TOOL · CONFLICT

MOVE THROUGH CONFLICT

Conflict isn't the problem. How we handle it is. This tool walks you through a hard conversation using a simple, repeatable cycle.

THE COMPASSION CYCLE

from Conflict Without Casualties by Nate Regier

01
be open

02
be resourceful

Get curious, check assumptions, and build solutions together.

03
be persistent

Agree on what happens next and follow through.

back to open: "How is it going? What still needs attention?"

> Regier points out that compassion means **to struggle with** someone. Drama is struggling against them. The goal of a hard conversation isn't to win. It's to work through the problem together.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

01 **Page 2, before:** get clear on the facts, your assumptions, and what you want.

02 **Page 3, be open:** listen to the whole story first.

03 **Page 4, be resourceful:** check assumptions and build options together.

04 **Page 5, be persistent:** agree, follow through, and circle back.

The Compassion Cycle is from Nate Regier, Conflict Without Casualties (Berrett-Koehler). Used here as a framework for practice.

BEFORE THE CONVERSATION

PREPARE

Ten minutes of honest preparation keeps you from walking in to win instead of to understand.

WHAT HAPPENED: JUST THE FACTS, WHAT A CAMERA WOULD HAVE SEEN

THE STORY I'M TELLING MYSELF ABOUT IT

WHAT I WANT FOR THE RELATIONSHIP

WHAT I WANT FOR THE OUTCOME

MY PART IN THIS, EVEN IF IT'S SMALL

AM I READY?

- [ ] I'm calm enough to listen, not just to talk.
- [ ] I'm willing to learn I've got part of it wrong.
- [ ] We have a private place and enough time.
- [ ] I'm going to them directly, not around them.

HOW I'LL START

e.g., "I want to talk about what happened Tuesday. Before I share my side, I'd like to hear yours."

STEP 1

BE OPEN

Listen to the entire story. Don't jump in to solve it before you understand the whole situation.

> **"Seek first to understand, then to be understood."**
> Stephen R. Covey, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Habit 5

HOW TO LISTEN

01 **Ask for the whole story.** "Walk me through it from the beginning."
02 **Don't solve it yet.** If you're forming your answer, you've stopped listening.
03 **Reflect it back.** "So what I'm hearing is ... Did I get that right?"
04 **Name what they're feeling.** "It sounds like that was frustrating."
05 **Ask what else.** The most important part often comes last. "What else should I know?"

WATCH FOR Listening only to reload your argument. Interrupting to correct the facts. Saying "yes, but."

WHAT I HEARD fill in during or right after

THEIR STORY, IN THEIR WORDS

WHAT THEY'RE FEELING

WHAT MATTERS MOST TO THEM

STEP 2

BE RESOURCEFUL

Get curious, check your assumptions, and work together on possible solutions.

CHECK YOUR ASSUMPTIONS

	WHAT I ASSUMED	WHAT'S ACTUALLY TRUE
01		
02		
03		

GET CURIOUS

questions that open up options

- "What would a good outcome look like for you?"
- "What do you need from me?"
- "What's one thing we could try this week?"
- "What have you already tried?"
- "What are we not seeing?"
- "What would make this work for both of us?"

BUILD OPTIONS TOGETHER

	OPTION	WHAT IT GIVES YOU	WHAT IT GIVES ME
01			
02			
03			
04			

WATCH FOR Rescuing: handing them your solution, or taking the problem off their plate. Work on it with them, not for them.

STEP 3

BE PERSISTENT

Agree on what needs to happen, then follow through on your commitments. Then circle back.

WHAT WE AGREED

	AGREEMENT	WHO	BY WHEN
01			
02			
03			
04			

HOW WE'LL KNOW IT'S WORKING

FOLLOW-UP CONVERSATION ON

WATCH FOR Letting it slide after a good conversation, or pushing so hard on follow-through that the relationship becomes the casualty.

back to open the cycle starts again at the follow-up

HOW ARE THINGS GOING?

WHAT'S WORKING?

WHAT STILL NEEDS ATTENTION?

- [ ] We kept our commitments, or named honestly where we didn't.
- [ ] The relationship is in a better place than before the conversation.