

## Walking on Hot Coals... *Without Getting Burned*

A Collaborative Approach  
to Conflict



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"Words are like eggs dropped from great heights; you can no more call them back than ignore the mess they leave when they fall."

*Either Stephen Covey or Jodi Picoult*

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### Objectives

- Gain insights into your predispositions & tendencies
- Raise awareness regarding life cycle that conflicts take
- Provide ideas for productive action in dealing with conflict situations

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## Conflict - What comes to mind?



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## Conflict

- Any situation in which people have incompatible (or perceived incompatible) needs, interests, wants, or values
  - Thoughts, Feelings, Action

***Conflict exists even if only one person believes it exists***

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## The Life Cycle of Conflict

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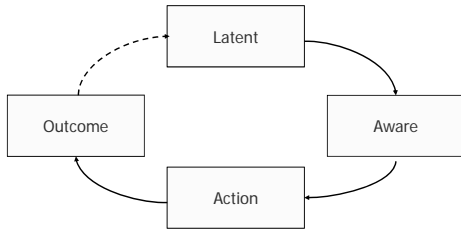
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## The Life Cycle of Conflict



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## Latent

*Situation likely ripe for conflict; parties may not perceive conflict*

Productive	Not Productive
Acknowledge potential	Ignore situation
Acknowledge others	Minimize others
Assume innocence	Assume bad intentions
Create dialogue	Avoid situation
Focus on the future	Focus on the past

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## Aware

*Parties perceive conflict. Feelings and behaviors likely change.  
Emotional reactions: hostility, anger, frustration, pain, others.*

Productive	Not Productive
Approach them	Avoid them
"I" statements	"You" statements
Describe emotions, remain calm	Act out emotions, lose temper
Inquire about intention	Make assumptions about intention
Assume innocence	Assume bad intentions

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## Action

*Move from awareness to action. Parties escalating or working to resolve.*

Productive	Not Productive
Dialogue	Aggressive behavior
Alternatives to non-productive behaviors	Engage in non-productive behaviors
Common goals	Argumentative; 1-upsmanship
Assuming innocence	Assuming bad intentions
Respectfully agree to disagree	Allow differences to polarize

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## \*Respect

### *Definition:*

- Each person is a fully functioning, intelligent, human being, capable of learning
- Each person comes to the situation with a perspective based on valid experience
- Each person can benefit from understanding the other's perspective
- We don't trash the other person because of disagreement

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## Outcome

*Productive or non-productive results (non-productive contribute to more potential conflict)*

Productive	Not Productive
Better understanding	Reduced communications
Better relationships	Lack of trust
Better able to solve future problems	Increased likelihood of more conflicts

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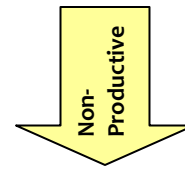
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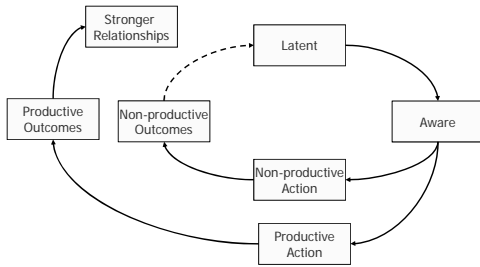
## Life Cycle of Conflict



<p><b>Latent:</b> Situations exist that act as breeding ground for conflict, although parties are probably not yet aware of specific issues with one another</p>	
Acknowledge the potential for conflict	Ignore the situation, hope it goes away ("sweep it under the rug")
Acknowledge the importance of the issue to others	Minimize the potential importance
Assume innocence	Assume bad intentions
Create opportunity for dialogue	Avoid the situation or the person
Focus on the future – the possibilities, what can be done	Focus on the past (who did what, why)
<p><b>Aware:</b> One or more persons perceive the conflict. Feelings and behaviors toward one another may change. Emotional reactions may take the form of hostility, anger, frustration, pain</p>	
Approach the other person	Avoid the other person
Speak in "I" statements	Speak in "you" statements
Describe emotions, remain calm	Act out emotions, lose temper
Inquire into intentions	Make assumptions about intentions
Assume innocence	Assume bad intentions
<p><b>Action:</b> The conflict has moved from awareness to action, and parties are either escalating, or working toward resolution.</p>	
Dialogue seeking to understand; constructive approaches to resolving	Aggressive behavior, verbal attacks, getting in the way of their accomplishing their goals, gossip
Calling out, offering alternatives to destructive behaviors	Engaging in destructive behaviors
Defining and focusing on common goals	Argumentative, one-upsmanship
Agreeing to disagree, with respect*	Allowing differences to polarize
Assume innocence	Assume bad intentions
<p><b>Outcome:</b> Outcomes are either functional or dysfunctional. Dysfunctional outcomes contribute to potential for more conflict.</p>	
Better understanding of issues, self, and other people	Anger, hostility, reduced communications
Better relationships, increased use of inclusion	Destruction of team spirit, lack of trust
Greater ability to handle complex situations, more innovative, better ability to solve future problems	Increased likelihood of more conflicts which will be more complex, and therefore more difficult to resolve

**Respect:** Each person is a fully functioning, intelligent, human being, capable of learning. Each person comes to the situation with a perspective based on valid experience, and we can benefit from understanding each other's perspective

## Influencing Positive Outcomes



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## Reflection – A Personal Situation



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- Think of a conflict relevant to you
- In what stage of the life cycle is the conflict?
- In which non-productive behaviors have you engaged?
- In which non-productive behaviors has the other party engaged?
- What alternative behaviors might you consider?
- Try one out

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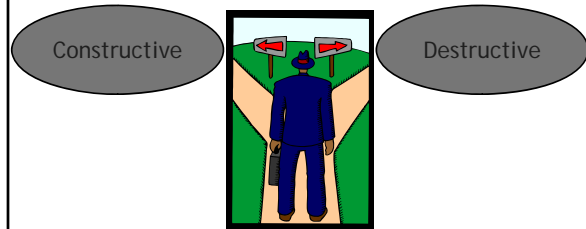
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## Watch out for your triggers



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Anyone can become angry -- that is easy.  
But to be angry with the right person, to the  
right degree, at the right time, for the right  
purpose, and in the right way -- this is not  
easy.

-- Aristotle

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## About Helene

Helene J. Dublisky M.S. combines business coaching, leadership development, and management consulting through Omega Coaching. She is a certified business coach who has held corporate executive positions, served on non-profit boards and as a graduate-level adjunct professor at the University of San Francisco. She has co-authored 2 books (IT People: Doing More with Less and Hire Power: Executing Strategic Staffing). Omega Coaching provides individual and team coaching and custom training to organizations.

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