

Relational Tool Box

Conflict Resolution 6/27/21

Day 1:

Most people are poor at resolving conflict, especially Christians.

Some of us are poor at resolving conflict because of wrong beliefs about peacemaking. Because Jesus proclaimed, "Blessed are the peacemakers," we wrongly assume that Jesus calls us to be pacifiers and people-pleasers who ensure that no one gets upset. Rather than expressing the ways that someone has hurt us or upset us, we avoid conflict by saying nothing, dismissing our wants, and pretending nothing is wrong. Yet, true peace will never come by pretending that what is wrong is right.

Others of us are poor at conflict not because we are trying to keep the peace, but because we fight, dirty. Whether because of our family of origin or because of our personality, all of us have adopted habits for dealing with conflicts that are unhealthy. Our unkind words, defensive postures, and aggressive (or passive-aggressive) behaviors can all contribute to dirty fighting tactics. Yet, true peace will never come until we learn to fight cleanly.

When we look at the life of Jesus, we see a model for true peacemaking. Jesus was willing to bring disruption to bring true peace. Jesus did not avoid conflict or appease people. He did not ignore tensions or differences. Jesus fought, but he fought cleanly and with integrity.

If we are going to follow Jesus, we must learn to engage in conflict. By the power of the Holy Spirit and in community, we can be transformed into the kind of people who fight cleanly and with integrity.

1. What is your normal stance in a disagreement? Passive? Aggressive? Argumentative? A yeller? Something else?
2. Have you ever been in an argument with someone and pushed their buttons just because you knew you could?
3. Thoughts about becoming a true peacemaker?

Day 2:

In the animal kingdom, animals all have a defense mechanism that can be broken down into roughly three different categories. When backed into a corner a raccoon will fight tooth and nail to protect itself or to get out away from the perceived threat. This can be unfortunate for someone that goes to take out the trash and interrupts the raccoons late night snack.

When a lioness emerges from the brush to pounce on an gazelle, the gazelle will take off running in a zig zag to avoid any confrontation with the aggressive lioness.

When it senses danger, a possum will often freeze, occasionally falling over and looking like it might be dead. Playing possum, is no game for the possum but the way it tries to survive.

1. When faced with conflict, most of us respond with one of the following postures: fight, flight, or freeze. Which of those do you tend towards? Which was most prevalent in your family of origin?
 1. Fight: Running towards conflict, sometimes engaging the conflict without slowing down enough to fight cleanly and cautiously.
 2. Flight: Avoiding the conflict, perhaps by distancing yourself physically or emotionally from the person or situation.
 3. Freeze: Staying present in the conflict, but doing nothing about it.

Day 3:

According to Pete and Geri Scazzero, in their book, *“Emotionally Healthy Relationships,”* Most people have go to “dirty fighting tactics,” that tend to take over when in a confrontation. These tactics tend to harm rather than help in a conflict.

1. Take 5 minutes to read the Dirty Fighting Tactics checklist below. Which 2 or 3 tactics do you see most often in your own life?
 - Silent Treatment
 - Lecturing
 - Blaming / Attacking
 - Condescension
 - Threatening Gestures
 - Name-Calling
 - Criticizing
 - Sarcasm
 - Complaining
 - Denying
 - Justifying
 - Walking Away
 - Placating
 - Avoiding
 - Shouting
 - Using “Always” and “Never”
 - Anger / Rage
 - Passive-Aggressive Behavior
 - Lying
 - Hitting / Violence
 - Showing Contempt

Why do you think these tactics can be ineffective?

Day 4:

Doing conflict well is one of the most difficult parts of any relationship, and yet it is an incredible source of growing intimacy. Since doing anything well takes practice, we want to spend some time now practicing fighting cleanly. Pete & Geri Scazzero, in *Emotionally Healthy Relationships*, list out 7 Steps to a Clean Fight. You'll notice that effective conflict resolution involves the participation of both the speaker and the listener.

Step 1: Ask for permission & state the problem (Speaker)

Begin the process by asking for permission to engage the listener in a clean fight and state what you would like to talk about. It's really helpful to use "I notice..." language. It's also important to be specific when you state the problem and to address a behavior, not just the emotion.

For example: "Do you have a minute to chat? I notice that you get up and leave when you're getting frustrated with me during an argument."

Step 2: State why it is important to you (Speaker)

Next, express the value that compelled you to bring this problem up. Try using the phrase, "I value..."

For example: "I value having healthy communication with you..."

Step 3: Fill in the following sentence: "When you... I feel..." (Speaker)

Next, refer to the way the behavior you are addressing makes you feel. The goal here is not to accuse the person, but to explain how the behavior impacts you, so try starting with the behavior and ending with the emotion you feel.

For example: "When you get up and leave while we fight, I feel disrespected and..."

Step 4: State your request clearly, respectfully, and specifically (Speaker)

In light of their behavior and your feelings, make a specific request for how you would like them to behave. Consider using the phrase, "I'd like to ask that you..."

For example: "I'd like to ask that you do not leave the room during our conflicts..."

Step 5: Consider the request & state your level of agreement (Listener)

As the listener, spend a minute reflecting out loud about the request the speaker has made. This is a great time to briefly share your perspective and feelings with this person. As you consider the request, you have an opportunity to agree to all, some, or none of what the speaker has requested.

For example: "Thank you for sharing this with me. I had no idea it impacted you so much. I can try my best to not leave the room during a conflict, but sometimes I may need to leave because I know that, if I were to stay, I would say something I regret."

Step 6: Agree to the request or offer an alternative (Speaker)

Now that the listener has heard the request and stated their agreement, you can agree to the request or offer an alternative.

For Example: "I understand that. I can agree to give you some space before we talk." Or, "I understand that. If you do need some space, let me know by saying "I need a minute" and we can take some time before we come together to talk about it."

Step 7: Review the agreement now and then again in 2 to 4 weeks (Speaker & Listener)

To make sure you're on the same page, take a minute for each of you to express your understanding of the agreement using the phrase: "My understanding of the agreement is.." So put a date on the calendar to come back together, review your agreement and check in about how it's going, and see if you need to make any adjustments.

Day 5:

When stepping into conflict, it's easy to get swept into the emotion of the moment and lose our integrity. We can fail to own our part of the problem, be unclear about our values, skirt around the truth, or fail to think about the future. This week's Practice is an exercise in keeping our integrity in a conflict, using what Pete & Geri Scazzero call *Climbing the Ladder of Integrity*. The Ladder of Integrity is

Step 1: Identify a nonvolatile issue that is bothering you (e.g. someone's lateness, cell phone usage, messiness, lack of communication, missing meetings).

Step 2: Using the sentence stems in the Ladder of Integrity below, journal through your issue. Begin at the bottom ("Right now, the issue on my mind is...") and work your way up to the top ("I hope and look forward to").

Step 3 (Bonus): If, after working through the ladder on your own, you feel that you've gained clarity on the issue, respectfully share what is going on inside you, what you value, and what you hope with the other person.

CLIMB THE LADDER OF INTEGRITY

12 - I hope and look forward to...

11 - I think my honest sharing will benefit our relationship by...

10 - The most important thing I want you to know is...

9 - One thing I could do to improve the situation is...

8 - I am willing/not willing to...

7 - This issue is important to me because I value...and I violate that value when...

6 - What my reaction tells me about me is...

5 - My feelings about this are...

4 - My need in this issue is...

3 - My part in this is...

2 - I'm anxious in talking about this because...

1 - Right now the issue on my mind is...

What I hope (11-12)

What I value (7-10)

What is going on inside me (1-6)

Be sure to stick to one issue.

emotionally
HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

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