Enhancing Your Conflict Competence

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Our Working Definition of CONFLICT

Two parties (individuals or groups) in relationship (even if temporary)

With a DIFFERENCE that feels incompatible (but also needs resolution)

And therefore causes tension and stress

Shorthand: Relationship+Difference+Tension
Differences

Preferences

Expectations

Desires

Ideas

Needs

Values

Principles

Moral commitments
Viewing Conflict in terms of differences can increase the chances of finding a new, creative resolution.
Any significant degree of conflict competence involves self-awareness.
FIGHT or Flight

Stand your ground, defend your position, attack, dig in, persevere!

Give way, retreat, discard, remove yourself, give up, move on.
Theory: some emotional reactions, especially fears, likes, and dislikes, develop in a “low road” through the brain, skipping conscious thought.

In one study, people showed an amygdala response to certain images (above, left) without being aware of the image or their reaction.
Fight/Flight Response

- Sensory Cortex
  - Long route:
    - Sensory Thalamus
    - Emotional Stimulus
  - Short route:
    - Amygdala
    - Emotional Response
The Five Levels of Conflict

1. Problems to Solve
2. Disagreements
3. Contests
4. Fight / Flight
5. Intractable Situations