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What is Resolution?

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Conflict is inevitable, resolution is attainable.

Conflict finds us but, resolution is worked for, sought after, and grasped – it is attained. The good news: resolution is slothful prey and prefers being captured.

This is the second of a three-part series titled "What is Conflict Resolution". Part 1 answered the question, "What is Conflict?" If you have not listened to or read part 1, I encourage you to do so because it will be helpful to you. Part 3 answers, "What is Mediation?" This combination forms a three-legged stool upon which all future podcasts will rest.

It may help to picture resolution as putting points on the board. Most sports have several ways to score points, and the best players know all of them. By the end of this podcast, you will know all the ways to 'score' a resolution.

Most likely you are here for any number of three reasons.

- A. Immediate conflict. You are in the middle of a conflict right now and you want it to end.
- B. Imminent conflict. You know of an unavoidable conflict right around the corner, and you want to prepare for it.
- C. Inevitable conflict. You have been around long enough to know that, at one level, life is moments of conflict separated by periods of time. You've had conflicts in the past that did not go well or settle well, and you don't want to go through that again.

It will help to keep two rules in mind. #1) You are not alone. And I mean that in two ways. First, I am here to help and, second, you are not the first person to experience conflict. There is a reason an entire industry is devoted to conflict resolution – because so many people experience conflict and benefit from help attaining resolution. That brings me to rule #2) Conflict is inevitable. Most of the time conflict finds us, we don't have to go looking for it, and it comes in three forms: internal, circumstances, and other people. By having a thorough understanding of both conflict and resolution you can, when you find yourself in conflict with another person, attain resolution.

In part one of this series I said we needed to "Start with the beginning in sight" and so we took a thorough look at conflict as the beginning. The flip side to that coin is "Begin

with the end in mind¹” and so here we will delve into the details of resolution. So now, let’s begin, with the end.

What is Resolution?

Resolution is an end that satisfies the parties and reduces stress.

When you suddenly realize you are engaged in a conflict with someone else, it may help, after controlling your anger, to ask them, “Would you rather fight about this or resolve it?” The other person will most likely need a couple seconds to think about what you just said – give them time to process the question – if they choose “resolve” then recite the above definition and ask if that’s what they want. Give them a little more time and if they agree then you are already halfway there. Here’s a hard truth: some people do not want resolution. Some people want to fight, they want to win, they want what they want, and they don’t care about your satisfaction or reducing stress. The good news is that attaining resolution with these people is only very difficult, not impossible.

Reaction vs Response

Conflict is an intersection of issues that induce stress.

Resolution is an end that satisfies the parties and reduces stress.

Anytime we approach an intersection or encounter an issue we have an opportunity to either react or respond. A reaction is instinctive; a response is intuitive. Instinct is built into us, like eye color or personality, it needs no training. In fact, a good deal of life training revolves around overcoming our instinctive reactions. For example, when you feel something in your eye, it is instinctive to rub your eye with your hand, however, we know that will only make matters worse, and so we train to flush water into the eye instead. Other times instincts are good. When you put your hand to a pot on the stove and it feels hot, your instincts jerk your hand away. Learning when, and when not, to rely on your instinctive reactions is vital.

Intuition is second nature or a conditioned reflex developed from education and experience. For example, when your foot automatically moves from the gas pedal to the brake pedal because you see a red light, that is a conditioned reflex that has become second nature. There is nothing natural about moving your foot, it is intuitive. Responding, rather than reacting, is more deliberate, more cognitive, more intuition than instinct.

¹ Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, 1989, habit #2

When it comes to conflict there are four initial reactions and four resolution responses. We are beginning with the end in mind, resolution, but we will start with the beginning in sight and look at the first step most people make in conflict: reaction.

Four Initial Reactions to Conflict

The four initial reactions to conflicts are: Avoid, Compete, Compromise, and Accommodate.

Individual and Shared Issues

An issue is a position or demand and its underlying motive that produces disruption. Reactions defend individual issues. Responses deal with shared issues.

When two people are in conflict there exist disruptive positions, demands and motives that are common between them. These issues are the ones bringing the two parties together seeking resolution. Additionally, each party has their own issues that affect the common issues. The shared issues are center of the bullseye, and the individual issues are peripheral. Some individual issues are closer to the bullseye and others are not even on the target. It is valuable to distinguish which issues are shared and how close each person's individual issues are to the shared ones. For example, two partners may want to sell their business, this is the shared issue, but one partner wants to buy a new yacht. The new yacht is an individual issue affecting the shared issue.

Typically, the shared issues are need based and the individual issues are wants. We humans are a funny species. We regularly fight to the death for something we want while stepping right over, or on top of, the thing we need. How many lives have been sacrificed in the pursuit of pleasure, adventure, or gold. This principle holds true in conflict. So often we hold on to peripheral wants while watching our need being sacrificed before our eyes. This reminds me of how hunters in Brazil catch monkeys. They put a nut in a box, then cut a hole just big enough for the monkey to squeeze his hand into and grab the nut. Once the monkey has the rock in his fist, he can no longer remove his hand. The hunter then walks up to the poor dumb animal who refuses to let go of the worthless nut and clubs him to death. Too many people in conflict hold onto things inside a trap when ripe fruit is just above their head – or in the center of a bullseye disguised as a shared issue.

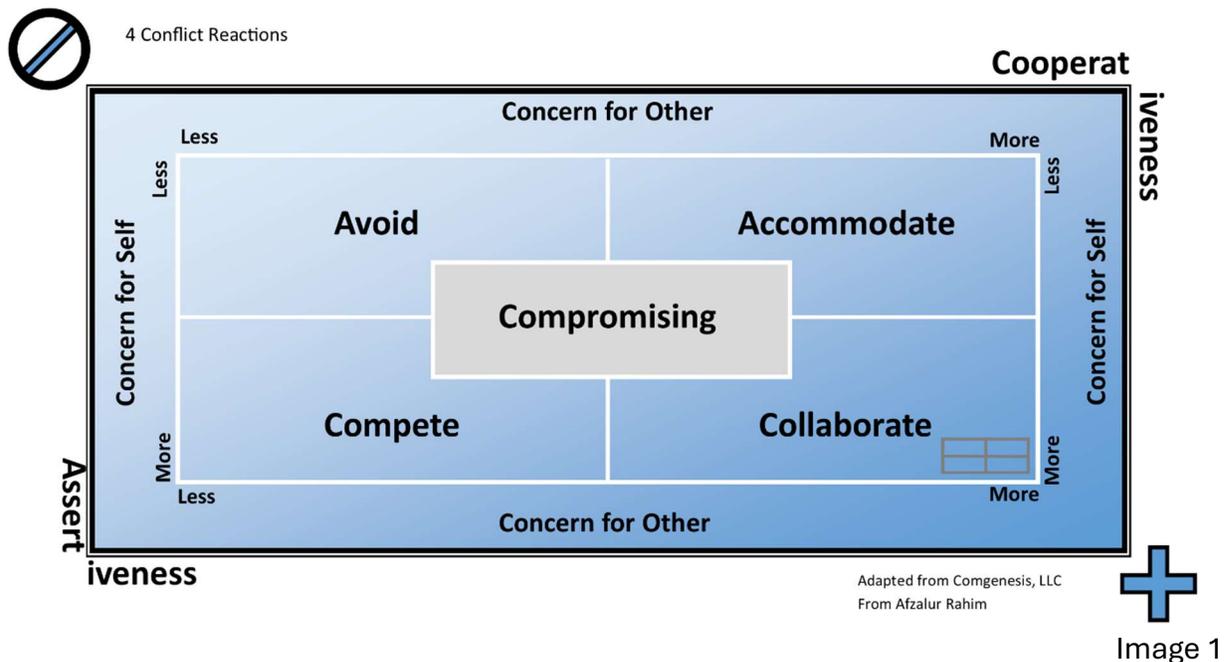
4F and Initial Reaction

It is human nature to pick low hanging fruit first. In conflict, the low hanging fruit, the easiest thing to do, is defend your individual position or demand. It is natural to first secure what you have and then try to get more. This natural tendency produces an initial reaction

to either avoid, compete, accommodate, or compromise in an effort to maintain your current standing on issues which are already your own. This natural reaction is the same reaction we have with stress. When experiencing stress each of us has a default instinctive reaction of flight, fight, fawn, or freeze. This is known as the 4F reaction. These two natural reactions coincide with each other: Flight is Avoid, Fight is Compete, Fawn is Accommodate, and Freeze is Compromise. The difference between a 4F reaction to stress and the four Initial Reactions to conflict is that stress only affects us, while conflict includes another. This explains why you could have a 4F reaction to stress and nobody would ever know, sometimes you don't even realize it, but when you have an initial reaction to conflict the other person knows it, observers know it, and you know it.

If you are already aware of your default 4F setting for stress, there is a good chance you will react to conflict with the corresponding Initial Reaction.

Initial Reaction 2x2 Grid



The Initial Reaction Grid starts in the upper left corner a circle with a diagonal line through it. This represents no conflict. The goal is to travel through this grid to the bottom right corner where a plus sign represents full resolution. Nearly 100% of the time, the first step taken by someone encountering conflict is avoidance. This makes sense because some things look or feel like conflict but are merely catharsis (blowing off steam), or a difference of opinion, or something else, and the simplest way to find out is allowing time to pass to see if anything develops or if the apparent conflict dissipates on its own. About half the time avoidance works to end the conflict.

When Avoidance does not end the conflict, most people move to either Accommodate or Compete and then move back and forth between these two. When those fail, they move to compromise. When all these attempts fail to end the conflict the parties typically either end the relationship or resort to litigation.

Using the rule of half-life, if 100 conflicts enter at Avoidance then 50 of them pass on to Accommodate or Compete where 25 come to an end. The 25 conflicts that remain then pass on to Compromise where 13 end. This means that 12 out of 100 conflicts make it to an end of the relationship or litigation and half of those, or 6 out of 100, pass on to collaboration. Collaboration is the beginning of resolution.

Below is a brief comparison of the five reactions,

- Avoiding is decidedly NOT working with the other.
- Accommodating is expecting or allowing the other to do most or all the work.
- Competing is working over the other or working the other over.
- Compromising is doing as little work as possible.
- Collaborating is working together with the other to achieve a goal.

Looking at the Initial Reaction grid,

- Avoiding is least assertive, least cooperative, and has the least concern for self and the other.
- Accommodating is overly cooperative and overly concerned about the other.
- Competing is overly assertive (aggressive) and overly concerned about self.
- Compromising is too little of everything and concerned only about ending the conflict.
- Collaborating is assertive enough, cooperative enough and equally concerned about both parties. Collaboration produces the highest value and longest lasting agreements.

“You” Statements

A clear sign you are reacting to a conflict involving another person is use of the word “you”. For example,

“You’re the one who...”

“You and your...”

“You’re wrong.”

“You really believe that?”

“**You should...**” (you should never say “You should...”)

“You’re always...” “You never...”

“You’re being ridiculous.”

“You need to...”

“You’re being oversensitive.”

“You just don’t...”²

“You” statements are a feeble attempt to absolve yourself from all aspects of the negative consequences of the conflict. It is as if you are saying, “I was just sitting here, reading a book, minding my own business, not interacting with anybody, when all of a sudden you came in and...” Conflicts between two people almost never happen that way. When you blame the other, you are reacting out of a self-preservation instinct.

Another very common form of this is “What about you?” This is a reaction to the other person’s reactive use of “you” statements. When an argument dips to this valley, both parties are claiming irresponsibility for the conflict – which is usually accurate. Conflict is an intersection of issues that induce stress. That’s all. Conflict is not a values judgement or intellectual contest; it is an opportunity to negotiate an intersection of issues. The person who takes this opportunity responsibly will work toward negotiating the intersection without causing harm to themselves, others, or surroundings. Slinging “you” statements back and forth is like trying to drive your car through an intersection by hitting every other car in sight, running into the lamp poles, and finally driving over the grassy area headed in a direction other than the one you wanted. Yeah, you made it through the intersection, but at what cost? And where are you going?

Disclaimer: Sometimes the other person should have done something or is being ridiculous etc. In this case, “I” statements such as, “I noticed you...”, “I need you to...”, “I’m curious...”, “I hear you, but...”, “I can tell you’re upset, but...” go a long way toward addressing their real concern without further raising their defenses.

One thing to pay attention to is that resolution seeks a satisfactory end that reduces stress, whereas reaction only seeks to end the conflict. Reaction doesn’t care about the parties’ satisfaction or reducing stress. In fact, a reactionary ending is usually unsatisfactory to one or both parties and increases stress between them. Yet only 6% of conflicts choose collaboration even though it is readily available from the start. This is mostly a result of our own selfishness but, occasionally, it is a by-product of ignorance: some people just don’t know how to collaborate or what resolution is. This article is intended to enlighten those who seek a better way.

A few words on the different reactions

Avoiding

Avoidance is neither denial nor ignorance.

² <https://youtu.be/S1mg3ImRmDU?si=lvornULFSmrf2Gc>
Sixty and Me YouTube

Someone who denies the obvious fact of a conflict is unconsciously protecting themselves from the associated stress. Denial is an internal conflict and needs to be treated appropriately. Any external help should come from a therapist.

Conflict requires only one party to feel stress; therefore, it is entirely plausible the other party is genuinely and completely unaware of any conflict. If you feel a conflict exists between yourself and another and the other seems ignorant of it, the best first step is asking yourself, “Is there an intersection of issues with this other person or am feeling stress from an internal conflict and reacting by blaming the other?” If you identify the issues and the intersection of the other person then approach the other, calmly share your discovery, and ask them to share their perspective.

Competing

As I said earlier, some people just want to win – at any cost. When negotiating with someone like this try to divide the issue into parts that can be collaborated and other parts that need to be won or lost. The unrelentless competitor needs to have a win someplace, or at least a good fight. Try to decide which “pawns” you are willing to surrender to capture their “bishop” and keep your “queen”. Also, some things are win/lose and you may need to fight for what is rightfully yours. Discern between the win/win (collaboration) and win/lose (competition) issues and lay your plans.

Accommodation

On the 2x2 grid, Accommodation is overly cooperative and under assertive. The reward for accommodation is lessening external stress. The price, however, is an increase in internal stress and the surrender of needs and wants that are rightfully yours. If your default reaction is accommodation, you would benefit from assertion training. On a scale, assertive behavior lies exactly between passive and aggressive.

Compromise

Compromise is the hallmark of litigation. A successful compromise is when everybody is equally dissatisfied, nobody gets all of anything, and stress remains static. Sometimes this is the best you can get – for the immediate conflict. Keep in mind, conflict is also imminent and inevitable; there will be another day.

Collaboration

Resolution is an end that satisfies parties and reduces stress.

Resolution of any type can only occur through a collaborative effort.

After reading this article, you may be tempted, when you face your next conflict, to jump right into collaboration. The other person may not be ready for that. When either

person is stuck in a reactionary mode resolution is nearly impossible. It may prove faster to work through the other reactions and arrive at collaboration together, after all, that would demonstrate a collaborative effort on your part. Using negotiation and possibly third parties, guide the reactionary through the reaction process toward collaboration, hoping all the while the reactionary will, of their own accord, choose collaboration. You may discover during your unified journey through the four reactions there wasn't as much conflict as you thought. When collaboration is chosen, the parties can move to the four types of resolution process. The small 2x2 grid inside the Collaboration square represents the four types of resolution.

I have talked about the 4F reactions to stress and how they relate to the four initial reactions to conflict. There is a fifth F: face. When you come face to face with the stress caused by a conflict and work backwards to the issue, you are taking the first step away from reaction toward internal resolution. When you come face to face with the other person involved in a conflict in order to collaborate you are taking the first step toward conflict resolution with other person.

Four Types of Resolution

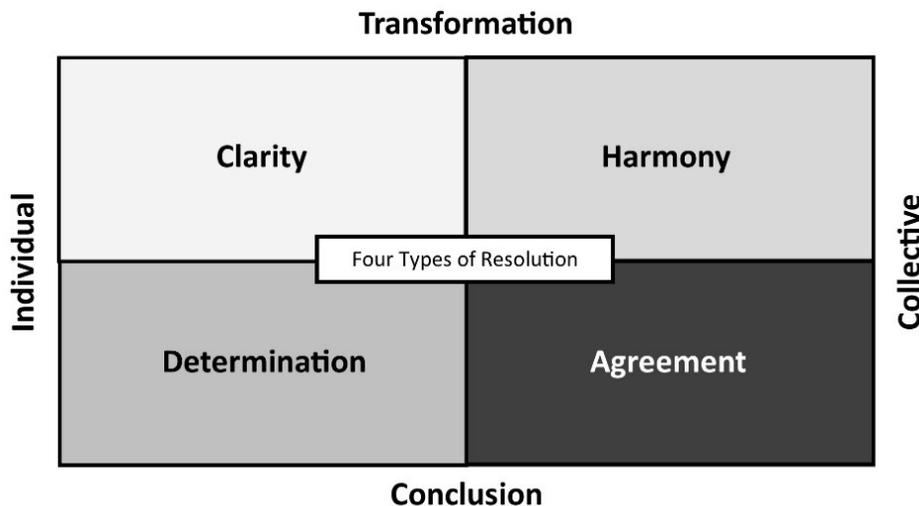


Image 2

Four Types of Resolution 2x2 grid

The Four Types of Resolution 2x2 grid, is and is not like the Four Initial Reactions grid. It is a good idea to begin at the upper left corner with Clarity and plan to work through Harmony and Determination (in either order) to arrive at Agreement, but, negotiations about a conflict designed to end at resolution do not always follow a plan. You may find, three minutes into asking clarifying questions, the other person offers an agreement proposal

that makes perfect sense – take it. If their proposal creates an end that satisfies the parties and reduces stress – stop asking questions and start planning the “How to’s” of that proposal. If you feel a little cheated because you weren’t able to discover as much as you’d hoped, don’t fret it; conflict is inevitable, you will have another chance.

Agreement is the primary goal of most negotiations. This is what most people are wishing for and working toward when they enter into a collaboration. But agreement does not always happen. Sometimes, as in my example above, agreement happens soon and suddenly, other times the other three types must be grindingly worked through to finally and exasperatingly arrive at an agreement, still other times agreement is never achieved. A “no-agreement” resolution is not necessarily bad.

When agreement cannot be reached our first natural reaction is accusing the other person of being evil, stupid or crazy. Even in the exceptionally rare case when this is true, we are the biggest losers by discounting or flippantly discarding all the data gained by the conflict being raised and whatever negotiations occurred and figuratively picking up our ball and going home. It is more likely the issues, one of the issues, or the intersection is bad. In a competitive, rather than collaborative setting, defending your issue (your position or demand and its underlying motive which produces disruption) is paramount. In a truly collaborative setting, you must consider if your issue is bad, badly timed, or a bad fit. This requires separating yourself from the issue; figuratively, *not* being the ball. When this happens, you can take a step back onto one of the other three types of resolution and gain from your experience “scoring” a few resolution points. Now let’s look at each of the Four Types of Resolution in more detail.

Detailed Examination

Resolution is an end that satisfies the parties and reduces stress. This definition works well for describing resolution in a conflict environment but, the word resolution is used differently in other areas. In the optical world resolution means focus or clarity, as in high-resolution. In the audio world resolution means to move from dissonance to consonance, from chaos to harmony. Used as a New Year’s resolution, it means determination. And in mathematics, resolution means solving a problem, making both sides of an equation equal, or making both sides agree. Each of these distinctions play a role in conflict resolution.

Clarity is achieved through greater understanding of the whole conflict and/or each of the parts. Harmony is produced by appreciative, respectful communication. Determination is making a decision or coming to a conclusion about a peripheral aspect of the conflict. Agreement is reached when both sides see in their mind and feel in their heart (reference PIES in “What is Conflict?”) equally about something. Looking at the Four Types of Resolution grid, Clarity and Determination are more of an individual resolution whereas

Harmony and Agreement are more communal. Likewise, Clarity and Harmony are more transformational whereas Determination and Agreement are more conclusive. Another way to picture resolution is like a bridge.

The Resolution Bridge



Image 3

Clarity is the beginning foundation.

Harmony is the deck: the load carrying superstructure.

Determination is the substructure that supports the deck.

Agreement is the ending foundation.

Conflict is the river under the bridge.

When two people in conflict decide to abandon reactionist methods and choose collaboration instead, they each have figuratively placed one foot on the Resolution Bridge to become a resolutionist.

Full Complete and Partial Resolution

Resolution is an end that satisfies the parties and reduces stress. Full resolution is attained when stress is significantly reduced and the parties feel satisfied about all issues, in all four types of resolution, and all four human cornerstones (PIES: Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, Spiritual). Full resolution almost never occurs. We are only human after all – and so is the other. The surest way to experience disappointment is by placing expectations on others. Expecting the other to enter into agreements that satisfy you FULLY is unrealistic. Expecting yourself to enter into agreements that FULLY satisfies the other is equally unrealistic. A more realistic objective is to decide which of the PIES is most important and how far across the Resolution Bridge that cornerstone needs to go. For example, imagine that at one point in a conflict your emotions are most important, but you only need clarity to feel satisfied and reduce stress. Clarity is understanding, and so when

the other expresses a sincere understanding of your emotional condition, a state of resolution has occurred. This isn't full resolution, but it is a step toward that end.

Complete resolution is more common. Complete resolution is when both parties feel enough stress has been reduced about enough issues, enough PIES have been addressed, and enough of the bridge has been crossed – at least for the moment. Anything short of a complete resolution is a partial resolution. Some conflicts take more time, more conversations, and more consideration to achieve complete resolution. Other conflicts never achieve completeness and sometimes you have to accept what you will get. Partial resolution is like driving at night, in the fog, or during a snowstorm. It's not great but we do it because we still want to get someplace. It's like me wanting a Silver Cloud Rolls Royce except I'm not willing to pay the price, so I drive a Toyota. I'm not going to walk everywhere just because I can't get what I want; I drive the car I have.

Let's look at the different components of the Resolution Bridge: Clarity, Harmony, Determination, and Agreement

Clarity

Clarity is understanding the whole thing, the parts that make up the whole thing, how the whole thing works, how each part works, how the parts work with each other, and how the whole thing works with other things. A lot of people think clarity is just another word for focus, but as you can see clarity is complex.

For conflict resolution, the more clarity the better. For collaboration, the more clarity each party has the better. This means the better you understand your perspective the more clarity you have, and that makes for a better resolution. Additionally, the better you understand the other's perspective at each PIES level the more clarity you have. Now, don't make the mistake of stopping there, the better understanding the other has of your perspective the more clarity exists for both of you, and that makes for a better resolution. Once the idea of clarity is understood the operative question becomes, "How much clarity is enough?" A good working answer is, "As much as is necessary to attain satisfaction and no more." This is like asking a chef, "How much garlic is enough?" The sage answer is, "That depends on the dish and the diner."

How can you gain more clarity? Get curious, not furious. Earlier I talked about "you" statements as a prime reactionary tool. Now we'll look at "I" statements as a prime revolutionary tool.

"I" Statements

If "You" statements attempt to shift blame to the other, "I" statements take responsibility for a portion of the conflict and its effect. This works when both parties have decided to abandon reactionism and take up collaboration. If you or the other still has one

foot in each camp, effectiveness will be limited. Disclaimer: people slip and fall back sometimes. In the middle of a heated negotiation session, it is common for you or the other to resort to “you” statements. When this happens, pause, collect your emotions, breathe, recite the definition of resolution, pause, and say, “I want resolution, is that what you want?” About half the time they say yes, and everybody drags themselves out of Conflict River, onto the banks, and back up onto the Resolution Bridge.

“You” Statements

“You’re the one who...”

“You and your...”

“You’re wrong.”

“You really believe that?”

“You should...”

“You’re always...” “You never...”

“You’re being ridiculous.”

“You need to...”

“You’re being oversensitive.”

“You just don’t...”³

“I” Statements

“I’m the one who...”

“Me and my...”

“I’m wrong” or “I may be wrong”

“I really believe...”

“I will...”

Always remember to never use always and never.

“I was being ridiculous.”

“I need to...”

“I was being oversensitive.”

“I just don’t...”

How Does What

Another tool for gaining clarity is, How Does What (HDW). Whenever you find yourself in a heated negotiation pause, breathe, then say one of these three words: how, does, or what. This will have the immediate effect of stopping the other because they are expecting an open ended question. If you can finish the sentence do so, if nothing comes to mind right away, simply switch to one of the other words until you can offer a complete sentence. Asking a how, does, or what question is not threatening, doesn’t come across as condescending, and usually gives you more clarity. For example,

“What about you!? You think I should start bringing in some money, but you could just work more hours.”

“How... {pause} Does that mean...{pause} What... {pause} I’m already working as much overtime as they’ll let me.”

Using “How Does What” bought time to put together the “I” statement that deescalated that exchange.

Variations of How Does What include, “How would that work?”, “How much would that cost?”, and “How much time would that take?” Asking these and all questions in a tone that says you are curious, rather than furious, will give you clarity. Variations of Does

³ <https://youtu.be/S1mg3ImRmDU?si=lvornULFSmrff2Gc>
Sixty and Me YouTube

include, “Did you mean that to be an insult?”, “Do you want resolution or victory?”, and “What do you mean exactly?” Variations of What include, “What effect will that have?”, “What makes you say/ask that?”, and “What would happen next?”

Other variations include, “Who is going to do that?”, “Where will this take place?”, and “When will this happen?”

What About Why

It is generally a better practice to avoid “why” questions. There is something about human nature that immediately raises our defense shields to maximum force and simultaneously launches a full counterattack when we are asked a “why” question. Almost any “why” question can be converted to a How, Does, or What question with significantly better results.

HDW questions approach the motive of an issue indirectly, whereas “why” is a direct hit. HDW are open ended questions allowing the responder to use a lot of words to explain. “Why” is a closed ended question demanding the responder to state clearly and concisely their motive. A “why” question can be effective when the conversation has dragged on long enough or the responder has been ambiguous to the HDW questions.

It is possible to ask a “why” question in a truly curious way but, this usually requires an explanation, preamble, or apologetic tone, all of which can be avoided by converting the “why” to an HDW.

However, it is a good idea to ask yourself “why” questions. Such as,

“Why is this so important to me?”

“Why am I so upset by this?”

“Why is this other person able to rattle me so?”

This will give you clarity about your own motives.

Harmony

In the world of conflict resolution, harmony is the sound of the conversation. A test of harmony would be; if someone who did not know the language was listening would they sense a serious discussion was taking place or just a brawl? A harmonious negotiation is typically determined by what does NOT exist. Excluded are yelling, expletives, and insults and interruptions.

It is very difficult to negotiate an intersection of issues when one or both parties are yelling, screaming, or shouting. This would be like negotiating an intersection with your car while all the other cars are honking their horns and flashing their high beams at you. The natural reaction is to stop. This may, or may not, be what the person who is yelling wants, but it is not what they need. Reactionary methods, like yelling, are typically used to defend or obtain a want. Resolutionary methods deal with needs. If you or the other is yelling, ask if

that person still seeks resolution, then recite the definition. You may have to take a slight detour and resolve the yelling issue to get back onto the main track.

Expletives are like a dog barking. They are just meaningless sounds intended to alarm others or draw attention to self. Nothing more. Negotiating a conflict to resolution requires meaningful conversations. It is confusing and disharmonious when meaningless and meaningful words are mixed together. This is like a four-piece band playing a well composed piece of music when suddenly another person steps up on stage and begins clanging a cow bell. It's hard to hear the harmonious sounds because the cow bell creates such an alarming distraction.

Insults say more about the giver than the intended recipient. Insults could include an eye roll, tongue click, sigh, snicker, or smirk. Insults are reactionary. There are plenty of college level courses on respectful communication, there are none on insults. When you find yourself tempted to offer an insult, offer a How Does What response instead. If the other is being insulting, politely ask them to wait until you are finished and then ask a How Does What question.

Interruptions are like "why" questions, they have a very small space in the conflict resolution process. Generally speaking, it is not merely rude but counterproductive to interrupt the other. However, there are times when the other seems to be filibustering or saying things that are irrelevant, irreverent, or just wrong and the only way to curtail that behavior is by interrupting. This reminds me of a special tool I have in my workshop that comes out only when the situation is desperate. I avoid using this tool because, while it may solve my immediate problem, it usually creates damage and more work for me later. The tool I am talking about is my 10lb sledgehammer.

Determination

It may be that one person will determine, make a resolution, to use fewer expletives if the other will determine, make a resolution, to stop clicking their tongue. This is an example of both individual and communal determination. Another example could be that both parties determine to use resolution methods and avoid reactionary tactics.

Determinations do not directly deal with issues or their intersection, but they do support the harmonious conversations that will.

Agreement

Agreement is the coup de grace or magnum opus of conflict resolution. As I said earlier, agreement does not always happen and, sometimes, is not necessary. Always keep this end in mind: resolution is an end that satisfies the parties and reduces stress. If you attain resolution without a formal, written agreement, take it and be thankful. When agreement is necessary, reduce it to writing. Answer as many of the 6W's as possible in the

agreement: Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How (how ends with a W). Pay extra attention to How. Precisely how is this agreement going to be fulfilled? By who? By when? Etc.

If the agreement is going to fall apart, you are much better off finding out at the drafting stage than the delivery stage. Said another way, if the wheels are going to come off this agreement car, you'd rather discover that in the garage than on the freeway. It is tempting, at this point, to rush through the writing exercise – resist that temptation. If you or the other is feeling impatient about the final writing task, take a break and come back to it with a clear mind that will see this through, all the way through. Failing at this point is like a farmer spending the late fall, all winter, and early spring preparing his field and then impatiently throwing seed on the surface during a late spring windstorm.

Transformation vs Conclusion

On the Four Types of Resolution grid, Clarity and Harmony are transformative while Determination and Agreement are conclusive. In conflict resolution, transformation is a radical change of mind, understanding, perspective, and/or behavior. This is an internal change. Sometimes, when two people in conflict collaborate, a transformative clarity is all that's needed. Other times a radical change in communication that creates more harmonious conversations, which in turn reduces stress, puts an end to the conflict. In other words, they found resolution at harmony. In these cases, no conclusion was reached.

Some conflicts conclude with agreement or determination(s) with very little transformation. There is no absolute right way, only the right way for each conflict.

Resolution vs Vindication

Resolution is an end that satisfies the parties and reduces stress.

Vindication is clearing of blame or suspicion; proof that someone was right.

Disputants have six wants in a conflict: Voice, Validation, Vindication, Procedural Justice, Safety, and Impact. Voice is the opportunity to be heard, not merely the opportunity to speak. Validation is an acknowledgment that your opinion, perspective, and need is legitimate and worthy of consideration; validation is not agreement, only that you are considered a valid participant in the discussion. Then we come to vindication.

Vindication is being declared not wrong, reasonable, or right. Sometimes assigning blame to the other satisfies. In an other-person conflict, vindication is typically sought out in a courtroom. Both sides state their case before a judge, make their arguments, with or without representation, and wait for the judge to declare who was right and, by default, who was wrong. The vindicated party, the one declared right, can then wallow in the mire of

self-gratification while the other is forced, by the full authority of the law, to pay for the wrong. Vindication does bring an end to the conflict; however, it is a very unsatisfying ending that does not reduce stress: vindication is not resolution.

Resolution is a forward-looking solution that pays scant attention to how the disputants got into the conflict, who was right, and who was wrong. Instead resolution focuses on how to get out of conflict – that is, how to get through the intersection of issues and get everybody back onto their desired path in a satisfactory way that reduces stress.

When vindication is necessary, and sometimes it is, resolution is difficult. Most of the time, in order to attain resolution, vindication must be forsaken. When either or both parties are set on vindication, that is determining who is right, vindication becomes the preeminent issue to resolve and if the parties can't or won't resolve that, then none of the other issues will matter.

Resolution is Peace

Resolution is an end that satisfies the parties and reduces stress.

Many people think peace is tranquility. Peace is not tranquility.

Tranquility is the absence of conflict.

Peace is the presence of resolution.

Tranquility is no beginning of conflict.

Peace is an end to conflict.

Tranquility is freedom from conflict.

Peace is freedom to resolution.

Tranquility is not doing something.

Peace is about doing what it takes to attain resolution.

Tranquility is non-existent stress.

Peace is reducing stress.

Tranquility carries the idea of nothing happening.

Peace is the result of something happening.

As an example,

Little French Key in Honduras is regularly rated as one of the most tranquil beaches in the world. There are no disputes, conflicts, or disagreements here. It is tranquilizing.

In contrast, when two nations officially end a war, they enter into a peace accord.

Life is stressful and conflicts are inevitable. Attaining resolution that ends conflict and reduces stress creates peace.

Summary

Resolution is an end that satisfies the parties and reduces stress.

There are four initial reactions to conflict:

- Avoid
- Compete
- Accommodate
- Compromise

These instinctive reactions may end the conflict but, they do not result in resolution because they rarely satisfy either party and almost never reduce stress.

A fifth reaction exists, collaboration, which is the beginning of resolution. There are four types of resolution:

- Clarity
- Harmony
- Determination
- Agreement

Agreement is the end to keep in mind but, it is not always reached, and sometimes that is okay. Resolution can be pictured as a bridge, beginning with Clarity, walking across the ravine with Harmony, supported by Determination, and stepping back onto a path from the base of Agreement.

Replacing “I” statements with “You” statements and using HDW (how does what) questions are tools that will be helpful in attaining resolution.

Resolution is not vindication. Resolution looks forward and works to get you out of conflict. Vindication looks backward to explain how you got into the conflict, hoping to blame the other.

Resolution is peace. Peace is the result of something happening and resolution is worked for.

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If you are in a conflict now and would like some help attaining resolution, reach out and contact me for a no cost, no obligation consult.