

CONFRONTING CONFLICTS

A Toolbox for Managing and Resolving Conflicts

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PREFACE

This handbook is not intended to contain all the different theories in conflict management, nor should you, as a reader, view this as the truth.

What we try to offer here are tools that can hopefully help you in getting to the ultimate goal – handling and resolving conflicts.

If you know other tools that work better for you, by all means, use them (and do share with us as well)! Take what helps you from this handbook, and leave behind what does not. If something in here made you able to handle conflicts better – the goal has been achieved.

Another important point to get out of the way: there are many different theories that discuss conflicts in various settings (workplace, conflict between countries, etc). This handbook focuses on methods that can help us when we work in teams of equals, like we often do in CISV.



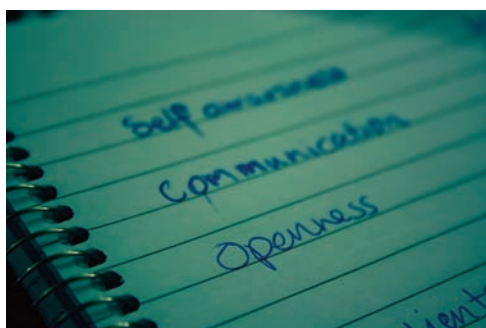
Finally, this handbook assumes that there is a conflict at hand. A conflict, in the terms of this handbook, is a disagreement. Hopefully, the tools provided in this book will allow you to prevent a conflict from escalating.

As this book talks a lot about developing awareness and self-reflection, you are invited to really engage in the reading and apply the concepts to yourself, your experiences, and your daily life. There will be reflections questions throughout the books that will allow you to do this. Reading this from a personal perspective will help you gain a better understanding of yourself, and also of the concepts we offer.

I hope you are able to take something away from this handbook and wish you an enjoyable and educational reading!

Sincerely,

Einav Dinur



INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a word that we often associate with negativity. Many people view conflict as something that should be avoided and feel that if a conflict arises it means that something is wrong. This fear of conflict is completely understandable and has a lot to do with how society perceives conflicts and lack of tools that we receive to allow us to handle them.

This handbook offers a different attitude towards conflict. You are encouraged to accept conflict as a natural thing that occurs when different thoughts, ideals, feelings, opinions and behaviors come together. It might actually be possible that a relationship with frequent conflicts is healthier than one without any evident conflicts.

We wish to move the focus from how to AVOID a conflict to how we HANDLE conflict when it arises.

You may find that a conflict, if handled in a constructive way, can lead to stronger relationships, better understanding of others, and empowerment. In a CISV context, we can find that conflict can lead to **building global friendship**. Therefore, the strength of a relationship should not be evaluated based on the number of conflicts that arise, but on how these conflicts are handled and resolved.

Consider the following passage from Mosquito Tactics (p. 38):

“Some of us are afraid of conflict, but we don’t have to be. Conflicts are bound to arise as long as people meet and live together, it’s perfectly normal. What we need to do is to improve how we find creative solutions to conflicts. A conflict can often be the beginning of something new and improved, where different values and experiences can be woven together. We find good solutions when we have good opportunities for communication, cooperation and critical thinking. It’s important to study conflicts and understand why they occurred.”

This handbook will provide you with some skills and tools for understanding conflicts better, and how you, yourself, react and interact in a conflict. Hopefully, these deeper understandings will allow you to overcome this common fear and to handle conflicts in a way that will allow relationships to grow and flourish.

The concepts you will encounter in this book may not be revolutionary in theory, but they can be revolutionary in practice. You will find that the real challenge is not understanding the concepts, but rather carrying them out consistently.

So, let’s get started!



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THE BUILDING BLOCKS

Sometimes conflicts work themselves out, but often they require something of us. To ensure productive and constructive conflict resolution, there are certain things that must exist in the process. We call these the Building Blocks. Without these, it will be awfully difficult to begin talking about conflict management and resolution. This handbook will provide you with skills to develop all three Building Blocks.

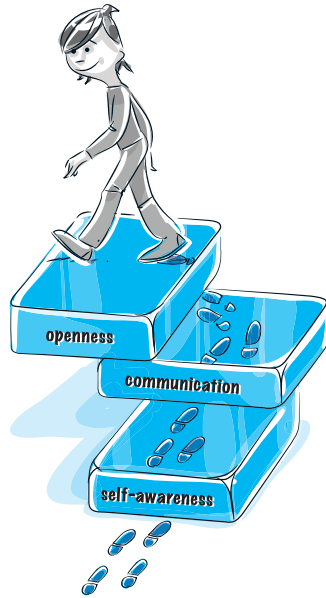
SELF-AWARENESS

Most of us do not try to create or provoke conflicts intentionally. It is more likely that we are unaware of how our behavior contributes to a conflict, especially an interpersonal conflict (involving one or more other people).

Therefore, the first and most fundamental step of conflict management is self-awareness. In order to have a real understanding of conflicts, you must turn the mirror inwards and really reflect and understand how YOU behave, think, react, and communicate. For that reason, conflict management cannot exist without the development of self-awareness.

COMMUNICATION

Normally, a conflict involves two or more people. Self-awareness alone is not enough for healthy conflict management. In order for



the other side to understand how you are feeling, communication is necessary. Discussing disagreements and sharing your feelings can lead to opportunities to strengthen and improve relationships. Of course there are different ways of communicating so there is also a question of HOW you communicate, which we will touch on later.

OPENNESS

Communicating how YOU feel in a conflict is not enough when we are looking at resolving a conflict. There must also be an openness to listen and understand the other side and their feelings and perceptions. Therefore, listening and being open are an integral part of conflict management and resolution.

In the following pages you will find a more theoretical understanding of conflict, in the hope of developing all of the three Building Blocks above.

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THE INGREDIENTS OF A CONFLICT

Conflicts are often associated with including negative emotions. Although this might be true, there are several other elements in a conflict besides emotions. Being able to break down a conflict into these ingredients that are always involved is helpful in understanding the conflict, and even more helpful in resolving it.

FACTS

Facts are the simple, objective, non-judgmental actions (or lack of action) that took place. As such, sides to a conflict should generally be able to agree on the facts.

Does this seem hard? It is. Because in most cases people confuse the dry facts with their own personal interpretation of the facts, thus leading to many sets of facts that actually apply to one situation.

It can be very hard to filter out the facts from our interpretations and feelings. Very often we mistake our feelings or interpretations for the actual facts. Especially in cases where people around us, or even society, agree with our interpretation of the facts.

For example, say Anna went out with Tom on a date. After the date, Tom never called her. What Anna takes away from this is that Tom is not interested in her. This could very well be true, however, if Anna is trying to map out the FACTS, the hard fact is that Tom did not call her after the date. That is the ONLY fact. “He is not interested in me” is an interpretation of the fact (caused by society, by what Anna’s friends told me, by Anna’s previous experience with dating, etc). And it does not matter whether Anna’s interpretation is accurate, and whether Tom really IS not interested.

When trying to resolve a conflict, even if we are very confident that our interpretation is correct, it is very important to make that distinction between facts and feelings/interpretations.

Think of facts as tofu. Tofu, on its own, does not have any flavor. Same with facts. The facts on their own should not “taste” like anything.

FEELINGS

As mentioned above, feelings reflect one’s personal interpretation of the facts. This is why it can be that identical facts generate different feelings in different people. For example, something that might really upset or frustrate you might not frustrate your friend or colleague, even though the facts are exactly the same.

Feelings are the flavor that we add to the tofu. That is why the same tofu can taste like chicken to you, but taste like soy sauce to someone else.

Feelings are how we EXPERIENCE a conflict. As such, they are also an indicator that a conflict exists or how escalated it is. In that sense, it is important to be in tune and listen to your own feelings. Not as the truth but as a red flag indicating that a conflict exists.

If you feel annoyed with someone, or angry, or hurt – this is an indicator that there could be a conflict at hand. Do not ignore your feelings or try to push them away. Use them as an identifying tool, but be careful not to mistake them for facts or view them as the absolute truth. This part can be tricky in many conflicts.

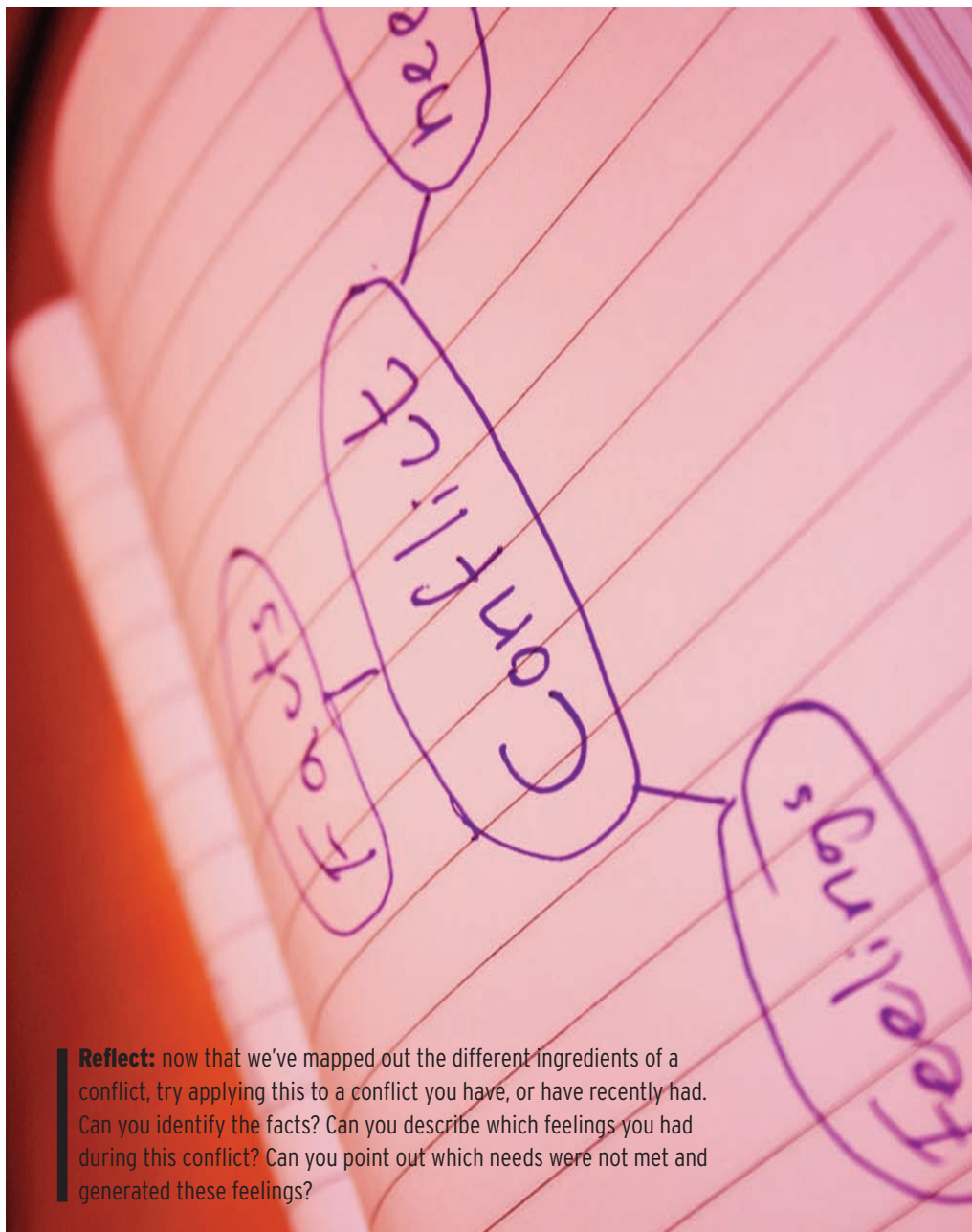
Because feelings are personal interpretations, there is no right and wrong when it comes to feelings. Therefore, arguing over whether or not a person should or should not FEEL a certain way is not effective in resolving conflicts.

For example, if someone was hurt by something you did, even if you didn't mean to hurt that person, you should try to avoid saying "Oh, you shouldn't be hurt by that." Phrasing it in this way suggests that what this person is feeling is wrong. Therefore, it would be more effective to say "I'm sorry you feel hurt, I never intended for you to feel this way."

NEEDS

Needs are very basic necessities that motivate us as individuals. For example: the need to be respected and valued, the need to be understood, the need to be loved, the need to be recognized, etc. Different people have different needs, or a different sensitivity to a certain need, which is exactly why two people can have a different reaction to the same set of facts.

Our needs are actually the causes for the way we feel. When a need is not met, it generates feelings. A good way to think of needs is like a backpack filled with things that come from our culture, our religion, our personal experiences, traumas, etc. We take this backpack with us everywhere we go.



Reflect: now that we've mapped out the different ingredients of a conflict, try applying this to a conflict you have, or have recently had. Can you identify the facts? Can you describe which feelings you had during this conflict? Can you point out which needs were not met and generated these feelings?

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FACING CONFLICT

In this chapter we will try to explore what kind of different reactions we have to conflict once it is already there. In order to simplify things, we have chosen three major approaches. Of course one person can have different kinds of reactions and these can very much depend on the type of conflict, the mood the person is in, who the other person is, etc. Read on and see if you can identify yourself in any of these.

HIT

The *hitter* has an aggressive approach to conflict. The *hitter* will usually get angry, defensive and will openly blame the other person for the existence of the conflict (“You did this and that and therefore we are in conflict”).

Hitting will often increase friction between the sides and lead to defensiveness from the others involved in the conflict. The *hitter* is usually competitive and wants to be right or win the disagreement. It is more about proving that he is right than finding a solution to this conflict.

When a person *hits*, this is usually visible externally, it can be in the language they use, in the tone of voice, etc. On the positive side, the *hitter* does not pretend that no conflict exists. He acknowledges the conflict and reacts to it.

RUN

The *runner* is a person who tends to avoid or deny the conflict. The *runner* is usually afraid or reluctant to confront the other side and therefore the *runner's* reaction to conflict is usually internal.

People who *run* wish to get rid of the conflict by not engaging in it, yet it is important to remember that avoiding confrontation does not mean the conflict goes away. On the contrary, this can escalate a conflict as more tension builds under the surface between the parties involved. On a positive note, the *runner's* tries to avoid the aggressiveness and eliminate the existence of the conflict.

STAND

The *stander*, first and foremost, acknowledges that there is a conflict at hand and is willing to stop and understand what lead to the conflict, what the facts/feelings/needs involved may be, etc.

Standing does not mean being passive. A *stander* can (and should) communicate his/her opinion and feelings, but they tend to do so in a constructive way, not in an aggressive way. *Standing* does not have to be the instinctive reaction you have to a conflict. It can be a reaction that you have after you've had a chance to calm down, or after realizing that pretending the conflict isn't there will not lead to real resolution.

A visual way of thinking of these approaches is pretending that each side of a conflict is sitting in a car (with an automatic transmission). You can put the car into DRIVE. You will then make contact with the other car, but it could be destructive.

You can also put the car in REVERSE. Then you'll avoid the collision but you did not really resolve anything. You can also put the car into PARK. Then perhaps you can step out, walk over to the other car, see what is going on in there, and maybe look at your own car from the outside...

So, which approach is the right approach?

People often think that *hitting* and *running* is wrong and *standing* is right. This is partially true. Of course we should all strive to “park our car” and *stand* as much as we can. However, our reactions to conflicts are part of us, and trying to fight them or judging ourselves for how we react will not get us anywhere.

This is where the self-awareness plays such an important role. By developing awareness of yourself and your reaction in different types of conflicts, you get to know yourself in a way that will help you to eventually *stand*.

For example, if you know about yourself that for the first day after a disagreement you are so angry that you will most likely hit, then you can give yourself that time to calm down, knowing that your first reaction is dominated by angry feelings. During that day, you should not judge yourself for being angry or for not being able to stand right away. Judging yourself is never constructive. However, being aware of this pattern will enable you, after you calm down, to stand and think of what the actual facts were, what needs you had that were not met, what feelings that lead to, and finally to communicate this and try to resolve the conflict.

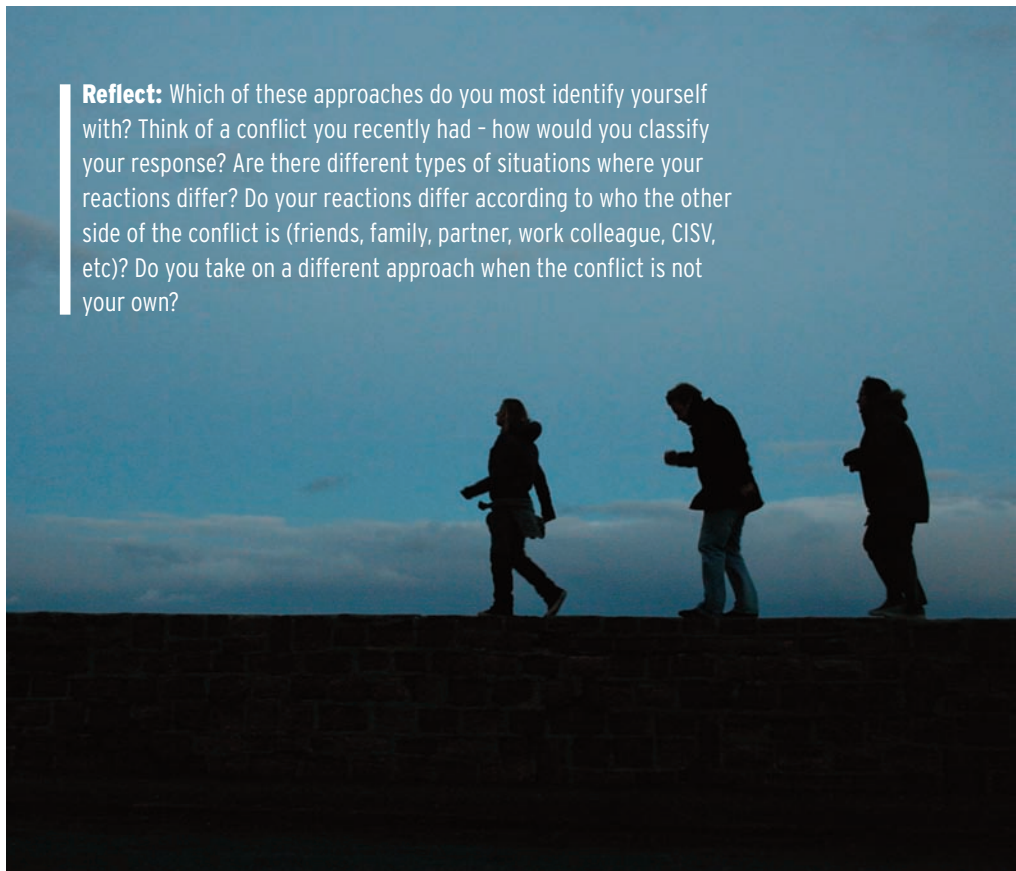
In other words, hitting and running is not something wrong. It could be that you will always have to hit or run first before you can move on to standing. Understanding these natural reactions is something that can help you to understand yourself, and will ultimately make it easier for you to stand. Perhaps with enough practice you can get to stand faster, or even right away.

Remember, just like you have certain reactions (like the example above of needing a day to calm down) others may have their own reaction patterns. Therefore, there might be a situation where you are ready to *stand*, but the others are not yet there. Use these distinctions to help you see where the other sides to a conflict are and find the time to stand that could be most productive for everyone involved.

A good way to identify if you are ready to *stand* is to ask yourself the following question (and try to answer honestly) – **“What is my objective?”** is it being right and proving that you are right, or is it resolving this conflict at hand?

It is okay to feel like you are in the first one. If you feel that you are more focused on being right, take more time until you are truly ready to resolve the conflict. Forcing yourself or others into resolving a conflict when not everyone is ready is not effective. Ask yourself this question again and again. When you feel your objective is to resolve the conflict, then you are ready to *stand*.

Reflect: Which of these approaches do you most identify yourself with? Think of a conflict you recently had - how would you classify your response? Are there different types of situations where your reactions differ? Do your reactions differ according to who the other side of the conflict is (friends, family, partner, work colleague, CISV, etc)? Do you take on a different approach when the conflict is not your own?



5

WHEN THE CONFLICT ESCALATES

As mentioned before, conflict, in the context of this handbook, is simply a disagreement. It can be a very basic disagreement that has a very simple solution and the conflict will be easily resolved. The existence of a conflict does not depend on how terrible the outcome of the conflict is or how difficult it is to resolve. The severity of a conflict can usually be connected to how escalated the conflict is. In order to help us understand this, let's look at certain steps of conflict escalation. There are two kinds of escalation: the external and the internal.

EXTERNAL ESCALATION

External escalation takes place out in the open and can be visible and noticeable to someone looking from the outside, or from the other side to the conflict.

Step 1: Disagreement. This can be any kind of situation where you and someone else do not agree. It can be not agreeing with what a person is doing or not doing, how they are acting, what they are saying, how you both interpret things, etc. It can be big or small, important or silly.

Step 2: Personification (“YOU are a rude person”) – Have you ever experienced someone getting annoyed with you about something specific you have done, yet when they say something about it they make it about YOU and not about that specific thing? For example, if someone said something to you that you thought is rude or aggressive, and when you share this with the person you say, “you are very aggressive”, instead of saying perhaps “when you said this and that I felt offended”, etc.

This is exactly what happens in the personification stage. Personification means to take the focus away from the specific action or lack of action that bothered you – and make it about the person instead.

When people feel there is an attack on their character and personality they are more likely to become defensive, and less likely to be open to listening to the other side, which is why personification usually leads to escalation.

Step 3: Expanding the problem (“you ALWAYS do that”) – this step can be especially present when you have a conflict with someone that has known you for a long time like a partner, family, or long-time friends. Recognize it? That famous “you ALWAYS do this...” or the twin “you NEVER do that.” Although sometimes it really does feel that your partner NEVER does the dishes, or that your friend is ALWAYS late for your meeting plans, you must be careful not to generalize. During a conflict, it’s easy to get away from the specific disagreement at hand and expand the problem (to former conflicts, etc.). This can escalate the conflict because you are no longer focused on the facts right now, and you bring things from the past. Keep in mind that people don’t ALWAYS do certain things. They might OFTEN do certain things, but generalizing and throwing that in their face is likely to make them defensive.

Step 4: Dialogue stops and gossip begins (“there is no point in talking it out”) – Frustration caused by a disagreement can lead to a point where the dialogue between the sides to the conflict stops, or never begins.

Often, we also like to find comfort and support from third parties not directly involved in the conflict. It’s very natural to want to have support from people around you. However, you must be aware how turning to someone outside of the conflict can escalate it.

There are two big dangers in the gossiping stage. The first is that it will begin to create an “us vs. them” situation. The sides to the conflict are now finding supporters to their side and thus escalating the conflict into something bigger that involves more people.

The second danger often happens when we turn to third parties. A lot of times, when we share a conflict with a friend, they will agree with our side or our arguments. This can lead to a bigger confusion between facts and feelings, and leave you stuck in the position that you must be right – because ‘it’s not just you now, other people agree’.

Step 5: Enemy Images – this step clearly means that the conflict has gone quite far to the point where you view the other side as an enemy. Viewing someone as such obviously will make you less enthusiastic about making an effort to resolve the conflict which is why this is an escalation step.

Step 6: Open hostility – this stage means that everyone around KNOWS that the sides to the conflict are sides to a conflict, and view themselves as enemies. This step can include mean comments, open fighting, disrespectful remarks, etc.

Step 7: Polarization. Imagine a line where you are on one end and the other side is on the very far end from you. This would be the stage where the relationship is over.

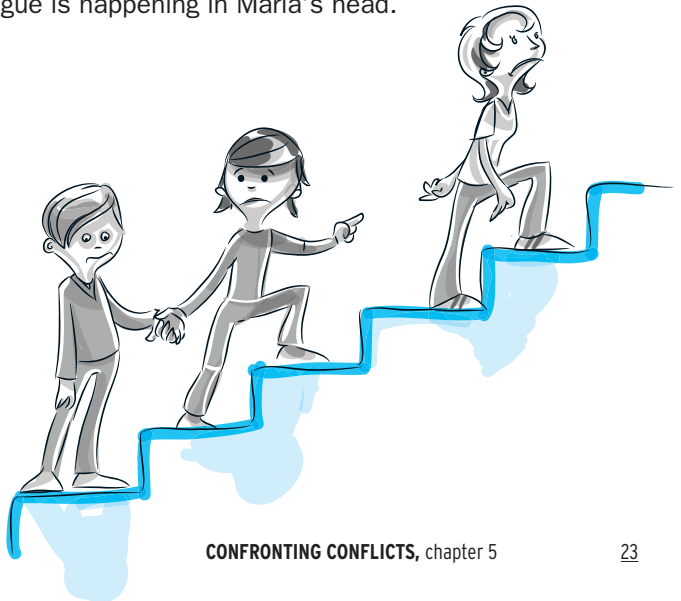
INTERNAL ESCALATION

Internal escalation is sometimes mistaken for a more peaceful way of handling a conflict because there is no open hostility involved. However, internal escalation can lead to negative outcomes just like external escalation and therefore it's also important to understand the steps of this type of escalation, which is harder to recognize when standing on the outside.

Step 1: Disagreement. Just as in an external escalation, internal escalation also starts with any kind of disagreement.

Step 2: Inner monologue (no dialogue) – when we don't share or communicate how we are feeling an inner monologue develops. This monologue is highly likely to be based on YOUR interpretations and feelings, and it is possible that it has very little to do with reality.

Take for example a situation where Maria passed by Anna, a colleague, on the street, and Anna does not say hello to Maria. Maria might start developing an inner monologue with regard to how Anna doesn't like her, how Anna is rude and mean, etc. But it could be that Anna honestly did not see Maria, and she has no idea that this monologue is happening in Maria's head.



Step 3: Withdrawal (invisible escalation, other party does not know) – when we reach certain conclusions in our inner monologue, this can lead to us withdrawing from a certain situation or a certain individual. Take the above example, if Maria is sure that Anna does not like her, she will probably not say hello to Anna next time she sees her, or if she knows Anna will be in a certain place, she might choose not to join, believing that Anna does not like her. Maria's entire behavior towards Anna now stems from a place where she is sure that Anna does not like her.

Let's keep in mind that throughout this process the other side to the conflict (Anna) might not even be aware that a conflict exists!

Step 4: Enemy images – just like in external escalation, enemy images can also occur when the escalation is internal. It can be developed internally in the person having the inner monologue. It can also begin developing in the other side to the conflict.

Continuing with the above example, enemy images can also start developing for Anna. As far as Anna is concerned, Maria is not nice to her and is avoiding her, etc. So perhaps Anna, not knowing of Maria's inner-dialogue, will also start feeling negative feelings towards Maria, thus escalating the conflict.

Step 5: Polarization. The relationship is over. It is important to underline that not confronting a conflict DOES NOT make it go away and we see how by not dealing with a simple disagreement, we can actually escalate it to a much more serious outcome, like polarization.

Being aware of these different types of escalation, and the different steps, can help us in understanding how far along a conflict is and what actions are necessary in order to begin resolving it.



Reflect: Can you identify yourself in any of the escalation steps? Are there any particular steps that you feel you usually get trapped in?

Exercise: In the next disagreement you encounter (whether being a side to it, or observing from the outside) try to see if you can point out different escalation steps. Write down the steps and see if you can break down the conflict into the different steps, and try to recognize which step the conflict is on. It helps in developing awareness to how a conflict can escalate.

6

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

We've talked about many tools that will help us with awareness towards a conflict and towards how we perceive and handle a particular conflict. The second building block is communication. Communication is one of the most powerful tools we have when dealing with conflict management and resolution. This may seem trivial but think of how many times you felt or thought something, but did not communicate it. This chapter focuses about how YOU communicate.

When dealing with communication it's important to discuss not only IF you communicate but also HOW you communicate. What kind of communication will help you in expressing yourself and take you closer to resolving the conflict?

WHAT IS MY OBJECTIVE?

Remember to keep asking yourself "What is my objective? Being right and proving that you are right, or resolving this conflict at hand?". Moving to the communication step will not be effective unless you are truly ready to resolve the conflict.

The main concept of effective communication is taking ownership of your feelings and needs, and realizing that your perception of

the conflict is exactly that – YOUR perception and isn't necessarily the truth. Also, keep in mind the steps of conflict escalation, and try to avoid these when communicating about a conflict.

WAYS TO KEEP YOUR COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVE

Use “I” statements – “I” statements help in taking responsibility for your feelings and needs. The most common formula is “I feel/felt _____ (feelings) when _____ (facts) because I need to _____ (needs)”.

This might seem a bit artificial but formulating this sentence can actually help you understand and be aware of your own feelings and needs in this conflict. Another common way of using I statement is just taking every “you” sentence and changing it to an “I” sentence. So instead of “You really hurt me when...” use “I felt really hurt when...”

Using a statement such as “You really hurt me...” suggests that is it a fact and will most likely make the other side defensive. We should know by now that being hurt is a FEELING and therefore we should claim it as such. Own your feelings by phrasing it as an “I” statement.

Avoid vague, general comments (“you are insensitive”, “you always make fun of me”) – as you recall, using general statements and making a personal attack on someone's character are steps in escalation of a conflict and as such are very inefficient ways of communication. Try using specific examples (and remember to use “I” statements), and separate the person from the action. This will help the other understand your perspective without feeling a general attack on their personality.

Avoid blaming, pointing fingers and placing responsibility on others – again, take ownership and responsibility of your own feelings.

Keep the conversation “above the belt” – needless to say, hurtful comments, playing on people’s insecurities, using offensive remarks and bad language are not very effective in getting the other side to listen to you. Keep your communication honest yet respectful. If you are using disrespectful language it is also an indicator that you are still in the hitting phase. Be aware of this and take your time until you are truly ready to stand.

Listen – the fastest way to get others to listen to you is by treating them the way you would like to be treated. If you expect others to listen to you, give them the same treatment – don’t interrupt, don’t roll your eyes, don’t look bored or uninterested. Make them feel like they are being heard and understood (see next chapter about openness).





7

OPEN UP

Like we mentioned above, communicating how YOU feel in a conflict is not enough to resolve conflicts. You must be open to listen and understand the other side and their feelings and perceptions. The best and easiest way to begin understanding the other side is by LISTENING.

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

In order to resolve conflicts effectively, the sides to a conflict must acknowledge the other side's feelings and needs. Acknowledging does not mean you are agreeing with this perspective, or give up your own. It simply means you are willing to understand and accept that the other side perceives things differently than you.

Listening is not just being quiet until the other has finished speaking. It is also not just hearing the other person. Real listening involves a true effort to understand the perspective of the one speaking. This sounds easier than it is. Especially when we are angry, emotional, and feel the need to stand behind our side of the story. Therefore, having some kind of structure for listening is often helpful.

Exercise: Have a certain designated seat in the room (perhaps a certain chair or sofa). The person sitting in that seat is the one who has the right to speak and share their perspective. After the person in the chair is finished speaking, the other side(s) must make that person feel understood, by summing up or repeating what that person had said. The other side(s) CANNOT discuss anything else or make comments regarding what has been said. They can only repeat to show that they understand or ask questions to clarify and help them understand. When the person in the chair feels satisfied that they have been understood, they may clear the chair. Then the chair becomes free for someone else to speak.

(The same can be done with a certain object, whoever holds that object is the speaker - the person whose perspective we are now discussing).



8

BRING IT ON!

In this section we would like to offer some practical guidelines that you, as an individual, a couple or a team, can use when you face conflict. Having a structured outline can help you put all the theory into practice.

GUIDELINES TO MANAGING CONFLICT:

1) Stand. Acknowledge that there is a conflict and be aware of your approach to the conflict (are you hitting or running? Is the other hitting or running? Are you ready to face the conflict and stand?). Remember to be honest and aware. Are you interested in resolving the conflict or in winning it?

Be attentive to whether or not the other sides to the conflict are ready to stand. Forcing someone to resolve a conflict may not only not lead to a solution, but also make the conflict worse.

2) Break down the conflict. Try to separate the conflict into its ingredients the way you see them (facts/feeling/needs). What were the facts? How do you feel (try being specific with the way you feel)? What needs that you have haven't been met? Also, try to identify how escalated the conflict is on the escalation steps.

3) Communicate. Let the other person or people involved in the conflict know how you feel. Use effective communication. Use “I” statements.

4) Listen openly. Be open to the other feelings and needs involved in the conflict. Try not to judge how others feel. Remember, there is no right and wrong when it comes to feelings and needs.

At a certain point the sides need to agree to finish discussing the past and move to talk about future behavior and ways of handling future disagreements. Before you move to finding solutions, both sides need to feel like they have been understood and that their feelings and needs have been communicated and heard.

Rushing this part and moving prematurely to finding a solution can leave sides feeling frustrated and this can get in the way of true resolution.

5) Brainstorm for solutions. After all sides have shared the needs they have, think together how we can make sure these needs are met in the future. Is there something we can do or not do in order for the sides to feel that their needs are met?

6) Seek for win-win. Look for a solution that will meet everyone’s needs and not just one of the sides. If both sides feel happy or at least content with the solution, they are more likely to keep to their commitment, as they will also gain from it.

Remember, conflict resolution is not about WINNING, it’s about solving the conflict. The best way to ensure true resolution of a conflict is when both sides feel happy and committed to the solution. Throughout the whole process keep asking yourself what your goal is – is it being right and proving that you are right, or is it resolving this conflict at hand?

It is okay to feel like you are in the first one. If you feel that you are more focused on being right, take more time until you are truly ready to resolve the conflict.

7) End with positive. Dealing honestly with conflict is not easy and you should reward yourself with a joint positive feeling once you've reached a solution. Do something fun together, or share something positive about each other. Ending on a positive note will help you remember how conflicts can be constructive and bring people closer.

FACILITATING CONFLICT:

Creating a resolution-oriented atmosphere in your team might also mean facilitating a conflict that you are not a direct side to; for example, as a staff in a camp or as a member of a committee, etc. Here are some guidelines to remember when you are facilitating a conflict.

A) Lead by example. Show others that you are not afraid of conflicts and that it is not a shameful thing.

B) Stand. Even if you are not a direct side to the conflict. Standing in a conflict that isn't your own does NOT mean taking a side, just helping the involved parties stand on their own. However, remember to be attentive to whether the sides are ready for that.

C) Encourage sides to break down the conflict. When you are talking to the parties involved (whether together or separately) try leading them towards distinguishing the facts/feelings/needs. You can do this directly – if they know the theory – or through your questions (When he did this, how did you feel? Why did you feel this way? You feel this person doesn't like you, why is that? Etc).

D) Acknowledge feelings. Remember that there are no right and wrong feelings and be careful not to dismiss people's feelings. Avoid saying things like "Oh, you really shouldn't feel this way..." Feelings are not rational and therefore arguing with feelings is neither effective nor constructive.

E) Encourage sharing. When people feel that their feelings are valid they are more likely to open up and share their needs. Allow people to vent, while guiding them towards standing. This will help in finding a real solution.

F) Let the solution come from the parties. Facilitate the conversation so that the solution doesn't come from you but rather from the direct sides to the conflict. For example, instead of saying "Well, maybe you should talk with this person and tell them how you feel" try saying "What do you think you can do so this doesn't happen again?" or "Do you think talking with this person will help?" etc.



CONCLUSION

Hopefully this handbook gave you some new insights that will allow you to face and resolve conflicts with more ease and in a peaceful and empowering way.

Remember to stay aware, but also not to be judgmental with yourself. Take your time and try to adapt the tools that work for you into your daily life and your relationships.

If you have any feedback, comments, stories to share or questions about this handbook and its content please send an email to confronting.conflicts@se.cisv.org

EXERCISES

Here are some ideas and tips that you can use to help you with carrying out the guidelines above. You can put these exercises together, or use only the ones you feel are necessary. Remember, these are tools for you so see if they can help and if so – use them!

ROUND OF INGREDIENTS:

Breaking down the conflict into its ingredients (facts/feelings/needs) is a key part of conflict management. Sometimes it helps to do this within the group. This exercise is done in three stages. You can use this as part of the Managing Guidelines.

Step 1: Agreeing on the facts. Each person, in turn, says what he/she thinks the facts are. Keep adjusting the facts until all sides agree on the facts.

Step 2: Sharing feelings. After agreeing on facts, each person in turn shares how he/she felt. When a person is sharing he/she should not be interrupted and the feelings he/she share must not be judged or argued with.

Step 3: Finding the needs. In this final step, each person should try to identify what needs they have that were not met which made them feel they way they did.

After this exercise it is often easier to move on to the brainstorm for solutions stage.

FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE:

When we are in conflict with another person, it is easy to be overtaken by negative thoughts about that person. This exercise forces you to focus on something positive.

After having a proper chance to vent, each of the sides to the conflict should point out something they value in the other person. It's best if you allow both sides to first think about it for a bit, and write it down (so you don't put them on the spot). If you are facilitating, perhaps you can share this as the facilitator.

Focusing on the positive achieves two things: First, it forces the individuals to find something they value in the other party, helping them steer away from the negativity that usually surrounds a conflict. Second, focusing on positive creates a better environment for listening and sharing. Hearing the other side to the conflict say something positive about you allows you to take your defenses down and be more open with listening and finding a solution.

NEEDLING OUT THE NEEDS

When in conflict, most people tend to focus on their position (or their side of the story) than on the underlying needs. Finding the needs and focusing on them will help us move on to the resolution stage.

Using paper or a board create a table that has the name of each of the sides to the conflict and for each side a space to write the position, and a space to write the needs.

First you write down each side's position, meaning their side of the story. For example, "I was offended by John because he didn't include me in the planning group." After writing the positions of all the sides, try to identify what needs that person has that have not been met and thus created the conflict. Using the above example, my need can be "I need to feel like my opinion is valued".

Now you have a chart specifying all the positions and needs involved in the conflict. Focusing on the needs, brainstorm together for a solution where the most needs, of all parties can be met.

BRAINSTORMING FOR SOLUTIONS

The way we brainstorm for solution differs from conflict to conflict. It could be a very easy step (for example, you didn't realize something you were doing bothers someone else and now that you know, it's no problem for you to stop), but it can also be a tricky step and some structure may help.

It is easier to brainstorm for solutions when clear needs of all parties involved have been identified so perhaps you should "needle out the needs" before looking for solutions. Here are some ideas for the actual brainstorm:

- **Talk it out.** Take turns suggesting solutions. Alter and revise the solutions to fit everyone's needs.
- **Write it down.** Have each person (as well as third parties if they are involved) write a suggestion on a piece of paper. This can be done anonymously. Read these out and see if everyone can agree on one, or if a small change can be added so that everyone is pleased.
- **Mediator.** If there is a third party facilitating the conflict you can ask that person to suggest a solution that takes everyone's needs into consideration. Remember, this isn't a court and the mediator is not a judge. It is still up to the sides to agree and commit to the solution.

THE CONFLICT CORNER

Standing in a conflict is not always easy. Therefore, having some kind of structured place or time where it's okay to bring up conflicts sometimes makes it easier to stand. This is especially relevant in a camp setting. Here are some ideas.

“The Conflict Resolution Room”. Take a spare room in the campsite and make it the Conflict Resolution Room. Agree with everyone at the beginning of camp that you only enter that room when you are ready to stand and face the conflict. In this way, you shouldn’t be forced into the room unless you are ready to resolve, but by going in you are taking a commitment to be aware, communicate and be open.

“The Conflict Master”. Sometimes it’s easier to have someone external facilitate the conflict. Perhaps one or two of the staff and/or leaders can be a conflict “master” (like a prank master). That way, if someone feels they are in a conflict and don’t feel comfortable handling it on their own, they can turn to this person and ask them to facilitate. This can be done openly or discretely. It can also be agreed that the conflict master will keep their eyes open, and stand even if the master isn’t a direct side to the conflict.

“Conflict Hour”. Designate a day or a time that is dedicated to bringing up conflicts and trying to resolve them. For example, it can be every third day of camp, or every day at a certain hour. Sometimes people are bothered by something but don’t want to be the negative one that brings it up. Designating a time especially for that might make some people more comfortable sharing things that are bothering them. Feel the group and see if it’s necessary.

One way to do this, for example, is for everyone in the group – in turns – to say what their high point of last day/days has been and what the low point has been. This way you are encourage people to share, and at the same time you send out the message that sharing the negative and the positive is equally important.

During the spring of 2010 CISV Sweden had the privilege of having Einav as an EVS volunteer at our office. Einav has a long active CISV background and experiences from a number of CISV activities and programs. In this handbook she has gathered her thoughts and experiences of conflict management as well as a number of methods for conflict management she has found helpful.

This handbook is created by Einav and is her view of the topic.

We wish her the best of luck with her continuous CISV commitment and the further work with conflict management.

Åsa Callesen

PRESIDENT, CISV SWEDEN



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