

CONFLICT INTENSITY FOR SESSIONS: how do we know when it is serious?

LEVEL ONE - PROBLEM TO SOLVE

1. Real disagreement; conflicting goals, values and needs etc. Easy to define.
2. Short-lived anger quickly controlled; parties begin to be uncomfortable in presence of each other.
3. Tends to be problem oriented rather than person-oriented.
4. Open sharing of information.

Solving the problem: *Move toward unanimous agreement. Utilize collaborative style. Win/win final resolution with acceptable, mutually agreed solution. Constructive disagreement is healthy.*

LEVEL TWO: DISAGREEMENT.

1. Real disagreement; mixing of personalities and issues; problem cannot be clearly defined.
2. Self-protection important; distrust begins. Caution in association; less mixing with the "other side."
3. Begin personifying problem; shrewdness and calculation begin.
4. Language guarded; selective holdback of information occurs on both sides.

Addressing the Disagreement: *Support to attempt collaborative solution; create agreed upon safe space for honesty; clear up facts; encourage accommodation to move toward consensus / acceptable agreement; win/win.*

----- most groups can handle levels above this line without assistance; below the line, help is needed -----

LEVEL THREE – CONTEST

1. Begin the dynamics of win/lose. Resistance to peace overtures. Focus on persons representing the opposition.
2. Not able to operate in presence of opposition; not willing/able to share emotions/feelings constructively.
3. Personal attacks; formation of factions/sides; threat of members leaving.
4. Distortion is major problem. Information shared only within factions. Objectives are more complex and diffuse; clustering of issues. Winning is more important than resolving.

Calling off the Contest: *Third party consultant / mediator; facts still may be helpful in decision-making process; decisions made by mediation, compromising, voting. Avoid perceived winners and losers; risk of some leaving*

LEVEL FOUR: CRUSADE

1. Shifts from winning to protecting one's own group; getting rid of opposition; believe others cannot or do not want to change; people and positions are one and the same.
2. Cold self-righteousness. Will not speak to other side. Factions are solidified. Clear lines of demarcation.
3. Information limited only to the cause being advocated; will not accept/listen to contrary or new information.
4. Talk now of "principles," not "issues." Language solidifies into ideology. Facts not important.

Minimizing Casualties: *Last place for constructive intervention by third party consultant; shuttle diplomacy; intervention to negotiate a settlement, not to resolve the issue; high probability of church split with significant numbers leaving.*

LEVEL FIVE: WORLD WAR

1. No longer a clear understanding of issue; personalities, positions, issues have merged.
2. Vindictive; loss of emotional control; relentless obsession to accomplish the objective at all costs; no longer satisfied with getting rid of opposition, now want to destroy them, hurt them.
3. Sees other party as harmful to society, not just to the offended group or person; must be stopped.
4. Information skewed to accomplish this objective at any cost; words imply destruction and/or elimination of the other.

Conflict Unmanageable: *Highly destructive atmosphere; no constructive outcome is likely; need to separate parties to prevent further violence; formation of administrative/judicial commission is likely.*