

## **Generative Conflict Resolution Theory & Process Excerpt**

In generative conflict resolution, we reframe conflict as an opportunity for growth and more authentic connection. We understand conflict as a natural part of being human together on this planet. It's guaranteed to happen, and is nothing to be embarrassed or ashamed of. Conflict in and of itself is neutral. If engaged with emotional safety, deep authenticity, and humility we can all transform in the process of walking through the fire together. We can learn more about each other, including how to engage better in the future. At it's best it can build deeper bonds rather than destroying them.

Below is a basic 7 step process that was originally created for interpersonal conflict inside a small group. We try to distinguish between mere *interpersonal conflict* and *conflict that has become oppression (along with other forms of abuse)*. *We wish to be survivor oriented, and to avoid the victim blaming, and further infliction of trauma so common in situations of oppression and other forms of abuse.* We acknowledge that the distinctions are not always clearly perceptible, and accept this as part of the process and challenge. Some of what we explore includes the differences between discomfort and hurt feelings vs. unsafety and dehumanization, as well as underlying power dynamics that often turn conflict into oppression and other forms of abuse. We value creative, restorative, and transformative processes that honor the humanity and dignity of all parties without creating harmful false equivalencies. We believe that strengthening community conflict resolution skills will decrease levels of emotional and physical violence, oppression, and other forms of abuse.

The following process works best when two people step aside and communicate directly with deep honesty and humanity. Each person needs to recognize the process and agree to go through all the steps, alternating turns and listening actively, without interrupting one another.

### **1. Process Your Own Emotions**

We recommend taking the time and space to simply be with yourself first, and fully allow yourself to feel whatever emotions arise within you, without judging or censoring them. It can be helpful to find a creative outlet—journaling, free writing, visual art, dance, singing. Find a song that speaks to your emotion and sing/dance to that song. We recommend not discussing the situation with other parties prior to discussing it directly with the person involved. **If** you feel you must speak with another person first, ideally it should be someone outside of the situation, who doesn't know the other person. If you do feel the need to share with a mutual contact, ask yourself if you are seeking support with getting clear. resolution, or someone to validate you and possibly be “on your side”. Whatever the case, it's beneficial to be mindful about choosing someone who has emotional maturity, honors confidentiality, and will not escalate the situation. After you've completed the full process, be sure to circle back and offer this person an update about the outcome of the situation, especially if things have been clarified and resolved.

**Self-inquiry** is vital to this step. Not everyone processes things in the same way, in every situation. It is important to ask yourself questions. What are you feeling? Where are those feelings are coming from? When did the feelings begin? When you ask yourself questions and listen internally, you can hear/feel the answers. *Look for the truth underneath the truth.*

How much of what you're feeling is about the other person, and how much of it is about past experiences you may have had (including traumatic experiences)? Distinguish between the impact of another's actions, versus what was already held inside. Remember, it can be *both/and*. It often is. We just want to identify the elements that are “our stuff” so we can better hold ourselves and others accountable for the pieces and parts that actually belong to each of us.

This 1 page excerpt has been condensed for our website. The remaining steps are:

2. Communicate using “I” statements
3. Ask for clarification
4. Take ownership
5. Empathize
6. Plan
7. Follow Up

This process includes parts of MoveToAmend.org's Toolkit and best practices of ‘Non-Violent Communication’. It has been radically modified, amended, and augmented by Chocolate Soul Revival, whose work centers the culturally specific needs of Black women, femmes, and gender-nonconforming people.