POSITIONS AND UNDERLYING CONCERNS

A **position** is one person's solution to an issue, what they say they want to happen.

An **underlying concern** (or 'interest') is the reason behind the position, why a person says they want something to happen.

A FOCUS ON POSITIONS	A FOCUS ON UNDERLYING CONCERNS
1. View the different sides as adversaries. 2. Goal is victory for my/our position. 3. State concerns by reacting to the other side's views. 4. Try to persuade the other side that my/our position is the correct one. 5. Take an extreme position – based on the assumption that I'll have to compromise. 6. Insist on a single answer; reject the ideas of others. 7. Demand one-sided concessions. 8. Apply pressure.	1. View the different sides as problem solvers. 2. Goal is a wise outcome for all. 3. Define concerns in a reflective and non-reactive way. 4. Explore underlying concerns of both sides, and the reasons for the concerns. 5. Highlight shared interests – expecting that there will be some common ground. 6. Brainstorm alternatives without premature evaluation; be creative. 7. Seek to address the concerns of both sides. 8. Use reason and be open to reason; yield to principle, not to pressure.

Some Strategies for Exploring Underlying Concerns

1. **Make a list of each side's underlying concerns, as they surface,** including basic needs. Use flip chart paper and put the list up on the wall so that the concerns are visible to everyone in the meeting. (Write big if it's a big meeting and there are lots of people.)

2. **Recast or reframe positions as concerns:** 'The Church Secretary has got to go!' if appropriate might become, 'So you are really concerned that the Church Secretary is not doing all that you think he should be doing?'

3. **Explore why a particular demand is being made,** in order to draw out the underlying concerns. For example you might say: 'Tell me more about why that is important to you, or what effect the situation is having on you' or 'Help us understand how this will meet your objectives' or 'What is at stake for you?'

4. **Explore why a particular proposal is not acceptable,** in order to understand the problem better. You might ask: 'Say more about what seems unfair here' or 'Help me understand why this doesn't seem a workable solution to you.'

5. **Highlight similar or shared concerns:** 'You both seem concerned that…' or 'Better communication is really important to both sides.'

6. **Invite new ideas and solutions** which could address underlying concerns **and explore what would need to change to make a proposal acceptable:** 'What would make you feel more positive on this issue?' or 'How would this proposal have to change for you to be happy with it?'