

LEVELS OF CONFLICT

(Adapted from Speed Leas, by Jim Mason)

Minnesota Renewal Center
3499 Lexington Ave. N, Suite 100
St. Paul, MN 55126-7058
651-486-4828

LEVEL 1: PROBLEMS TO SOLVE

Assumption: Rational methods and rational solutions will fix the problem
Relationships: Positive, with reduced risk taking
Objective: Solve the problem
Language: Realistic, specific

LEVEL 2: DISAGREEMENTS

Assumption: We can develop serious alienation if this problem is not resolved through compromise
Relationships: Emerging mistrust; calculated behaviors, with not all information shared
Objective: Solve the problem and come out looking good
Language: More vague, more general;
higher emotional content; jokes have hostile edge;
inaccuracies in other's case pointed out to "score points"

LEVEL 3: CONTESTS

Assumption: Resolution is not possible; compromise is not an option
Relationships: Distancing between parties with less communication;
assumptions about opponent's "real" intentions/motives
Objective: Sustain position; win the contest (make opponents lose)
Language: Perceptual distortion; focus on opponents rather than problem (personal attack);
emotion laden; statements turn back on each other;
claims that opponents don't want peaceful resolution

LEVEL 4: FIGHT/FLIGHT

Assumption: Personal misconduct of other party(ies) is primary issue
Relationships: Strong alienation;
little direct communication except for hostile interaction;
emergence of strong leaders who develop (recruit) others to their positions;
avoidance patterns among leaders;
sub-group cohesiveness more important than total group cohesiveness
Objective: Hurt, weaken, punish, humiliate other party(ies) causing withdrawal/retreat;
defeat of others more important than solving problem or good of the whole
Language: Aggressive, hostile, emotion-laden; attacks other's integrity (positions are hypocritical);
non-verbal becomes very important

LEVEL 5: INTRACTABLE SITUATIONS

Assumption: No positive outcome possible; loss of hope
Relationships: Lost sight of, in pursuit of a cause (holy war); couched in terms of good/evil struggle
Objective: Destroy other; withdrawal is no longer an option
Language: Loses touch with reality;
descriptive of an eternal cause, fighting for an unambiguous principle