

**HOW TO  
HANDLE CONFLICT  
AND MANAGE ANGER**

**ACTION GUIDE**

**BASED UPON A PROGRAM DEVELOPED BY  
NATIONAL SEMINARS FEATURING  
DENIS WAITLEY**

## Session

# 1

# UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT AND ANGER

---

Conflict and anger are constants in your life. For that reason, it is unrealistic to expect that they can be avoided altogether. Rather, the best course is to understand their causes and to develop healthy, controlled responses to them.

It is important to remember that neither conflict nor anger are always negative. In fact, they can be positive opportunities for learning new skills and growing toward full potential.

Beyond the primary needs of every human being — food, clothing and shelter — there are three other needs all people share:

- The need to be loved, valued and appreciated
- The need to be in control — of ourselves and our destinies
- The need for self-esteem

Whenever you feel you're in danger of losing one of these needs, you can experience either fear or anger, which often result in conflict.

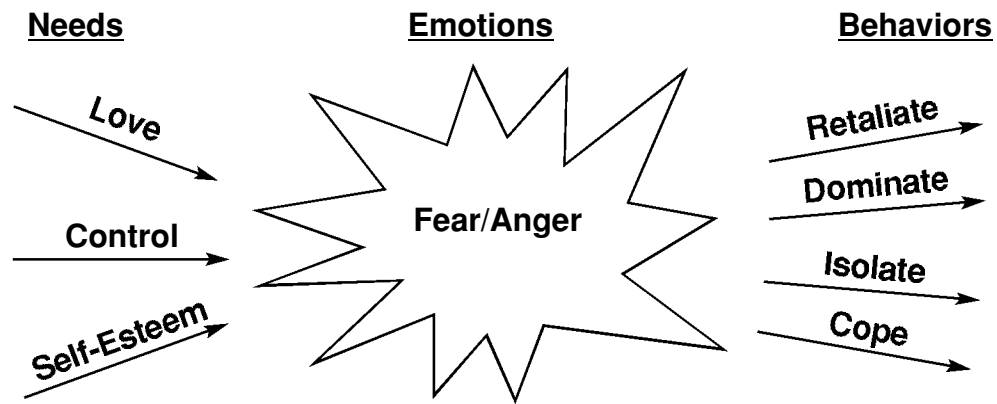
Remember: you can choose your reaction to any situation. Conflict and anger are not simply things thrust upon you by circumstances over which you have no power. You *choose* to get angry. And in choosing anger, you must then choose how you're going to manifest it.

There are four options for how you show your anger:

- Retaliation
- Isolation
- Domination
- Coping

Coping, of course, is the preferable path to follow and is the subject of this audiocassette course.

The following illustration serves as a graphic review of the emotions, needs and behaviors that play a role in conflict and anger.



Before proceeding with an exploration of coping with conflict and anger, it is beneficial to have a clear view of where you stand in relation to both at the moment.

The following self-assessment presents 25 situations in which conflict and anger are likely to arise. After thinking carefully about each situation, rate on a scale of 1 - 5 the level of volatility of your likely reaction, circling your response. On this scale, 1 indicates a relatively calm reaction and 5 indicates a major eruption.

1) As you're about to leave home for an important appointment, you spill coffee on your clothing.

1 2 3 4 5

2) A car pulls out in front of you, causing you to slam on your brakes, and the other driver gestures at you as if you'd done something wrong.

1 2 3 4 5

3) You miss a deadline at work because information to be supplied by someone else arrives late.

1 2 3 4 5

4) A waiter or waitress gets your order all wrong, and you're served a meal you don't want.

1 2 3 4 5

5) Friends arrive at your door unexpectedly, assuming that you're ready to entertain them.

1 2 3 4 5

6) You must wait an extremely long time at a medical or dental office.

1 2 3 4 5

7) You drop a gallon of milk, spilling it all over the floor.

1 2 3 4 5

8) You're driving behind a car going ten miles an hour under the legal speed limit, and there is no way you can pass.

1 2 3 4 5

9) You get a ticket for parking illegally.

1 2 3 4 5

10) Someone makes fun of your new haircut.

1 2 3 4 5

11) At work, a recent effort is criticized by your boss in front of several of your colleagues.

1 2 3 4 5

12) At the last minute, a friend cancels out of plans you'd made for the evening.

1 2 3 4 5

13) Someone takes credit for work you did.

1 2 3 4 5

14) You discover that someone is spreading gossip about you.

1 2 3 4 5

15) Someone to whom you're speaking doesn't even pretend to be listening to you.

1 2 3 4 5

16) A friend borrows something of yours — car, book, clothing, etc. — and returns it damaged, though he or she makes no mention of its condition.

1 2 3 4 5

17) Your judgment or intelligence is called into question.

1 2 3 4 5

18) A pen breaks in the pocket of your favorite suit.

1 2 3 4 5

19) An expensive item of clothing returns from the cleaners with a large stain on it.

1 2 3 4 5

20) Someone at work goes through your desk drawers without your permission.

1 2 3 4 5

21) At the very last minute, you are asked to make a presentation at work on a subject with which you are mostly unfamiliar.

1 2 3 4 5

22) Your spouse or partner makes a major purchase without consulting you.

1 2 3 4 5

23) Friends bring their toddler to your home and sit silently as the child wreaks havoc on your belongings.

1 2 3 4 5

24) Despite your certainty, you are unable to convince your bank that they have made an error adversely affecting your balance.

1 2 3 4 5

25) A friend tells someone else personal information you've revealed in confidence.

1 2 3 4 5

After answering all of the questions, add the numbers you have circled. Place your total score in the blank below.

---

Total Score

If your total score is:

- 25 – 50:** While there is probably always room for improvement, you remain admirably calm in the face of potentially vexing situations. You have learned that there are other options besides anger as reactions to change and sudden or unpleasant developments. The rest of this audiocassette course will help you refine your already praiseworthy ability to remain cool and in control.
- 51 – 100:** If you scored in this range, join the club. This is where the majority of people taking this self-assessment will find themselves before learning the lessons found in this audiocassette course. Your ability to contain conflict and anger at generally manageable and non-destructive levels still needs work. You opt for anger more than you should.
- 101 – 125:** You literally are in the process of killing yourself. Volcanic reactions like yours to life's difficult situations do all sorts of harm to your body and health. It is probable that, in the past, you have jeopardized friendships and working relationships—if not lost them altogether. It is vital that you pay strict attention to the lessons in this audiocassette course: it is no overstatement to say that your life may very well depend on it.

## Session

## 2

# MAINTAINING YOUR SELF-CONTROL

---

You have learned that anger and fear are two emotional reactions you might choose in response to conflict or the threat to any or all of your basic needs. You should also understand by now that making either of these choices will not get you very far in getting those needs met.

To meet those needs, you must keep your emotions in check, you must exercise self-control.

The following is a four-step system — each step represented by a question — that will help you stay cool, calm and in control, at least *most* of the time. Review the scenarios offered on the tape, if necessary, to understand how each question is used in a conflict situation. The four questions in the system are:

- What past experiences were like this, and what did I learn from them?  
(Projection)
- What's my level of commitment to this person?  
(Relationship)
- What else is happening now?  
(Present Event)
- What's on the line?  
(Risk)

Now, think of a current conflict you're experiencing in your own life. Then fill out the following chart, describing the anger and fear you feel as you ask yourself the four questions comprising this system. A sample, based on the story found on the tape, is offered if you need a format to follow. You may want to copy this chart before you fill it out for use in future situations.

**SAMPLE**

**1) Projection: What past experiences were like this and what did I learn from them?**

*Being stuck in traffic will make me late to see an important client. I've been late to see this client before and he got upset and uncooperative. It was uncomfortable, and I don't want to be in this uncomfortable situation again.*

**2) Relationship: What is my level of commitment to this person?**

*He's an important client. I have a professional commitment to him, especially since we are to sign a contract today. I feel that my need to be in control is threatened, as is my need for self-esteem.*

**3) Present Event: What else is happening now?**

*My boss told me this morning that if I don't get this contract signed today I'll lose my job. There's another loss of control. And if I lose my job — another threat to my self-esteem — my wife will be upset, a threat to my need to be loved. My car is also starting to overheat. Repairs mean more money. No job means no money means no repairs.*

**4) Risk: What is on the line?**

*My job, my car, my marriage, my home are all on the line.*

**CURRENT CONFLICT IN YOUR LIFE**

**1) Projection: What past experiences were like this and what did I learn from them?**

---

---

---

**2) Relationship: What is my level of commitment to this person?**

---

---

---

**3) Present Event: What else is happening now?**

---

---

---

**4) Risk: What is on the line?**

---

---

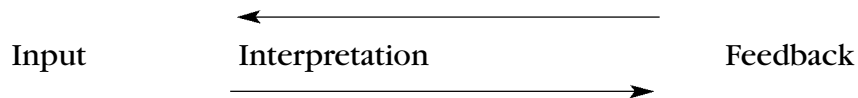
One of the best ways to maintain control in any situation is through effective communication. There are words and phrases that simply should never be used, including:

- ***But*** — indicates you didn't really mean anything you said just before.
- ***Should*** — places blame on the other person.
- ***You made me*** — shifts responsibility away from you in a counterproductive manner.
- ***Always/never*** — these extremes rarely apply to real situations.
- ***I can't*** — an escape from responsibility, this is just another way of saying, *I won't*.

The four essential speaking skills you can use during conflict are called The Four C's:

- **Speak Clearly** — the best way to do this is to slow down.
- **Speak Concisely** — get your point across in a reasonable amount of time.
- **Choose Words Correctly** — conflict resolution will be made easier if you can express exactly what you mean and feel.
- **Use Concrete Terminology** — nothing is ever accomplished when your message is unclear; speak to be understood.

The point of The Four C's is to send messages that are as positive as possible. When you send positive messages, most of the time you will receive positive feedback. Never stop trying to make communications as clear and effective as possible.





## Session

### 3

# MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT CONFLICT AND ANGER

---

Conflict and anger have several myths surrounding them, myths that can upset our thinking, cloud our judgment and lead us toward inappropriate responses to situations in our lives.

Below are five myths about conflict and anger, followed by what the truth *really* is.

**Myth #1**—The presence of conflict is the sign of a poor manager.

**Truth**—Since conflict happens all the time, everywhere, it can't be blamed on a manager; what *is* a manager's responsibility, however, is what he or she does with conflict once it arises.

**Myth #2**—Conflict is a sign of low concern for the organization.

**Truth**—People generally defend and fight for what deeply concerns them; why else would they be upset?

**Myth #3**—Anger is negative and destructive.

**Truth**—Anger *can* be negative and destructive, but it does not have to be; like conflict, it often stems from deep concern and a desire to be constructive.

**Myth #4**—Conflict, if left alone, will take care of itself.

**Truth**—Conflict can escalate as easy as it can dissipate; without proper attention, it can take on a life of its own.

**Myth #5**—Conflict must be resolved immediately.

**Truth**—A quick resolution isn't always possible or desirable; if you take the time to define the conflict carefully, you'll have a better chance of finding the best solution.

Now you know the truth and the myths about conflict. You understand that it is a situation full of emotion, a situation that, if the emotion gets out of hand, can frequently escalate. There are, however, six predictable factors that can help you de-escalate that tension and emotion.

After reviewing the six factors on the tape, respond to each of the following statements, answering either true or false. Then check your responses with the answer key found below.

- 1) Parties in conflict typically believe they know the course of conflict — and their diagnosis is usually right on target.  
\_\_\_\_\_ True    \_\_\_\_\_ False
  
- 2) Conflicts perceived to be rooted in action and content are, in reality, often caused by communication failures, particularly in listening.  
\_\_\_\_\_ True    \_\_\_\_\_ False
  
- 3) Deliberate attempts to harm another person are extremely rare.  
\_\_\_\_\_ True    \_\_\_\_\_ False
  
- 4) The need to be right is, at best, a secondary contributor to conflict.  
\_\_\_\_\_ True    \_\_\_\_\_ False
  
- 5) By the time conflict reaches a level where people are willing to deal with it, the real conflict is actually an accumulation of half-remembered and relatively minor issues.  
\_\_\_\_\_ True    \_\_\_\_\_ False
  
- 6) Most conflicts involve a dance — a series of moves and countermoves — with one person leading, i.e. a single individual who is “to blame.”  
\_\_\_\_\_ True    \_\_\_\_\_ False

### **ANSWER KEY**

- 1) **False.** Rarely do people know the real reason for a conflict. When you learn to separate yourself mentally from the situation and look at it from a more objective viewpoint, you’ll be able to identify more of the actual cause.
  
- 2) **True.** Listening is a skill, not an ability, and it does not come easily. Whatever the situation, conflict can be reduced if one party is willing to simply listen.
  
- 3) **True.** The only time a person tries to hurt someone else is when they’re on the defensive. When you’re careful not to put them on the defensive, conflict is much less likely to escalate.

- 4) **False.** The need to be right is a strong drive in most of us and is a primary contributor to conflict. By focusing on developing win-win relationships, you can overcome the need to be right all the time.
- 5) **True.** You probably can cite several examples from your own experience in which little things become big things over the course of time.
- 6) **False.** Conflict *can* be described as a dance, but no single person, usually, is to be blamed. Working with others can cause conflict, but it's a necessary part of our personal and professional lives. Keep your focus on the long term, where the ultimate benefit of cooperation resides.

## Session

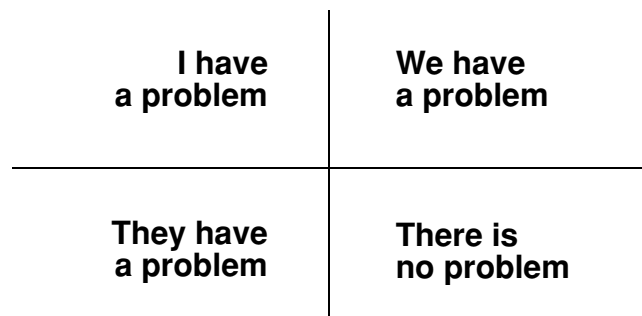
## 4

# WHO OWNS THE PROBLEM?

---

An important step in dealing with conflict and anger effectively is to identify who really owns the problem. Anger often blinds the issue of ownership, and the angry party ends up having more than his or her share of the problem because he or she *becomes* the problem.

The following is a model for placing ownership where it belongs:



In the lower right-hand quadrant, there is *no* problem. Many times, big conflicts are based on no problem at all, because people get upset based on their own perception of reality.

There are three possible ways to perceive reality:

- **How you see things**—Based on your past experience and conditioning, everything that has happened to you in your entire life has led you to believe that this is the way the world works.
- **How others see things**—Based on their past experience and conditioning, which are usually different than yours, everything that has ever happened to them has led them to believe that this is the way the world should work.
- **How things really are**—If you try to achieve this perspective whenever possible, you'll have the best chance of success in problem solving.

In order to get some practice determining the ownership of various problems, turn to the self-assessment beginning on page 4 of this guidebook. Review the situations outlined there, paying special attention to those you marked as causing you the most conflict and anger.

Who owns the problem in each situation that makes you angriest? By pinpointing ownership of the problem, can you map strategies for dealing with it effectively? Does identifying ownership help you prepare yourself to have a less angry reaction when and if the situation arises again? How?

In the space provided below, list three recent or ongoing conflicts or anger-producing situations in your life. Explore the question of ownership in each situation — remember that more than one person can own the problem.

1) Problem/Situation \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who owns the problem? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why do you say that? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How does assigning ownership to this (these) person(s) change the way you view the problem or situation?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Knowing the problem's ownership, how much of an emotional investment do you owe the situation?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2) Problem/Situation \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who owns the problem? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why do you say that? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How does assigning ownership to this (these) person(s) change the way you view the problem or situation?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Knowing the problem's ownership, how much of an emotional investment do you owe the situation?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3) Problem/Situation \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who owns the problem? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why do you say that? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How does assigning ownership to this (these) person(s) change the way you view the problem or situation?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Knowing the problem's ownership, how much of an emotional investment do you owe the situation?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

One way of fighting against a negative perception of reality is building healthy relationships, which promotes all things positive. When you're in an unhealthy relationship, you feel responsible *for* others — you're seeking to fix, protect, rescue and control them, and you carry their feelings.

In a healthy relationship, however, you feel responsible *to* others. You show empathy. You encourage, share and confront. You're sensitive, and you listen.

The checklist provided below is one simply to help your organize your thoughts about various relationships in your life. List eight major relationships — personal and professional — in which you are currently involved and then, after conscientiously thinking about each, mark whether you feel responsible *for* that person or responsible *to* them. When you are finished, go back over the list and review how many healthy relationships it indicates you have and how many unhealthy ones.

<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Responsible To</b>	<b>Responsible For</b>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

What have you learned by doing this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Can you devise any strategies for making all of your relationships healthy ones? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Session

# 5

# CONFLICT: DANGER AND OPPORTUNITY

---

Conflict is rooted in emotion, and, like all emotions, it has potential for either good or harm. It offers an opportunity for either growth or loss. When you handle conflict effectively, there are three areas of growth:

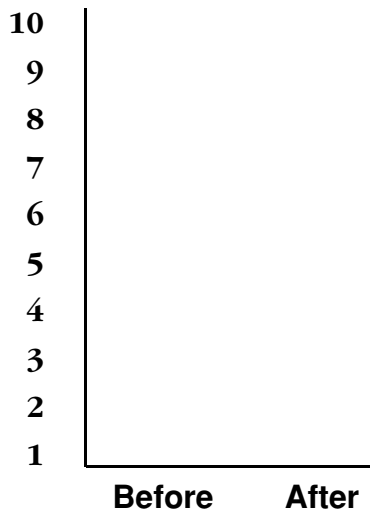
- **Your personality**—Experiencing success in dealing with conflict builds your self-confidence, which builds your self-esteem. People with high self-esteem tend to have more positive personalities.
- **Your power**—Personal power, or trust, is built between people when they overcome their fear of self-disclosure. When dealing successfully with conflict, you likely used self-disclosure, which built trust—and, thus, power.
- **Your perspective**—When you have a conflict with someone, it's usually because they have a different perception of reality. By working through this conflict successfully, you've widened your own perspective.

Select a recent, successfully concluded conflict in your life. After careful consideration, determine a level for your personality, power and perspective *before* the conflict's conclusion, using a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the lowest, 10 the highest level). Then, using the same scale, determine a level for your personality, power and perspective *after* the conflict's successful conclusion.



Using the before and after levels you've established, create a bar chart for each of the areas of growth that illustrates the extent of your growth produced by the recent conflict. Finally, in the blanks next to each chart, write a brief description of *how* you have grown in each area.

**Personality**



---

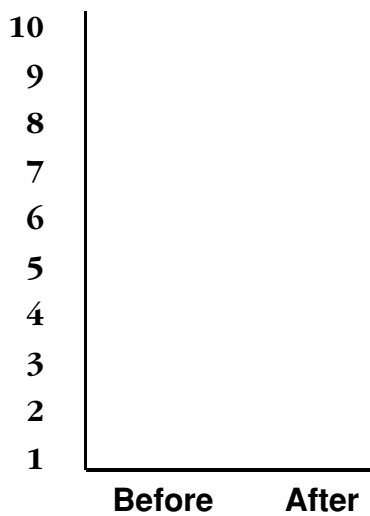
---

---

---

---

**Power**



---

---

---

---

---

**Perspectiv**

10  
9  
8  
7  
6  
5  
4  
3  
2  
1

**Before      After**

---

---

---

---

---

Note: If you believe that you experienced no growth from the conflict situation, think again. Reconsider the event very carefully. It is rare indeed that you will walk away from a successfully resolved conflict without the prize of at least some growth.

Unfortunately, there can also be negative consequences of conflict. Here are three potential areas of loss:

- **Momentum**—Instead of an opportunity, conflict can be viewed as an obstacle that stops some people in their tracks.
- **Self-esteem**—Those with whom you are in conflict may try to make you feel guilty, inadequate or stupid. Remember: the only person who can ever allow you to be manipulated is you.
- **Relationships**—A sad but true occurrence is when friends and family, the very people with whom your lines of communication could and should be the clearest, are torn apart because of conflict.

Obviously, you have much at stake when it comes to conflict. The end result of conflict is up to you, so choose growth instead of loss. It will become easier and easier to make that choice as you continue with this course.

## Session

# 6

# YOUR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE

---

We all approach conflict from a slightly different perspective because of our past experience and conditioning. It's vital to have a clear picture of exactly how *you* deal with conflict.

Following are ten incomplete statements, each with five alternative completions. Rank the completions in the order of how well they describe you.

Place a 5 next to your first choice, a 4 next to your second choice and a 3 next to your third choice. You'll have two unused completions for each statement. Remember: you will write down 5, 4 and 3 next to your first, second and third choices respectively.

1) When you have strong feelings in a conflict situation, you:

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. Enjoy the emotional release and sense of exhilaration and accomplishment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B. Enjoy the challenge of the conflict.
- \_\_\_\_\_ C. Find it frightening because someone will get hurt.
- \_\_\_\_\_ D. Become convinced there is nothing you can do to resolve the issue.
- \_\_\_\_\_ E. Become serious and concerned about how others are feeling and thinking.

2) The best result you can expect from a conflict is:

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. To help people face facts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B. To cancel out extremes in thinking so a strong middle ground can be reached.
- \_\_\_\_\_ C. To demonstrate the absurdity of self-centeredness and draw people closer together.

\_\_\_\_\_ D. To lessen complacency and assign blame where it belongs.

\_\_\_\_\_ E. To clear the air and enhance commitment and results.

3) When you have authority in a conflict situation, you:

\_\_\_\_\_ A. Put it straight and let others know your view.

\_\_\_\_\_ B. Try to negotiate the best settlement.

\_\_\_\_\_ C. Go along with the others, providing support where you can.

\_\_\_\_\_ D. Keep the encounter impersonal, citing rules if they apply.

\_\_\_\_\_ E. Ask for other viewpoints and suggest that a position be found that both sides might try.

4) When someone takes an unreasonable position, you:

\_\_\_\_\_ A. Lay it on the line and say that you don't like it.

\_\_\_\_\_ B. Let him or her know in casual, subtle ways that you're not pleased, possibly distract with humor and avoid direct confrontation.

\_\_\_\_\_ C. Keep your misgivings to yourself.

\_\_\_\_\_ D. Let your actions speak for you, possibly using depression or lack of interest.

\_\_\_\_\_ E. Call attention to the conflict and explore mutually acceptable solutions.

5) When you become angry with a peer, you:

\_\_\_\_\_ A. Explode without giving it much thought.

\_\_\_\_\_ B. Smooth things over with a good story.

\_\_\_\_\_ C. Compensate for your anger by acting the opposite of your feelings.

\_\_\_\_\_ D. Remove yourself from the situation.

\_\_\_\_\_ E. Express your anger and invite a response.

6) When you find yourself disagreeing with other group members about a project, you:

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. Stand by your convictions and defend your position.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B. Appeal to the logic of the group in the hope of convincing at least a majority that you are right.
- \_\_\_\_\_ C. Go along with the group.
- \_\_\_\_\_ D. Do not participate in the discussion and don't feel bound by any decision reached.
- \_\_\_\_\_ E. Explore points of agreement and disagreement, then search for alternatives that take everyone's views into account.

7) When one group member takes a position in opposition to the rest of the group, you:

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. Point out publicly that the dissenting member is blocking the group and suggest that the group move on without him or her if necessary.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B. Make sure the dissenting member has a chance to communicate his or her objections so that a compromise can be reached.
- \_\_\_\_\_ C. Encourage members to set the conflict aside and go on to more agreeable items on the agenda.
- \_\_\_\_\_ D. Remain silent because it is best to avoid becoming involved.
- \_\_\_\_\_ E. Try to uncover why the dissenting member views the issue differently so that the group's members can reevaluate their own positions.

8) When you see conflict emerging in your team, you:

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. Push for a quick decision to ensure that the task is completed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B. Avoid outright confrontation by moving the discussion toward a middle ground.
- \_\_\_\_\_ C. Relieve the tension with humor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ D. Stay out of the conflict as long as it is of no concern to you.
- \_\_\_\_\_ E. Share with the group your impression of what is going on so that the nature of the impending conflict can be discussed.

9) In handling conflict between group members, you:

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. Anticipate areas of resistance and prepare responses to objections prior to open conflict.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B. Encourage your members to be prepared by identifying in advance areas of possible compromise.
- \_\_\_\_\_ C. Promote harmony on the grounds that the only real result of conflict is the destruction of friendly relations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ D. Submit the issue to an impartial arbitrator.
- \_\_\_\_\_ E. Recognize that conflict is healthy and press for the identification of shared concerns and/or goals.

10) In your view, one group might fail to work with another because:

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. There's a lack of a clearly stated position or a failure to back up the group's position.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B. There's a tendency for groups to force their leaders to abide by the group's decision, as opposed to promoting flexibility, which would facilitate compromise.
- \_\_\_\_\_ C. There's a lack of motivation on the part of the group's membership to live peacefully with the other group.
- \_\_\_\_\_ D. There's irresponsible behavior on the part of the group's leaders, resulting in the leaders placing emphasis on maintaining their own power positions rather than addressing the issues involved.
- \_\_\_\_\_ E. There's a tendency for groups to enter negotiations with a win/lose perspective.

Now, add up your scores for each letter. For example, add up all numbers in the blanks in front of A completions, then do the same for all B completions. Repeat the process for C, D and E. Put the totals in the blanks below. (Note: when you add your scores together for all five letters, their sum should be 120.)

\_\_\_\_\_ **A**                      \_\_\_\_\_ **B**                      \_\_\_\_\_ **C**                      \_\_\_\_\_ **D**                      \_\_\_\_\_ **E**

Your next step is to transfer the scores to the chart that appears below.

Column A \_\_\_\_\_ — Dominator

Column B \_\_\_\_\_ — Compromiser

Column C \_\_\_\_\_ — Placater

Column D \_\_\_\_\_ — Withdrawer

Column E \_\_\_\_\_ — Collaborator

Finally, circle your highest score. That is your dominant conflict management style. Put an asterisk (\*) next to your second highest score. That is your secondary conflict management style, which usually appears when you are afraid or angry.

What do these styles mean?

**Dominator**—Win/ lose oriented when dealing with conflict, a dominator intends to be the one who wins.

**Compromiser**—Though a compromiser believes he or she is achieving a small win, it is just the opposite; both people in a compromise feel equally unhappy.

**Placater**—By allowing the other person to have their way in a conflict, the placater meets his or her top priority: ending the conflict and making the other person happy again.

**Withdrawer**—When a withdrawer perceives he or she is going to lose, removing him- or herself from the situation is the preferred solution.

**Collaborator**—Employing the most effective way to deal with conflict, the collaborator is someone who looks for a win-win solution.

## Session

# 7

# THE DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT

---

When you understand the dynamics of a conflict, you're better able to control its outcome. As a first step toward that understanding, here are the six dominant characteristics of conflict of which you need to be aware.

- As conflict escalates, concern for self increases.
- The desire to win increases with a rise in self-interest; saving face takes on increased importance at higher levels of conflict.
- Nice people can become harmful to others as conflict increases.
- Conflict management strategies that work at low levels of conflict are often ineffective and at times are counterproductive at higher levels of conflict.
- Conflict may skip levels.
- People are likely to be at different individual levels during conflict, but an overall organizational level of conflict can be identified.

A final characteristic of conflict is that it occurs in three stages:

- **Stage One: Daily events**—The minor conflicts that happen every day, you can handle these most easily with brainstorming through which, with others, you find a solution with the most pros and fewest cons.
- **Stage Two: Challenges**—When you don't face the daily events at the first stage, you find yourself in a win-lose situation, the solution of which begins with removing as many barriers as possible.
- **Stage Three: Battles**—With the intention of hurting the other person, you probably can't settle this sort of situation on your own; instead, you need third-party intervention.



While moving from Stage One to Stage Two to Stage Three is easily done—simply by not facing up to the situation—reversing the process, retreating from Stage Three to Stage Two to Stage One, is extremely difficult. That’s all the more reason for you to confront conflict when it is still at Stage One.

The following is a Conflict Assessment Checklist to be used to evaluate an existing conflict in your life and to determine the stage at which it currently exists. Make several copies of the blank checklist for future use.

In the assessment, divided into the three stages of conflict, there are eight questions to be answered yes or no for each stage. The pattern of your answers will quickly tell you at what stage your conflict is—it is the stage with the most “yes” answers.

Following the assessment are strategies for coping with conflict at each stage.

### **STAGE ONE**

1) Are the individuals involved willing to meet and discuss facts?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_\_ No

2) Is there a sense of optimism?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_\_ No

3) Is there a cooperative spirit?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_\_ No

4) Does a “live and let live” attitude typify the atmosphere?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_\_ No

5) Can individuals discuss issues without involving personalities?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_\_ No

6) Are the parties able to stay in the present tense?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_\_ No

7) Is the language specific?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_\_ No

8) Do solutions dominate the management efforts?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_\_ No

## **STAGE TWO**

1) Is there a competitive attitude?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

2) Is there an emphasis on winners and losers?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

3) Is it hard to talk about problems without including people as part of the problem?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

4) Is the language generalized?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

5) Are the individuals involved beginning their statements with words like "They," "Everyone is," "You always" and "He never"?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

6) Is there a cautious atmosphere when issues are discussed?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

7) Can you detect a "cover-your-rear" attitude?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

8) Do the individuals make efforts to look good?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

## **STAGE THREE**

1) Are attempts being made to eliminate others from the problem-solving process?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

2) Is there an intention to hurt?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

3) Have obvious leaders or spokespersons emerged?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

4) Is there a choosing up of sides?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

5) Has corporate good become identified with a set of special interests?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

6) Is there a sense of “holy mission” on the part of certain individuals?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

7) Is there a sense that the conflict will never end?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

8) Has there been a loss of middle ground, with only one-sided, all-or-nothing options?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

After discovering the stage at which your particular conflict currently is, read below what you can do to deal with a conflict at each stage:

#### **STAGE ONE: HOW TO COPE**

- Keep the parties involved looking at both sides.
- Encourage “what if” thinking.
- Identify residual emotions.

#### **STAGE TWO: HOW TO CONTEND**

- Create a safe environment for everyone involved.
- Be hard on facts, but soft on people.
- Challenge extremes.
- Keep group accountability.

#### **STAGE THREE: HOW TO CHALLENGE**

- Get as many details as possible about the conflict and the individuals involved.
- Remember that logic and reason don’t work.
- Establish goals and get commitments.
- Keep your perspective.

## Session

# 8

# LEARNING TO WORK AS A TEAM

---

A fact of life in the modern workplace is that organizations that will survive and thrive in the future are those moving away from a hierarchy with a single, powerful person at the top to a structure in which all employees form a partnership, at least figuratively.

This requires that people learn to stop fighting with one another and learn to work as a team. The following are four keys to richer relationships that will go a long way toward developing that team spirit:

- **Self-disclosure:** If you want people to disclose their fears, recognize and talk about your own.
- **Listening:** If you want people to speak up, demonstrate that you can communicate.
- **Modeling:** If you want people to stop making negative assumptions, freeze those assumptions in yourself.
- **“What’s the worst thing that could happen?”:** If you want people to ask questions about fear and anger, ask those questions first.

Another way to facilitate teamwork is by working to avoid hurt feelings that will linger even after the conflict is over. Here are six problem-solving rules that keep conflicts from getting personal:

- Attack the problem, not the person.
- Verbalize your feelings, but never act on them.
- Move from justification to resolution.
- Look forward to opportunity, not backward by blaming.
- Identify the points where you can give rather than take.
- Remember that the angrier the event the less likely logic will work.

After reviewing the four keys to richer relationships and the six problem-solving rules, all detailed above, choose the three on which you feel you need the most work, the three areas in which you are weakest. Are you quick to attack another person, ignoring the actual problem? Are you unable to verbalize your feelings of anger and fear? Then write a brief assessment of where you are currently in those areas and where you’d like to be.

**Area # 1** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Area # 2** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Area # 3** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Session

## 9

# COMBATING CONTROL AND HARASSMENT

---

Unfortunately, the ideal workplace does not yet exist. Among other problems, gender stereotyping is still often perpetuated in our day-to-day behavior — and it is often used to control others.

There are five ways people can use differences in gender or power against you, very subtle tactics to take away your control:

- **Demeaning labels/language**—Because we know too many of them from sad experience, they will not be listed here, but each is an attempt to control mood and self-image, and each can cause defensiveness.
- **Demeaning tasks**—Although no task is inherently demeaning, if you're expected to do something by virtue of your gender or asked to do things considered beneath your rank, you're being controlled and, perhaps, punished.
- **Power shifts**—Taking away an individual's power or responsibility as a means of control is an unfair and very real manipulation.
- **Failure**—Organizations spend an enormous amount of time and money keeping track of what people have done wrong; the constant awareness of that fact is a form of being controlled.
- **Self-destruction**—By choosing to stop growing or even threatening to harm themselves, people can control others.

Fortunately, we have resources available for combatting control tactics:

- **Choice**—The freedom of thought.
- **Knowledge**—Expands your comfort zone through new information.
- **Practice**—Will improve your self-control and your life.
- **Involvement**—If you're involved, you have some degree of power.

At some point, you've probably been on the receiving end of what you perceive to be harassment or hardball tactics. It's a difficult situation, but it can be handled effectively with the following six-step system.

- **Listen**—Assess what was really said.
- **Make a “cushion statement”**—Describe how you feel.
- **Explain why you feel that way**—No one thinks or feels exactly as you do, so articulate that.
- **Look for some alternative**—Ask an open-ended question.
- **Use the broken record technique**—Say over and over, “I didn’t like what you said. Was it meant to hurt?”
- **Put it in writing**—Make a written contract — including the date, what was discussed, what was agreed upon — to get a commitment to end harassment.

If you currently feel that you are suffering from harassment or hardball tactics, use the space below to write a draft of the written contract you would like your harasser to agree to sign. Remember to be as specific as possible. Because the final contract will include what was agreed upon with this person, this draft should contain your ideal agreement.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Sometimes a manipulator doesn't confront you directly. Gossip and backstabbing are used. If you're being hurt by gossip and you want to stop it, there are three steps you can take to end it.

- When you hear that someone is talking behind your back, ask the person who tells you about it to confront the gossipier with you. If the answer is no, proceed to the next step.
- Ask if you can use the other person's name with the gossipier and repeat what they just said. If the answer is no, proceed to the next step.
- Say clearly and directly to this person, “Then this is not true, and I'll do everything I can to ignore and discredit this rumor.”

## Session

# 10

# NEGOTIATING A SOLUTION

---

As you bring a conflict to a conclusion, you'll usually need to do some negotiating. There are seven negotiating styles from which you can choose, depending on your particular needs.

The following chart describes each negotiating style and the situation(s) in which each works or does not work.

**Style #1: Denial** — You choose not to listen.

**When It Works:** When you need to separate yourself from the situation; when you need time.

**When It Doesn't Work:** When the other person knows you have the information that's needed.

**Style #2: Withdrawal** — You physically leave.

**When It Works:** When the other person must have your participation.

**When It Doesn't Work:** When you have a lot to lose; when you're right.

**Style #3: Placating** — You give way to power.

**When It Works:** When the other person requires status.

**When It Doesn't Work:** When you need a real solution.

**Style #4: Suppression** — You don't say what you really want to say.

**When It Works:** When your information is damaging; when you need time.

**When It Doesn't Work:** When the other party already has the information.

**Style #5: Dominance** — You try to overpower.

**When It Works:** When you have the power.

**When It Doesn't Work:** When other people don't respect your abilities or power.



**Style #6:** Compromise — Both parties identify possible solutions.

**When It Works:** When both parties are right; when you want to keep relationships open.

**When It Doesn't Work:** When only one party is right; when you have nothing to give up.

**Style #7:** Collaboration — You expand your horizons.

**When It Works:** When you have time; when a good relationship exists.

**When It Doesn't Work:** When there's a conflict of interest or lack of trust; when time is short.

As you've seen, you're most effective in handling conflict when you choose the appropriate negotiating style. But it's hard to determine the best style to use in the midst of a conflict.

Here is a system that can help you decide which style is best in a particular situation. It's called the ACES system, and it's comprised of four steps.

**A: Assessment**—What happened? Who owns the problem? How has the problem impacted you? How has it impacted others?

**C: Control**—What would be the long-term ramifications if you did nothing? What would they be if you took action?

**E: Engagement**—What would be the best mode of communication in this situation? Verbal? Non-verbal?

**S: Solution**—How can you work toward a win-win outcome whenever possible?

Review the taped discussion of the ACES system and then select any number of conflicts that may currently be in your life. Apply the ACES system to each and determine which negotiating style is best suited for each conflict.

## Session

# 11

# HANDLING OUTER AND INNER CONFLICT

---

There are ten conflict-resolution skills everyone must know. If we all worked toward developing these skills, resolving conflict would no longer be such a struggle. And conflict itself would move toward a healthy exchange of ideas, rather than a battle.

The ten conflict-resolution skills are:

- Listening
- Being a role model
- Discussion
- Creating feedback
- Making personal change
- Being vigilant
- Dealing with fear
- Facilitating others
- Being a learner
- Finding and using resources

Your biggest conflicts are often in your head. If you're experiencing excessive stress or rejection, you may not realize how much it's affecting you. But it will manifest itself in some way.

You need to develop the ability to recognize the signs of internal conflict. There are six signs you can watch for that will tell you when something's going wrong.

- **Seeing limited alternatives and developing a fear of failure**—Not seeing any alternative courses of action, you do nothing, a good way to avoid failure and the best way to avoid success.
- **Complaining more frequently**—You need to find out why you're complaining so much and, after examining the circumstances in your life, determine what's really bothering you.
- **Grasping at straws**—Even though you know conflict rarely goes away by itself, you're holding out hope that your problem might get better on its own.

- **Abandoning projects soon after you begin**—By never completing anything, you'll never experience success, thus starting down the path to self-destruction.
- **Finding yourself at square one and wondering if you have the strength to start over**—Remember: you're at square one every day when you wake up; if you can face the day, you can face anything that the day brings.
- **Coming up with “perfectly good reasons” not to change**—Although you think change will hurt you, struggling against change is what really hurts you.

A peaceful inner world will make you much more effective at handling conflicts in the outer world. There are four types of distorted thinking that can cause internal conflict.

The following chart lists those distortions, the negative thinking each involves and the best self-defense against each distortion. In the spaces below each example of Negative Thinking and Self-Defense, write a personal example of any negative thinking you're experiencing in that category, and the self-defense you can use against that distortion.

**Distortion**—Overgeneralization

**Negative Thinking**—“I always make mistakes.”

---

**Self-Defense**—“I do a lot of things right!”

---

**Distortion**—All-or-nothing thinking

**Negative Thinking**—“No one will support me.”

---

**Self-Defense**—“Someone may be less than happy, but there are few things that everyone agrees on.”

---

**Distortion**—Labeling

**Negative Thinking**—“I'm a jerk.”

---

**Self-Defense**—“I was less than nice in that particular instance, but that doesn't make me a jerk.”

---

**Distortion**—Everyone’s going to get hurt

**Negative Thinking**—“I’m going to ruin my relationships by acting this way.”

---

**Self-Defense**—“I can be angry and stay in control.”

---

## Session

# 12

# TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

---

No system for handling conflict and managing anger can work if you haven't first learned how to take care of yourself. You need to maintain your self-esteem along the path to success.

In order to support your self-esteem, you need to pay attention to five areas of your life.

- **Behavior**—Evaluate actions and needs, and determine if your actions are allowing you to meet your most important needs.
- **Feelings**—After identifying specific emotions you are feeling, learn to accept, rather than deny them.
- **Attitudes**—Build a positive mental attitude (PMA) and begin to feel good about yourself.
- **Beliefs**—When you aren't experiencing success, or you aren't feeling too good about yourself, check (and adjust, if necessary) your four belief systems:
  - a belief in humanity as basically good or basically evil
  - a belief in a higher order or an absence of one
  - a belief in life itself as basically fair or unfair
  - a belief in yourself as someone you either like or don't like
- **Programming**—You program the computer in your brain with four levels of self-talk:
  - “I can't”
  - “I should”
  - “I will no longer”
  - “I choose to”

The most influential form of self-talk is level four — “I choose to.” At this level, by using positive affirmation statements, you are consciously moving in a positive new direction. It is at this level that you set powerful, positive goals.

Goal setting is most effective when you follow these six guidelines:

- State your goal in the present tense.
- Be specific and put it in writing.
- Make it a simple, easy-to-use plan.
- Be practical about what you can achieve.
- Be personal and honest.
- Make sure the goal asks enough of you and causes you to stretch.

As you complete your work on this audiocassette program, begin to incorporate your new knowledge into your life. Think about how you have been living your life, how you have been handling conflict and anger and how you can make changes in both.

Begin reprogramming your brain with positive self-talk. In the space below, write three level-four self-talk messages to yourself. They should be “I choose to” statements that will begin to program positive, new directions into your life.

1) **I choose to** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) **I choose to** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3) **I choose to** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Finally, use the goal-setting guidelines listed on the previous page and set three goals for yourself that, when met, will make you better prepared to deal with either conflict and anger or with your life as a whole.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_