

## Clearing the air

### Lead-in

1 Work in pairs and discuss the questions.

- 1 Are you a good team player?
- 2 Is it important that you get on well with your colleagues?
- 3 What sort of things do people fall out about at work?
- 4 Have you ever fallen out with someone at work? Have you seen other colleagues fall out? What happened?
- 5 What does the expression 'clear the air' mean?

### Input

1 **▶67.1** Bill and Clare work in the editorial department of a publishing company, but don't see eye to eye. Listen to them discussing their problems with each other at a 'clearing the air' meeting. Another colleague (Joanne) is acting as a mediator. While you listen, answer these questions.

1 What complaints do they make about each other?

.....  
.....

2 Do they resolve their issues?

.....  
.....

3 Who do you think is more direct/aggressive in this meeting?

.....  
.....

2 Check your answers with a partner.

### Language focus

1 Match the expressions from the audio (1–8) with their definitions (a–h).

- |                            |       |  |
|----------------------------|-------|--|
| 1 to badmouth someone      | ..... | a how someone carries out their job  |
| 2 to tell it like it is    | ..... | b to say something that is not true/ridiculous                                     |
| 3 working style            | ..... | c to say negative things about someone   |
| 4 to walk all over someone | ..... | d not to let something which happened in the past affect the present or the future |
| 5 to pull your weight      | ..... | e when two people don't get on because of difference in attitude/character         |
| 6 to talk nonsense         | ..... | f to do your share of the work   |
| 7 a clash of personalities | ..... | g to treat someone without respect   |
| 8 put something behind you | ..... | h to speak frankly   |

**2** Work in pairs. Complete the sentences with one of the expressions (1–8) from 1.

- 1 I've had a difficult year and lots of bad stuff has happened but I'm determined to .....
- 2 She's really nasty to her brother. She bullies him and generally just .....
- 3 I'm sorry, but that's completely untrue. Don't ..... !
- 4 Some people say I'm too honest, but I think I just .....
- 5 We don't accept laziness round here; everyone has to .....
- 6 I tried to get on with him, but it wasn't possible. I suppose you can say it was a .....

**3** Look at these phrases taken from the audio. What function do they all perform?

- 1 He can be a little bit disorganised.
- 2 I'm not saying Bill's lazy, but ...
- 3 He's not the most punctual person either.
- 4 She's always interfering.

Some of the complaints above sound more direct than others. Which do you think are the most direct? Which are less direct? In terms of structure, how do they achieve this effect?

**4** Work in pairs. Rewrite the sentences below using the techniques looked at in 3.

- 1 She arrives late all the time. ....
- 2 She's lazy. ....
- 3 He's really rude. ....
- 4 He makes so much noise when he eats! ....
- 5 She's a terrible communicator. ....
- 6 It was such a stupid thing to do! ....

**Task**

**1** Work in groups of three. You are going to take part in three 'clearing the air' meetings. Your teacher will give you role-cards which you will use to take part in the meetings. Everyone will have the opportunity to be the mediator in one of the meetings

Use the notes on the cards and your own ideas to prepare for the meeting. If you have to make complaints, think about how you will word them. Will you take a direct or a diplomatic approach?

**2** Do the first role-play. The mediator should open the meeting and then invite the colleagues to voice their complaints. The meeting is only over once you have achieved some kind of agreement.

Once you've finished, repeat the procedure for the role-plays 2 and 3.

**3** Report back to the class on your meetings, saying how you got on, if the problem was solved and who the best mediator was.

**Review**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....