

Non-Violent Conflict and Dispute Resolution

Always remember, and never
forget...



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Conflict is the energy that holds relationship together. Sounds strange, but true. However, not all conflict is bad, but one has to know the difference between good and bad conflict and how to *work to eliminate the bad kind*, while working just as hard to **enhance** the good. No, this is not too difficult, but it does require skills that we don't often consciously practice. This presentation is designed to increase participant's skill set necessary to recognize the roots and anatomy of interpersonal conflict, bring them to the surface of relationship, engage the other person and "pull them close" and then redirect negative behavior into more positive channels.

One interpretation of the anatomy of conflict:

1. The beginning of conflict
2. Fight or flight response
3. Alienated thinking
4. New wants
5. Empathy

The Anatomy of Conflict

1. In any given moment we are usually wanting something. Consciously or unconsciously, we would like things to happen the way we want them to. We have a vision or a perception of how things should happen and if things happen that meet that perspective we are comfortable, but if they don't we are uncomfortable; we are in conflict.
2. When we are in conflict there may be a change in how we perceive the situation at hand. We may feel sad and disappointed. Similar but unresolved experiences from the past may add energy to the situation and our reactions may be stronger. We may feel anger or fear out of a sense of self-preservation, a very old and primitive reflex- the fight or flight response. When we sense danger these instincts are triggered to protect us by fighting or running away. Though most conflicts are not life- threatening, we can still find ourselves seized by panic and adrenaline as if there was an attack on our very lives.
3. In this state of reaction, we often "scramble" for some sense of understanding or relief from our distress. To achieve a sense of inner stability or to gain control of the situation, we move into alienated thinking, thinking that is more concerned with evaluating who is right or wrong, rather than what we are wanting or needing. Alienated thinking is more likely to distance us from the other person and from ourselves, separating us from our feelings and needs.
4. If we were connected to our feelings and wants, we would discover that behind the alienated thinking are new wants. These new wants are concerned with the stress of the situation, and are looking for connection rather than alienation. However, most of us have difficulty making a connection when we are lost in the alienated thoughts, fear and frustration that arise from conflict. Unable to achieve the connection we need; we store our wants away in our unconscious until another issue brings them up again.
5. Empathy is a way to make that connection by identifying the wants and needs that are behind other people's reactions. Providing empathy for others with whom we are in conflict sets the stage for us to receive the empathy that we also need. (Harvey and Ventura, 2006)

One great truth: *Conflict* is the energy that holds relationship together – work to create *positive*.

Pull the weeds & Sow good grass.



- Bad or "depleting" conflict behaviors are foolish risks: "weeds"
 - Lying
 - Narcissism
 - Withholding
 - Withdrawing
 - Blaming/doubting
 - Sabotage others/self
 - Manipulation
 - Control
 - Victimstance
 - Martyrdom
- Good or "enhancing" conflict behaviors are intelligent risks: "good grass"
 - Trust
 - Commitment
 - Participation
 - Co-creation
 - Effective communication
 - Empathy
 - Understanding
 - Honesty and congruence
 - Being present

The outstanding significance of these lists is that the more *positive* behaviors present in any workplace, team or relationship, the more harmony, synergy and “mutualism” (each member providing something the others need but can’t produce on their own) are at work. People in this environment are much more likely to stay a part of that team, regardless of the stress and difficulty encountered.

The more *negative* behaviors present, the more likely people will look for another place to go. There is no synergy. People tend to withhold their mutual contributions and become self-centered if only to survive. In business, turnover is public enemy #1. If a leader can keep their people, they have a much better chance to grow, but if they’re constantly retraining new employees how to do the job, growth stops. (From “Valuing Relationship”, Griggs Productions 1994, www.griggs.com.)

The great Les Brown story, “Laying on the Nail” as a way of explaining why negative conflict can linger for years, and that it’s much easier (although dysfunctional) to gripe and complain rather than doing something about it. Thanks to Major Gary Albus, DPS Lubbock, for the inspiration.

“There was a young man walking down the street and happened to see an old man sitting on his porch. Next to the old man was his dog, who was whining and whimpering. The young man asked the old man “What’s wrong with your dog” The old man said “He’s laying on a nail”. The young man asked “Laying on a nail?, Well why doesn’t he get up?” The old man then replied “It’s not hurting bad enough.”

Source | Les Brown, *Live Your Dreams* (William Morrow Paperbacks, July 1994) page 194

A Review of Parent, Adult and Child, 101 - The “Transactional Analysis” Theory of Resolving Conflict from “*Games People Play*” by Dr. Eric Berne

In 1964, Dr. Eric Berne M.D. wrote “*Games People Play*”. The book put into pop culture his theory of relationship and conflict which he called “Transactional Analysis”. In part and paraphrase, here is what he said about T.A.:

From time to time, people show noticeable changes in four specific aspects of behavior. They are posture, voice, viewpoint, and vocabulary. These changes along with shifts in feeling, temporarily create a “new person” in us, or what Berne called an “ego state”. These “new people” are a sort of defense mechanism soldier to combat the effects of stress, pressure, or attack against us. Those “new people” or ego states have names and personalities that have been recognizable for years – ***parent, adult and child.***

Although *natural* to jump into one of these new people to protect ourselves, it is not *normal* to stay in them. So, this brief overview of the ego states is (hopefully) an explanation of how they can either enable or diffuse conflict where words are the only (or primary) permissible means to resolve it.



“From time to time, people show noticeable changes...”

- Posture, voice, viewpoint and vocabulary changes.
- Changes create a shift in feeling.
- “Social stimuli” creates a new person or “ego state”.
 - *Stuff* happens – “The last thing I needed...”
 - Defense mechanisms to combat stress, pressure or “attack”.
- “Ego states” have more common names: Parent, Adult and Child

One of my favorite (and perfectly accurate) examples of the “social stimuli” that can lead to a new person, or “ego state” is the song “*The Last Thing I Needed*” by Donna S. Farar and the great Gary P. Nunn:

The postman delivered a past due bill notice,
The milkman came two hours late;
The garbage man dumped all the trash on the sidewalk
The hinges fell off of the gate;
This morning at breakfast, I spilled all the coffee
I opened the door on my knee;
The last thing I needed, the first thing this morning, was to have you walk out on me.
Last night you came home late, and I knew you’d been drinking,
By that old mellow look on your face;
But I thought it really don’t matter, since it’s the holiday season,
And you fill such a big empty space;
And I laid down beside you, and I wanted your loving,
‘Cause your love makes my life complete,
And the last thing I needed, the first thing this morning,
Was to have you walk out on me.
So excuse me for looking like my world has ended,
Excuse me for looking like I just lost my best friend;
Excuse me for living and being forgiving,
Just go if you want to be free;
The last thing I needed, the first thing this morning,
Was to have you walk out on me.
Yeah, the last thing I needed, the first thing this morning,
Was to have you walk out on me.

Characteristics of P-A-C

This is your parent means...

- “You are now in the same state of mind...”
- *Something* turns you into your Mom or Dad.
- “Parents” are:
 - Self-referential
 - Personal, possessive pronouns (*I, me* and *my*)
 - Authoritarian – “I’m...”
- What are some things your parents used to say?
Parental postures are dangerous in potential conflict, inciting “fight”.

Child characteristics

- This is your child means...
 - “The manner and intent of your reaction...”
 - *Natural vs. adapted* child?
 - “Children” are:
 - Selfish
 - Personal, possessive pronouns – especially “*my*”
 - Short-term thought process
- Child postures (signaling “flight” or withdrawal) create super parents – examples?

Adult characteristics

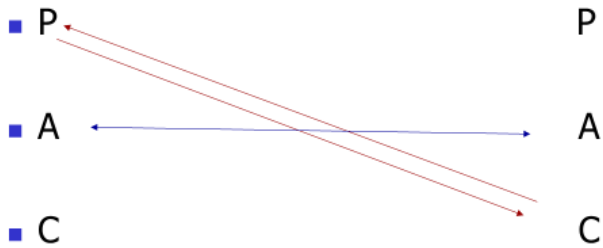
- This is your adult means...
 - “You have just made...”
- “Adults” are:
 - Autonomous
 - Objective
 - Non-prejudicial
 - Responsive, not reactive
 - Plural, possessive pronouns (*we, us* and *our*)
 - Generates empathy.
- Adult postures are “engaging” – calming, loose, open, non-threatened and non-threatening: listen, empathize, ask.

Remember, once started, one’s clock only ticks so long before locking into fight or flight...

45 Seconds.....



The Most Effective Way to Resolve Conflict is as an "Adult"



To consciously practice "adult" engagers and responses, try this warm up":

Send back the steak.

The brakes on my vehicle are still not right.

I have NO idea what you're talking about.

Exercise #1 respond to each like an "adult"

■ "You can't *make* me!"

■ "What kind of idiot are you?"


■ "Why *can't* I have it? *Why??*"

■ "I don't have to do a ____ thing you say!"

■ "What were you thinking?"

■ "I'd really love to date, but just not you."





If There's a "Secret" to Success...

- We must work to engage the other person and elevate them to the adult level...
 - Even when, and especially when, they "don't deserve to be treated like one"...
- "I treat people as good as they let me", isn't good enough.

Former, long-time president of Michigan State University, John A. Hannah once said:

"The greatest ability in business is to get along with others and influence their actions. A chip on the shoulder is too heavy a piece of baggage to carry through life." (Harvey and Ventura, 2006)

References that influenced this presentation include:

1. **Games People Play – The Psychology of Human Relationships** by Dr. Eric Berne, M.D., Grove Press, Inc., New York, New York, 1964.
2. **Verbal Judo: Redirecting Behavior With Words** by Dr. George J. Thompson and Dr. Michael J. Stroud, The Verbal Judo Institute, 1984
3. **Verbal Judo: The Gentle Art of Persuasion** by Dr. George J. Thompson and Jerry B. Jenkins, William Morrow and Company, New York, New York, 1993.
4. **"Valuing Relationship"**, a three-part video-based program produced by Griggs Productions, San Francisco, 1994. www.griggs.com
5. ***What to Do When Conflict Happens***, Eric Harvey and Steve Ventura, the Walk the Talk Company, Dallas, Texas, 2006.

Presenter - J. Mark Warren

Is a Training Consultant and former employee with the Texas Association of Counties in his hometown of Austin, Texas. His presentations convey a message of inspiration, motivation and new direction and revolve around leadership, interpersonal communication and relationship skills, workplace diversity and professionalism, bridging the generations and customer service excellence.

Mark worked with the TAC Leadership Program and served as the coordinator of its Leadership Training from 2002 and County Best Practices from 2009 to 2015.

After graduating from St. Edward's University in 1977, Mark spent 23 years with the Texas Department of Public Safety, retiring in 2000 as the Assistant Commander of the Training Academy in Austin.

From December 2015 through August 2017, Mark presented a series of presentations on verbal de-escalation with the Texas Police Association for the Department of Public Safety and law enforcement and criminal justice professionals across Texas.

For more information on Mark's presentations, please visit, www.county.org/Education-Training/Event-Presentations/Special-Presentations, or mwarren24@msn.com.