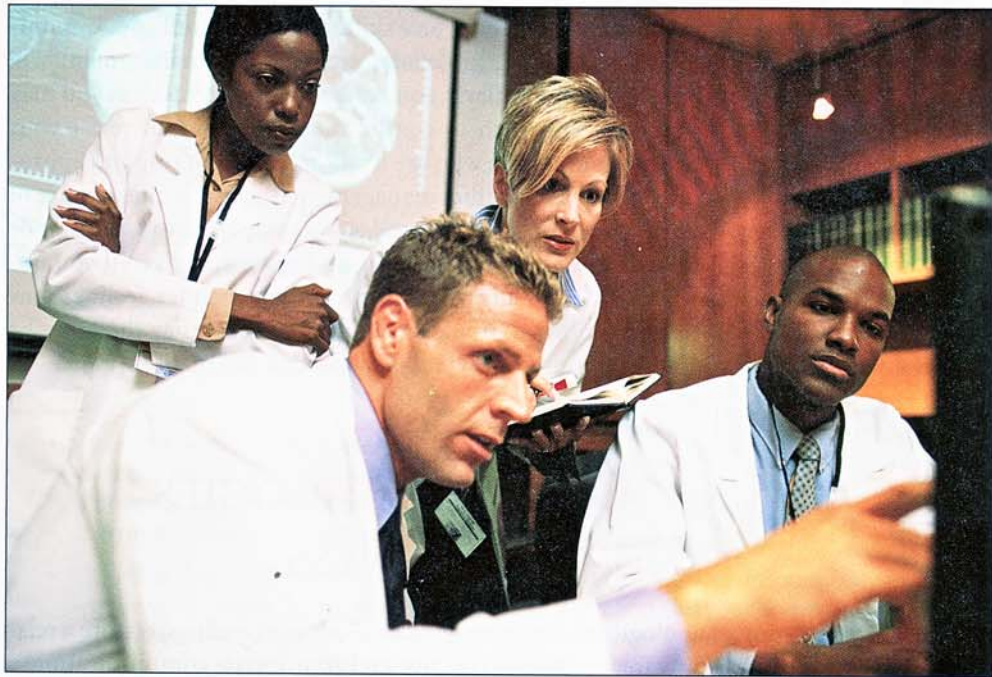


Insist that the Results Be Based on Some Objective Standard (Criteria) A principle of fairness or some objective standard should be used to justify a mutually satisfying solution in collaborative conflict resolution. Fair standards can be based on costs, scientific



Collaborative conflict resolution involves making use of a variety of communication skills to help partners reach their goals.

judgment, what a court might decide, ease of compliance, moral or professional standards, equal treatment, and efficiency. For example, we can say:

- “What do you think is the most important criterion or standard to guide our thinking about which solution is best?”
- “Would you be most satisfied with a solution that is least expensive?”
- “Would you agree to a solution that we can put into place in the least amount of time?”

Any of these questions can apply to the partners who need more space yet desire to stay close to friends and the children’s schools.

Remember to be realistic about the guidelines and skills related to conflict communication. There is no guarantee that engaging in collaborative conflict management will meet the needs of all parties in a dispute. Similarly, someone more powerful than you may make use of a win-lose, competing approach to conflict management and reject your request to engage in collaboration, and people who are irrational may not respond appropriately and effectively to your attempts at conflict management. Instead of making use of the collaborative or compromising personal conflict styles, you may need to withdraw or accommodate a relational partner who is extremely angry and aggressive. Even if you initially use conflict management skills in an effective and appropriate manner, feelings may be hurt and angry words may be expressed. Apologies and forgiveness may therefore be competent responses to conflict communication that is ineffective and inappropriate.