Enhancing Your Conflict Competence

Vanderbilt University Osher Life Long Learning Course, Spring, 2015
Review

• Definition of Conflict
• Focusing on *differences*
• Levels of conflict intensity
• Fight/Flight physiology
• Importance of self-awareness
  – Basic attitude towards conflict
  – Default styles in dealing with conflict
  – Triggers (verbal, physical, behavioral)
CONCEPTUAL Insights
1. Conflict Definition
2. Focus on Differences
3. Levels of Conflict
4. Fight/Flight Response

PERSONAL Insights
1. Increase Self-awareness
2. Recognize Triggers

BEHAVIORAL Insights

DESIRED OUTCOMES
Fight/Flight Response

- Sensory cortex
  - Long route
    - Sensory thalamus
    - Emotional stimulus
  - Short route
    - Amygdala
    - Emotional response
1. Conflict Definition
2. Focus on Differences
3. Levels of Conflict
4. Fight/Flight Response

1. Increase Self-awareness
2. Recognize Triggers
3. Note favorite verbal weapons
Verbal “weapons”

• Attack/blame
• Self-defend
• Complain
• Sarcasm
• Ask a Righteous Q
• Speculate
• Discount
• Interrupt
DESIZED OUTCOMES

CONCEPTUAL Insights
1. Conflict Definition
2. Focus on Differences
3. Levels of Conflict
4. Fight/Flight Response
5. Three Conversations
   a) “what happened”
   b) Feelings
   c) Identity

PERSONAL Insights
1. Increase Self-awareness
2. Recognize Triggers
3. Note favorite verbal weapons

BEHAVIORAL Insights
The “What Happened” conversation

Principle: *the situation is more complex than either party can see fully*

Three dimensions:

- Truth Assumption
- Intention Invention
- Blame Frame
“What Happened?”
Truth Assumption

A BATTLE OF MESSAGES

• Assumption: I know all I need to know to understand what happened

• Goal: Persuade other person I am right

The Ladder of Inference
“What Happened?”
Truth Assumption

**A BATTLE OF MESSAGES**
- Assumption: I know all I need to know to understand what happened
- Goal: Persuade other person I am right

**A LEARNING CONVERSATION**
- Assumption: Each of us brings different information and perceptions to the event (unknown to the other)
- Goal: Explore each other’s stories
“What Happened?”
Intention Invention

A BATTLE OF MESSAGES
• Assumption: I know what the other intended
• Goal: Let they know what they did was wrong

A LEARNING CONVERSATION
• Assumption: I know what I intended and the impact their actions had on me (not what they were thinking/intending)
• Goal: Share the impact on me and find out what their thinking was. Also what impact I have on them
“What Happened?”
Blame Frame

A BATTLE OF MESSAGES

• Assumption: It’s all their fault. (or all my fault)

• Goal: Get them to admit blame and take responsibility for making amends

A LEARNING CONVERSATION

• Assumption: We probably have both contributed to this mess.

• Goal: Understand the contribution system: how our actions interact to produce this result
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BEHAVIORAL Insights
The Feelings Conversation

A BATTLE OF MESSAGES

• Assumption: Feelings are irrelevant and not important to share (or their fault and they need to hear all about them)
• Goal: Avoid talking about feelings (or unload on them)

A LEARNING CONVERSATION

• Assumption: Feelings are the heart of the issue and usually complex. I may have to work a bit to understand my feelings.
• Goal: Acknowledge and address feelings (mine and theirs) without judgment or attribution
DESERVED OUTCOMES

1. Conflict Definition
2. Focus on Differences
3. Levels of Conflict
4. Fight/Flight Response
5. Three Conversations
   a) “what happened”
   b) Feelings
   c) Identity

CONCEPTUAL Insights

PERSONAL Insights
1. Increase Self-awareness
2. Recognize Triggers
3. Note favorite verbal weapons

BEHAVIORAL Insights
## The Identity Conversation

### A BATTLE OF MESSAGES
- **Assumption:** I am competent or incompetent, good or bad, lovable or unlovable. There is no in between.
- **Goal:** Protect my all-or-nothing self-image.

### A LEARNING CONVERSATION
- **Assumption:** There may be a lot at stake psychologically for both of us. Each of us is complex, neither is perfect.
- **Goal:** Understand the identity issues on the line for each of us. Build a more complex self-image to remain balanced better.
DESISHED OUTCOMES

1. Increase Self-awareness
2. Recognize Triggers
3. Note favorite verbal weapons

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1. Acknowledge
2. Pause
3. Shift Stance
4. Listen
5. Explore