

Workbook Chapter Thirteen Resolve Your Conflicts

Self-Assessment Tools:

HOW CAN PEOPLE USE THE PARTNERSHIP WAY TO RESOLVE THEIR CONFLICTS OF WANTS AND NEEDS?

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Here is the most effective process for resolving conflicts of wants and needs using the Partnership Way. The person experiencing the conflict should initiate its resolution. The person with the most skills should take the lead. They can begin to prepare for a face-to-face conflict resolution session by first completing Worksheet #1 at the end of Chapter Four.

You should complete Partnership Worksheet #1 from Chapter Four because it will help guide you in prepare yourself for a partnership resolution to your conflict of wants and needs. It will help you clarify your inner experience of conflict, center yourself, identify your feelings related to the conflict, and determine your typical responses to conflict situations. After completing Partnership Worksheet # 1, you will be clearer about whether the conflict involves wants and needs or values and beliefs. Once you have taken these steps, you must decide how to approach the conflict. Remember, there are four different ways to approach any conflict. You will need to choose which one you want to use.

Partnership Worksheet #2 at the end of this chapter guides you through a face-to-face encounter with the person or persons involved in a conflict of wants and needs, should you choose to approach the conflict directly. Chapter Six presents a method for resolving conflicts of values and beliefs. Before beginning a conflict resolution session, it is important to first set some ground rules, including time limits and general agreements about avoiding "blame and complain" strategies.

HOW CAN PEOPLE USE THIS EIGHT-STEP METHOD TO RESOLVE THEIR CONFLICTS OF WANTS AND NEEDS?

Step 1: How Can They Provide an Objective Description of Their Perception of the Conflict?

Partnership Worksheet #2 asks you to objectively describe to the other person and your perception and experience of the situation or conflict. It is important that you avoid any inflammatory statements or name calling, such as, "You are such a slob for not cleaning up your dishes," or black-and-white statements such as, "You are always leaving your dishes for me to clean up, and you never lift a hand to clean up after yourself."

At a subtler level, it important to avoid words that imply judgment and comparison, infer evaluation and assign intent as they often trigger people and escalate the conflict.¹

Table 5.1 Trigger Words That Can Escalate A Conflict

abandoned	distrust	putdown
abused	interrupted	rejected
betrayed	let down	threatened
unappreciated	boxed-in	manipulated
bullied	misunderstood	unheard
unseen	cheated	neglected
coerced	overworked	co-opted
patronized	unwanted	used
pressured	diminished	provoked
attacked	intimidated	taken for granted

In their description of the problem, you need to use concrete words to describe the other person's behavior: "I found your dishes from last night still in the sink this morning" versus "I guess your arm must be broken or something because you didn't clean up your dishes again last night." Using concrete, noncritical language can be difficult when you are have e strong feelings, which is why it is important for you to center yourself before entering a conflict resolution session. Remember that conflicts can activate old memories and trigger symptoms of post-traumatic stress, so work on developing an attitude of kindness toward yourself and the other person.

It may also be difficult for the person people are confronting to hear what you are saying, even though they are trying to be objective. If you notice that the other person is becoming immediately defensive, you may have to shift to Step 6 and reflect the other person's feelings ("You seem hurt that I am talking about this problem"). If the person relaxes a bit after they say this, they may be able to return to Step 1. If the other person does not relax immediately, continue responding with emotionally supportive statements until the other person relax or you can postpone resolving the conflict until the other person has calmed down.

Step 2: How Can People Express Their Feelings About the Conflict to The Other Person?

Worksheet #2 asks you to express your feelings regarding the behavior of the other person that is interfering with you getting your needs met. It is

¹ The words on the following list, identified by Marshall Rosenberg. (2015) *Non-violent Communication*. San Diego, CA: Puddle Dancer Press, p. 44, are good examples of words to avoid.

important to remember the functions of different feelings and to express those feelings in a functional way. It is more effective to say, "I feel sad when you don't keep your agreements with me" than to either escalate your feelings or express them critically or accusingly. Saying "I hate you!" or "You don't love me!" would be escalation, which is a form of "dirty fighting."

Here are some examples of feeling words that expand the list of the six core feelings of fear, sadness, anger, shame, excitement, and happiness:

Core Feelings with Examples of Feeling Words

Fear	Sadness	Anger	Shame	Excitement	Happiness
Apprehensive	Depressed	Enraged	Ashamed	Amazed	Blissful
Dread	Dejected	Furious	Flustered	Animated	Ecstatic
Frightened	Despondent	Incensed	Mortified	Eager	Elated
Panicked	Disappointed	Indignant	Self-conscious	Aroused	Thrilled
Scared	Discouraged	Outraged	Miserable	Energetic	Thankful
Terrified	Hopeless	Resentful	Regretful	Enthusiastic	Delighted
Worried	Unhappy	Livid	Remorseful	Invigorated	Glad

Step 3: How Can People Describe the Tangible Effects of the Conflict on Them and/or Their Relationship?

You need to describe concretely how the other person's behavior keeps you from meeting your needs: "When you didn't do your dishes last night, I had to wash a bowl before I could eat my breakfast cereal." Their description should be objective and straightforward. In this example, the tangible effect is "having to wash a bowl in order to eat breakfast." This effect, in addition to being quite tangible, would be visible to the other person. Other effects that might not be as visible might be damage to the trust in your relationship or to any feelings of intimacy.

Step 4: How Can People State What They Want or Need from the Other Person in Order to Resolve the Conflict?

It is important for you to take responsibility for your needs by telling them to the other person. Without this step, the implication is that the other person is responsible for taking care of guessing what your needs are. This kind of transaction invites inappropriate caretaking and win-lose forms of conflict resolution. When you tell the other person what you want as a resolution, you are giving that person the choice of either accepting your suggested

resolution, if it meets his or her needs as well, or coming up with an alternative resolution. One of the blocks that you encounter is that you have difficulty in defining what your needs are. Table 5.2 the list of needs in the main categories of need.

Main Categories of Needs With Suggested Words

Connection	Honesty & Autonomy	Physical Well-Being & Play	Peace	Meaning
Acceptance	Authenticity	Movement	Beauty	Awareness
Affection	Integrity	Exercise	Communion	Competence
Appreciation	Truth	Rest/sleep	Ease	Contribution
Cooperation	Choice	Sexual expression	Clarity	Effectiveness
Closeness	Freedom	Touch	Equality	Participation
Empathy	Independence	Fun	Harmony	Purpose
Respect	Spontaneity	Laughter	Order	Understanding

Step 8: How Can People Agree to Disagree With Each Other if Necessary, and Look for Deeper Sources of the Conflict?

This step is necessary only if those involved gets stuck in an, "I'd rather be right than be close" position. If you become unable to find a partnership resolution to your conflict, you still have a couple of choices.

If you do not resolve your conflict at this level, you can decide to go even deeper into the conflict by using Partnership Worksheet #4 from Chapter and Partnership Worksheet # 5 from Chapter Ten to identify the hidden sources of their conflict.

SKILL PRACTICE EXERCISE: PARTNERSHIP WORKSHEET #2: THE EIGHT-STEP METHOD FOR RESOLVING CONFLICTS OF WANTS AND NEEDS

Step 1: Provide an Objective Description of Your Perception of The Conflict.

Describe objectively your perception of the problem or behavior: Begin with ""I" statements." Avoid using ""you" statements," threatening body language, a strident voice, and critical, evaluative, or judgmental language; For example, you might begin with, "I noticed that you didn't clean up your dishes before you went to bed last night."

Step 2: State How You Feel Toward the Other Person as A Result of The Conflict.

Share the way you feel toward the person or problem: Keep your focus internally, specifically on your inner experience of the conflict, to help you

stay centered so that you do not escalate or lose your objectivity. Continuing with the above example, you might say, "I felt angry and hurt when I saw the dishes sitting there this morning."

Step 3: Describe the Tangible Effects of the Conflict on You and/or On Hour Relationship

Describe the tangible effects or results of the problem or issue on you and/or your relationship: Speak authentically in such a way that helps the other person realize that how their behavior has created a consequence for you that tangibly affects the bond or connection you feel toward him or her. Here you tell the other person how what he or she did that has affected you by saying, "When I had to wash a bowl for my cereal that you agreed to wash, I felt resentful and I didn't look forward to being with you tonight."

Step 4: State What You Want or Need from the Other Person in Order to Resolve the Conflict.

State directly what it is you want from the other person: Formulate this request ahead of time in your mind so that you can speak precisely. Be prepared to enter into a negotiation process, if necessary, to get your need met by having a series of options or solutions that might be acceptable. Emphasize how much you value and care for the other person by saying, "What I want is to be able to feel close to you and in order to do that, I would like for you to keep your agreement to clean up your dishes before coming to bed."

Step 5: Ask Directly for What You Want or Need Form the Other Person to Resolve the Conflict

Ask the person directly for what you want: Asking directly gives the other person a choice. When people have a choice, they are more likely to act cooperatively and be willing to negotiate with you if your initial suggestion is not acceptable to them. You need to ask directly, "Would you be willing to do that?" Be prepared for a refusal of cooperation with the question, "Well, what would you be willing to do?"

Step 6: Use Reflective Listening if the Other Person Gets Defensive

Use reflective listening, if the other person gets defensive: At this point, the other person will likely give you an explanation for his or her behavior.

Listen for the person's feelings and reflect them back so that the person feels heard and understood before you go onto the next step. Avoid getting bogged down here by defending yourself, blaming the other person, complaining about this person, or escalating by bringing in other unrelated issues. Focus on your feelings of compassion and caring for the other person as you reflect back what you think that person is feeling. You can say, to them, "When I get angry about these things, you look like you are feeling

hurt and angry. Is this true?" Once you have reflected back the other person's feelings, you may want to return to your original question: "Would you be willing to do what I am asking?"

Step 7: Negotiate a Resolution to Your Different Suggested Solutions, if Necessary Negotiate if there are differences between what you want and what the other person is willing to give: If the other person refuses to cooperate with your initial request, ask them, "What are you willing to do?"

Step 8: Agree to Disagree with Each Other if Necessary and Look for Deeper Sources of the Conflict

If you are unable to negotiate your differences, look for deeper sources of the conflict: In this case, you may have to agree to disagree and invite the other person to join you in exploring the conflict further. You might say, "We just don't agree on this issue, and I can accept our disagreement. Would you also agree that we can't find a cooperative solution at this time?" Or you might say to the other person, "Would you be willing to explore our differences further by looking at differences in values or beliefs as a possible cause of this conflict?" This would involve using Partnership Worksheet #3 from Chapter Six. If you agree to explore even deeper elements of the conflict, this would require use of Worksheet # 4 from Chapter Eight and Worksheet # 5 from Chapter Ten.

WORKSHEET #3: A SEVEN-STEP METHOD FOR RESOLVING CONFLICTS OF VALUES AND BELIEFS

From *Intimate Combat* by Barry K. Weinhold

Directions: Below is a seven-step process for resolving conflicts of values and beliefs. This model uses the dialogue skills described above. Before using this Worksheet, you should have found the incomplete aspects from your previously unresolved conflicts and used Worksheet # 1 to resolve them at their source.

When you do that first, it becomes much easier to resolve any current conflict of values and beliefs using Worksheet # 3. In using this Worksheet with others, if the other person in the conflict is not familiar with this method, it is often helpful to have this printed out and available to all those involved in the conflict.

Step 1: Take Turns Listening to Each Other's Views of the Conflict, Using Reflective Listening.

Be sure to identify the feelings as well as the content. Agree not to state your own opinion or position until the speaker agrees that the listener has reflected back what the speaker said. For example, the listener might say, "I am against abortion and believe that *Roe v. Wade* legislation should be

abolished. I believe that abortion is murder and this is part of my religious beliefs." The listener reflects back, *"According to your religious beliefs, you believe that abortion is murder and that the Roe v. Wade legislation that permits it should be abolished."* When the speaker indicates that he or she feels heard and agrees verbally that what was repeated back is accurate, that person is ready to move to Step 2. Then when the other person has a turn to state his/her position of this issue and he/she feels heard, he/she is ready to move to Step 2.

Step 2: Take Turns Finding the Sources of Our Value or Belief Conflict.

Each person now shares personal experiences that may have led to the formation of this value or belief. The listener asks, *"What personal experiences have you had in your life that helped you form this belief?"* The speaker replies, *"My daughter got pregnant when she was seventeen and she didn't tell me. Her boyfriend and some other friends helped her get an abortion, and I only found out when she began bleeding afterwards and almost died. I was terrified when I first found out about it, and then I got really angry at her and her friends for not telling me."*

Again, the listener reflects back the feelings and content before moving forward to the next step. *"Your daughter had an abortion without consulting you when she was a teenager and almost died because of it. Her brush with death terrified you and this also left you feeling angry about not being consulted and about her friends helping her take this risky step."*

The speaker replies with, *"Yes. She trusted her friends to help her more than she did me. I not only almost lost my daughter, but I lost my grandchild."* Reflecting back, *"This event has really impacted your values around this issue."* If she agrees this is what she said, then she is ready to move on to the next step. Again, the other person has to provide information about his/her previous experiences related to the issue and be heard, before moving to the next step.

Step 3: Take Turns Finding the Sources of Our Feelings Related to the Conflict.

Focus on the feelings and reflect back what you hear from the other person. The listener asks, *"What other times in your life have you felt this way?"* The speaker says, *"My younger sister had an abortion when she was in high school and didn't tell my mother. She did tell me though, and I was very scared for her. I had to keep this secret from both of my parents for many years. My sister was never able to get pregnant after having the abortion, in spite of all her efforts. I decided as a result of her experience that abortion is bad."*

The listener says, *"So your sister's abortion as a teenager was very scary*

for you. You saw how much pain and suffering she had as a result of having it. Keeping her secret from your parents left you feeling lonely and unable to ask them for comfort and help during this difficult time." If this response is seen as correct, this person is ready to move to the next step. Before that is done, the other person has a similar opportunity to express feelings and be understood and accepted, before moving to the next step.

Step 4: Determine Any Shifts in Our Awareness

Take turns restating any new perceptions. The listener might say, *"Based on what you have shared with me about how you formed your opinions about abortion and your feelings about it, do you have any new perceptions of your value or belief?"* The speaker replies, *"Yes, I recognize that my strong feelings about my daughter's abortion are related to what happened to my sister. I can see why I yelled at her and spoke so harshly about her boyfriend and friends. I also recognize that I have been feeling grief about the loss of a grandchild—one that I will never know. I think that my sister also has this grief because she told me she wished she had asked my parents for help. They might have supported her in birthing and raising this child. She didn't know it would be her only chance to be a mother."*

When both people have stated their positions on the value or belief and each completed Steps 1 through 4, they can look for commonalities they might have in how they've formed their value or belief. Then they might ask each other, *"How are you feeling about me as a result of hearing the reasons for my position on the issue of abortion?"*

Step 5: Explore Remaining Areas of Agreement and Disagreement

One way to process this step is to say, *"I think we can now agree that we originally thought that we had very different positions about abortion, yes? After looking at the experiences that are related to abortion, I can see that we have some things in common and I feel a lot of compassion for the pain and suffering that we both have had. How do you see it?"*

Step 6: Make Plans to Handle Any Remaining Areas of Disagreement

This might take the form of saying, *"I think it is safe to say that neither of us has changed our minds about the value of abortion and that we would probably make different choices if we were faced with them. I can see why you believe as you do. If I had experienced what you have, I might also believe the way that you do."*

Step 7: Make Plans to Handle Any Strong Feelings or Reactions We Each Might Still Have

If either of you still has strong feelings and reactions, consult Worksheet

#4 in Chapter 7 to help locate the source of these strong feelings and reactions. After that, you may want to go back to this Worksheet to see if you can achieve a better outcome.

Additional Resources:

Films: "Marnie" by Alfred Hitchcock