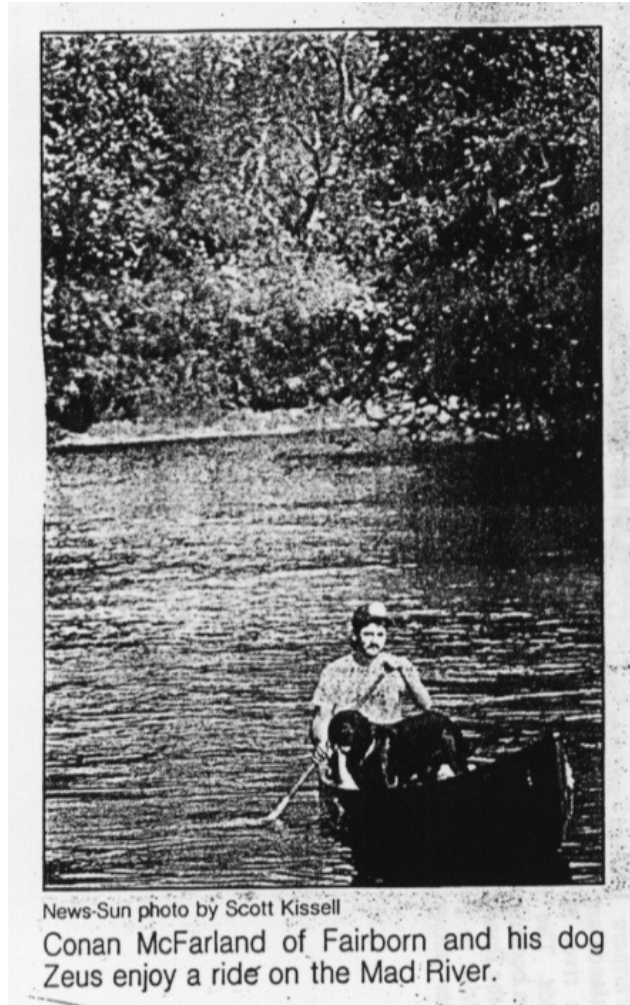


News-Sun photo by Scott Kissell  
Conan McFarland of Fairborn and his dog Zeus enjoy a ride on the Mad River.

- ❖ Tranquility, accented with rapids - quiet, peaceful but always moving, never standing completely still
- ❖ Use the current, rather than fighting it
- ❖ Know your place in the river
- ❖ Adapt to changing circumstances



# Navigating a River



- ❖ You can only steer if you're either moving faster or slower than the current; when in the rapids, you can't just float
- ❖ It's easier to steer if you're not in front
- ❖ Best done with others
- ❖ Portage when you must!



# Conflict Transformation

- ❖ Relationships are always worth restoring
- ❖ Be curious
- ❖ Seek reconciliation, not resolution
- ❖ The transformation of conflict takes time, be patient – it may never happen
- ❖ The meaning and usefulness of conflict depends on my perspective
- ❖ Best done with others



# Sharing Our Expertise

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Find 3 colleagues and break into groups of 4

Share a story of a conflict you have had in your residency program

- ❖ What have you learned and what would you ask for help on
- ❖ What is unique about rural
- ❖ What good has come or is coming from the conflict

Assign a group leader to share back to the group.



# Bob: Some Tools I have found useful....

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# Writing it Down.....Reflecting.....Practice

Practical Positive Cognitive Psychology: Tonya Caylor MD

Step 1: Thought Download – take 3 minutes to describe the situation, then reflect

Step 2: Identify the main stressor

Step 3: Separate the Fact vs Thought/Story

Facts are:

- Free of Adjectives
- Free of Loaded Words
- Free of Assumptions
- Free of Judgements
- Outsiders word agree



# Thought Model

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C = Circumstance – just the facts



T = Thought – short



F = Feeling - one word emotion



A = Actions – and Inactions



R = Results – yours only



Tonya Caylor MD

<https://www.joyinfamilymedicine.com/>



## Helpful Tips

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What are 5-10 other ways to view it?

What might someone else think?

Instead of debating the validity of a thought, ask if it is useful.





# Actions when there is no resolution



May you be well.  
May you be happy.  
May you know  
love.  
May you know  
peace.

Share two practices: Metta and Revolutionary Love Compass

Metta – in Sanskrit means positive energy and kindness towards others. Also known as loving kindness meditation. Recant these words:

Start with your self

The focus on those we naturally love – where loving is easiest.

Those we who you care about

Take a pause- Imagine those two people offering their loving kindness, take in their goodness

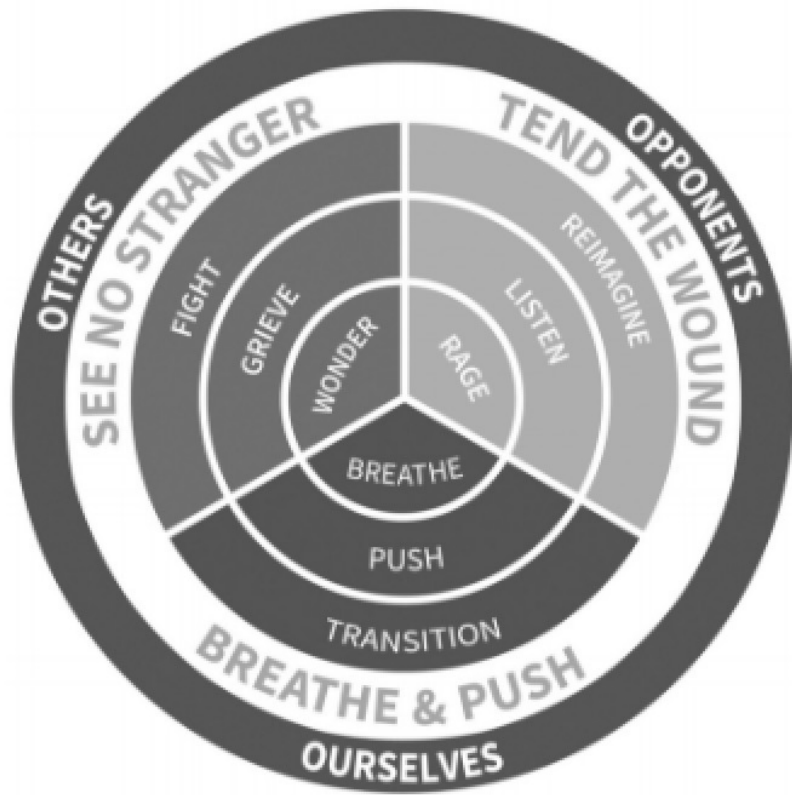
Those we have he most conflict or discord with

The world, the planet everyone around you

Return to yourself

# Revolutionary Love Compass

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- Concept by Valerie Kaur Theologian and Activist
- A Tool to Orient Oneself
- Point at whomever you want to practice loving
- In conflict your opponent (notice not enemy)
- Inner Ring contains internal actions
- Middle ring contains interpersonal actions
- Outer ring contains social actions
- All three are engaged in labor of revolutionary love
- This is hard, so remember the advice of the midwife: Breath and then Push

# Loving the opponent: Tend the Wound



An opponent is any person who beliefs, words or actions cause harm

Enemy implies permanence, opponent is fluid

Can practice tending the wound: Ours and if it is safe theirs

Rage in Safe containers to process pain (silent scream, throw pillows)

Listen to understand them, the contexts that enable our opponents to cause harm

Reimagine context, culture and institutions that protect dignities.

Tending the wound is not only moral but strategic. It is the labor of remaking the world.

This is hard: Recall the advice of the midwife: Breathe then Push





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Between Stimulus and Response, there is a space.

In that space lies our freedom and our power to choose our response

In our response lies our growth and happiness

Viktor Frankl

Holocaust Survivor, Psychologist and Neurologist



# Final Comments, Next Steps and Delta Plus



# Resources and Appreciation

Lis Jex Program Coordinator Providence Hood River Rural FM Residency Program

Tonya Caylor MD [www.Joyinfamilymedicine.com](http://www.Joyinfamilymedicine.com)

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Rosie Hunter, PhD [rosie@wolfandhunter.com](mailto:rosie@wolfandhunter.com), [www.wolfandhunter.com](http://www.wolfandhunter.com)

The Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation <https://iftsoct.wildapricot.org>

Kaur, Valerie: See No Stranger: Revolutionary Love. <https://valariekaur.com/see-no-stranger/>

- [The Revolutionary Love Project - Valarie Kaur](#)
- <https://valariekaur.com/learninghub/an-introduction-to-the-compass/>

Anatomy of Peace, The Arbinger Institute, Resolving the Heart of Conflict

How to do Metta: <https://www.lionsroar.com/how-to-do-metta-january-2014/>

- Lederach JP. The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace. Oxford University Press: New York, 2005.
- Acosta D, Karp DR. Restorative Justice as the Rx for Mistreatment in Academic Medicine: Applications to Consider for Learners, Faculty, and Staff, *Acad Med*. 2018;93:354–356. doi: 10.1097/ACM.0000000000002037