

Conflict perceptions

'Conflict' what does the word mean to you? - Ask First.

Our view of conflict will determine how we respond to conflict and will determine the styles of conflict that we use.

"When my momentum as a person-my hopes, dreams, wants, needs, drives-runs counter to your momentum there is conflict. To sacrifice my momentum is to be untrue to the push and pull of God within me. To negate your momentum is to refuse to be reverent before the presence and work of God within you."

There will be conflict

there will be conflict :-
to sacrifice or negate
momentum is what conflict
becomes
unhealthy

"It is not the conflicts that need concern us, but how the conflicts are handled"

Views of Conflict when fear is involved - fear that is un-named
unresolved avoided
or not
worked
through.

- 1) Conflict is seen as being natural, normal, neutral and sometimes even delightful. It may involve pain and may not have a good outcome. Conflict is viewed as neither good nor bad, right or wrong, conflict simply is. There are multiple views to life and as we live together those differences will come into sharper focus and they provide an opportunity to name differences and to work through with respect and care, to a new picture.
- 2) Conflict might be viewed as a given, as something that cannot be avoided or worked through. With this view we might make statements, "We just can't get along," "we are incompatible," "We will never understand each other, and that's all there is to it." With this view people will avoid conflict at all costs, will avoid anything that threatens their world view. Distancing is a way to deal with the issue. I want out.
- 3) Conflict is seen as 'crushing', if the person clashes with someone they will be judged, rejected, or the friendship will fall through. This view will make a person have to accommodate and be the nice person, quickly giving in and making others feel comfortable around them.
- 4) Conflict might be viewed as an inevitable issue of right or wrong. The person has to defend their truth at all costs and prove the other person

wrong. This view will make the person rigid, black and white, judgemental and perfectionist.

- 5) Conflict might be viewed as a mutual difference to be resolved by meeting each other half way. I will come part way and you come part way. People will compromise on their views and meet the other halfway. This means that people are constantly having to mediate a compromise, without moving to a new view or new way of viewing the world.

What is your default position?

The 5 options of conflict without the personalisation — *without the fear*

- 1) Conflict is seen as being natural, normal and neutral. Care-fronting is offering genuine caring that bids self and the other to grow. To care is to welcome, invite and support growth in both self and the other. Care fronting is offering real confrontation that calls out new insight and understanding. To confront effectively is to offer the maximum of useful information with the minimum of threat and stress. Care-fronting unites love and power; it unifies concern for the relationship with concern for goals. If care-fronting is not possible.
- 2) Moving to a co-operative compromise. This is hopefully a temporary solution which will open the opportunity to move towards enhanced caring and increased openness and honesty
- 3) If this fails it might be wise to move towards a yield to maintain relationship stance. Not as an end state, but a commitment to build relationship so that more effective conversations and negotiations can take place
- 4) If this fails. It might be wise to move to a win-lose stance of affirming goals even at the cost of sacrificing relationship. The hope is to clarify the situation sufficiently to return to an equally and affirmative and assertive relationship
- 5) Last choice. Is to leave and withdraw from the relationship. The others right to refuse, reject or withdraw for a period of time. And after a period of time checking out what is happening for the person.
- 6) Mediation by a third party may be an option?

Conflict is seen as being natural, normal, and the personalisation that often occurs with other styles is removed or taken out of the issue. Confrontation is viewed as using the power that the person has to clarify and work through the issues to a new understanding and way of relating. Added to this view of conflict is the idea of caring. The idea that I want to stay in relationship with you and that I want to be heard and to know where I stand. This is what the author calls care-fronting.

Five options of conflict

1) I'll get them, 2) I'll get out, 3) I'll give in, 4) I'll meet you half way, 5) I care enough to confront. These are the basic options available in most conflict situations.

1) "I'll get them" is the I win you lose scenario. I'm right your wrong, the issues are very clear and simple. Some-one is totally right and the other person is totally wrong. This stance uses all power and little love or concern for the other. Goal is valued above relationship, my way is the only way. This stance can be very aggressive, and cause great rifts in relationships and may be used because the person feels very threatened or they are very frightened off being rejected or hurt. It can be used to maintain a point when under constant threat.

2) "I'll get out" is a way to deal with conflict. The idea here is that I don't feel I have much control or say in the conflict and or it can be the view that people cannot change and we will overlook them or withdraw. Conflict is to be avoided at all costs, when they are threatened, get out of the way at all costs. Withdrawal has its advantages if safety is the requirement. It a way out of conflict but not a way through conflict.

3) "I'll give in" is the I will yield to be nice because I need your friendship approach. This perspective says that conflict about differences is a disaster. It is far nicer to submit, to go along with the others demands and stay friends. Staying nice to keep friends may serve people well, but it will fall short, you will become a doormat.

4) "I'll meet you halfway" is the recognition that I only have half the truth and I need your half position. It is a creative compromise, conflict is seen as natural and everyone should be willing to come halfway in an attempt to resolve things. It calls for at least a partial sacrifice of deeply held goals and beliefs which may cost all of us the loss of the best to reach the good of the agreement. It is a compromise of what is truth. It does not allow people to tussle with the truth that can be tested, retested, refined and perhaps find more of it through our working it out seriously.

Care-Fronting

Chapter 2

The Truth: when in conflict

Our views and personal experience of conflict strongly influences how we respond to conflict and the style of conflict management we use for example some of us become defensive, while others become very quiet.

We are aware that one particular style of conflict management, does not really work well in all conflict situations. Flexibility in the styles we use and flexible responses are important skills to include in our own styles of conflict management.

When we are in a relationship we want to be fully heard, and we need to fully hear the other person. A healthy relationship is about flexibility, adapting to different needs, beliefs, ideas and circumstances. It is therefore crucial to practice, communicating to those that matter – to say what we mean, what we need, and what we want in a clear and simple way. A part of good communication involves listening to what the other person means, needs, and wants. Therefore to say what we really mean takes courage. To listen to what someone else is really saying and means also takes courage.

- **Communication in conflict means** stating clearly, and simply and *truthfully* what we mean, need, want. This is taking personal responsibility for our part in a conflict.

From *Caring to Confront* - page 31

I want to speak honestly. Truthing is trusting others with my actual feelings and viewpoints. Avoiding honest statements of real feelings and viewpoints is often considered kindness, thoughtfulness or generosity. More often it is the ~~cruellest~~^{cruellest} thing I can do to others. It is benevolent lying. Selective honesty is not honesty at all. I find myself using it

- 1) To avoid real relationships with others when I'm too rushed or tired to give them my time
- 2) To avoid clear confrontation with others
- 3) To manipulate situations or facts to protect myself or others.

Such defense systems, no matter what sort of safety they promise are not useful. It is necessary to be truthful in all situations. We should pay others the compliment of believing they too value honesty and can handle honest feelings. We should be able to truthfully express what we feel, where we am, how we think. [In appropriate ways, in appropriate environments]

When we conflict:

When situations of conflict become difficult, we should aim to speak clearly, honestly, personally, directly and in simple **statements**. This approach provides the greatest impact with the least confusion or distortion. While we may not be able to move through the conflict to an understanding, at least we can express truth without getting caught up in old communication traps of the “whys”, and the “it’s your fault” and the “you must change first”.

For Example

“It’s okay, no problem”, you say to your sister on the phone. It’s the fourth time in a row she’s got caught up in other activities and called you with last-minute apologies for not keeping a scheduled family related meeting about your aging father’s health needs. It’s not really okay with you, even though you keep saying it is. But that’s always been your style. Be agreeable, give in to others, and say everything’s okay, bottle your feelings until finally you explode over some simple thing and say things you regret as soon as you hear them.

- Always giving in is no good. Accumulating anger, resentment is even less helpful. Dishonest statements to cover it all are even worse. When the anger eruptions come, it’s totally unsuitable and has no effect.

Going back to the phone call example, another way of handling it may have been –

“No, it’s not okay. I really need to discuss father’s health with you. I am irritated you have been unable to meet with me on four past occasions. I really want your ideas, and opinions about this matter. Try to change your schedule and come and join me....”

Can you give another example?

Healthy communication – involves being truthful with each other – is made up of give and take of sending and receiving clear messages. The two basic rules are quite simple (1) To communicate a message, make a statement; (2) to ask for a message, use a question. This seems to make sense, or does it? Simplicity in speech is **to state what should be stated, ask what needs to be asked and refuse to confuse the two**. When questions are used as concealed ways to make statements, or statements are made as concealed questions, confusion results. In healthy communication, there is a strong preference for statements, a wise caution in using questions. Why are questions so suspect? Because they are the most easily distorted form of speech, the most often –co-opted and corrupted part of speech.

Some questions are simple, that ask for clarification or more information. These are called (open questions). Other types of questions may require multi type replies, general comments or can be controlling/demanding, judgemental. These are often called (closed questions)

Common Question example: “Don’t you feel that...? or “Wouldn’t you rather...?” These types of questions limit or restrict possible responses and may lead the other [us] down a path to make an admission or commitment that the questioner wishes NOT WHAT the respondent wants. Q: “Don’t you think that new....is a waste of money: A: “No, I don’t think that....is a waste of money if you think that, I invite you to say it by speaking for yourself.”

Questions Used in Conflict:

Examples of the type of questions used in conflict

The punishing question that hurts:

“Why did you say (do, try) that?” This punishes and is stirring up conflicts in the other or is attacking the other person by implying the other person is inconsistent or dishonest and there is a degree of dishonesty between intention and action. Question: “Why did you do such a....?” Answer: “I’ll tell you what I want.”

The setting-up question:

“Didn’t you once say....?” This manipulates the other into a vulnerable position, ready for a verbal blow. Question: “Isn’t it true that you once....?” Answer: “Ask me about the here and now, I’m present”.

The nagging question that is designed to provoke:

“What did you mean by that..?” or “What you waiting for?” This layered question has varied meanings (1) tell your meaning again, I’m listening. (2) What are you implying about me? (3) How dare you say that to me? (4) Can’t you speak more clearly, you twit. (5) You’re attacking me. The ‘nagging’ question has as many levels as the listener may choose, and it has no single level. No matter which level the listener chooses to answer, the questioner can say “You misunderstood me”

The question is about making evaluations, judge’s motives and intentions, control.

Why questions are often covert ways of attempted control. Try eliminating 'why' from relationships, and ask 'what' and 'how'. These offer all the information I need to know to relate effectively. "Why" doesn't ask a simple question; it tends to evaluate and judge motives and intentions. "What" or "how" deal with what is wanted in our relationships and how we can get it.

For example: "Why can't you pick up your wet towel after you've showered?"

Instead: "What stops you from picking up your wet towel?"

The why question is perceived as a 'trap', when the listener tries to explain 'why', the questioner may respond by saying our "why" answer was no good.

"What" or "how" deal with what is wanted in relationships and how we can get it.

Suggested simple guidelines for cleaning up conflicts are:

The person who has a complaint should make the first move to discuss it

One complaint per discussion/session relevant to *now* and not the past

Does not use trapping questions, just clear statements

Try giving honest, clean complaints or criticisms for example "the behaviour you do is..."; "When you do I feel.... (Sad, confused, frustrated...) "What I really want is...." Try and have the other repeat the complaint/criticism. Then respond with a clear yes, no, or compromise offer

Simple guideline, but they are the way of being truthful/honest and caring through conflict.

Chapter 3

Owning and Using Anger Well

Why do you get angry?

Anger is a demand to be heard, noticed, recognised, valued, heeded. Anger is a response to people treading over a person's boundaries and there will be a flare of anger in response. Often people will experience anger as an emotion initially and will then use thinking processes to understand why the anger is being experienced. The two processes of emotions and thinking need to go together.

What happens when people respond only to the emotion of anger without using thinking processes to understand the issues and conflict?

Anger can be used to assist in the management of conflict.

Anger when used well helps the person to be heard, and to maintain respect and dignity for the parties involved in the conflict.

In order for anger to be used well people need to make sure that they are dealing with, finding healing for underlying thoughts of rejection and anxiety.

People have a built in reflex to love and value the self and the person will respond to preserve it against threat. This means that all people have a built in need to experience respect, acceptance, value, and belonging.

Anger is the emotion that people experience when there is a threat to the self by another's behaviour, actions or words. Anger is the demand that you recognise my worth as a person.

People are automatically defensive in the face of rejection, and with this underlying threat people experience states of anxiety that their sense of self esteem, self regard is being endangered. For people who expect that they will experience high rates of rejection in their relationships, means that they will experience high rates of anxiety. This high rate of anxiety will affect their ability to use anger effectively.

Anxiety is very uncomfortable to people and they will use anger to counter this emotion. Anger is far more energising and will give a sense of power in the face of threat. It often enables the person to use other tactics to shift the focus from self and onto the other person. However anger used this way is the uncontrolled flare, the explosive anger that leaves the person with little recall of what happened, confuses the

what happens when unable to express anger or sit on it. not heard or listened to

what happens when anger explodes not able to listen or hear others

Think of someone who is assertive about them + how do they use their anger

person's ability to understand what their demands are and restricts the person's ability to work towards a new understanding or new agreement with the other person/s. Anger used in this manner will do little to assist in the building of relationship. It may in fact irritate the other person to the point that will fight back and the relationship is left in tatters. People who expect to be rejected in almost all of their relationships will need to deal with their own issues concerning rejection or will continue to experience high rates of anxiety and anger will be used in a negative manner. It will stop the person from being able to hear the other person and will make impossible demands on the other person.

Anger when not spoken about energises resentment, energises conflict and leaves a rumbling situation to run out of control and affect us.
Have you experienced this?
What is it like?

In order to deal with anger effectively there is a need to work out the demands that anger is pointing us towards.
To recognise and admit them out loud and own the anger

Then there is a choice

- Negotiate the demands that matter and cancel the ones that don't. Freedom comes as a person is open and honest in facing demands made on others, cancelling unfair demands, and allowing others to live and grow without the imposition of controlling demands. Some of those demands are that, "I need to be liked by everyone." "I cannot make a mistake." "I cannot face conflict, because it means I will be rejected." "I have to be nice to everyone."
- Be aware of when your anger is being driven by the threat of our sense of rejection and dealing with it, not allowing it to get in the way. Put your feelings into words and own them: 1) I get angry when:..... 2) And my behaviour is:..... 3) And afterward I feel:..... 4) What I really want is:.....
- Recognising that explosive anger is powerless to effect change in relationships. It can be a way of diverting away from the real issues.
- Need to be aware of own feelings of resentment and hate. People can have their biases and judgements and people need to be aware of these. To name them and be honest about them.
- Need to not transfer problems onto other people.
- Need to own sense of rejection and challenge it. Having a fear of being rejected tends to make the person need to be loved by

everyone. Tends to make high demands of the person and of others. Need to deal with the issue of stigma. Need to deal with past hurts and challenge their validity.

- Need to be open to exploring new behaviours in conflict situations. When I get angry, I want to try:..... Use other people as sounding boards to help with this.