



**Institute for Dispute Resolution  
Oklahoma State University**

103 Seretean Wellness Center  
1514 W Hall of Fame  
Stillwater, OK 74078-2026  
Office: 405-744-3011  
Toll Free: 1-800-248-5465  
Fax: 405-744-3050  
[www.mediation.okstate.edu](http://www.mediation.okstate.edu)

## **Good Meeting Management: *Tips for Getting Along and Communicating Well at Farm Family Meetings***

Farm Transitions Workshop, November 7, 2008

Lynn Malley, J.D., M.A., LL.M.

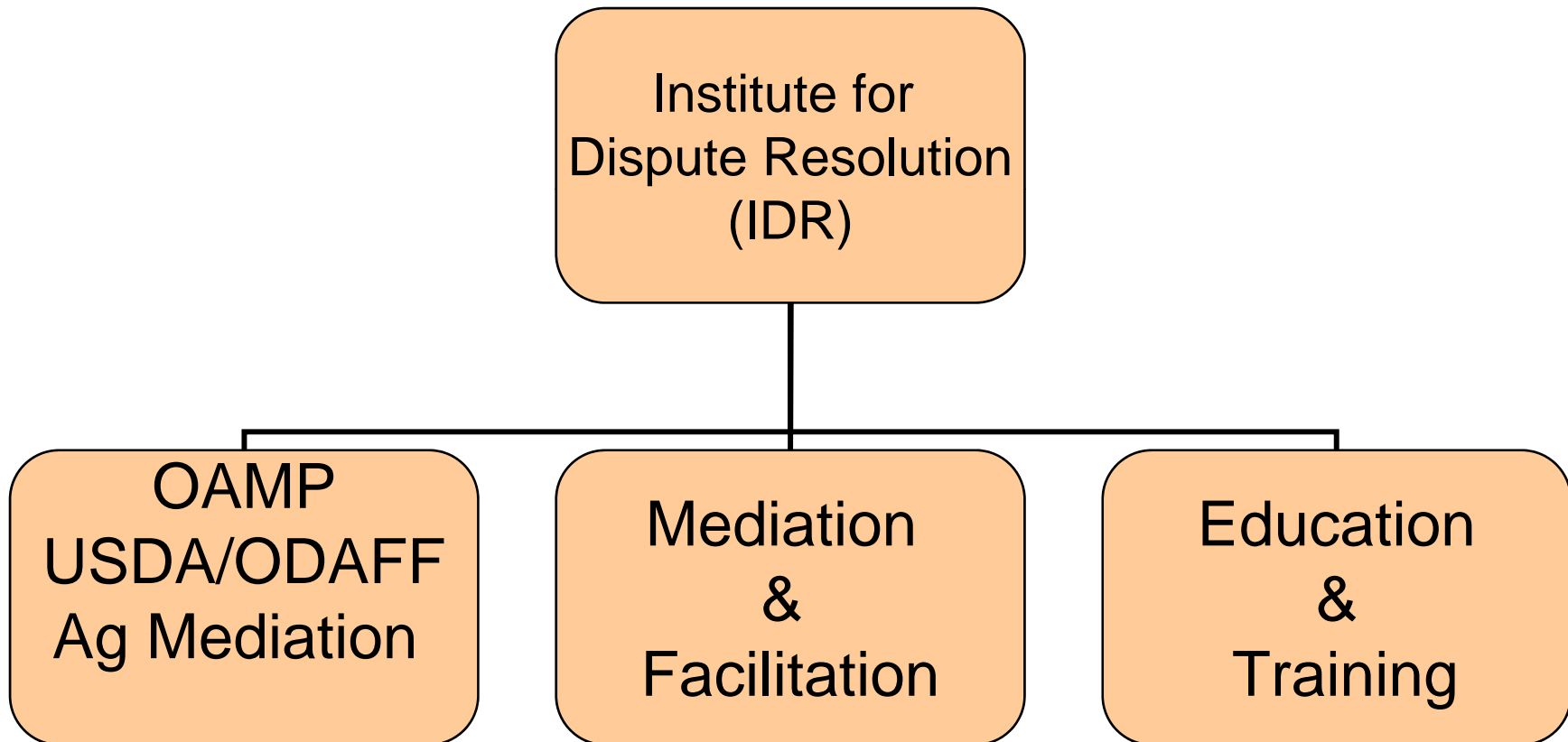
Program Coordinator, Institute for Dispute Resolution  
Oklahoma Agriculture Mediation Program, Oklahoma  
State University





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# Objectives:

1. Consider what meeting management is and why it is important
2. Learn about and practice good meeting management skills
3. Learn about and practice positive communication skills



# Objective 1: What is meeting management and why is it important?

1. What happens when there **is** good meeting management?
  1. Someone directs the meeting
  2. The necessary people are there
  3. The important topics get covered
  4. Everyone has his/her say
  5. Personal conflicts are set aside
  6. Progress is made
  7. Agreements may be reached



# Objective 1: What is meeting management and why is it important?

1. What happens when there is **not** good meeting management?
  1. The right people may not be at the meeting
    1. I'm too busy.
    2. We can do that after the corn is planted.
    3. We tried them before, and they didn't work.
    4. Meetings are a waste of time.
  2. There may be no direction so important topics may not get covered
    1. People may not speak or feel heard
    2. Personal conflicts may interfere
    3. Nothing may get done



# Objective 2: What are good meeting management strategies?

1. Set the stage
  1. Be prepared
  2. Select a coordinator/facilitator
  3. Have the necessary people there
  4. Have an agenda
2. At the meeting
  1. Use the facilitator to
    1. Follow the agenda
    2. Engage everyone
    3. Manage conflict
    4. Summarize
3. After the meeting
  1. Send out notes and reminder of next meeting



# Good meeting management strategies – Setting the stage

- Have someone coordinate the preparation
- Have all the right people at the table—and say who's coming
- Select a convenient and comfortable location
- Be sure that everyone knows the purpose of each family meeting
- Prepare family members ahead of time
  - Propose an agenda and a facilitator
  - Have each person bring a list of personal concerns and any important documents
- Schedule sufficient time



# Select a coordinator/facilitator



## Who can be the facilitator?

- Family member
- Respected outsider

## Who can be the facilitator?

- Professional neutral





# Have the right people there...

Who are the *right* people?



Father



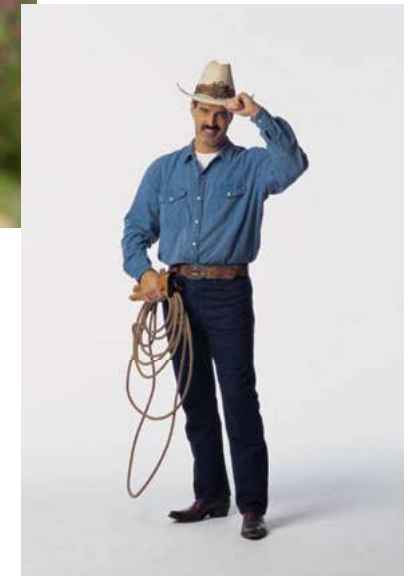
Mother



Daughter-in-law  
who works on  
the farm



Son  
Child of son and former  
Daughter-in-law



# Who are the *right* people?

Nephew who works on the farm



Partner of daughter who just graduated from college



Daughter who just graduated from college



Child of daughter and partner



Former daughter-in-law



Hired help

# Are *all* the important people necessarily the *right* people?

1. Owners
2. Spouses/significant others
3. Children
  1. Young
  2. Old
  3. On the farm
  4. Off the farm
4. Others



# Choose a setting that is right for you



# Good meeting management strategies – the Meeting


- Have someone act as facilitator
- The facilitator should
  - Remind folks about the purpose of the meeting - this should not be news!
  - Ask someone to take notes
  - Use an agenda
  - Review agenda with everyone
    - Ask for input at the beginning of the meeting
    - Make additions or changes before starting the meeting
  - Refer back to the agenda to keep participants on track
  - Encourage participants to
    - Take turns speaking
    - Be open to other points of view
  - Summarize what each person adds to the discussion
- Summarize at the end of the meeting and plan for the next one



# Who manages the meeting?

- The facilitator manages the meeting





# How does the facilitator manage the meeting?

1. Pre-meeting
2. At the meeting
  1. Ground rules
  2. Go through the agenda
  3. Take notes
  4. Keep the process moving and on track
  5. Help resolve conflicts constructively
3. At the end of the meeting
  1. Verbally summarize
  2. Follow up with written summary
  3. Thank everyone for coming

# How does the facilitator manage the meeting? (cont.)

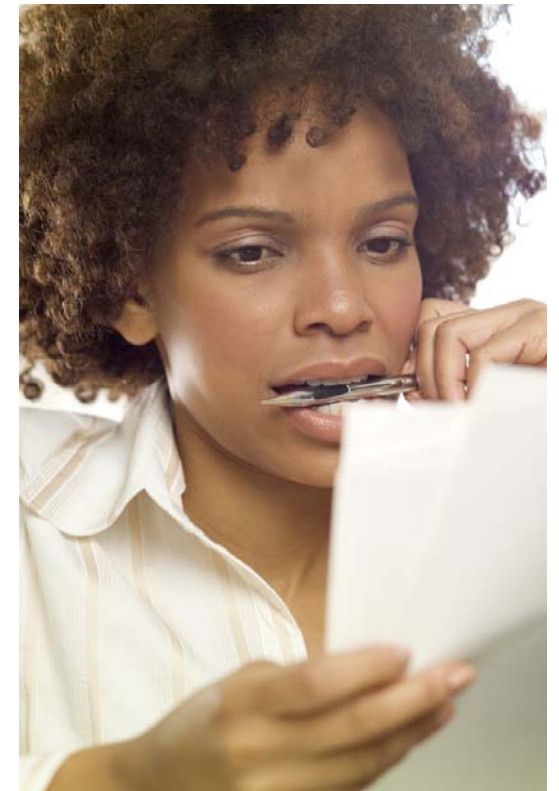
1. Pre-meeting
2. At the meeting
  1. Get assent to ground rules
    1. Take turns
    2. Speak for yourself
    3. Really listen
    4. Be respectful
  2. Go through the agenda
  3. Take notes
  4. Keep the process moving
  5. Help resolve conflicts constructively





# What is the role of the agenda?

- It provides a map, a trail guide
- Following it allows the family can see that the meeting has been productive
- People are more willing to come to meetings that are
  - Productive
  - Civil
  - Short
  - Business-like



# What are important agenda items?

- Important agenda items are based on the needs to be addressed by the farm family.
- Often, information must be brought to the meeting for a productive discussion to happen.
- This information may need to be culled so what is really important at the time can be discussed.



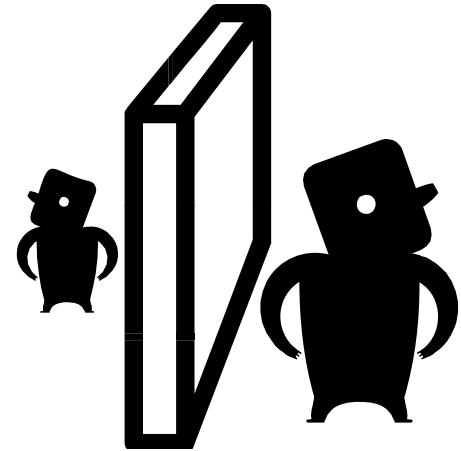
# Important agenda items will vary from meeting to meeting

- Often, there are decisions to be made with many possible choices
- Specific information provided allows these difficult decisions to be made



Be sure that everyone gets to both  
have his/her say and to be heard


1. What is the difference?
  1. Have your say
  2. Be heard
2. Listening techniques





# Summarize and plan for future meetings

1. At the end of the meeting
  1. Summarize verbally
  2. Ask about possible future meeting times
2. After the meeting
  1. Send out
    1. Written summary
    2. Confirmation of time and place of next meeting
    3. Tentative agenda
    4. Request for agenda items



## **Objective 3: Use communication skills that will help facilitate a positive meeting**

1. Speaking and feeling heard
2. Taking turns
3. Using “I” statements
4. R.E.S.P.E.C.T.
5. Active listening
  1. Content
  2. Emotion
6. Positive participation

# Potential Sources of Conflict in a Family Farm Meeting...

- Generational differences
- Value differences
- Hidden agendas
- Power differences
- Shortage of \$\$\$
- Lack of leadership or commitment



# Recognize Conflict when... Communication Is Fractured



- Family members won't speak to each other
- Family members won't come to a family farm meeting
  - FM deny there's a need (or time) to meet
- FM come to the meeting but won't speak in the meeting but talk about others afterwards
  - FM get angry and seethe or yell or cry
  - FM are demeaning/disrespectful
  - FM don't listen to the other family members
  - FM avoid the issues
  - FM inappropriately raise new issues or old issues again...or again
  - FM bring 2 boxes of old disorganized papers to a meeting about finances





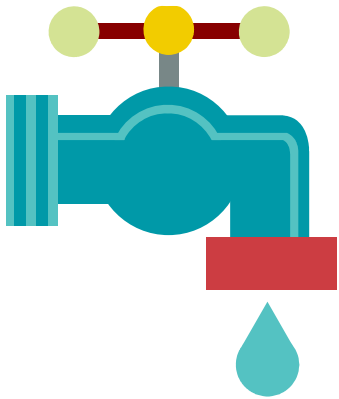


# Conflict can result in communication breakdown. What's Going On?

- Feeling “Un-heard” & unimportant
- Experiencing a lack of respect
- Feeling at a disadvantage
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Feeling powerless
- Questioning ability or professionalism
- Questioning one's commitment
- Questioning integrity
- Fear, grief and loss

# Speaking... and Feeling Heard

- Practice time!
  - Pet peeves...



Pick a partner from your family or not, as you choose.

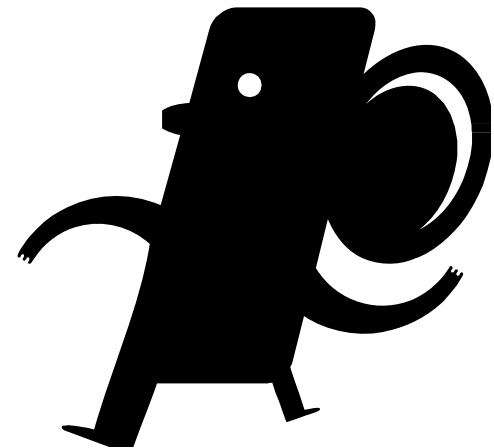
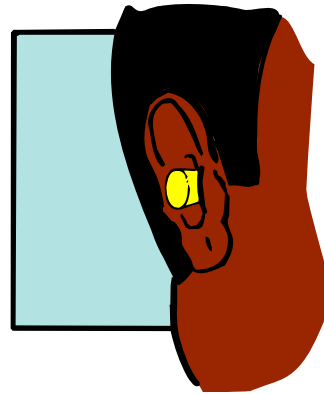


Each of you will have one minute to talk while the other listens intently.

Then, switch sides. The second person will have one minute to talk while the other listens intently.

# Who felt listened to?

- How could you tell you were being listened to?
  - Presence
  - Body Language
    - Eye contact
    - Leaning forward
  - Summarizing
    - Words and emotion
  - Language
    - Uh huh
    - Go on
- How can you demonstrate this type of listening in a meeting?





# Using “I” statements?

1. I statements are those that begin with “I” and tell how “I” feel and think.
  1. Father is getting older and his adult son is upset because Father will not try some new farming technique.
    1. You always want to do the same old things!
    2. John doesn’t think that we should try no-till farming.
  2. Mother goes to all the community meetings and helps the other women with the cooking and cleaning. Father always arrives just in time to eat and never in time to help cut the wood for the wood stove in the community room.
    1. You are always late for meetings!
    2. Why do you think cleaning the community room is women’s work!

# “I” statements...

- Practice time!



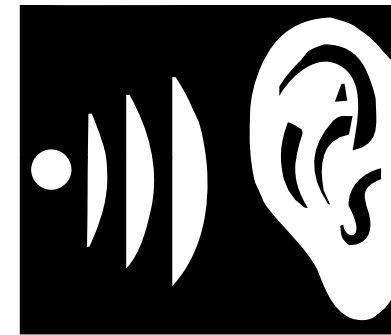
# Using Active Listening



- Active listening helps people to feel understood and is useful way of identifying potential misunderstanding before they have the chance to mushroom into bigger conflicts
- Proactive way to manage emotional situations
- Facilitates discussion by conveying respect
- The listener reflects the content and the emotion

# *Active Listening ...*

- Practice time!







# Using positive participation?

- What is positive participation?
- Feeling heard = Positive Participation

# What is negative participation?



- Won't come
- Won't speak in the meeting but talk about others afterwards
- Gets angry and is demeaning/disrespectful
- Doesn't listen to the other family members
- Avoids the issues
- Denies there's a need (or time) to meet
- Inappropriately raises new issues or old issues again...and again
- Brings 2 boxes of old disorganized papers to a meeting about finances





Now...

## What is positive participation?

- Always comes and is prepared
- Speaks and listens at appropriate times
- Does not talk about others afterwards
- Is polite and respectful
- May be emotional
- Is willing to address even difficult issues
- Raises appropriate issues
- Brings necessary information



# Remember the Little Things...

- If things get hot...or cold...
  - Take a break
  - If you need more info. and more time, say so
  - Share a snack or meal
  - Don't ignore it!
- Consider bringing in a neutral facilitator to guide the next meeting
- Remember, this is a joint problem solving opportunity

# Your turn to practice having a family meeting...

- Pre-meeting – 5 minutes
  - Pick a facilitator
  - Pick a role play or a real (small) current family farm issue
  - Decide on an agenda
- Meeting – 15 minutes
  - Facilitator manages the meeting
  - Go through the agenda
  - Take turns
  - Summarize what happened
- We will all debrief – 10 minutes





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Thanks very much for your participation.  
Let us know if we can be of any  
assistance through the Institute.

