



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 values and practices at CompassPoint: Elena Featherston, Laurin Mayeno and Poonam Singh, who also teach with us in these areas. We have also attributed certain concepts and exercises to other authors and creators in the page foot notes, 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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Introductions

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

Mingle Magic

Why do we have conflicts at our nonprofits, even when we're aligned with the same mission?

Why is staying aware of privilege important during a conflict?

Why is staying aware of power important during a conflict?

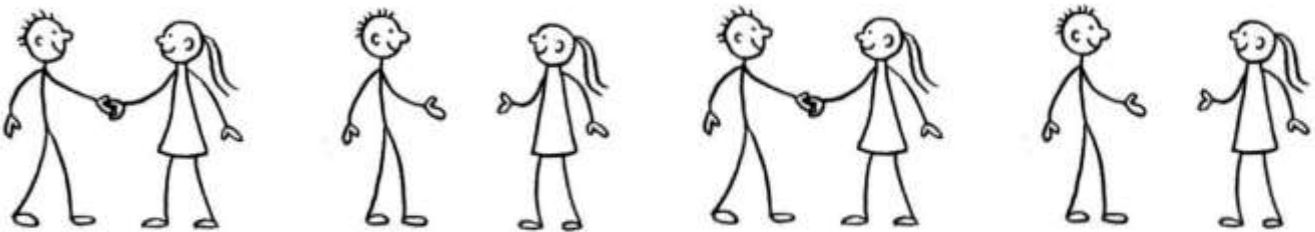


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PRIVILEGE AND OPPRESSION

DEFINITIONS

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 such as health care, education, employment, and housing.

Four Levels of Oppression/“isms” and Change:

Personal: Values, Beliefs, Feelings

Interpersonal: Actions, Behaviors, Language

Institutional: Rules, Policies, Procedures

Cultural: 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 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. The capacity to exercise control over others.

****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****

Privilege and Oppression (continued)

“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.”

- *EverydayFeminism*, Sian Ferguson

<u>Type of Oppression</u>	<u>Target Group</u>	<u>Non-Target Group</u>
Racial	People of color	White people
Class	Poor; working class	Middle and Owner Class
Gender	Women	Men
Sexual orientation	Lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual	Heterosexual people
Ability	People with disabilities	People without disabilities
Religion	Non-Christian	Christian
Age	Children, Youth, and Elderly people	Adults
Educational Privilege	People without college degree	People with college degree
Immigrant status	Immigrant	U.S.-born
Language	Non-English	English

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

“**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

****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****

Agenda for Today

Opening + Building the Container

Who Am I? (in relationship to conflict)

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

- lunch break -

Exploring Guiding Principles

Skill Building and Application

Next Steps and Action Planning

Group Agreements

-
-
-
-

Which group agreement will I focus on for today?

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 to responding to conflict. 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, and
- (2) **Cooperativeness:** the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns

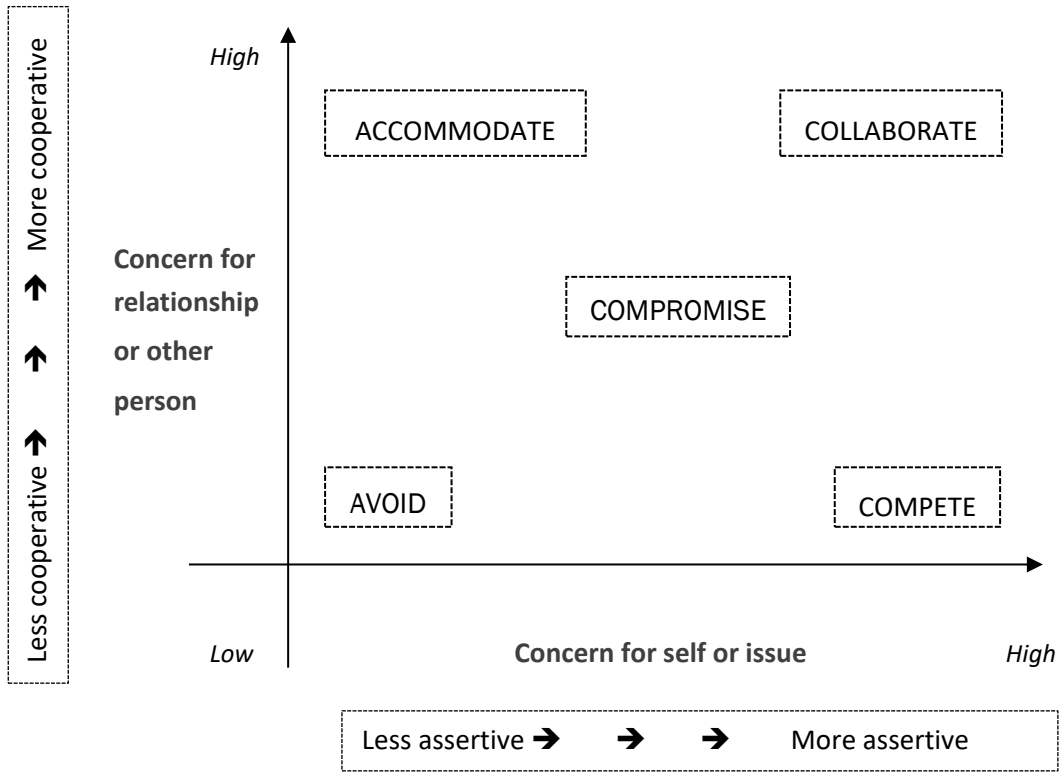
Conflict Style	Definition	Fundamental Premise	Dimensions*
Avoid	To side step or ignore the problem, issue, or person	This isn't the right time or place to address this issue.	Assertive and Uncooperative
Accommodate	To yield your own position in favor of the other party's need in a conflict	Working toward a common purpose is more important than any of the peripheral concerns; the trauma of confronting differences may damage fragile relationships.	Unassertive and Cooperative
Compete	The inverse of accommodation, where you fight your corner and insist on 'winning' the conflict.	Associates "winning" a conflict with competition.	Assertive and Uncooperative
Compromise	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
Collaborate	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*

Group Activity: Teach Back

Style	Advantages	Disadvantages	When to use
Avoid			
Accommodate			
Compete			
Compromise			
Collaborate			

Which Style When?



Things to Remember about Conflict Styles:

Managing conflict effectively over time requires comfort in all styles.

There are choices when responding to conflict.

People often have a "dominate" conflict style, but depending on the situation they may choose alternate styles.

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

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

Exercise: Taking a Stance on Privilege and Power



Reflection Questions:

1. How did it feel to be one of a few people standing in the room? Inversely, what about one of the few folks sitting?
2. How did you see your own understanding of your privilege and relationship to power show up in this exercise?
3. Are there some forms of privilege you're more comfortable acknowledging and claiming? What about types of oppression that you experience?
4. How consciously are you thinking about how your privilege shows up in the workplace?

Exploring Principles

Think of a time you had a conflict with someone, and it was resolved.

- What happened? *(hint: share only the most important highlights of the story, it's easy to lose track of time when we're talking about a conflict)
- How did you resolve it?
- What did you learn?
- How did your conflict resolution default style show up?
- How did privilege show up?
- How did power dynamics affect things?
- What lesson(s) did you learn that might apply to future situations?

Small group discussion

Thinking about who I am, including my power, privilege, and conflict resolution style, which of these principles would help me navigate current and upcoming conflicts well?

Exploring Principles, continued



**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. Holding accountability with the utmost reverence, without slipping into the need to be adversarial.



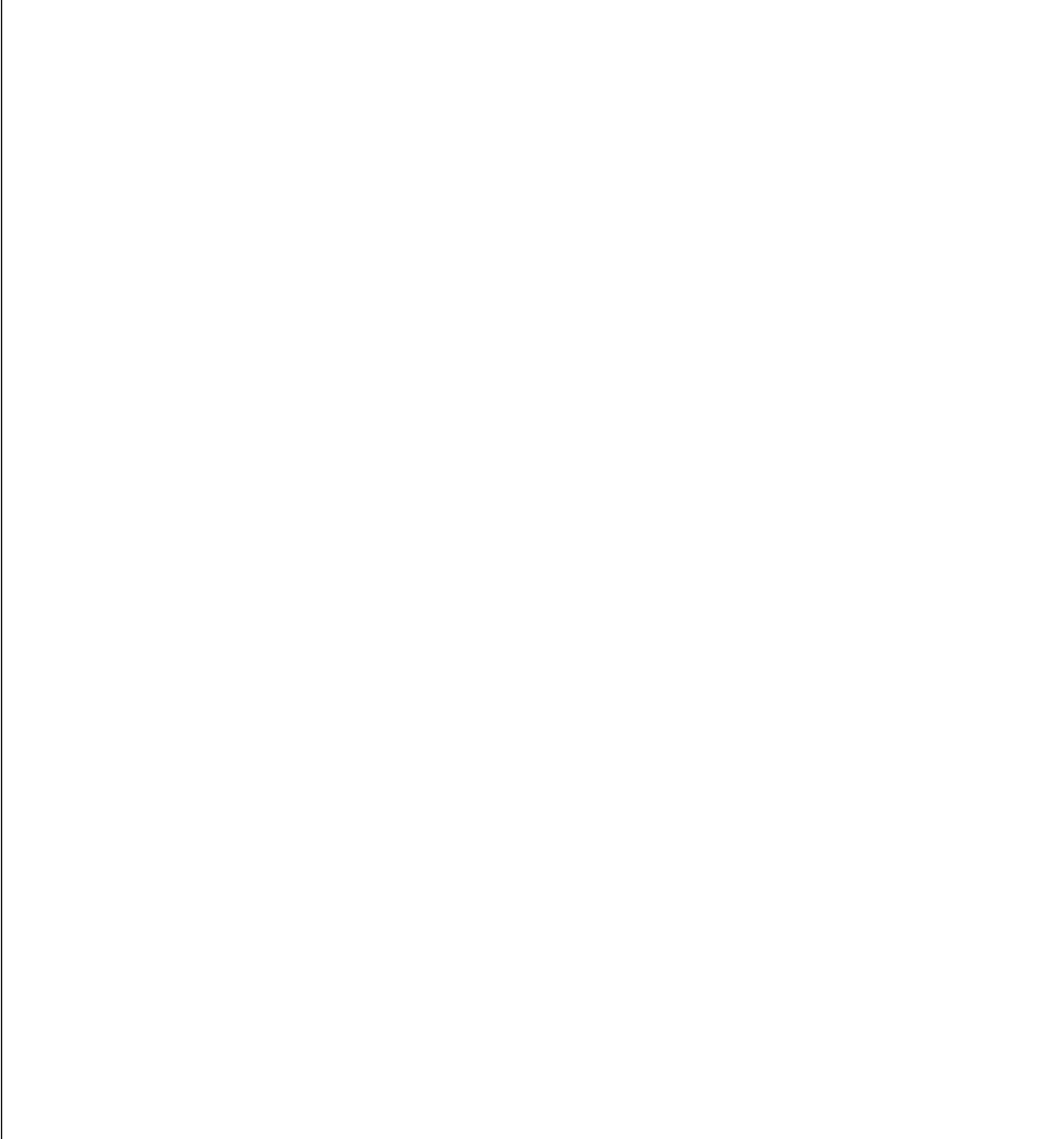
**Amy's
Principles for
Navigating
Conflict**

1. Forget perfection, Do the best I can with what I know now and be willing to hear that I made a mistake.
2. "The person with the bigger emotional charge gets to go first." – Sandra Kim, Everyday Feminism
3. Conflict situations usually have complicated power dynamics. It's easier for me to see where I'm marginalized, than to see where I have unearned privilege

My Guiding Principles for Conflict Resolution with Power and Privilege in Mind:

Exploring Principles, continued

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

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their response to the question above.

Skill Building and Application

Listening Skills

Four Modes of Listening

- *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.
- *Engaged 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*.

**Four Modes of Listening from "Coaching Skills for Nonprofit Managers and Leaders" by Michelle Gislason and Judith Wilson – CompassPoint Nonprofit Services*

Share with a partner: what are some things you've learned so far today?

Tips for listening:

- Be present
- Release other thoughts/responses/solutions/ideas
- If they get 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?)

What did you learn about listening?

Why is listening an important conflict resolution skill?

Skill Building and Application, continued

Observation Skills

"Coming Down the Ladder of Inference"

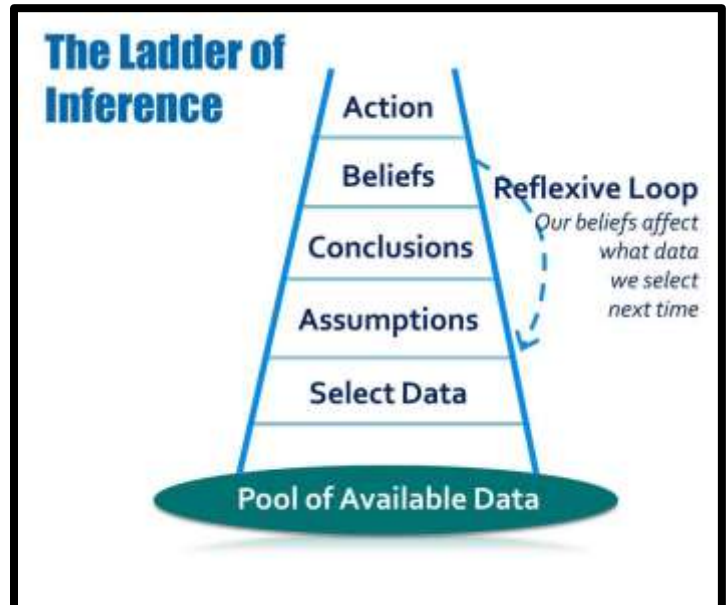


Image from talentgrow.com

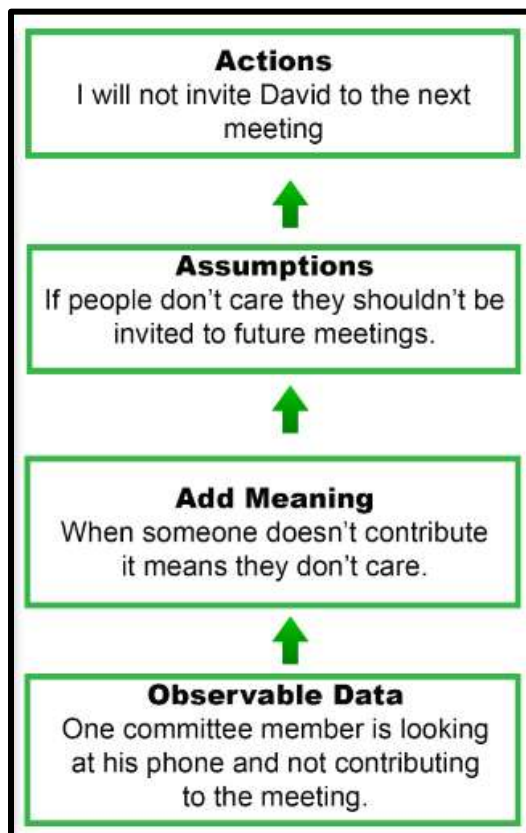


Image from personalmasterycoaching.wordpress.com

Skill Building and Application, continued

Practice the Skill of Observation

- 1- Free write for 5 minutes about “what happened” on the left-hand side of the page – feel free to be as “judge-y” as you want. Make assumptions. Blame the other person.
- 2- When the bell chimes, you’re going spend 5 minutes on the right-hand side of your page. Pick a few details in your story and see if you can turn them into neutral observations.

1. What happened? (my story)	2. Write Down Observations
<i>She got angry with me as soon as I mentioned the trip. She stormed out of the room.</i>	<i>I mentioned the trip and she frowned. A minute later she left the room quickly and didn't respond.</i>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Skill Building and Application, continued

Inquiry Skills

Good questions come from curiosity.

What are some things you're wondering, or curious about, related to your conflict?

What are questions you could ask to expand your understanding and challenge your own assumptions?

Possibilities:

- What is most important about all of this?
- What do you see as the biggest challenge?
- How do you see it differently?
- What is it that you never want to hear me say again?

What are questions you could ask to help the other person to open up their thinking?

Possibilities:

- "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?"

Adapted from *Taking the War Out Of Our Words: The Art of Powerful, Non-Defensive Communication*, by Sharon Ellison.

Skill Building and Application, continued

Empathy and Self-Empathy

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 needed 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 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?

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 to fix this?
- What in this 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.

Adapted from Michelle La Baron and training conducted by Valerie Edwards, LCSW and Maria Ramos-Chertok, Esq.

Skill Building and Application, continued

60 Second Statement to Address a Conflict

Write a rough draft of your 60 second statement to practice

1. Name the problem in 1 sentence.

2. Name my role in the situation, so far.

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

4. Name the next steps that I recommend.

5. invite my partner to respond:

Practice it out loud to hear how it sounds.

Adapted from *Fierce Conversations*, by Susan Scott.

Action Planning and Next Steps

Something to think about:

Something to learn about:

Something to share with a coworker or friend:

Something to bring back to my workplace:

Something I'm going to do 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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