

ABC Conflict Resolution

Session 2: Preparation for the Journey

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- I. Take stock before you guide someone.
 - A. We work for our own sanctification, and then we help others (Galatians 6:1-2).

 - B. Think about these things first in your own life, and then you will be able to wisely guide others. (Romans 12:2)

- II. What is the counselee starting with?
 - A. Travelers take stock of their assets and liabilities before they begin the journey.
 1. Assets help us along the way.
 2. Liabilities create obstacles on the journey.

 - B. The Conflict Avoidance/Pursuit Spectrum
 1. Conflict Avoidance: Withdrawing from situations that involve conflict
 - a) 'Flight' mode
 - b) Motivational Statement: "I can't win."

 2. Conflict Pursuit: Creating or exacerbating conflict situations
 - a) 'Fight' mode
 - b) Motivational Statement: "I have to win."

 3. The Healthy Middle: Conflict Engagement
 - a) Emotional regulation of anger, fear, and shame
 - b) Humility and desire to build bridges (Ephesians 4:1-3)
 - c) Motivational Statement: "I can speak, listen, and grow."

- III. Assets
 - A. The Holy Spirit (John 14 and 16)

 - B. Wise Fellow-Travelers (Proverbs 11:14)
 1. Other Christians who have walked the road of conflict wisely
 2. Pastors and ministers
 3. Counselors and mediators
 4. Resources (such as books, podcasts, articles, conferences, etc.)

C. Gifts and Skills (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

1. How might the counselee's relational assets help on the journey?
2. Apply the counselee's gifts and skills to the work of healthy conflict.

IV. Liabilities

A. Shame is speaking loudly.

1. Beliefs about him/herself may bring insecurity regarding their character.
2. If someone 'pokes' at a negative belief about the self, s/he may go into fight or flight mode.

B. Fear is speaking loudly.

1. Understanding our fears can lead to growth in taking our thoughts (and feelings) captive to make them obedient to Christ.
2. Common Fears Associated with Conflict:
 - a) Judgment/looking foolish
 - b) Being wrong, feeling guilty, or facing consequences
 - c) Rejection/abandonment
 - d) Being threatened, harmed, or dominated
 - e) Losing ground or influence

C. Past trauma is invading.

1. If conflict has caused danger or threat of harm in the past, his/her mind will naturally connect conflict with danger.
2. Even if there is no danger, the brain sometimes gives off the danger signal.

D. Relational discomfort is intolerable.

1. The counselee may believe conflict causes rejection, loss, or abandonment; OR the counselee has been hurt already, and they expect to be hurt again.
2. This may lead the counselee to either avoid or pursue conflict.

E. Healthy conflict has not been modeled.

1. If the counselee's family avoided or pursued conflict in unhealthy ways, s/he has not learned the skill of healthy conflict.
2. We learn through experience, so experience needs to grow.

F. The theological framework is weak or nonexistent.

1. Many of us think Christian unity means always agreeing with each other.
2. Many of us misunderstand the biblical grounds and the fruitful outcomes of healthy conflict.

- G. The power dynamic is strong.
 - 1. The person with whom the counselee has conflict is either 'above' (someone who has more influence and power) or 'below' (someone who has less influence and power).
 - 2. When there is a power differential, conflict is naturally more difficult because the two parties aren't coming to the table on equal ground.

- V. How do we minimize liabilities?
 - A. Help the counselee do the work of grieving his/her losses and wounds. (Psalm 55:16-18; Ecclesiastes 7:4)

 - B. Help the counselee uproot negative thoughts and expectations, and plant truth. (Philippians 4:4-8) This happens when the counselee:

 - C. Help the counselee seek forgiveness. (Colossians 3:12-13)

 - D. Help the counselee learn what it means to have healthy conflict.