

# 1.3

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## BRAVE CONVERSATIONS: MANAGING CONFLICT

Handling difficult conversations is an important communication skill to develop. With the right strategy, it's possible to turn conflict into learning conversations that allow you to solve issues, improve relationships, and come to a shared understanding.

# BRAVE CONVERSATIONS: MANAGING CONFLICT

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In this lesson you will:

- Learn methods for managing conflict: the Learning Conversations model, the STLC approach, and the Third Side method
- Learn how to handle specific kinds of conflict: highly emotional, distinct personalities, family, mediated (non face-to-face)
- Learn how to recognize and respond to dangerous conflict situations

## BRAVE CONVERSATIONS - MANAGING CONFLICT

### Approaching Conflict With the Learning Conversations Model

It was upon reading the New York Times bestselling book *Difficult Conversations, How to Discuss What Matters Most* (Stone et al.) that I first realized I had much to learn about managing conflict. Though this book was first in print in 1999, it remains a popular guide for handling tricky conversations in a skillful and healthy manner. The book begins by reminding readers that feeling anxious or uncertain during conflict exchanges is totally normal . . . but preventable! Handling conflict is a skill that can be learned. Learning the difference between unhealthy conversations and healthy conversations will improve your stress level, your confidence, and your ability to approach and manage conflict.

Too often, we enter into difficult conversations with unfair assumptions, emotionally charged language, and a focus on blame. Rather than solve issues or improve relationships, this approach pulls us apart. In the Learning Conversation method, curiosity is key.



This method requires you to admit you may not truly understand the other person's perspective. You must also be willing to have an open and honest dialogue, as well as a goal of reaching shared understanding instead of being right or scoring a "victory."

A Learning Conversation does not mean giving up your stance or replacing your ideas with theirs; it simply means that you willingly consider their ideas and your ideas as equally important. I have condensed the work of Stone and colleagues with the following steps to consider for a learning conversation variation:

- 1. Understand your own story better.** Consider what you are feeling and be okay with those feelings. Remember from the emotions wheel in part one that our feelings are often quite complex; instead of quickly naming the first thing you're feeling, consider secondary feelings, also. Be willing to share the full spectrum of your feelings – without labels or judgment – in the learning conversation.

- 2. Eliminate assumptions.** Remember that much of our thinking is automatic. We reach conclusions but don't always pause long enough to admit that such conclusions may not be true. Human nature is to favor our own perspective; likewise, we quickly interpret the other's perspective in a negative and twisted way. For example, your friend

hasn't reached out to you lately, so you assume their intention is to hurt or unbefriend you. Before you make assumptions, you should ask yourself, "What else could be the reason?"

**3. Do not place blame.**

Wasting time trying to decide who's at fault does not lead to a healthy conclusion. Instead of putting energy into the blame game, engage in empathetic, two-way dialogue in which you aim to figure out where the problem or issue stemmed from and what can be done about it.

**4. Get on the balcony.**

Work together to take a bird's-eye view of the conflict. Once you have spent time dialoguing about each of your feelings and each of your contributions to the issue at hand, exchange your focus on "me" for a focus on "we." Brainstorm creative ways to satisfy both of your needs. Don't rush the process, and don't settle for a short-term solution. Reaching a long-term solution that you each can feel good about takes time but is worth it!

**Put it Into Practice:**

*Have fun turning a well-known conflict into a learning conversation. Consider the main conflict of a popular fairytale such as "The Three Little Pigs," "Little Red Riding Hood," or "Cinderella" being retold with the four steps suggested in the learning conversation explained in this section. In what way(s) did the outcome change by using this approach?*

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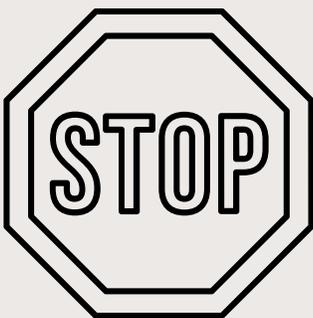
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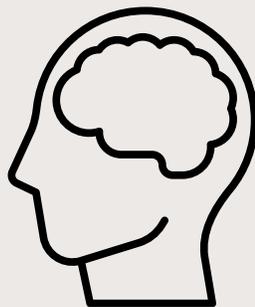
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**Approaching Conflict With the STLC method**

In the interpersonal communications classes I teach to my high school and community college students, I explain the STLC conflict management method. Personally, I find it much easier to remember acronyms; hopefully the four letters of STLC will stick with you as you find yourself faced with a challenging conflict situation.



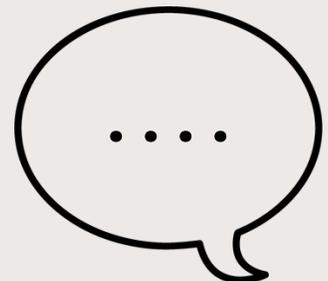
**Stop**



**Think**



**Listen**



**Communicate**

**Stop.** Physically and/or mentally take time to be fully aware of what's going on. If you feel overly tense or emotional, take some deep breaths or a quick walk alone before entering a conflict discussion.

**Think.** Similar to a learning conversation, it is important not to jump to conclusions or place blame. Carefully consider the origin of the conflict and what each person involved is communicating - consider possible causes of each person's feelings and actions, and consider outcomes.

**Listen.** Remember the poor listening practices from part one? Avoid them at all costs! No distorted listening or interruption; the goal here is to suspend one's judgment in order to accurately interpret the other's message.

**Communicate.** In this model, the communication step is deliberately last as it is dependent upon the successful completion of prior steps and is also usually the hardest component of conflict management. It is important at this point to keep in mind the impact of not only your words but also your body language. Avoid using a sarcastic tone, rolling your eyes, or crossing your arms in a closed-off, guarded stance.

When utilizing the STLC method, it is also suggested that you take the time to reflect afterwards. What do you feel now that the conversation is over? Do you feel like you understand the other person's perspective? Do they understand yours? Do you need to plan for further conversation, or has the issue been resolved?

If you consider what went well and what may have gone better, you can plan for improved future conflict conversations!

### Approaching Conflict With the Third Side Model

One of the more inspirational approaches to conflict resolution is William Ury's The Third Side approach. It is especially effective for conflicts within a large group of people because it utilizes the collective power and strength that comes from considering different perspectives and different ways of doing things as described in the African Proverb that says,

**“When spider webs unite, they can halt even a lion.”**

The Third Side is all about going to that balcony mentioned in the discussion of Learning Conversations. When you approach conflicts from this perspective, you enter like a mediator. At the heart of mediation is getting to the root of the story. With this model, you approach the conflict like a mediator seeking a peaceful cooperative negotiation. All parties must be heard from and the full stories of all involved must be uncovered with the goal of reaching a shared perspective. You can have natural sympathies for one side or the other and still choose to take the Third Side which will benefit everybody within the larger community.

Taking the Third Side involves:

- Seeking to understand all sides of a conflict. Use questions like “Why are

you feeling this way?” “What are you hoping for?” “What are your ideas?”

- Encouraging a process of cooperative negotiation using neutral, fair, and unbiased language.
- Supporting a wise solution – one that fairly meets the essential needs of all parties and also of the surrounding community
- Finding a wise solution that meets the needs of all parties and the surrounding community.

The Third Side has been successfully utilized in local, civil, and global conflict as an alternative to hostile or violent solutions. It works when participants honor equal power distribution (no one involved should have more weight or value than anyone else); it works when participants search for common ground; it works when participants find a solution that is right not only for them but for the greater community; it works when all those who are exposed to conflict choose to take the Third Side and honor the whole.

*Extend an invitation to everyone who needs to be involved in the conversation. A request for a cooperative sharing-listening-discussing meeting can be sent via letter, text, phone call, or face-to-face meeting. The process will demand time and cooperation.*

### How to Handle Highly Emotional Conflicts

The next few parts of this section discuss

how to deal with unique conflict situations. We will begin by discussing how to handle highly emotional conflicts. Not only is there a high likelihood you will face several emotionally charged conversations at times in your life, but it is also the type of conversation at which there is more at stake. If you are not especially careful when emotions are heightened, you can permanently damage relationships. First and foremost, it is imperative to remember that everyone's expression of emotions is different. Non-expressive individuals sometimes have difficulty experiencing, identifying, and showing emotions. They might interpret expressive individuals who display much emotion in conflicts as “irrational” or “unreasonable.” Whether one or both persons involved is emotional during the conflict, there must be an attempt to defuse or lighten high emotions and reach a safer, leveler starting point. Let's explore three techniques.

**1. Paraphrasing.** Acknowledge the emotions at play, and try putting into words how the other person is feeling.

- It sounds to me like you are...
- That must be... (be empathetic and consider how you would feel in their shoes)
- That sounds like...

**2. Validating.** Recognize that the other person has a right to be feeling this way and take ownership for your part in the matter.

- I can see you are feeling very...
- I can understand why you feel this way.
- I know my behavior has caused you to feel this way.

- I am sorry my behavior has caused you to feel this way.

Pretend you are involved in one of the following conflict scenarios:

*(#1) Person A is extremely neat: they make their bed every morning and like things in place; Person B is a rather messy roommate whose untidy behaviors have Person A at their wits end.*

*(#2) Person A used their hard-earned money to buy a new pair of shoes; Person B borrowed them without asking and got the shoes very dirty and scuffed up, which infuriated Person A.*

With a partner, play out the scenario with one or both persons using the paraphrasing, validating, and questioning techniques. You can also imagine or write out how the scenario could play out with these techniques.

**3. Questioning.** Before you reach your own conclusions about how the other person is feeling, about the cause of their feelings, or about their needs; consider asking questions. Remember the need for curiosity in a Learning Conversation? It is important to gather as much information as possible in an attempt to find clarity. There are two types of questions to ask:

- **Closed-ended** questions require a specific answer such as yes/no or agree/disagree. Ask this kind of question when you need to check facts.
- **Open-ended** questions require a longer, less prescribed answer. Ask

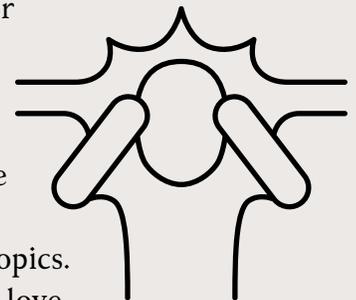
this kind of question when you want to allow the other person free expression, perhaps to better understand their perspective or get clarity on the issue at hand.

## How to Handle Conflicts With Different Personality Types

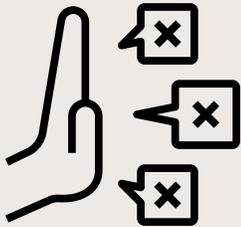
Let's face it: there are people in our lives whose idiosyncrasies can make even light conversations feel like hard work. In an article featured in the December 2023 edition of Reader's Digest titled "How to Get Along with Anyone," writer, author and journalist Rosemary Counter provides tips for dealing with particular personality types. I have taken her advice for conversations with complainers, contrarians, and chatterboxes and added my own suggestions.

**Complainers**, in a nutshell, don't ever stop complaining about how bad they have it or about everything in life that is unfair for them. Counter's suggestions for reducing or preventing conflict in conversation with this type of person include showing empathy and simply listening and allowing them to share what's bothering them. Essentially, if you provide a safe space for them to vent for a while, your kindness may rub off and they will be more receptive to discussing more pleasant and positive topics.

**Contrarians**, in short, love to argue. It seems instinctual for them to disagree with whatever anyone else says. There are a few ways to deal with this

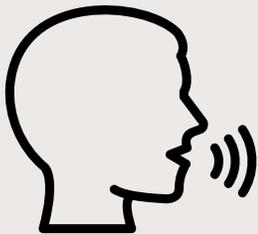


type of person. First, you can agree with them! Okay, maybe not about every ridiculous thing that comes out of their mouth, but it can be helpful to tell them, “I agree with you about this part.” Other options are to use the questioning technique so you can better



understand where their thinking stems, or you can do your best to change the subject. Generally, it is not worth hashing it out with contrarians; however, if it is someone close to you, you might want to calmly tell them how you feel when they disagree with you.

**Chatterboxes** prefer talking to listening, which can lead to frustratingly one-sided conversations. I have, myself, been guilty of playing this type, and I blame family genes! In all seriousness, for some chatterboxes, the habit is not so much about their personality as it is about a deep-seated need to be heard. One suggestion is to listen calmly for a while



and ask questions, then in a straightforward way, tell them, “I would like to tell you/ask you about...” If you are on a time constraint and feel comfortable doing so, you can even tell the other person “Since I need to leave in three minutes, I was hoping to share...”

**Frenemies** are those people in your life who are hot and cold. One minute they act like your closest companion, and the next they treat you like an opponent. If a

frenemy has found their way into your life, you don’t always know if they’re on your side; you just know it hurts when they are not. Often, according to Counter, a frenemy acts confident and competitive when they are actually insecure and distrusting deep down.



If you choose to keep this type of person in your life – perhaps because you do not have a choice – it is best to be open with them. Tell them, using “I statements” instead of judgment or blame, how you feel. For examples: “I do not like it when I’m talked to in this way” or “I value our friendship but don’t always sense you feel the same way.”

### How to Handle Family Conflicts

Successful management of family conflict requires prioritizing the love and care you have for one another. Kindness, compassion, forgiveness and understanding must be priorities in order to avoid unhealthy patterns of handling arguments that cause stress and long-term issues. Adopting any of the following techniques can foster healthy conflict management in your family:

- **Planning regularly scheduled family meetings.** You can take one of two approaches with family meetings. The first option is to pick a repeated time (i.e. every Sunday evening or the first and third Mondays of the month) at which all family members go around and share how they are doing. When family meetings are the norm, sharing becomes

the norm and meetings feel less like a response to dysfunction and more like a healthy routine. The second option is to ask for a family meeting once a conflict has arisen. It is vital to find a time that works for all members. Additional suggestions are to create and share an agenda in advance to eliminate discomfiting surprises, and to clarify agreed-upon rules such as “no raised voices” and “one at a time until all individuals are heard.” Striving for a solution is a good idea, but if it’s taking too long, agree to table the meeting for a short time. Try to finish family meetings on a positive note. Individually or collectively, celebrate what was good and what worked during the time together.

- **Allowing green-light brainstorming**

If your family is faced with a single issue, green-light brainstorming has the potential to evoke a lot of creative ideas. This is a technique I have often used in my classroom in order to give everyone a voice. The approach is simple: in a completely non-judgmental manner, produce as many ideas as possible. One person should write them down on a large sheet of poster board or dry erase board. At this point, family members can say whatever comes to mind and can let one idea trigger another. The only rule is that no one can express, verbally or nonverbally, any objections or insults to what is said until all ideas are exhausted.

- **Create a family contract.** For issues that keep coming back up, a contract can help to minimize conflict. In the *Difficult Conversations* book, Stone and colleagues discuss the fault in thinking, “I’m the

parent; my children should just do what I say.” The problem, they remind us, is that what should happen and what does happen are often two different things. In order for parents to diagnose why they are not getting the desired results from their children, they need to engage in two-way conversation by listening to a child’s true thoughts. The family contract will be an agreed-upon set of steps or rules with clearly laid-out consequences for breaking them based on talking through what everybody wants or thinks should happen. It is signed, dated, and printed if possible, and should be revisited frequently. If your child acts unhappy about this process, assure them that you are teaching them responsibility and fostering their independence!

### Putting a family plan into practice:

*Issues that commonly require a plan include use of technology, first-time driving, dating, curfew, and sharing of household duties. Acknowledge your children’s feelings and concerns, then work together to create a list of rules that includes desired behaviors and non-negotiables. The creation of a contract will eliminate arguments and teach your children accountability.*



## How to Handle Mediated Communication Conflicts

We have witnessed substantial change among society and culture in the past two decades that have influenced the ways individuals communicate. The rapid evolution of computers, the internet, and new media has transformed everyone's interactions in both positive and negative ways. Today, computer-mediated communication includes email, text, social media platforms, online learning, and videoconferencing (e.g. Zoom & Google Meet). It is no wonder, then, that there is a high probability of facing challenging conversations or conflicts in those settings. Conflict management handled for computer-mediated communication requires great care and thoughtfulness. Let's consider tips for three types of digital dialogue:

### 1. Texts and Emails

Since this type of communication lacks nonverbal cues like tone of voice and facial expression, it is more difficult to judge one another's feelings. To minimize conflict, use language that is explicit and specific. Choose your words carefully for words and phrases can have multiple meanings. Don't hesitate to ask for clarification throughout the conversation. Emails and texts are also non-synchronous and require waiting for the response. In the process of waiting, don't allow frustration to cause you to jump to conclusions or respond too quickly. Choose mindfulness, non-reactivity, and non-judgmentalism over worry. Giving the other person the benefit of the doubt

AND having patience with email exchanges will make your communication more effective.



### 2. Cell Phone Calls

Most communication experts encourage picking up the phone rather than sending a text or email when it's not possible to meet in person to handle a conflict. The phone allows for hearing the other person's tone of voice which is beneficial when the conflict involves a sensitive issue. Of course, this can also become problematic when emotions are running high. To help the other person defuse their emotions and be less reactive during the conversation, send an email or text ahead of time describing the conflict you want to address. This allows them time to think through their own feelings and be prepared for the phone conversation. During the conversation, practice empathy. Be clear about your own emotions; and ask about and acknowledge the other person's emotions. Conflicts over the phone benefit from a balanced give and take in which no one is dominating the conversation and interruptions are kept to a minimum.

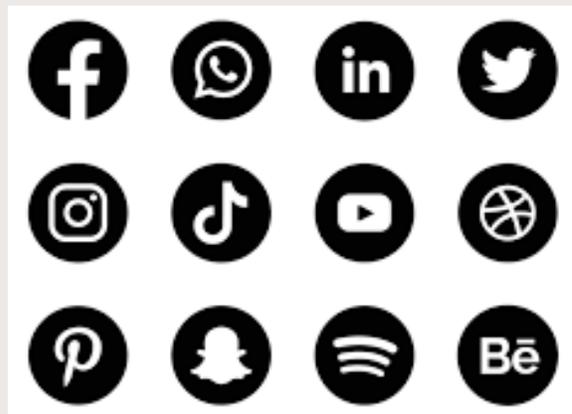


### 3. Social Media

In today's world, many people have several social media accounts. Facebook alone has over 3 billion active users which is more than twice the population of the entire continent of Africa! Although these platforms have the potential to open doors and inspire people to come together, a close examination shows it to be one in which individuals often seem less likely to present their opinions in a balanced open-minded manner and more likely to use offensive language and criticism. No wonder social media is ripe with contention.

In order to reduce and manage conflict while using social media, it is extremely important to put into practice healthy communication practices and conflict resolution skills. Many of the strategies presented earlier can be utilized. For example, the STLC approach in which you stop, think, listen (in this case, read thoroughly), and THEN communicate in a respectful and mindful manner can lead to a more favorable outcome than an impulsive and insulting post. Additionally recalling the Third Side basics, in which you remind yourself that not everything

is black and white, allows for a more empathic social media conversation. Other helpful strategies are asking for clarity, striving to reach common ground with the person at the other end, and NOT ENGAGING in public exchanges that are hurtful or demeaning. If you wish to further a sensitive conversation started on social media, you can request to do so in a more private manner such as Facebook Messenger. Finally, when conversations escalate beyond what is reasonable and safe, protect yourself from harm by reporting a thread or blocking the individual from reaching out to you. Be smart and post smart!



#### Put it into Practice:

*Review your habits with online communications . . .*

*Is your writing clear or can it be easily misinterpreted? Have you been guilty of jumping to conclusions? Replying to messages too quickly? What are 2-3 changes you could put into action for healthier digital dialogues?*

## DISCUSSION OR REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Is conflict always a bad thing?
2. What is your usual way of handling conflict? How has this conflict style been working for you - are you satisfied with the outcomes?
3. Think of a time when a simple disagreement escalated to a conflict. What happened? Why did this escalation occur?
4. What are some of the common blocks that get in the way of effective communication during conflict?
5. What are the possible outcomes when conflicts are handled positively?
6. Why is communication so important in conflict resolution?
7. Think of a recent interpersonal conflict that went badly. How could you have implemented the STLC Model of Conflict to improve what happened during that conflict?

## PRACTICE, ROLE PLAY, OR MORE TO CONSIDER

### 1. **The Orange Negotiation**

Divide the group into two teams; the facilitator of the activity takes the role of the keeper of a rare orange; the last of its kind. Both teams are supposed to buy the fruit and they need to convince the facilitator that they are the team that deserves the fruit. Team A will be informed that the rare orange rind can be used to invent a new element; Team B will be told that the pulp of the orange cures a disease.

Take 5-8 minutes for each team to brainstorm and present why they should get the orange. Then take 5-8 min for the teams to talk together to try and find a satisfactory solution that both agree on

### 2. **Turn a well-known conflict into a learning conversation.**

Have fun retelling the popular fairytale “Little Red Riding Hood” using the four steps suggested in the learning conversation model:

- Each party considers all they’re feeling and is willing to share
- No assumptions are made; each party asks the other for their reasons
- No blaming; a 2-way dialogue is used to determine each party’s part in the problem and what can be done
- Brainstorm creative ways to satisfy both parties’ needs.

In what way did you imagine the outcome(s) changing by using this approach?

*\*See Appendix A as a resource for this exercise*

### 3. **Choose one of the following conflict scenarios to role-play using the paraphrasing, validating, and questioning techniques:**

- a. Person A is extremely neat: they make their bed every morning and like things in place. Person B is a rather messy roommate whose untidy behaviors have Person A at their wits end.
- b. Person A used their hard-earned money to buy a new pair of shoes; Person B borrowed them without asking and got the shoes very dirty and scuffed up, which infuriated Person A.

In a group setting, select a partner and one or both of you apply the techniques for defusing emotion in the conflict as you role play.

As an individual, imagine or write out how the scenario would play out using these techniques.

## APPENDIX A: THE BIG BAD WOLF'S STORY

I'm the wolf. You may have heard people refer to me as "The Big Bad Wolf," which, as you can imagine, isn't a very pleasant nickname to have. It all started one day when I was cleaning up the garbage that some people had left behind – you see, they come to the forest and have a wonderful time and then they just leave a huge mess! The forest is my home and I care about making it nice! Then I heard footsteps so I leapt behind a tree because I know that sometimes people can get scared when they see me, even though really, I'm a nice guy. I saw a girl coming down the trail holding a basket. She looked suspicious to me because she was dressed in a strange red cape and she had her head covered as if she didn't want anyone to recognize her. She started picking flowers right from my own flowerbed and trampling all over the little trees that I had just planted! To make it worse, she ate a chocolate bar and threw the wrapper on the ground! Naturally, I came out and asked her as nicely as I could to stop and be more careful, but she gave me this long sob story about how her grandmother wasn't well and she was going to visit her and wanted to bring her flowers and a basket of goodies, so I let it go.

Well, as it turns out, I remembered that I knew this girl's granny – she's an old friend of mine. I sped over there and talked to her about her granddaughter's behavior, and together we decided that we would teach Little Red Riding Hood a lesson. Granny hid under the bed, and I dressed up in her nightgown.

I was just going to give her a little scare, but as soon as she came into the room she said something very nasty about my big ears. I've always been a bit sensitive about my big ears because the other wolves used to make fun of me when I was a cub, but I tried to make the best of it by telling her that my big ears were better for hearing her with. Then she made a really insulting remark about my bulging eyes. This was harder for me to blow off because she sounded so mean! Still, I made it my policy to turn the other cheek, so I told her my big eyes helped me to see her better. Then, you won't believe it, but she insulted my big teeth, and that really got to me. I've never been very confident about my looks and she was just tearing me apart! I should have had better control, but I leaped from the bed and growled that my teeth would help me to eat her.

Now, come on, I was never going to eat her or do her any harm! I would never! But Little Red Riding Hood started freaking out, screaming and running around the house. I tried to catch her so I could tell her that it was all a joke but the woodsman who lives nearby must have already heard her. All of a sudden, the door came crashing open and there he stood with his ax. I knew that I was in big trouble and I didn't have time to explain the situation to him, so I just flew out the open window and ran home to the forest. I've had to remain in hiding ever since – everyone is out to get me – they think I'm a horrible evil bloodthirsty wolf! There are terrible rumors going around the forest about me. None of my friends will even talk to me anymore. I'm so broken up about it. I heard that poor little Granny has been very disoriented and confused lately, so she can't even corroborate my story. I don't know what to do! My whole life is ruined.

## RESOURCES

Moddes, Wendy. "Which Style Are You? Discovering Your Communication Style quiz." College in the Schools Introduction to Communications, Brainerd High School. Class handout, [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sBnzz\\_j54r6BW8p9xrGggQtD3qxH\\_zwDt/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sBnzz_j54r6BW8p9xrGggQtD3qxH_zwDt/view?usp=sharing).

(I have assigned this self-awareness quiz in my classroom for many years. Your results will indicate whether your conflict management style is passive, aggressive, or assertive—it is a close equivalent to the ABCs of conflict mentioned in part one of this unit: avoiders, battlers, and collaborators.)

Moddes, Wendy. "The 10 Commandments of Conflict Management." College in the Schools Introduction to Communications, Brainerd High School. Class handout, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1s3wxL8KJdbn8wgQt5GHLyIOnuPPnpNxY5fpKZvqTvVM/edit?usp=sharing>.

(This is another handout I have shared with students in my communications classes. It includes a set of guidelines to ensure that difficult conversations are handled with compassion for self and other.)

Ruby, Kathleen. "12 Steps Handout. Planning for a Difficult Conversation." Washington State University. Handout, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1S3lVS6WXf2MfAwO8UjRNodZHqsIlaym8/view?usp=sharing>.

(This step-by-step process for preparing to manage a conflict was modeled after the Difficult Conversations book by Stone and colleagues. It provides a succinct reminder of how to navigate through difficult topics and reach a satisfying outcome.)

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# Christ-Centered Corner

## *Encouragement From a Christian Perspective*

God calls His people to be peacemakers. We are told in Hebrews to “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12:14), and again in Romans to “Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.” (Romans 12:18 NLT) This is not done by avoiding brave conversations but by developing the character and the skills needed to handle conflicts in a manner worthy of the Lord.

Our Heavenly Father has not left us alone in this endeavor but has given us His Spirit. This results in a God-given desire for peace that can motivate us to read and listen to recommended sources (including the Bible) on communication skills for conflict management. We can depend on the Lord to give us opportunities to practice those skills.

In addition, Paul credits Holy Spirit for providing the wisdom and understanding that is needed to discern God’s way in every circumstance of life and bring forth godly results. (Col 1:10) In difficult conversations, we can pray for God to fill us with the knowledge of His will that comes through His Spirit, just as Paul did for the Colossians.

Many of the attitudes that are necessary for healthy conflict management are found in God’s love. This is the love that has “been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit”. (Romans 5:5). Mindfulness of God’s love enables us to exchange “we for me” and seek the solution that satisfies both parties rather than insisting on our own way. It gives us the patience, kindness and self-control to avoid rude language and blaming. God’s love rejoices in truth and positions us to be curious and interested in learning the other person’s perspective rather than seeking to be right and favoring our perspective.

In conflict management, we should not lose sight of the ultimate assignment God has given us - the ministry of reconciliation.(2 Cor 5:18) Every brave conversation we enter into is an opportunity to be Christ’s ambassador. May our behavior and our words always be appealing to the other person, and be used by God to stir a desire in them for a restored relationship with God through Jesus.

