

Reducing Conflict 84 Root of Conflict

By Bob Whipple MBA CPTD



It is important to understand the root of what is causing a conflict. You must get a different view, like doing an “up scope” so submarine officers can see what is happening. In the heat of battle, it is essential to know where the enemy ships are located.

The advantage of a submarine in battle is that you cannot see the vessel with the naked eye. The craft can maneuver in any direction without being detected. The disadvantage is that once you have

been detected electronically you are a sitting duck for an attack.

How to change the view to find the root of conflict

When individuals or groups are in heavy conflict, their focus is on destroying the opponent’s points. It is easy to become myopic and miss the essential nature of what is going on around the conflict. You can get so caught up in the rancor that you forget the bigger picture.

It is helpful to call for a hiatus in the action to take stock of what is going on. Try some of the ideas below next time you are in severe conflict. In this article, I refer to conflict between two people. The ideas will also work for groups that are in conflict.

Review the facts and seek agreement

You often fight with others because there is a misunderstanding of what happened. If you take the time to sit down calmly and analyze what happened, the problem may disappear. View the problem from a different angle and check for areas of agreement. If you and the other person can agree that the problem started last week, it is a good start.

In this early discovery phase, you may run into areas of disagreement. Set these aside and continue brainstorming for ways you can agree. Once you have a big pile of things where you agree, then you can begin to make progress.

Upscope any areas of disagreement

Look for the underlying cause of areas where you disagree. You may uncover some areas of jealousy or some historical things that have colored the relationship. By surfacing these in an up scope, you allow progress toward a resolution. If the process is rocky and you run into repeated rancor, look for a mediator.

Obtain a neutral third party

Both people must agree that the mediator is neutral and be willing to listen to the analysis. If there is a totally closed mind, you will never reach a resolution. Keep in mind that one type of resolution calls for no “winner” or “loser.” You simply agree to disagree on that point and move on. It is not essential to agree on every point for you to have a good relationship with another person.

Document any resolutions to resolve the root of the conflict

If there is a truce and an end to the acrimony, feel good about it. If any changes in perception resulted from the discussions, document them and state the new agreement. Following the steps above can make a significant reduction in the conflicts you experience.

Summary

Conflict between people is a simple fact of life. Everyone does not see the world with the same colored glasses. Follow the steps outlined here to resolve your differences. It can enhance the quality of your life.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals*, *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online*, and *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations.