

Analyzing a 21st Century Dispute[©]

The most powerful tool for resolving a dispute is an open, inquiring mind. Please answer the questions below to the best of your ability. Then use the questions you cannot answer completely, or feel you are just guessing at, as a roadmap for further inquiry. You may never have all the answers, but asking the right questions may get you to where you need to go.

1. What do you think this dispute is about?
2. What does the other party think this dispute is about?
3. What does this dispute say about you? In other words, what meaning does it hold for you?
4. What does this dispute say about the other person? In other words, what meaning does it hold for him or her?
5. Are you clear about what you are trying to achieve? If tradeoffs may be required, are you clear about your priorities?
6. What is the other person trying to achieve? If tradeoffs may be required, what are his or her priorities?
7. What are your gut reactions to the other person? What do you think these reactions are based on?
8. What do you think his or her gut reactions are to you? What do you think these reactions are based on?
9. Do you regard any key facts pertaining to this dispute as beyond question, and, if so, why?
10. Does the other person regard any key facts pertaining to this dispute as beyond question, and, if so, why?
11. Is the other person demanding that you change in some way? If so, could you somehow experience this change for a while before deciding whether to agree to it?
12. Are you demanding that the other person change in some way? If so, could you help him or her experience this change for a while before deciding whether to agree to it?