



## **SWORDS, SHIELDS, DAGGERS & HANDSHAKES**



**Recognizing Your Conflict Styles & Positive Tools to Deal with Criticism, Anger, and Other Yucky Stuff**

Your clients and customers are complaining, your e-mails are stacked up higher than the national debt and your to-do list is growing faster than mold in a shower. So what other great test to human strength and fortitude do you need to add to your wonderful day? Negative comments from your teammates...Oh yes! Those people hidden most of the day behind the cubical walls, those people that are there to support you. Esprit de Corp, one for all, all for one and pass the ammunition! Your teammates are there to test you. Making your work day less like, an episode of "Friends" and more like a "Three Stooges" short. Yet you're the one that keeps getting it in the eye. What are you supposed to do?

Is conflict with your teammates inevitable? I don't think so. Situations that cause conflict are inevitable. Whether the situation will cause you internal conflict or a conflict with someone else is a matter of choice, your choice. If you think it is a part of the job to take on a conflict attitude you will go to work each day with two certainties, traffic and conflict. If you are thinking, "But you don't know my teammates, especially ....." Well I don't know them, but you do and tomorrow when you go to work they will still be there standing, waiting for you with their coffee cup and a sneer, ready to do battle. What will you do?

### **THE STEPS TO PERSONAL POWER**

If you are getting criticized or bombarded with negative comments, what can you do? How can you get rid of your combat mentality and claim your personal power?

The steps are clear; Figure out how you typically respond, label it, decide whether your method or methods is working and then learn the personal power tools called HANDSHAKES to deal with the onslaught. If your looking at the words Swords and Daggers and thinking, "Alright! I'll learn

how to get “her” good.” Sorry to disappoint you. You’re not going to learn assault techniques. Put the tank in park and put away that m-16.

Handshakes are non-defensive tools, ways of acting rather than reacting. Instead of attacking or even feeling the need for attacking you will act non-defensively. You won’t learn ways to control others, but instead, ways to feel in control of yourself. Personal power isn’t gaining power over others, but feeling internally powerful. The little voice inside your head that’s thinking as your hearing the negativity, “This guy’s a jerk” or “I’m getting creamed” or “I’ll show him” is calmed. You don’t have to be 100% percent comfortable hearing negative information. This method isn’t about being Pollyanna, smiling through the pain and thinking that everyone is peachy keen nor is it about being Curly or Larry Stooze waiting to get the pie in the face. You can learn to feel more in control, the power you will have is inside you.

### **SWORDS, SHIELDS AND DAGGERS**

#### **WHAT DO YOU USE TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM HARM?**

The first step in the gaining personal power is to figure out how you typically respond to criticism, negative messages and information in general that you don’t want to hear. Let’s explore how you protect yourself. What Swords, Shields, and Daggers do you use that keep you from getting hurt, that give you something to do in an uncomfortable situation, that puts you in a different spot when you feeling under attack. Realize that different situations and different people may call forth different responses. In a moment you will list ALL the ways you protect yourself from criticism, negativity, others emotions, situations where you feel awkward, or how you act when you just don’t want to hear something.

List what you use to protect yourself.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Ok, let's look at your list.

Do you leave the room, stuff it, raise your voice, give an excuse, counterattack, sabotage their next project, slam doors, ignore it and hope it will go away or criticize them back? Do you think, "This guy doesn't know what he's talking about"? Do you think, "I've got to take it"? Do you go tell another teammate, tell your team leader, get busy, or avoid seeing this negative teammate? Do you think, "If this guy just did his job and didn't bother me I wouldn't have this problem"? Do you take a break, get a headache, cuss up a storm, or lie awake at night and think about it? Do you get mad at yourself, go get a cup a coffee, think "I'm right, you're wrong?" Do you make plans with other teammates in the break room to get them at the next meetings, cry, eat something sweet or just stay quiet? Do you just plain not hear it, go home and complain to your spouse, decide it's not worth your time? Do you plan on getting them later? Do you sit at your desk or stand at your workstation thinking "This always happens to me"? If you said "Oh, yes!" to any of the above and they weren't on your list or they made you think of new things, add them to your list now.

Surprise! All these things just listed are defensive options. That makes perfect sense. You feel attacked and you defend yourself. Negative information hurts. You have an image of yourself and you will go to great lengths to protect it. We want to think "I am a good person", however we

define “good” and when something happens to shake our core image of ourselves we get out the Swords, Shields, and Daggers.

Remember, we called them forms of protection. They do that. They protect you. And actually, you should feel good that you developed ways of coping in the world. You should be proud that you have survived. I’m not joking. You should feel good that you protected yourself. Now you can ask yourself, “Are these protections working well for me right now, everyday, in my interactions with my teammates.” If your feeling “Yucky” in any way they may not be doing their job well. Perhaps, not as well as they use to, or maybe not with some people or they may take too much effort. Finally, they may not be the best options because they have negative consequences. Realistically, many of these responses may be appropriate in certain situations, but if you have a response you are using over and over no matter what the situation is and its not working, it will be helpful to explore in order to have new options.

To begin to see that you have choices, go back to your list. Across from each item write out it’s opposite. For example, if you wrote “Get mad”, write across from it “Stay calm”. If you wrote, “Leave the room” write across from it, “Stay and discuss the issue.” Not all the alternatives you write on the right side of the page are non-defensive and some of the responses on your original list may already be non-defensive. This exercise is to let you see what all the opposites are and help you realize you have another choice every time you are in a conflict -- you have a choice.

As you look at the opposites you may say that would never work or I don’t know how to make that work. Good news, later you are going to learn how to use the non-defensive choices that will and won’t feel yucky. If you have some things on your list you think are non-defensive you may already be using Handshakes. If you listed things on your left hand list like “listening” and “asking

question” reward yourself immediately! Go out and buy yourself a really nice car, take a trip to Paris or just whisper quietly to yourself, “I knew I was smart.”

### **RECOGNIZING YOUR PROTECTION(S)**

There are four major styles of responding to conflict; they are Swords, Shields, Daggers and Handshakes. Each one will be defined and be followed by an example. As you read each one ask yourself, “Do I do this?” When and with whom? Look at your original list carefully. Sometimes it’s hard to recognize your real style. Remember, as you go through the styles to be gentle with yourself. You are a good person; these styles have worked for you, and may continue in some situations to be the best choice.

### **SWORDS**

Swords use assertive and competing behavior. A sword wielder’s underlying motivation is, “I’m more important than any body else” and “My needs before yours.” They may be seen by others as aggressive or even bullying. If you are a sword wielder you may see your behavior as a way to get things done and taken care of. At our extreme, Sword bearers attack the people who we feel wronged us or by-standers who get in our way. Criticizing back, yelling, getting mad and any phrase that starts with... “Your mother...” is a Sword behavior. Swords are direct. They are out in the open. Sword wielders don’t hide their feelings. Telling your team leader about a problem with another team member could be a sword or a passive aggressive dagger behavior depending on the circumstances. When someone uses a sword his body and voice communicate power.

Typically, a sword wielder gets bigger; he takes up more space, perhaps standing with his legs far apart. He stands with his heart exposed, perhaps with his chest puffed up, and often with his arms held away from his body. His voice communicates power with loudness and or great

speed. The laid back posture of a team member who leans back in his chair, arms above his head, fingers interlaced, elbows out, feet propped up on the desk, is called the “cape and crown posture”. The “cape” is the arms above and the elbows out, making the head appear bigger.

The crossed hands, with the fingers interlaced, is the symbolic crown. The feet up symbolically say, “I could step on you if wanted to”.

### SHIELDS

Shields are unassertive. They can use either avoiding or accommodating responses. A Shield holder’s underlying motivation is to get along and not get hurt. They are likely to be passive in their responses, or not respond at all. They think by not saying anything that they are “nice.” And “a team player.” At their extreme, the Shield hides or cringes in response to negativity. Shield responses include; avoiding , giving a reason and or an excuse, not saying anything and feeling they just have to grin and bear it, sometimes telling other people, but most of all thinking they have to be the victim or the martyr. The next type, the daggers tell on you out of spite. The shields do it and merely whine. Take note, saying “Yes” or “You’re right” when you are secretly thinking of how you’re going to get them back later, is a Dagger response. The non-verbal communication on a shield holder shows a lack of power. Typically the person takes up less space, the heart is protected, the hands may even cover the heart, the head might be lowered, direct eye contact is avoided and the voice may soften.

### DAGGERS

Daggers, or more specifically Armor and Dagger behaviors are a combination of unassertive and aggressive responses. An Armor and Dagger Responder acts to protect himself from harm and then strikes the offender later with a hidden dagger. Examples include saying “Yes” to the team

member in the meeting and then not doing the task; responding to a negative comment with an ambiguous e-mail; getting sick in response to conflict so the team members feel sorry for you; or stuffing your emotions, but your displeasure leaks out subtly. These behaviors are sometimes the most difficult to recognize in yourself. The secret is to look at your underlying motivations and emotions. The armor is saying “I’m not strong enough; I can’t let my true emotions show.” The hidden dagger symbolically says, “I am angry or resentful and you’ll get it eventually.” You may label going to tell other team members about an offender as a shield response or even a positive response because you didn’t let your anger show to the person. However, if you share your story with the intention of giving the offending team member a negative reputation, you are using a hidden dagger. If you are nice to them face to face but muttering an explicative as they leave the room that is a Dagger response. To be frank, there may be a scary person on your team and you may need to use this style to survive, but realize that there is an emotional and physical response to holding in all that hidden aggression. The body language of an Armor and Shield Holder is conflicted, a smile and pursed lips. Agreement and the hand touching the nose signaling it doesn’t smell right to you. Saying “I’m listening” while the arms are crossed.

### **HANDSHAKES**

Handshakes are assertive and cooperative behaviors. They can be compromising or collaborative. With a handshake response you communicate that you are important and that the other person is important too. Handshakes were invented centuries ago to indicate that as you approached with an extended arm to someone from another tribe that you held no weapon. The right hand was typically extended because it was usually the weapon hand and the left arm was left open and available so it could protect the heart. In medieval times, knights created the shaking part of the



handshake to dislodge any hidden daggers that might be hidden up the other knight's sleeve. Shaking would last three to five pumps to dislodge the hidden weapons. The message in the handshake style is "I want to have an honest, open and non-threatening interaction with you." Take on a peaceful attitude to let go of your combat mentality. The combat mentality is telling us that our teammates are the enemy. You think "I'm not like them or "I'm the victim and they are the bad guy". As long as you have a combat mentality you don't have to change on iota. You can justify your defensive victim behavior saying "I had to yell, keep quiet, tell the team leader, because of the way they treated me. Combat mentality creates and endless cycle of conflict in a team. No matter what is motivates team members behavior you see it as done intentionally to hurt you.

Many years ago in one of my first jobs I had an older worker on my team, who was always asking about my personal life, giving me unsolicited advice, and in my mind criticizing how I chose to do things. I felt patronized. When I saw her come down the hall I said to myself here comes the enemy. I avoided her in the break room I sat at the other end of the table from her at meetings.

Even though I spent a lot of time complaining about her to my friends I never spoke to her directly about how I felt. I was great at armor and dagger. When I finally took on a peaceful handshake attitude and invited her to lunch and asked her about herself and really listened a miracle happened I discovered that this woman was the oldest of eleven children and she essentially raised her brothers and sister. "Wow", I thought, "she is mothering me!" I saw her behavior in a whole new light. I discovered as we grew closer that she actually admired me and wanted to support me in being a successful speaker. Whoa!" my combat attitude had so successfully affected my view of her I hadn't recognized an ally. Our relationship changed not because she changed, but because I

changed. The entire conflict had been inside me.

How many of us look at our teammate's behavior and think, "if she would just stop\_\_\_\_" or "if I could just get rid of \_\_\_\_." My life would be so much better. You read books to learn how to change the "other" person, but its all about you changing you. You can't control other's behavior you can only control yourself. Stop being the victim of your own mind. When you are a Handshake you see your self much more clearly, your strengths and your vulnerabilities. You also see your teammates more clearly and their strengths and vulnerabilities.

Now we will discuss specific non-defensive handshake tools. Establish commonality. We like people who are like us we like to interact with teammates who are like us. When we meet someone for the first time we are looking for commonalties. "You're from Atlanta, Oh I have an aunt Bertha who lives there" we feel safer. At a primal level we are feeling, "I know somebody else from the Atlanta tribe, they are safe so I guess you're safe too." Conflict tends to occur when we emphasize the differences and put them in the enemy camp. "I'm not like him he's got to be right all the time," "I don't like her" or "He is always so pushy." No one wants to cooperate with a team member who is a perceived as an enemy.

### ESTABLISH COMMONALITY

Find mutual interest, hobbies, vacation spots TV show music. Say to yourself, "he thinks the summer project is a priority and so do I." Say out loud "what are our common goals for this project?" "What do we both see as the quota for this shift?" "What do we both want to see happen with this client/customer?" "What result do we both want from this meeting today?" You can establish commonality nonverbally as well. When we accentuate the nonverbal differences in our teammates it also causes conflict. Someone furrows their brows and never smiles so we see them

as a grinch. Guess what, they may see you constantly smiling face and think what a phony. “He is so slow it takes forever for him to finish a sentence” or “she is so fast she is constantly interrupting me.” When we like a teammate, when we get along with them, we have a tendency to subconsciously match and mirror their body language. They lean forward you lean forward. They take a sip of soda, you take a sip of soda, they talk in a fast excited voice you respond in a fast excited voice, they start to use rapid hand gesture you start tapping your foot in the same rhythm as their gestures. If you video taped your conversation and played the tape on fast forward it would look like you were dancing. You’re in sync and that feels good. You think, “I can trust her, she’s just like me.” This matching happens naturally. You rarely notice when someone is in sync, only when they are out of sync and that feeling creates conflict.

When someone is upset, with a negative tone, raises their voice slightly and stridently expresses their displeasure with something and you are calm and placidly give them a platitude, they may calm down feeling out of sync with your calmness. However, if their truly upset and they think wait a minute she has no idea how upset I am because she is still calm. They are very likely to get louder longer and meaner till they hook you and you raise your voice in exasperation to match them. I call this the louder longer meaner phenomenon. The lack of matching someone’s pain causes them to feel a lack of empathy. You don’t get their pain so they will get louder longer and meaner, till you do. When you feel that someone is in pain as they communicate and your calmness is not helping ease it show empathy by matching them nonverbally.

#### ESTABLISH COMONALITY NONVERBALALY

Match body posture and facial expressions, energy level gestures, voice, even rate of speech and breathing. Do this activity, slowly and gently while maintaining eye contact. When you match

them and interesting thing will happen you will actually be able to feel what they are feeling. In addition, as mentioned previously, you communicate to them at the subconscious your understanding; “hey I get it, I’m with you.” “I’m not your enemy.” “I want to understand you.” Don’t mirror aggression. If someone stands over you legs apart, hands on their hips and starts yelling at you don’t you jump up and match them. You might get punched. What you can do is subtly come in at a level or two below their energy, have a little intensity in your voice as you say “I understand you’re upset, this project is important to me too.” Then slowly bring your volume down and slow your rate of speech and relax your body; a little miracle is likely to happen, they will slow down with you and lower their voice because they no longer feel the need to yell. What if the team member is giving you a piece of criticism? Such as, “your ugly and your mother dressed you funny.” Then without using a defensive voice or posture, use one or more of the following, Handshake Responses.

#### **HANDSHAKE RESPONSES: REPEAT THE HEAT**

Repeat what the criticizer has just said. Like taking the time to blow across the surface of a too hot cup of coffee to help it cool down, repeating the criticism gives the criticizer and you the time to cool down. In addition, repeating back the information gives you a better understanding of what the other person has said. The active listening required to paraphrase the comment activates a different portion of your brain than passive listening. Brain researchers say that activation not only helps you understand the information better but also helps you become calmer. You have heard the advice, “When you get mad count to ten.” That works because numbers are processed in the more logical rational unemotional part of your brain and counting basically makes you switch from the emotional right hemisphere to the unemotional left. Repeating the information can also

help you switch to the more rational portion of your brain. For example, you can say “Let’s make sure I understand...” When I was working on a project with a rather bossy “always right” team member they yelled out one day “If you would do exactly what I told you to do exactly the way I told you to do it we wouldn’t have any problems.” Since this was a team project, we all needed to have equal input. I calmly repeated back his statement. Guess what? He said it so emotionally he hadn’t even realized how horrible he sounded. When he heard himself in my paraphrasing he hung his head and said, “Oh, I’m sorry that sounded pretty bad.” You’ll find that repeating back can sometimes let the speaker hear themselves and that is enough to defuse the tension.

#### HANDSHAKE RESPONSES: REQUEST MORE

“Are you kidding?” You say, “Someone is criticizing me and I’m supposed to ask for more?” Let me clarify, when someone criticizes you and you’re not sure what the heck they mean or you have assumptions, request more information. If someone says, “I don’t like how you’re doing your work.” You say calmly, “What specifically don’t you like about my work?” People very often criticize in generalities especially if they speak emotionally. Emotional statements come from the part of the brain that sees the big picture, not the specific details. By requesting specifics you get the negative team member to basically switch hemispheres to access the details. A word of caution you will know that they’re very upset if they get flustered or in any way can’t give specifics. Their extreme emotions may be overriding their ability to switch hemispheres.

Years ago I was co-authoring my first book with a professor who was known for being a grumbly critique. We had each taken a chapter heading to work on. I slaved over my chapter for two weeks researching and rewriting it. When we met in the professor’s office he handed me his chapter and

I handed him mine. I got rather nervous as he reached for a red magic marker. He read a few pages then put a large X across a page he read a few more pages and put another X two more X's later he finished reading threw the chapter at me and said, "This stinks!" I sat there stunned then was overcome first with humiliation then with anger as I thought, "What right did he have to be so abrupt?" Then I thought, "I'm so stupid, I'm going to have to work even harder if he doesn't think my ideas and research are any good." "I'll have to rewrite the whole thing from scratch." All of a sudden I realized that I was responding defensively. I took deep breath and in that pause I realized I had no idea what he had meant by his "This stinks!" comment. So I asked him, "What about this chapter do you not like?" He replied, "Well, look at this page there are three spelling errors and here on this page there are two!" "Now look on this page, you have two sentences that don't have parallel construction!" Though he was still upset, I was suddenly happy. All the errors were spelling and grammar. I asked what about the content. He said, "Oh that's great, but you have got to do something about your English." I learned on that day that emotions can truly keep you from hearing the real message, asking for specifics really works and that spell check doesn't catch all errors. Requesting more information isn't about catching the criticizer in a generalization it's about clarifying communication so you know what you could do differently.

For example, "What specifically do I need to change?"

#### HANDSHAKE RESPONSES: ASK WHY

Remember when you were little and your mother asked you to do something and you asked why. Well when we get older and someone criticizes us, they are effectively saying, do it my way and we sometimes still want to know why.

Asking why is your right. Perhaps you feel a team member is backing you into a corner and you begin to feel like a victim. Or maybe they are saying stop doing something this way and you don't understand why. It can't be done your way. Perhaps you don't respond to an e-mail within an hour of receiving it and your team member criticizes you. You ask, "I'm confused, why is it important for me to check my e-mail every hour?" If their reply is, "...because, I look at mine every hour and therefore you should too." You can have a courageous conversation about your schedule and personal preferences. (See my chapter in the book, "Reach for the Stars" for instruction on courageous conversations.) If they say, "...because this project is due at the end of the day and I can't finish without you reading the document and giving me input." Then you know their concern has some warrant. You must be sure that your demeanor has no hint of a smart aleck retort or whine as you ask, "Why?." But instead indicates a sincere curiosity. This request is softened by saying, "Help me understand...", "I'm confused...." or "I want to understand...." For example, "Help me understand why this is important to you..."

#### HANDSHAKE RESPONSES: AGREE WITH IT

"What?" you say, "Are you crazy?," "Agree with a criticism?" Yep when the person is right, agree. It's the fastest most effective way to defuse a negative comment. It works best when you do truly agree. When you did come late to the meeting, when you didn't help on a project, when you should have, when your mother did dress you funny for work that day, agree.

I like to be right. When I was growing up my father was Full Bird Cornell in the Air Force and a College Professor. He was ALWAYS right. It was a family ritual when he would make a mistake for him to joke, "First mistake I ever made." Years later when I went out into the world and started my business I felt I was always right. That it was part of my genetic heritage to ALWAYS be right.

Well, always being right means that everybody else in the room is always wrong. Pretty soon nobody wants to be in the room with you.

Then I started teaching Handshake non-defensive options. One day, I was riding in a car with a team member. He said something, I told him he was wrong and why. He turned to me and gave me the evidence to prove he was right, I said, "Oh your right!" "I was wrong," there was a potent silence, the earth moved. The planets realigned. I felt a strange peace come over me. My team members jaw dropped and he said, "Do you realize that in all the time we've worked together that's the very first time you let me be right?" "That's the very first time you admitted that you were wrong?" I quickly replied, "No your wrong!" He started laughing and I realized that I had made him wrong again.

Agreeing, takes away the negative comments power. There is nothing more your teammate can say. Though, I still like to be right. (My boyfriend will attest to that) I have found, as you will that there is a release and an ease that comes with agreeing. By the way, agreeing works very well with your mother's criticisms of you too. So the next time she says, "You need a haircut. Say, "Your right Mom."

For example "Your right I do need to do that differently."

#### HANDSHAKE RESPONSES: I'M SORRY

You've done something wrong, an instead of excusing yourself out of it (as in making up an excuse) just say a short and simple "I'm sorry." Or "I'm sorry I messed up." It seems so easy to say, "It's not my fault." "It's all the teams fault." Or, "I got it late or I would have gotten it to you on time." We think of these as explanations or justifications, but they are really defensive



SHIELDS. Stand facing towards your teammate, if you're strong or you're mighty you can say, "I'm sorry."

For example, "I messed up, I'm sorry."

#### HANDSHAKE RESPONSES: EXPRESS WHAT YOU ARE FEELING

"What do mean telling them how I'm feeling?" you ask. "You mean tell them how miffed I am?" Nope. Tell them that they said something that was upsetting to you. Not, "You make me mad." But instead, "When you say that I don't care about our project I get upset." Notice that you don't say **YOU MAKE ME MAD** and that you also repeat the. Why do you need to tell them your emotional response their statesmen? Because some people have no idea how their negative comments affect others. They can't or won't think about it. The people who have difficulty understanding are usually using with the logical left hemisphere, sometimes called the critique brain. This makes the person great at telling you what specifically is wrong or what they don't like but without the interaction of the right brain were emotions are considered can sound rather blunt and unfeeling. For these people you need to clue them in. Caution, don't say "You **MAKE** me angry." You decide to be angry, they don't **MAKE** you angry. Also angry and mad are emotion laden words, miffed, upset or the entire list of emotions besides angry and mad would be more effective.

#### HANDSHAKE RESPONSES: DISAGREE

Now you're talking, you may say. You tell them how stupid they are. Not quite. Disagreeing isn't about making the other guy wrong. It's about letting them feel however they want to feel and you getting to feel whatever you want. The first step in disagreeing is to listen carefully to what the team member has said then repeat the heat, so they have no doubt that you heard them. Then you

disagree. For example “You feel.. I disagree, I feel...” Notice the first step is not, “Your wrong and your mother wears army boots.” If you say to a team member your wrong they are just going to turn around and say, “No I’m right your wrong.” and you’ll end up with a Peewee Herman “I know your are but what am I?” four year olds argumentative style. Simply repeat what they have said. Then disagree. If that doesn’t diffuse it and they keep trying to convince you that they are right and you’re wrong, try the next response.

#### HANDSHAKE RESPONSES: AGREE TO DISAGREE

In this response you both are adamant in you opinions and neither is going to change the other’s mind. I was working on a project with a team member and one issue came up that we just kept disagreeing on. I finally said, “It’s important to me that we get along on this project.” I can tell you that I feel strongly on this issue and you’re not going to say anything to change my mind so why don’t we agree to disagree.” “I’ll respect your opinion and you respect mine and if it comes up in a team meeting we will just smile knowingly at each other.” “He actually laughed and said O.K.!

#### HANDSHAKE RESPONSES: DELAY IT

“Oh boy, you mean I can stuff it. “Put it off for anther meeting.” Nope. A delay is not a Shield technique. No stuffing allowed. It’s not a Cape and Dagger technique. No saving it for ammunition later.

Time delay is more like a time out. It can be as short and simple as saying. “Let me think about it before I respond.” You can also just take a deep breath or say “Let’s go get a cup of coffee or coke and come back and talk about his.” It’s just a brief break to let any really intense negative emotions dissipate. The way the brain operates in a conflict after a delay of twenty four hours it

will only hold onto your side of the discussion the more time the passes the more right you become and the more wrong they are. So just ask for or suggest a short break. For example, “This is important to me but the emotions are pretty intense I think we could work this out if we took a break and came back after lunch and talked about it.” Notice the wording. You don’t say. “Your too mad now to be reasonable.” “I need you to calm down.” Make the emotions separate from you or you take ownership of your emotions. For example, “I’m too emotional to solve this right now can we take break here and talk about it.” or “I’m on overwhelm with a project now, and this is important to me can we talk about it at 3:00 after I’m done and then I can give it the attention it deserves.” Notice that you are making an appointment to delay. So that it’s sure to be taken care of.

For example “There’s too much emotion now. How about we talk about this today at 2:00?”

### INTERGRATING THE HANDSHAKE TOOLS

Now you have enough handshake tools to give a choice in responding. As you start practicing them you probably find one that seems to be more comfortable for you. Use that tool until it becomes second nature to you until you don’t have to think about it or hesitate. In the meantime, take the quick reference sheet of handshake options given below and tape them somewhere. Maybe pin it to your cubicle wall or workstation. Or make them a screen saver for the first part of your daytimes. Put them somewhere where you’ll be reminded to use them. Don’t let them be mere bookmark. Let them help you change the way you deal with conflict.

Little by little these handshake options have helped me. They were awkward at first and I still have my favorites. I knew that were really a part of me about a year after I started using them. I was doing a workshop for the elders of a church in Richmond Virginia when I had just taught the

handshake options and given the class a break. One of the elders of the church came up during the break and said. “These options are bull...” I replied, “Oh, what about them don’t you like?” He looked at me funny and said “darn it!” We decided at the beginning of the break that we would all criticize you to get you defensive and that the handshakes wouldn’t work, but you didn’t hesitate. You were curious, you didn’t get mad at all.” I realized in that moment that I hadn’t felt defensive. Since I used the tools over and over again, I was more in control of myself. These responses can make a difference in your life. You just need to practice them.

Now test yourself with the insights and tools you’ve gained. Write out your response and label it.

1. Your teammate comes over and starts ranting about a voice mail you sent them. How do you deal with him?
2. You’re in one of those pointless meetings that has gone on longer than the Emmys and you aren’t happy because your not getting a little gold statue instead you are getting chewed out by your teammate for not doing the project the way she specified. How do you respond?
3. Your team leader pulls you into his cubicle to talk about how you have been interacting with a teammate. He says something you vehemently disagree with. How do you respond?
4. You’re working on a project with a team member and they tell you in no uncertain terms the way you’re doing your part is wrong and stupid. What do you say?

Think about your responses. What emotions did you feel? What did you resist doing? Was your combat attitude engaged? Be aware that in every conflict you have choices. As you work with your team, put away your swords, shields and daggers. Then return your “Braveheart” tape to Blockbuster and rent a Disney flick. Remember, you have personal power.

### HANDSHAKE QUICK RESPONSE SHEET

Listen to your team member and acknowledge them. Then use one of the Handshake responses, you have a lot of options.

### **ESTABLISH COMMONALITY VERBALLY**

~Look for what you agree on rather than differences.

~Example: What do we both want to accomplish with this meeting?

### **ESTABLISH COMMONALITY NONVERBALLY**

~Match their body language

~Example: They sit with their arms folded and their legs crossed in disagreement or closed off from your ideas. You very slowly match them. Maintain eye contact while slowly moving out of the match into an open relaxed and receptive posture and watch them relax with you.

### **REPEAT THE HEAT**

~In an intentions voice repeat what the criticizer has just said.

~Example: “Let me make sure I understand... You said...?”

### **REQUEST MORE INFORMATION**

~Ask for the details or a specific explanation of your behavior.

~Example: “What specifically do I need to change?”

### **ASK WHY**

~Use your right to discover the consequences of your behavior.

~Example: “Help me understand why it's important for me to do it that way.”

### **AGREE**

~With the statement, if it is true.

~Example: "You're right."

## **AGREE TO DISAGREE**

### **HANDSHAKE QUICK RESPONSE SHEET CONTINUED**

~Make an agreement to disagree

~Example: "Let's agree to disagree on this issue."

## **I'M SORRY**

~Heal the mistake and don't add a justification or an excuse.

~Example: "I'm sorry I messed up."

## **EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS**

~If the other person is clueless and not "out to get you."

~Example: "When you say...I feel...."

## **DISAGREE**

~Without making the other person wrong.

~Example: "You feel...I disagree I feel..."

## **TIME DELAY**

~Make an appointment to deal with the issues later if there is too much emotion now.

~Example: "There is too much emotion now. How about if we take a break go get a snack and come back in five minutes and talk about it?"