



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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Today's Agenda

Opening + Building the Container

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

Who Am I? (in relationship to conflict)

Lunch Break

Conflict Resolution "Speed Dating": Principles + Strategies to resolve conflict

Building Practices – Designing Alliance

Next Steps and Action Planning

Group Intentions

- Be fully present
- Stretch out of your comfort zone
- Move up, move back
- Find your own voice
- Observe confidentiality
- Bring your heart as well as your mind

Which group intentions will I focus on for today?

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 positional power important during a conflict?

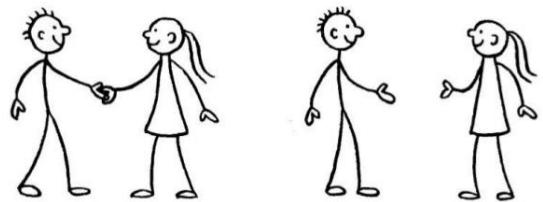


Image from slideshare.net

Privilege, Power, and Oppression

DEFINITIONS¹

CONFLICT: The tension created through an active disagreement, struggle, 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:

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.

¹ Definitions adapted from: © Leaven 2003 Doing Our Own Work: A Seminar for Anti-Racist White Women
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Privilege, Power, 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

Types of Oppression ²	Variable	Historically Included Groups	Historically Excluded Groups
Racism	Race/Color/Ethnicity	White	People of Color (African, Asian, Native, Latinx Americans)
Classism	Socio-economic Status	Middle, Upper Class	Poor, Working Class
Elitism	Education Level Place in Hierarchy	Formally Educated Managers, Exempt, Faculty	Informally Educated Clerical, Non-exempt, Students
Sexism	Gender	Men	Women/Transgender
Genderism	Gender Identity/ Gender Expression	Cisgender (appearance and behaviors are congruent with the Gender Binary)	Transgender, Gender Non- confirming, Genderqueer, Androgynous
Heterosexism	Sexual Orientation	Heterosexuals	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Pansexual, Asexual, Queer, Questioning
Religious Oppression, Anti-semitism	Religion	Christians/Protestant	Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, Agnostic, Hindu, Atheist, Buddhist, Spiritual, LDS, Jehovah’s Witness, Pagan...
Militarism	Military Status	World War I & II, Gulf War Veterans	Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan Veterans; Pacifists
Ageism Adulthood	Age	Young Adults Adults	Elders (40+ by law) Children
Ableism	Physical, Mental, Emotional, Learning Ability	Currently able-bodied	People with a physical, mental, emotional and/or learning disability
Xenophobia	Immigrant Status	US Born	Immigrant
Linguistic Oppression	Language	English	English as a second language, non- English

****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****

“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

² Chart from *Is Reconciliation Possible? - Lessons from Combating “Modern Racism”* by Valerie Batts

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

Behavioral Manifestations of Modern Oppression³

Modern Oppression Behaviors	Internalized Oppression Behaviors
Dysfunctional Rescuing	System Beating
Blaming the Victim	Blaming the System
Avoidance of Contact	Antagonistic Avoidance of Conflict
Denial of Cultural Differences	Denial of Cultural Heritage
Denial of the Impact of Oppression	Lack of Understanding or the Minimization of the Impact of Oppression

Modern Oppression: Behavioral Manifestations

Dysfunctional Rescuing:

- Helping based on an assumption that people in the target group cannot help themselves
- Setting people up for failure consciously or unconsciously
- Helping in such a way that limits the person's ability to help themselves
- Often motivated out of guilt or shame
- Often embedded in a "culture of niceness or politeness" thus making its limiting aspects hard to discern

Blaming the Victim:

- Attributing the results of systemic oppression to the target group
- Ignoring the real impact of oppression on the lives of the target group
- Blaming people for their current economic situation
- Setting target group members up to fail and then blaming them

Avoidance of Contact:

- Not having social or professional contact with people in the target group
- Exercising the choice to not deal directly with people in the target group regarding difficult or sensitive issues

Denial of Cultural Differences:

- Minimizing obvious physical or behavioral differences between people as well as differences in preferences that may be rooted in culture
- Being color-blind in a way that masks discomfort with differences

Denial of the Political Significance of Differences:

- Denying the differential impacts of social, political, economic and psychological realities on the lives of the target and dominant groups

³ Adapted from *Is Reconciliation Possible? - Lessons from Combating "Modern Racism"* by Valerie Batts

- Minimizing the influence of such variables on our lives and institutions
- May be accompanied by an attitude that cultural differences are just interesting or fun
- Unwillingness to acknowledge the multiplicity of ways in which the impacts of the myth of dominant group superiority continue.

Internalized Oppression: Behavioral Manifestations

System Beating:

- Attempting to get over on or around the system
- Manipulating others or the system through guilt, psychological games, or illicit activities
- Acting out of anger, playing dumb, clowning, or being invisible
- An awareness that the target group member is an outsider and that the s/he cannot succeed by being direct and/or being himself or herself

Blaming the System:

- Deflecting responsibility for one's actions
- Putting all the blame on the other or the system for one's problems
- Refusing to learn about or acknowledge mental, emotional, and stress-related issues as real
- Externalizing and blaming of others that in effect gives away the target group member's ability to effect change
- Sometimes masks a sense of hopelessness in the target group member's ability to visualize and/or implement a more desirable system

Antagonistic Avoidance of Contact:

- Avoiding contact with the dominant group
- Distrusting all dominant group members (obsessive concern and suspicion)
- Being overly sensitive to rejection
- Rejecting other target group members for being "not target group enough" (e.g. "not black enough," "not Chinese enough")
- Fueled by rage that can be self-destructive to the person who carries it

Denial of Cultural Heritage:

- Distrusting one's own group and accepting one's own group as inferior giving deference to the dominant group
- Ejecting or devaluing one's cultural heritage
- Valuing or overemphasizing dominant group standards (e.g. beauty)
- Valuing and accepting the dominant group as the highest authority

Lack of Understanding or the Minimization of the Impact of Oppression:

- Being passive and unassertive; feeling powerless (learned helplessness)
- Misdirecting anger to persons with less power or turning anger inward resulting in high blood pressure, strokes, ulcers, etc.
- Having difficulty expressing anger and avoiding conflicts at all costs
- In-group fighting, displaying "ism" behaviors, taking advantage of the lack of information and feelings of the powerlessness of other target group members
- Failure to examine the pervasive nature of oppression and the multiplicity of ways in which target group members are set up to collude with its perpetuation

Examples of Behavioral Manifestations of Oppression in Supervision

Modern Oppression Behaviors	Internalized Oppression Behaviors
<p><u>Dysfunctional Rescuing</u> Supervisor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are following up with a staff member on a task you assigned them. You have a habit of doing other people's work to be helpful. 	<p><u>System Beating</u> Supervisee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You were assigned a task by your boss but it seems hard. You decide to wait until they might help out by doing it for you since they often do this.
<p><u>Blaming the Victim</u> Supervisor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have a staff member that seems to not get it. You think they should have more initiative in their work, and you will give them this feedback. 	<p><u>Blaming the System</u> Supervisee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You feel like how things are done isn't fair. There seems to be a lot of unspoken rules. You feel if you could do it your way it would be all good.
<p><u>Avoidance of Contact</u> Supervisor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have to give some difficult feedback to a staff member about their attire at work. You are uncomfortable saying something so you just try to avoid the conversation. In this meeting, you try to bring it up. 	<p><u>Antagonistic Avoidance of Contact</u> Supervisee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You feel like your boss wants you to dress and act "white." You just avoid your boss because you feel they don't understand you.
<p><u>Denial of Cultural Differences</u> Supervisor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You ask your supervisee to make some budget cuts in putting on a community event. You let them know that the only unnecessary cost you see is translation into Spanish since everyone speaks English. 	<p><u>Denial of Cultural Heritage</u> Supervisee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You know that about 20% of the people that will attend a community event you are putting on are monolingual in Spanish. You cut Spanish translation out of the budget because you believe people should work harder to learn English as Latino immigrants like you did when you came here.
<p><u>Denial of the Impact of Oppression</u> Supervisor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You schedule a team retreat off-site in a location inaccessible by public transportation early in the morning. You are upset when your supervisee misses this event and doesn't communicate the reasons why. You think if this happens again they may not be able to stay in this position. 	<p><u>Lack of understanding or the minimization of the impact of oppression:</u> Supervisee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can't attend an off-site team retreat because you are a single mom with no way of dropping your kids off and making it on time on the bus. You are angry, sad, and frustrated but blame yourself. You become sick because you are so nervous about losing your job but don't tell anyone what's going on.

Alternative Behaviors for Modern “Ism” and Internalized Oppression Behaviors⁴

1. Helping instead of <i>Rescuing</i>	1. Confront/Speak up instead of <i>System Beating</i>
2. Problem Solving/Responsibility instead of <i>Blaming</i>	2. Share Information/Make contact instead of <i>Avoiding</i>
3. Make Mutual Contact instead of <i>Avoiding</i>	3. Take Responsibility for My Actions instead of <i>Blaming</i>
4. Notice Differences instead of <i>Denying Differences, especially power dynamic</i>	4. Notice and Share Information about my Differences & Culture instead of <i>Denying My Target Group status</i>
5. Learn, Ask About, Notice the Impact instead of <i>Denying the Impact</i>	5. Notice, Ask and Share Info About the Impact of the “ism” On Me and My Target Group instead of <i>Denying the Impact</i>

⁴ Adapted from *Is Reconciliation Possible? - Lessons from Combating “Modern Racism”* by Valerie Batts

Who Am I? (in relationship to conflict)⁵

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 " <i>winning</i> " 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

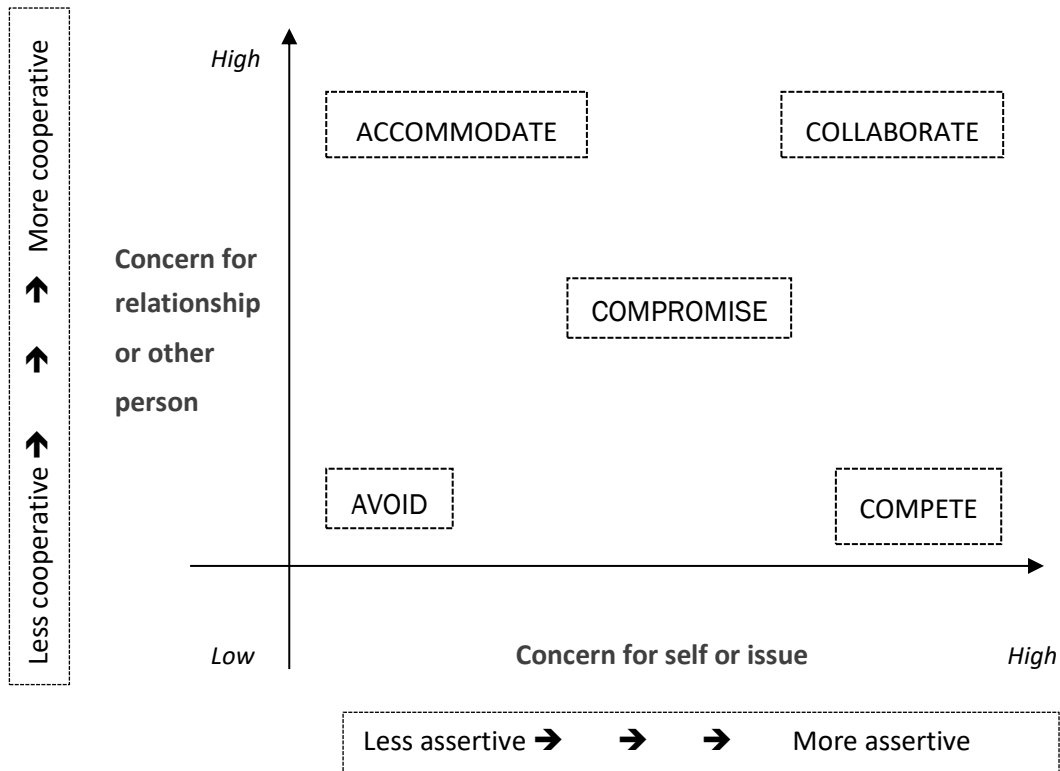
⁵ Based on definitions by Thomas & Kilmann referenced above. Other sources:

<http://www.bcs.org/content/ConWebDoc/24899>; <https://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/conflict.htm>

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.

Designing the Alliance: How to create healthier personal and professional relationships⁶

Sara is happy that Dalia sends projects her way, but it annoys her when Dalia waits until the last minute to give her the work, causing Sara to have to scramble to get it done in less time than has been promised.

Peter and Dave have recently begun living together. Dave wishes Peter would just “get it” that he doesn’t like to talk in the morning, or at least not until he has had his coffee.

And Jorge bemoans the fact that his boss practically watches over his shoulder while he’s working. Can’t he just give him space and trust that Jorge knows what he’s doing?

All of these people, in fact, just about anybody in any kind of relationship, can benefit by learning to “design the alliance” with the person with whom they’re in relationship.

The concept of *designed alliance* is used in coaching to set the stage for a relationship that empowers clients to be the most successful as they make changes in their work and personal lives. For example, a client might suggest the most effective ways for his coach to support him when he’s feeling scared, resistant or stuck. Once the alliance has been designed, it’s important to update it as individual needs and desires change.

This concept is highly applicable to all kinds of relationships: romantic or work partnerships, friends, parent-child, and more. Imagine a world, in fact, where all relationships begin with a consciously designed alliance, the purpose of which is to create a mutually successful experience. There are many core concepts covered in coach training that assist students in enriching and deepening their personal and professional relationships.

How might things be different in the scenarios above if alliances had been designed from the start?

Perhaps Dave and Peter could have taken time before they began living together to talk about what kinds of support they would want from each other. They could have saved themselves quite a bit of discomfort by designing it so that Dave could have his quiet time in the morning without Peter feeling rejected. Likewise, Peter could make his own requests. Together they could bring greater clarity and ease to their relationship.

Imagine what life at work would be like if Jorge and his boss had designed an alliance at the beginning of Jorge’s employment. Jorge might have let his boss know that he is most effective

⁶ Adapted from <http://nlp-leadership-coaching.com/designing-the-alliance-how-to-create-healthier-personal-and-professional-relationships/>

when given space to carry out assignments independently. The boss might have asked for a trial run at this way of working together. Although this communication didn't happen when Jorge was first hired, there's no reason it can't happen now.

And what if Sara designed it with Dalia that, unless she has proper turn-around time, Dalia will have to do the work herself. That might actually inspire Dalia to keep to her original schedule, or perhaps even get the work done early! In either case, clear boundaries will make for a much happier working relationship.

Bringing conscious communication and the willingness to listen to and meet each other's needs is a wonderful way to empower the relationship to serve each person. The notion of creating an "alliance" instills the understanding that "we are in this together," working to consciously design a successful experience for both individuals. What could be better than that?

Designing the Alliance Question Prompts⁷

90-minute meeting once in two months or three months – only about partnership, not about work. Preferably over lunch away from the office. Choose 3-5 questions per meeting to spur discussion.

I Identifying Intentions

- What assumptions do you have of each other?
- Name your highest hopes and dreams for this partnership.
- Name your worst fears or lowest dreams for this partnership.

II Creating the Atmosphere

- What is the tone or relational environment you want to create?
- How do you each contribute in creating the experience you want?

III Sharing Responsibility

- What expectations do you have of each other's roles?
- What can you count on from each other? Be specific!
- What requests do you have of each other?
- What commitment do you want to make regarding how and what information is shared with each other and with the board?

IV Acknowledgement & Championing

- How do you appreciate and fiercely support one another?
- Acknowledge or champion each other now.

V Creating a Backup Plan

- How do you choose to be with each other when conflict arises?
- What discussion do you want to have if one – or both – of you breaks an agreement?
- What will help you get back to your alliance if it gets slippery or starts to break?
- If one – or both – of you chooses to break the alliance, what is important to remember/to occur in that discussion?

⁷ Adapted from CRR Global ORSC
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Listening Skill Building and Application

Listening leaves the listener and the person being listened to with a full sense of **integrity** and **respect**. With intention to hear others out, it allows us to grasp the full understanding of what others are trying to get across and gives others a feeling that we care.

Four Modes of Listening⁸

- *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*.

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?)

⁸ Four Modes of Listening from *Coaching Skills for Nonprofit Managers and Leaders* by Michelle Gislason and Judith Wilson – CompassPoint Nonprofit Services
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Inquiry Skill Building and Application⁹

Inquiry Definition

The skill of inquiry is the ability to ask useful questions and pull forth the brilliance from the other person. Inquiry involves asking stimulating question for their sake, rather than for yours.

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

Here are some questions you could ask them to expand your understanding of the situation and challenge your own assumptions.

- What is most important about all of this?
- What do you see as the biggest challenge right now?
- 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?"
- "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?"

⁹ Adapted from *Taking the War Out Of Our Words: The Art of Powerful, Non-Defensive Communication*, by Sharon Ellison.

Empathy and Self-Empathy

Empathy Exercise¹⁰

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.

¹⁰ Adapted from Michelle La Baron, training conducted by Valerie Edwards, LCSW and Maria Ramos-Chertok, Esq.

Resource and Skill Building

60 Second Statement to Address a Conflict¹¹

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.

¹¹ Adapted from *Fierce Conversations*, by Susan Scott.
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Action Planning and Next Steps

Something to think about:

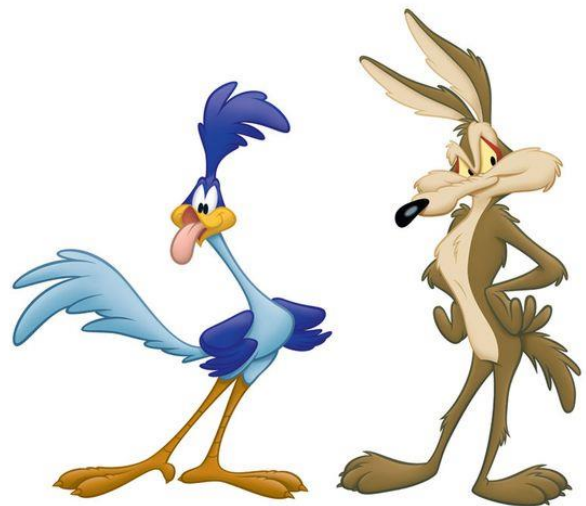
Something to learn about:

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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