



Pearson New International Edition

Managing Conflict through Communication

Dudley D. Cahn Ruth Anna Abigail
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7. Use the mind-mapping technique to analyze a conflict you have experienced recently. After you are done, write the answers to these questions: What were you thinking when you started? Is it still the same? When you see the whole picture, how is your thinking affected? What was surprising? Are there any parts out of balance? Do you need to fill anything else in?
8. Use the Six Hats problem-solving method to analyze a conflict you have experienced recently. Be sure to write the names of each hat and the conclusion that perspective brings to you.

WORK WITH IT

Read over the following actions, and identify any that you think are good examples of assertive communication.

- a. I not only have a high regard for the other, I also have a high regard for myself and my own personal goals.
- b. I allow other persons to interrupt me as much as they want. I believe that I am sensitive and subordinate to them. I am extremely indecisive and need time to think before settling a conflict. I often accommodate to the other person's view.
- c. I find that I use this behavior a lot at work and with the people with whom I work. I find myself forgetting promises, appointments, and agreements; making unkind statements about others when they are not around; scheduling too many tasks to do at once; gossiping about the people I am in a conflict with. I continuously deny that something is wrong, but then fail to cooperate.
- d. I don't let a lot bother me up to a certain point. Because of this, I do think I am letting other people get what they want and accommodating them. I know that I avoid serious conflicts in this manner. But when I am pushed past my limit my automatic system takes over and I shake like a leaf. It scares me into a sweat.
- e. I always seem to try to impose my will onto others. I know that I need to chill out at times but sometimes my anger takes over when I am in a heated argument. I bring up topics that the other person wasn't expecting. I use this style in situations where I need to win. I am highly competitive.
- f. I resort to swearing and other forms of verbal intimidation.
- g. Conflict can just be unproductive. I just save my breath rather than trying to explain my point of view.
- h. I make sure that my opinion is known and do the best I can to make sure my interests are known. But I also do not like anyone else to feel left out in a conflict situation. I am clear and concise in telling others what I believe the problem to be and possible ways to remedy it. Another behavior I have in a conflict situation is to be listened to and taken seriously. I believe everyone should be taken seriously, especially in a conflict situation.
- i. I try to be careful not to hurt anyone else's feelings with anything I say. I like to express myself in a responsible manner so as to not offend others.

DISCUSS IT

1. Read the following case study and answer the questions that follow it.
When engaged in conflict with my brother, Carl, we usually begin with a period of silence where we both contemplate our reasons for feeling as we do. We usually think the problem over thoroughly before we say anything. Then comes the verbal argument (I prefer to call it a discussion). We try to be compromising and focus on the problem. We are supportive, encouraging, direct, and honest. We express positive feelings for each other to let each other know that we care and want things to work out. We are careful about letting the other express himself while trying to understand

his point of view. If you asked either of us, we could summarize the other's concerns quite accurately. I would say we believe in equal power. Finally after we get everything off our chests and get the matter resolved, we poke fun at each other and feel like a weight has been lifted off our shoulders.

- a. Did the parties use the S-TLC system for dealing with this conflict situation? How so?
 - b. What do you think the parties probably did to "stop"?
 - c. What do you think the parties probably did during the "thinking" step?
 - d. What techniques do you think the parties probably used during the "listening" step?
2. Read the following case study and answer the questions that follow it.

My friend and I both struggle with our emotional problems. Lately, we have both worked on areas in our lives. She is trying to assert herself more, and I am to the point where I cannot take any more advice on how to run my life. I need to start thinking about what I want to be, not what everyone else tells me I should be. Unfortunately, these two areas have run into each other. She feels she needs to tell me how she feels about everything, including how I act. For example, she told me the other day that I should just say, "I can't go with you today," instead of giving a long explanation. She told me when I give a long explanation it seems that I am trying to make up an excuse and that I just don't want to go with her. I told her I really couldn't handle that kind of criticism right now, and she said "no problem." Two days later, we got into it again when she got mad at me for something that wasn't my fault. She still believes she should assert herself and tell me exactly what is on her mind, and I still cannot handle it right now. It's a stalemate.

- a. Regarding the S-TLC system, do you think the parties tried to "stop"? According to the text reading, what could/should they have done? If you are good at doing this step, what advice can you give to others?
 - b. What do you think the parties probably did during the "thinking" step? According to the text reading, what could/should they have done? If you are good at doing this step, what advice can you give to others?
 - c. What techniques did the parties use during the "listening" step? According to the text reading, what could/should they have done? If you are good at doing this step, what advice can you give to others?
 - d. Did the parties try using I-statements? According to the text reading, what could/should they have done? If you are good at doing this step, what advice can you give to others?
 - e. In what ways could the narrator change her friend, the situation, or herself?
3. In the following case study, how might you use the ideas in this chapter to produce a creative and more insightful resolution to the conflict?

An interesting situation is occurring with another tenant and my roommate and me in our apartment building. We have assigned parking spaces, and the tenant that parks next to my roommate has a tendency to pull his car in and park it in half of her space. She has asked him to move over because she has trouble opening her car door. He becomes upset because his car is soaked by the sprinklers located on the other side of it. Two nights ago when we came home, he was over his line and into our space. My roommate parked close to his car because she thought it might make him realize how close he was parking. However, he got angry and left a nasty note on her windshield. Both parties are not happy. I see the situation as petty, and I think that the neighbors need to work out some kind of agreement instead of exchanging unpleasant words or nasty notes.

- a. Before attempting to be creative, what would be a more obvious, straightforward application of the six-step confrontation model?
- b. How might you think differently in this situation? Ask unusual questions, imagine how someone you know might view the situation, and/or try thinking laterally.

- c. How might you apply visual methods of creative thinking: mind-mapping, Six Hats, and visual journaling?
 - d. Using any or all of the above methods, describe a creative approach that produced a preferable, constructive solution to the problem that was different from initial attempts to resolve the conflict.
4. In the following case study, how might you use the ideas in this chapter to produce a creative and more insightful resolution to the conflict?
- My husband and I went out for an early dinner at a nice restaurant. The restaurant was practically empty, but we were seated next to a table that had a recently stained cover. The table had been cleared but had not been re-set for dinner. My husband, who once worked as a server in a 5-star restaurant, was horrified that the cloth was there—he felt that it should have been removed immediately even if the table wasn’t set. He told the person who seated us that it was disgraceful, he told our server, and when the manager came over to ask if she could be of help, he told her. He was not appeased by their report that the busboy had not come in and it would be taken care of when he arrived. And no one was taking his “hint,” if you could call it that, that the cloth simply be removed regardless of whether the table would be immediately re-set. The manager finally took it off but I could tell she was completely exasperated by his disgust at the tablecloth. Even after it was removed he kept saying that being forceful was the only way to get things done, and he was convinced he was right because everyone gave in to his demand. I was so embarrassed by his behavior that I left the waitress a *very* good tip.
- a. Before attempting to be creative, what would be a more obvious, straightforward application of the six-step confrontation model?
 - b. How might you think differently in this situation? Ask unusual questions, imagine how someone you know might view the situation, try thinking laterally.
 - c. How might you apply visual methods of creative thinking: mind-mapping, Six Hats, and visual journaling.
 - d. Using any or all of the above methods, describe a creative approach that produced a preferable, constructive solution to the problem that was different from initial attempts to resolve the conflict.

EXERCISE: “MANAGING AN INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT”

OBJECTIVE

The goal is to apply the key concepts and principles taught in this chapter in a role play consisting of two conflicting parties and possibly one or two observers.

TIME

Ten minutes to select a scenario, discuss the roles to be played.

Fifteen minutes to discuss and resolve the conflict.

Twenty minutes for the role players and observers to discuss their conflict with the rest of the class.

INSTRUCTIONS

Form groups of three or four persons. Two are to role play a conflict with the other one or two acting as observers and then complete Form #1 below. The two role players select one of the scenarios below (or make up another if you prefer) to serve as a conflict. Try to apply the principles and techniques taught in the chapter. Assume that you have thought about the conflict ahead of time (preparation—engaging in positive self-talk and imagined

interaction), made a date to sit down and talk (at a convenient time and place). Now it is time for you to engage in interpersonal confrontation. Try to use S-TLC, assertiveness, and I-statements. After you explain the problem to the other, try to consider the other person's point of view, try to reach agreement that you can both feel good about (win-win), and set a time for a follow-up to ensure that the agreement is working out. Note to role players: It is fun to really get into the scene and add to it. You can supply details. You can start out angry, have to take a time out, say something rude, and see how the other responds. Maybe start out being difficult, but then slowly come around to the other's point of view. Maybe shake hands or hug at the end to show that all is well that ends well. Role plays can be done one at a time for the benefit of the class as an audience, or several done simultaneously in different parts of the classroom. They may or may not be videotaped for later viewing.

ROLE PLAYS

- a. Family members: Brother and sister (or two sisters). You think that your sister took an expensive piece of furniture from your father's house after he passed away without discussing it with you. Your sister took care of your father in his final days and had a key to his house. Your sister was also in control of your father's finances and you think she took all his money from the bank during his final days. Now you are angry at your sister.
- b. Two roommates are living in a house, with one television. You try to treat each other equally. Recently your roommate decided that he/she wants to watch some TV programs that are on at the same time as sporting events. Meanwhile, you want to watch sports on the weekend and some weekday nights. The negative atmosphere is so bad in the house that you decide to confront your roommate about it.
- c. Two romantic partners are having a conflict overtime management. You want to spend time with your buddies and even invite one or two to join you and your woman friend when you go out together. She doesn't approve of all of your friends and finds two to be particularly offensive and a bad influence on you. She also wants to spend more time with you without your buddies hanging around.
- d. A friend left her boyfriend and asked to move in with you. Kristi spends too much money. She likes to buy a lot of clothes. She never has enough for meals or gas, so she is always asking you for money to buy food or gas. She wants "a loan" from time to time and sometimes doesn't have enough to help pay the apartment rent and utilities. You are fortunate to have enough money, but think it is unfair that she isn't pulling her share and needs money from you so often. Kristi often doesn't pay back the money she owes you.
- e. Two resident hall roommates: Bryon comes home late and rowdy from the local bars on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. Sometimes he brings guys with him. On occasion one has even slept over because he was too drunk to drive. You have Friday classes and need to go to work early every weekend.
- f. Two sisters: Tiffney borrows your clothes without your permission. She also occasionally snoops through your room and tries to find your diary, cell phone, and other personal items.
- g. Married seniors: Husband recently retired and now spends all his time in the house. He doesn't do any household chores and gets in his wife's way.
- h. Two neighbors: Pearson's dog barks, and when loose makes messes in his neighbor's yard. Recently the dog ripped open the garbage container when the neighbor placed it at the end of the drive for pickup.

FORM 1: OBSERVATION OF INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT.

1. How well did the conflicting parties use S-TLC? Did anyone stop and take a time out? Would it have been useful?

2. How might the conflicting parties have improved their “thinking” about the conflict?
3. How might the conflicting parties have improved their “listening” during the conflict?
4. How might the conflicting parties have improved their “communicating” during the conflict? (Did they use I-statements, assertiveness?)
5. How well did the parties use the six-step confrontation model? How well did each listen to the other?
6. Did the parties reach an agreement that both were satisfied with?
7. Did the parties set a date to return for a follow-up on how well the agreement was working out?
8. How well did the parties use their creativity? Did they try to look at the problem from different angles (use lateral or vertical thinking)? Did they use mind-mapping or visual journaling?
9. On a scale of 1–10 (worst–best management), how would you rate the management of this interpersonal confrontation? Which conflicting party attempted to be the most productive?

NOTES

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