

My Conflict

(Contributed by Meg Einhorn)

“My Conflict” is an activity designed to increase personal awareness of one’s role in conflict. The primary purpose of this activity is to explore what works well in working through conflict and what needs to be changed. Participants probe underlying assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs about conflict, as well.

First, participants are encouraged to relax and clear their minds of extraneous thoughts. Taking a couple of deep breaths, stretching, or shaking out one’s hands and feet can encourage them to recreate in their mind’s eye a recent conflict (Note: they should be informed that the conflict chosen should be one they feel comfortable sharing with a partner or others in a group discussion.) Participants are guided through remembering the conflict and encouraged to create a vivid visual recollection of the conflict. They are given the following verbal cues from the facilitator:

1. ***What did you see in the environment?***
2. ***What did the other person look like (e.g., clothing, body posture, facial expression)?***
3. ***What did you hear (e.g., what the other person was saying, what you were saying, tone of voice, peripheral noise)?***
4. ***What were you feeling (e.g., excited, scared)?***
5. ***What were you thinking (e.g., “This is a great opportunity,” or “I hate this”)?***
6. ***How was your body feeling (e.g., relaxed, muscles tense, butterflies in stomach)?***

What the trainer/facilitator might say:

“Think about an interpersonal conflict you have recently experienced. Try to recreate, in your mind’s eye, where the conflict occurred, who was present, and how you were feeling (both physically and emotionally). Consider what you were thinking just before, during, and after the conflict. Take your time to create a complete mental image, and then answer the following questions:”

My conflict – record sheet

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the conflict start?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did I contribute to it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did I do during the conflict?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What consequences did I experience as a result of this conflict?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this a common pattern for me in conflict?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What attitudes or beliefs do I hold about conflict? What parts of my belief systems contributed to this conflict unfolding as it did?

Allow participants about five minutes to reflect. Encourage them to record their responses on the accompanying “My Conflict” sheet.

After participants have completed the “My Conflict” sheet, ask them to discuss their conflicts with a partner (ten minutes).): Then seek insights from the larger group, analyzing individual scenarios using the following questions:

- Identify or describe the problem.
- What were the external consequences?
- What were the internal consequences?
- What would I do differently?
- Is this how I usually behave when in conflict?
- What are some of my personal attitudes and beliefs about conflict?

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