

# **Understanding the Value of Warm Conflict Resolution, and Saying Goodbye To The War Room**

By Faust Ruggiero, M.S. (taken, in part, from *The Fix Yourself Handbook*) \*

*Conflict is not the monster you make it out to be. It is an intellectual gift. It helps you organize your world, and tells you how intelligent you can be. You need to stop fearing it.*

The process of conflict resolution is a powerful instrument in human growth. The standard definition of “conflict” is a serious disagreement or argument, typically a protracted one. That, unfortunately, is exactly how conflict is viewed. The view of conflict is packed with negative energy, and quickly conjures up horrible apparitions of emotional demons yearning to feast on our souls.

Conflict is neither positively nor negatively charged. It simply means that each party has different information. We, fearing the potential for loss, put the emotional charge into the information, certain that tragedy is going to bestow itself upon us. Thus, it’s not the conflict that causes the problem, it’s the emotional magnum opus we created that breaks our spirit.

## **Win at All Costs**

In classic conflict situations, there is an agenda to win the argument, and the intellectual weaponry being used is not always straightforward and honest. Engaging in conflict can make us feel as though we are stepping into the lion’s den to have part of our humanity viciously ripped away. This is hardly the case. So, I’ll redefine conflict using terminology that isn’t delivered at the end of a blood-wielding sword.

*Conflict is the intellectual state that occurs when two different opinions occupy cognitive space at the same time.* The information is initially introduced as fragmented, oppositional, and incongruent. In conflict, the solution or compromise has not yet been defined. That may become

the conclusion when the conflict is resolved. Conflict, then, as I am using it, simply means that two or more people are expressing information that is not the same.

Let's take a closer look at what happens when two people enter into a conflict. Since each person's opinion has been expressed, and both know what the other thinks, they are simply two people who have different opinions about something. Each person, however, is aware that the information exchange could develop into an emotionally charged argument. So, even before any information exchange can occur, each party is poised for the potential of war. This happens because we all believe that the conflict will have a winner and a loser. This view of conflict is archaic. Consider this example:

### **No Friend Of Mine**

Jake is a staunch Democrat. His whole family is, and always has been. He is in a heated discussion with Frank over a hotly contested social issue. Jake is towing the Democratic line, while Frank is holding down that of his Republican party-mates. Each continues to deliver opinion after opinion, and the argument continues to become more heated. Finally, Jake leaves the argument, delivering one last jab, and exits the room. War was waged without compromise or solution. In the end, neither understood what the other had to say, and no solution was realized.

This is an example of the *conflict war room*, complete with all its emotional weaponry. If they were more willing to listen to what the other had to say, ask some questions, and give each other the respect due, things might've turned out much differently.

### **Bad Rep**

Before you can resolve conflicts between two opposing information sources, you must reduce the internal conflict you, yourself are experiencing. You need to stop fearing conflict, and

become comfortable with the thought of opposing information sharing space with yours. That can be a good thing. Now I'm getting to the crux of our current discourse. Conflict is not always negative. Conflict can also be a positive intellectual experience, and that is the first conflict you need to address. That the human mind could even comprehend the existence of conflicting information reaffirms the magnificence of our cognitive capabilities.

Conflict is simply your mind recognizing that not all the information is complimentary, and if it is presented clearly, and with respect, the marriage of two or more different ideas can produce solutions, with efficient plans to move forward. The human mind possesses the ability to accomplish the task, and it wants to do this. So then, why is there so much fear and insecurity when it comes to conflict resolution? The answer is our old nemesis: our emotions.

### **The Simple Intellectual Exercise**

The human brain is equipped with readily available tools to help you address both the internal and environmental issues you experience on any given day, and in any given situation. Conflict is essential to human growth. Expressing yourself efficiently in conflict situations should be nothing more than *unemotional presentations of simple facts*. An opposing viewpoint does not make one an enemy.

The real enemy comes from right inside yourself. Since your mind and emotions work so closely together, the line between intellect and emotion can quickly become blurred. In the heat of the battle, emotionally expressed opinions can instigate a *war room mentality*. When emotional barrages subdue the sound presentation of the facts, the result can be a dramatic, passionate battleground that soon bears little resemblance to the initial information. For this reason, emotional conflicts are rarely, if ever, resolved. Hence, you have a proven existential basis for your fear of engaging in conflict-related situations.

To further refine our definition of conflict, I am going to apply it to healthy conflict resolution. *Healthy conflicts are solution oriented, intellectually expressed exercises, that define and organize relevant information into cohesive, functional presentations.* As you can see, there is little, if any room in this formula for the emotional weaponry of the war room.

Conflicts do not produce anxiety. Emotions do. Emotions have no place in conflict resolution, and you must set your sights on solutions, not worthless, petty skirmishes. In any opposing information design, there is the information, the willingness to discuss that information, and the resolution. Everything else is emotional rubbish. You speak, you listen, you respect, you attempt to arrive at a workable solution, or at least, a compromise, and you move on. It's a simple information exchange, and you are all capable of using this wonderful intellectual gift. Make this your priority.

### **Taking Positive Action**

1. When you engage in any conflict situation, make the decision to be honest, humble, willing to review the information, and dedicated to a solution. This sets the foundation for the communication necessary to resolve the conflict.
2. Try to keep your emotions at a minimum. Infusing emotion into an intellectual discourse does nothing but cause problems.
3. Focus more on the information being presented, and less on how you feel about it. It's the information you need to resolve the conflict. Keep those facts moving in the direction of a solution.
4. In a conflict, there is a tendency to go off track just a bit. When this happens, refocus on the facts. Keep your intentions focused on a solution.

5. Rid yourself of any preconceived notions about what might happen. This will cause you to get ahead of yourself, and that is when your emotions will take over. Again, focus on obtaining the facts. These can be presented by everyone involved in the discussion.
6. Keep the pace of conflict resolution slow and the volume low. Speak to the other people as friends.
7. Try not to be so impassioned about how you believe the conflict needs to be resolved. Always remain calm, and always stay on topic. Never make the conflict evolve into a personal assault. If you can't remain calm, leave the situation; warmly.
8. Remember, you have no control over what the other person says or does. Focus on what you are saying, and be willing to listen to them. That's all you can control.
9. Prepare yourself mentally. Take some time and review the **facts**. Try to reduce the emotional energy you are putting into this. Use factual information that accurately describes your concerns. If you think your emotions are too strong, talk the matter over with someone you trust.
10. Don't confront others in a hostile environment. Be considerate enough about their feelings, and you might see them return the favor. Be respectful. Remember it's an information exchange, not a war, and like you, others have feelings.
11. Never go into an information exchange as a representative of a position you firmly believe is true, but lacks enough information to produce a sound conclusion, and actionable, positive movement forward. If you cannot substantiate everything you are saying, either don't say it, or express it as an opinion in need of further information,
12. Communicate in precise statements. You want the other person to clearly understand what you're saying. Deliver those statements with warmth, and a true willingness to

listen, and understand what the other person is presenting. Listen to what they have to say. If you don't agree, or don't understand what they're saying, ask questions.

13. Try not to worry about the other person's response. They may or may not agree with you. Your only concern is to learn to more efficiently present your concerns to others. Results are never guaranteed. Efficient communication demands the willingness to bend, and sometimes change your position based on the facts.
14. Stay away from personal assaults. Not everyone is going to share your beliefs. Positive growth depends on information from a variety of different, and often opposing positions. This information is necessary to complete the concept being discussed. Be open minded enough to willingly embrace information which may be different than your own.
15. Try not to look at someone who has information that is different from yours as your enemy. This person could be the key that unlocks the door to necessary information that can lead to a successful venture.
16. Remember that the facts always remain the facts. You may not like them, but you need them to move forward. Be willing to put your emotions aside, and become an efficient factfinder.
17. Try to refrain from taking on the responsibility of *defender of your side's position*. This is almost always an emotional experience. Instead of taking sides, be on the side of the facts. They will never let you down.
18. Be willing to take a risk. You want to become someone who is capable of intelligently confronting problematic situations with love, respect, decency, and honor. Be that someone.

## **In Conclusion**

Recognize conflict as the powerful, positive tool it is. Feelings are important, and if possible, can be included in an intellectual discourse, but never, under any circumstances, do they rule the exercise. We become more confident by learning to engage in healthy confrontations with other people. By keeping our emotions at a minimum, staying close to the facts, and using a warm, respectful approach, you will see that you are able to express your concerns, more efficiently understand the bigger picture, and formulate and execute plans which benefit individuals, and society as a whole. Communicate intelligently. Stay focused on acquiring all the information, and get out of the war room. You can do this.

\*Ruggiero, Faust, M.S. *The Fix Yourself Handbook*, FYHB Publications, 2019.

[https://www.amazon.com/Fix-Yourself-Handbook-Process-Transform/dp/1734383003/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=1KG9HKV2GKZDP&keywords=faust+ruggiero+book&qid=1663440091&srefix=Faust+R%2Caps%2C75&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Fix-Yourself-Handbook-Process-Transform/dp/1734383003/ref=sr_1_1?crid=1KG9HKV2GKZDP&keywords=faust+ruggiero+book&qid=1663440091&srefix=Faust+R%2Caps%2C75&sr=8-1)