

LEVELS OF CONFLICT

Speed Leas

Level 1: Problem to Solve

Characteristics:**Issue:**

Real disagreement; conflicting goals, values and needs, etc.

Emotions:

Short-lived anger, quickly controlled; parties begin to be uncomfortable in the presence of others.

Orientation:

Tends to be problem-oriented rather than person-oriented.

Information:

Open sharing of information

Language:

Clear and specific

Objective:

Solve the problem. Move toward unanimous agreement.
Utilize collaborative style.

Outcome:

Collaborative agreement if possible. Win/win final resolution with acceptable, mutually agreed solution.

Skills Needed:

1. Trust / rapport building skills
2. Ability to think theologically
3. Good listening skills
4. Working knowledge of organization's rules
5. Problem-solving and decision-making skills.
6. Consulting skills
7. Knowledge of available resources

Response:

1. Encourage participation

Level 2: Disagreement

Characteristics:**Issue:**

Real disagreement; fusing of personalities and issues; problem cannot be clearly defined.

Emotions:

Distrust beginning. Caution in association; less mixing with the "other side."

Orientation:

Begin personalizing problem; shrewdness and calculation begin.

Information:

Selective hold-back of information occurs on both sides.

Language:

More vague and general; "some people ...," "they...," hostile humor, barbed comments and put-downs.

Objective:

Face-saving; come out of looking good. Tend to move toward consensus. Not yet win/lose conflict.

Outcome:

Attempt collaborative solution or negotiate acceptable agreement; win/win with real effort.

Skills Needed:

1. All skills for level 1 plus:
2. Analytical skills
3. Understanding of power dynamics and issues.
4. Mediation skills.
5. Self-awareness skills.

Response:

1. Encourage participation - seek those who tend to withdraw
2. Training in communication skills
3. Collaborate if possible, compromise if not
4. Tension reducing strategies

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Level 3: Contest

Characteristics:**Issue:**

Begin the dynamics of win/lose. Resistance to peace overtures.
Focus on persons representing the enemy.

Emotions:

Not able to operate in presence of "enemy," however, admire worthy opponent. Not willing/able to share emotions / feelings constructively.

Orientation:

Personal attacks. Formation of factions/sides. Threat of members leaving. Need third party consultant from outside.

Information:

Distortion is major problem. Information shared only within factions.

Language:

Over generalizations: "You always ...," "We never....," Attribute diabolical motives to others.

Objective:

Shifts from self-protection to winning. Objectives are more complex and diffuse, clustering of issues.

Outcome:

Decision-making - mediation, compromising, voting. Possible that some will leave.

Skills Needed:

1. All skills for level 1 & 2 plus:
2. Designing and negotiating contracts
3. Clear recognition of one's own limits
4. Understanding interaction of personality types.
5. Facilitator in group process.
6. Skilled in developing clear process of decision-making.

Response:

1. Outside third-party intervention

Level 4: Fight/Flight

Characteristics:**Issue:**

Shifts from winning to getting rid of person(s). No longer believe others can change or want them to change.

Emotions:

Cold self-righteousness. Will not speak to other side.

Orientation:

Factions are solidified. Clear lines of demarcation. Last place for constructive intervention by third party consultant.

Information:

Limited only to the cause being advocated; will not accept / listen to contrary information.

Language:

Talk now of "principles," not "issues." Language solidifies into ideology.

Objective:

No longer winning; now eliminate other(s) from the environment. Hurt the other person / group.

Outcome:

High probability of split with significant number of persons leaving.

Skills Needed:

1. All skills for level 1 & 2 & 3 plus:
2. Ability to assess need for additional skill building.
3. Proven experience (track record.)
4. Knowledge of broader, more specialized resources.
5. Ability to find and make use of professional organizations and resources.
6. Careful adherence to the rules of the organization.

Response:

1. Outside third-party intervention

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Level 5: Intractable

Characteristics:**Issue:**

No longer clear understanding of issue; personalities have become issue. Conflict now unmanageable.

Emotions:

Relentless obsession in accomplishing the objective(s) at all costs. Vindictive. No objectivity or control of emotion.

Orientation:

Sees person(s) as harmful to society, not just to the offended group or person.

Information:

Information skewed to accomplish the objective at any cost.

Language:

Focuses on words that imply the destruction and/or elimination of the other.

Objective:

To destroy the offending party / persons, i.e., to see that the fired pastor does not get a job elsewhere.

Outcome:

Highly destructive. Use of compulsion to maintain peace. May be necessary to remove members from organization.

Skills Needed:

1. All skills for level 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 plus:
2. Adequate personal support system and strong inner resources
3. Able to practice personal stress management techniques

It is acknowledged that at this level. It is highly likely that no reconciliation is possible. Consultant's purpose is to minimize damage of conflict and enable person/institution/group to be able to function again.

Response:

1. Consultant or organizational mediation team