

# CompassPoint

NONPROFIT SERVICES

## Conflict Resolution with Power and Privilege in Mind

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We are grateful to the work of many other people whose contributions to communicating across social differences have informed these materials, and our own practices at CompassPoint.

We have also attributed certain concepts and exercises to other authors and creators in the page footnotes, and along with our deep appreciation to their work, we encourage you to find more of their work and thinking through those footnotes.

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# Agenda

## DAY 1

- Opening + The Whys of Conflict
- Who Am I? (in relationship to conflict)
- Who Am I? (in relationship to privilege and power)
- Communicating Across Differences – External Behavior and Internal Process

## DAY 2

- Skill Building and Application
  - Focused Listening
  - Curiosity & Questions
  - Making Observations
  - Self-Empathy & Empathy
- Next Steps and Action Planning

# Introductions

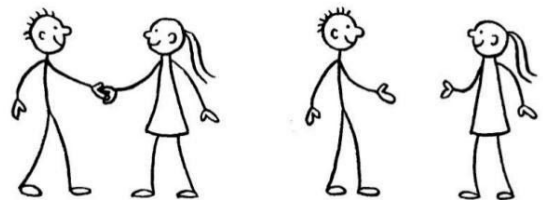
Name, pronouns, organization, *and* what does conflict mean to you?

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# Mingle Magic

Why is staying aware of privilege important during a conflict?

Why is staying aware of positional power important during a conflict?



*Image from slideshare.net*

# Privilege, Power, and Oppression

## DEFINITIONS<sup>1</sup>

**CONFLICT:** The tension created through an active disagreement, struggle for needs, opposing efforts, and/or divergent ideas.

**POWER:** Power can be defined as the ability to cause or influence an outcome. It is not the ability to control a situation, control is always limited.

**PREJUDICE:** A judgment or opinion that is formed on insufficient grounds before facts are known or in disregard of facts that contradict it. Prejudices are learned and can be unlearned.

**STEREOTYPE:** An exaggerated or distorted belief that attributes characteristics to members of a particular group.

**OPPRESSION:** The combination of prejudice and institutional power which creates systems that perpetuate discrimination against some groups (often called “**target groups**”) and benefits other groups (often called “**dominant groups**”).

Some examples of oppressive systems are **racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, ageism, and anti-Semitism**. These systems privilege dominant groups and exert control over target groups by limiting their rights, freedom, and access to basic resources.

### ***Four Levels of Oppression/“isms” and Change:***

**Internalized:** Values, Beliefs, Feelings

**Interpersonal:** Actions, Behaviors, Language

**Institutional:** Rules, Policies, Procedures

**Ideological:** Beauty, Truth, Right

**PRIVILEGE:** Privilege operates on personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels and gives advantages, favors, and benefits to members of dominant groups at the expense of members of target groups. In the United

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<sup>1</sup> Definitions adapted from: © Leaven 2003 *Doing Our Own Work: A Seminar for Anti-Racist White Women*  
© Visions, Inc. and the MSU Extension Multicultural Awareness Workshop

States, privilege is granted to people who have membership in one or more of these social identity groups:

White people (also, white-skinned\* people); Able-bodied people; Heterosexuals; Males; Christians; Middle- or owning class people; Middle-aged people; English-speaking people.

**INSTITUTIONAL POWER:** The ability or official authority to decide what is best for others. The ability to decide who will have access to resources.

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We can define privilege as: **a set of unearned benefits given to people who fit into a specific social group.** Society grants privilege to people because of certain aspects of their identity. Aspects of a person's identity can include race, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, geographical location, ability, and religion, to name a few.

**“Privilege is the other side of oppression.** It's often easier to notice oppression than privilege. It's definitely easier to notice the oppression you personally experience than the privileges you experience, since being mistreated is likely to leave a bigger impression on you than being treated fairly.”

*EverydayFeminism, Sian Ferguson*

## Understanding Systems of Oppression

\*Chart adapted from USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work

**\*\*There are MANY more interlocking forms of oppression and systems of power which reinforce them. We recognize we have not listed examples of every form of privilege, system of power, and/or types of oppression\*\***

<b><u>Type of Oppression**</u></b>	<b><u>Target Group</u></b>	<b><u>Non-Target Group/Dominant Group</u></b>
<b>Racial</b>	People of color	White people
<b>Class</b>	Poor; working class	Middle and Owner Class
<b>Gender</b>	Cisgender & Transgender/Gender Non-Conforming (GNC) Women	Cisgender Men
<b>Gender Identity</b>	Transgender; GNC; Gender Non-Binary; Two-spirit	Cisgender people
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, Two-spirit	Heterosexual people
<b>Ability</b>	People with disabilities	People without disabilities
<b>Religion</b>	Non-Christian	Christian
<b>Age</b>	Children, Youth, and Elderly people	Adults
<b>Educational Privilege</b>	People without college degree	People with college degree
<b>Immigrant status</b>	Immigrant	U.S.-born
<b>Language</b>	Non-English	English



# Group Intentions

As facilitators we are trying to build a community where you can continue the learning with each other in accountability and love, free from punitive judgement.

Acknowledge you were raised with biases and that you are on a journey to liberate your heart and mind.

We invite you to consider these agreements as intentions to practice in our sessions, and to make them your own.

- Both/and thinking
- Understand the difference between your intent & impact
- Create space, accept space
- Observe confidentiality
- Bring your heart as well as your mind

*Which group intentions will I focus on for today?*

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## Who Am I? (in relationship to conflict)

Behavioral scientists Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann (who developed the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument) have identified five styles of responding to conflict.<sup>2</sup> These styles are based on a person's conflict-handling behavior along two basic dimensions:

1. **Assertiveness:** the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns.
2. **Cooperativeness:** the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns.

Conflict Style	Definition	Fundamental Premise	Dimensions*
<b>Avoid</b>	To sidestep or ignore the problem, issue, or person.	This isn't the right time or place to address this issue.	Assertive and Uncooperative
<b>Accommodate</b>	To yield your own position in favor of the other party's need in a conflict.	Working toward a common purpose is more important than any of the peripheral concerns; the trauma of confronting differences may damage fragile relationships.	Unassertive and Cooperative
<b>Compete</b>	The inverse of accommodation, where you fight your corner and insist on 'winning' the conflict.	Associates "winning" a conflict with competition.	Assertive and Uncooperative
<b>Compromise</b>	Both sides yield or give up part of their position in order to resolve the issue.	Winning something while losing a little is OK.	Intermediate of both
<b>Collaborate</b>	Working together to satisfy both parties; distinct from compromise in that neither side has to give anything up.	Teamwork and cooperation help everyone achieve their goals while also maintaining relationships.	Assertive and Cooperative

*\*based on definitions by Thomas & Kilmann referenced above*

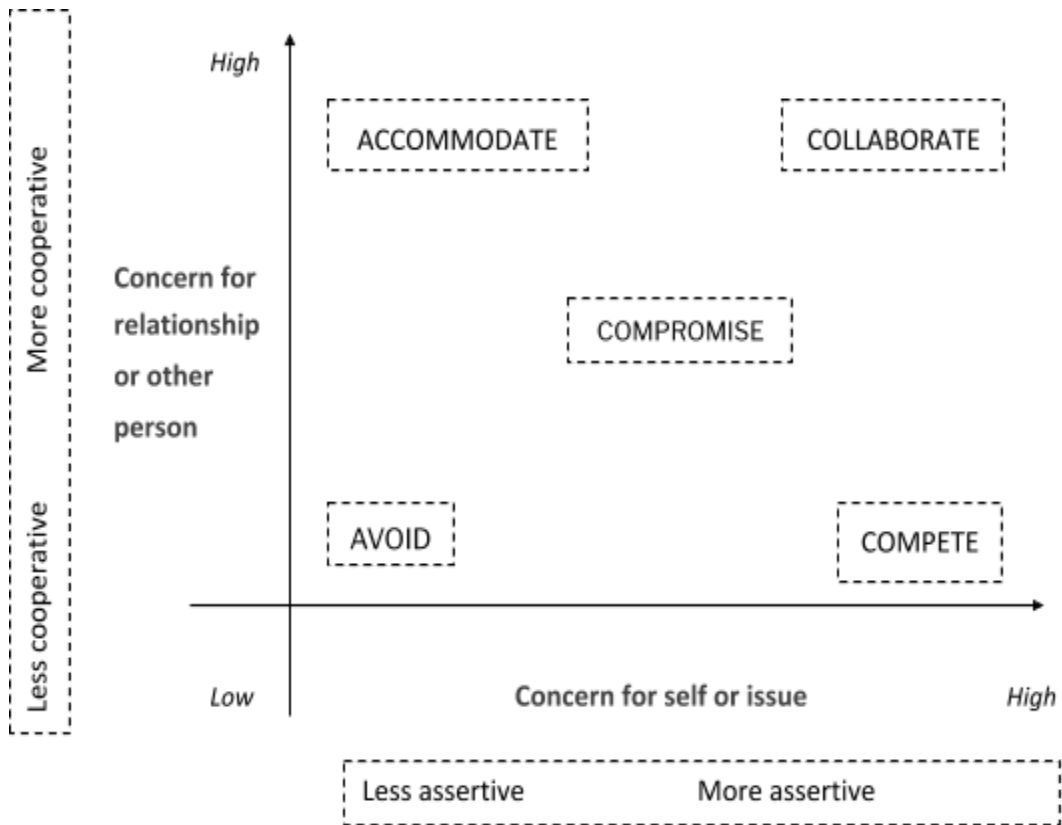
<sup>2</sup> Sources: <http://www.bcs.org/content/ConWebDoc/24899>; <https://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/conflict.htm>; <https://www.cpp.com/pdfs/smp248248.pdf>

*\*based on definitions by Thomas & Kilmann referenced above*

## Group Activity: Conflict Styles Group Share

Style	Advantages	Disadvantages	When to use
Avoid			
Accommodate			
Compete			
Compromise			
Collaborate			

# Which Style When?<sup>3</sup>



**Things to Consider about Conflict Styles:**

What choices are you making when responding to conflict at work?

There is no right or wrong conflict style; there are pros/cons to each.

Which conflict style can you apply to a current conflict you are in?

How are power dynamics affecting your conflict style?

When you have more power? Less power?

<sup>3</sup> graph adapted by PCRC from materials by Moulton & Blake (1971) and Thomas & Kilmann (1974)

## Who Am I? (in relationship to power and privilege)

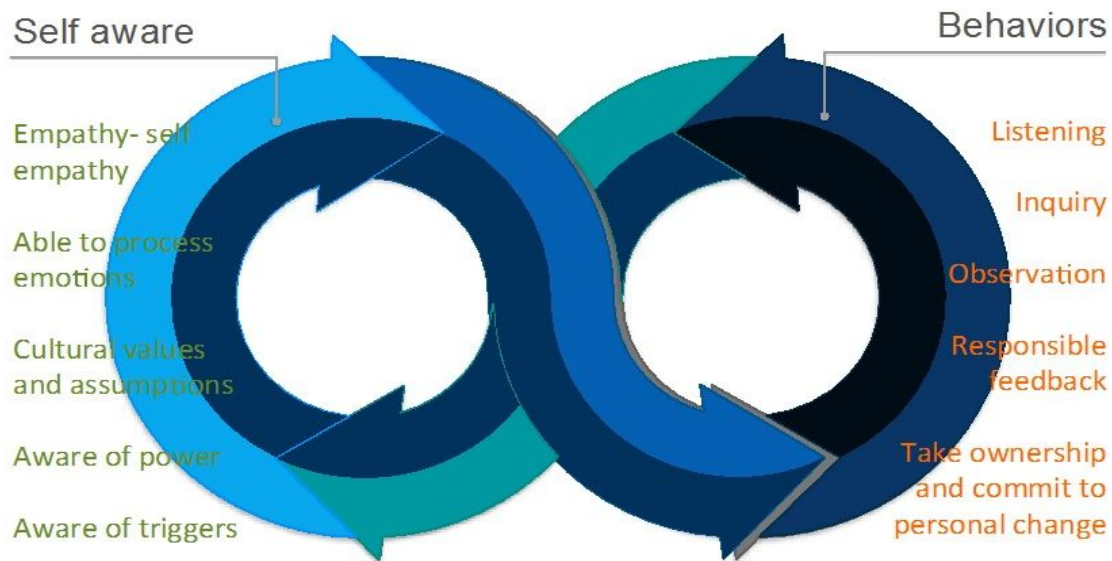


**CHECK YOUR PRIVILEGE**



**PROTECT YOUR PRIVILEGE**

# Communication Competencies



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## Kad's Principles for Navigating Conflict

1. "I know what I know. I know what I don't know. I don't know what I don't know. I know that what I once knew was wrong."
2. Feedback is usually not an indictment or an appraisal of one's character.
3. Checking my "come-from" place.



## Steve's Principles for Navigating Conflict

1. "Honor my feelings, mind my reaction."
2. Interpersonal conflicts are not just about them and me, it's also what's around us.
3. Remember our significance to impact others positively and negatively, to renew and deepen relationships.

## Exploring Principles: Questions

**Question 1:** What's your conflict resolution superpower? (For example: listening, empathy, honesty, etc.)

**Question 2:** How has positional power influenced a past conflict you've been in? Think about either the positional power you've held or the person you were in conflict with has held.

**Question 3:** Reflecting on your conflict style, what's one source of inspiration or source that has helped you resolve a conflict in the past? (For example: mentors, colleagues, practices, etc.)

### Exploring Your Own Principles

What's something you will tell yourself when a new conflict occurs? (How you want to be in conflict.)

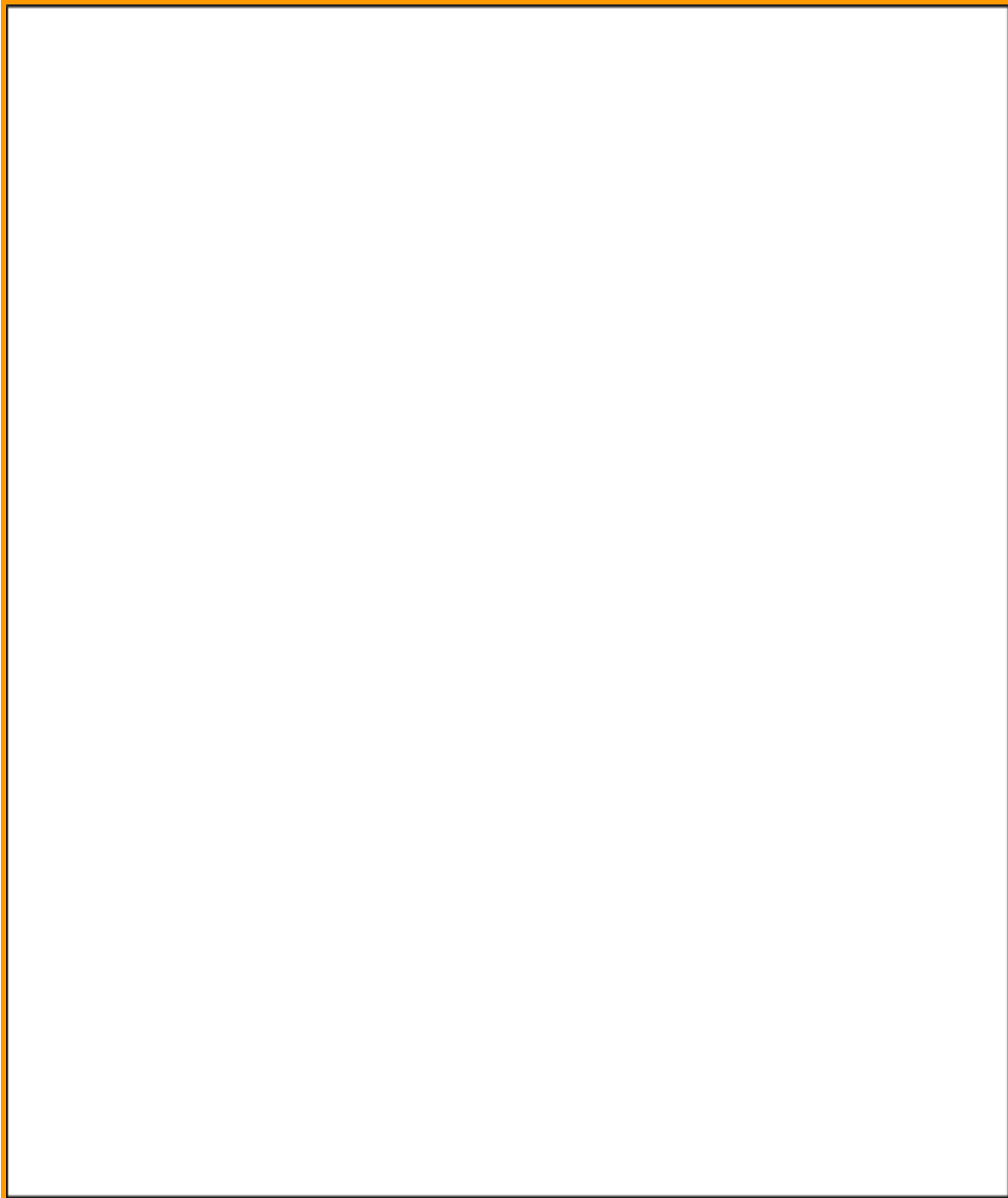
*My guiding principles for conflict resolution with power and privilege in mind:*

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**How can I apply my guiding principles to my current conflict situation?**





## Skill Building and Application

### ***Four Modes of Listening***<sup>4</sup>

- *Superficial listening*: I'm listening to you, but I'm distracted with my own thoughts. I don't hear you. In this situation, it's really all about me.
- *Self-referential listening*: I'm listening to you, but I will nudge the conversation. So now it *becomes* all about me.
- *Fix-it listening*: I'm listening to you but I want to fix your issue by myself. In this situation, it's *still* really all about me, in relation to you.
- *Focused listening*: I'm listening to you with full attention. I want to understand who you are and what this experience is like for you. In this situation, it's *all about you*.

### **Tips for listening:**

- Be present
- Release other thoughts/responses/solutions/ideas
- If who you are listening to gets stuck, ask an open-ended question to get them going again (i.e. what was that like? Why was that important? What's different now?)

**Reflection: Who do you tend to listen more often to? Who do you tend to listen to less?**

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<sup>4</sup> From "Coaching Skills for Nonprofit Managers and Leaders" by Michelle Gislason and Judith Wilson – CompassPoint Nonprofit Services.

## Skill Building and Application: Inquiry Skills

From a place of curiosity...

**What could you ask yourself to expand your understanding of the conflict and challenge your assumptions?**

- *What is most important about all of this?*
- *What do you need most in this situation?*
- *What power dynamics are at play?*
- *What are all the ways this person is different from me, and what do we have in common?*

From a place of curiosity...

**What could you ask the person you are in conflict with to open up their thinking?**

- *What do you need most in this situation?*
- *If you were in my shoes right now, what would you do?*
- *What needs to shift, for something better to happen?*
- *What do you see as the biggest challenge?*
- *Are you saying that as a fact or as your perspective on the issue?*
- *Do you believe you are 100% right and I am 100% wrong about this?*



**Here are some additional examples of open-ended questions that might be used with someone to interrogate reality:<sup>5</sup>**

- *What is most important about all of this?*
- *This is what's going on for me...what is going on for you?*
- *What is your theory about how this can work?*
- *What leads you to conclude that?*
- *What do you think about what I just said?*
- *What would you change about what I just said?*
- *How do you see it differently?*
- *How does this relate to your other concerns?*
- *Can you help me understand your thinking here?*
- *How did you arrive at this view?*
- *What do you see as the biggest challenge?*
- *How can I work best with you?*
- *What similarities do we have?*
- *What is it that you never want to hear me say again?*
- *What is important that I honor about you? About your culture?*
- *When have things worked well for us? How can we get back to that place?*

Ask questions and stay open and curious as a way of interrogating reality and getting to the bottom of what's really going on (for you or for them). Invite them to ask you questions as well. What each of us believes to be true simply reflects our views about reality.

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<sup>5</sup> Adapted from *Coaching Skills for Nonprofit Managers and Leaders*, by Judith Wilson and Michelle Gislason, CompassPoint Nonprofit Services.



**Thinking about your conflict/communication breakdown, write down 2 questions you can ask yourself that will help you challenge/confirm any assumptions you might be holding in the conflict.**

**What questions can I ask the other person to help them identify and question their assumptions, consider another perspective and connect to their values and their best self?**

# Empathy and Self-Empathy

## Empathy Exercise<sup>6</sup>

Empathy is the ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people and the skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions. Understanding is not the same as agreeing with their opinion or behaviors. Being empathetic is not about stamping down or stuffing your own feelings; you must also be aware of what you are feeling and what you need in the situation (self-empathy). Strengthening a practice of empathy and self-empathy can lessen the judgments that you have about yourself and the person, so you can get to shared purpose and effective actions.

**Exercise Purpose:** To convey the importance of empathy in the ability to understand the perspective of different parties when intervening or participating in a conflict.

### 1. Pair up with your accountability partner.

Choose who will be “A” and “B”. Use the conflict experience you discussed earlier.

- What are you most concerned about?
- How do you tend to act in this kind of situation?
- What do you feel about the conflict?

### 2. A (you) will **switch chairs** and **assume the role** of the person you have the conflict with. B will interview you again in this assumed role. (4 minutes)

- How do you know person A?
- Have you had any difficulty with A lately?
- What kind of constraints do you face in the organization?
- What is it like dealing with A?
- What are your concerns/fears about this situation?
- What do you need from A?
- How are power dynamics affecting this situation?

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<sup>6</sup> Adapted from Michelle La Baron and training conducted by Valerie Edwards, LCSW and Maria Ramos-Chertok, Esq.

**3. A (you) will switch chairs again and assume self. Answer the following questions as yourself. B will ask the questions and listen: (4 minutes)**

- How did you contribute to this situation?
- What have you tried in order to fix this?
- What in this conflict are you responsible for?
- What can you do next?
- How are power dynamics affecting this situation for you?

**4. The first round is complete. Person B takes their turn in the same exercise.**

**Notes/Reflections:**

## Resource and Skill Building

### **60 Second Statement to Address a Conflict<sup>7</sup>**

Write a rough draft of your 60 second statement to practice

1. Name the problem in 1 sentence.

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2. Name my role in the situation so far.

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3. Name what's at stake – what are the consequences if we don't address this issue?

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4. Name the next steps that I recommend.

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5. Invite my partner to respond.

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Practice it out loud to hear how it sounds.

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<sup>7</sup> Adapted from *Fierce Conversations*, by Susan Scott.

## Action Planning and Next Steps

Something to think about:

Something to learn:

Something to share with a coworker or friend:

Something to bring back to my workplace:

Something I'm going to do in order to address my conflict:



## Conflict Famous Cartoons



**\*\*images sourced from\*\*:**

1. <https://ourconvergence.org/creative-development/conflict-management-creative-environments>
2. <http://www.sonymax.co.za/programs/boondocks>
3. <http://cartoonbros.com/tom-and-jerry/>
4. <http://irishmanreynolds.deviantart.com/art/Roadrunner-and-Wile-81783355>

### Keep in touch!

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