

CHAPTER 6

ENTER THE RING

It's minus twenty-three degrees across Montana's wind-whipped plains as an arctic front descends. Whiteout conditions prevail, making seeing beyond an arm's reach impossible. Cattle navigate by sensing the storm's direction and running away from it. While their navigation through the storm is less intense, it's prolonged and often has catastrophic results.

In my mid-twenties, I worked on the Blackfeet reservation in northern Montana. I saw cattle that had attempted to escape these vicious winter storms. They had lost ears, hooves, and tails to frostbite. The bison, however, take a different approach. They sense the direction of the storm and charge into it. Unlike cattle, this painful and courageous act values short-term pain for long-term gain. The bison emerge on the other side of the storm with extremities intact.

Productive conflict requires that we charge into the storm. Once inside, our task is to create conditions where it feels safe to speak

directly, even when it involves relational risk. That's not easy. Most of us were never taught how. This chapter will show you what productive conflict looks like as you learn how to apply it. As you practice, you'll build the capacity not only to resolve conflict at its root but also to grow from it.

We face the need for conflict daily, and we have the choice to be the cattle or the bison—to run away or charge into it. If we wish to evolve, we must choose the way of the bison.

TRANSACT OR TRANSFORM? UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR TYPES OF CONFLICT

As we have seen, productive conflict is key. However, not all conflict is created equally. There are four types of conflict: Destructive, Transactional, Collaborative, and Transformative; each requiring increasingly deeper levels of intentionality.

DESTRUCTIVE CONFLICT

Destructive conflict is fear-based, where neither person in the conflict is willing to explore edges beyond what they already know. Motivated by fear, all involved fail to discover new ways of seeing themselves, the other, and the situation. Each person defends their rightness. Engaging in destructive conflict not only doesn't address the issue, but also it often amplifies the disconnect, ultimately harming the relationship further.

TRANSACTIONAL CONFLICT

Transactional conflict results in a superficial resolution. It's like pulling a weed from your patio but leaving the root intact. Think of this as the founder of a business who repeatedly misses leadership team meetings but buys the team lunch to "make up for it." Rather than addressing the deeper issues that caused the conflict by entering into the edges, a transaction has been made that allows all parties to simply move on, ignoring the deeper issue of the leader's absence.

COLLABORATIVE CONFLICT

Collaborative conflict addresses the root of the issue. Both parties engage in the conflict with a curious mindset and a desire to understand the perspectives and motivations of the other. Each person's experience is shared and genuinely listened to. Deeper needs are discovered, and a collaborative plan is created to address them moving forward.

TRANSFORMATIVE CONFLICT

Transformative conflict uses conflict as a vehicle for personal and relational growth and is the only type of conflict that will lead to personal development. It requires the additional step of radical introspection *after* the conflict is resolved. Here, we proactively dig into our own deeper and often subconscious stories and motivations.

In Transformative Conflict, we ask reflective questions such as:

- "Why was that conflict so emotionally charged for me?"
- "Is this type of conflict a pattern that shows up in other areas of my life?"

- “Is there an underlying fear that inspired this conflict?”
- “What is the underlying story or belief I have that keeps provoking this pattern of conflict?”
- “Am I willing to reexamine this belief and reconstruct it so that I may live with greater integrity?”

FOUR TYPES OF CONFLICT



Both destructive and transactional conflict focus on symptoms and limit the potential for resolution and growth, as these approaches avoid addressing the root of the issue. Until edges are explored and the root is addressed, symptoms from the root issue will inevitably return, creating an exhausting hamster wheel of dealing with the same issues into perpetuity. While collaborative conflict comprehensively addresses the issue, thus preventing symptoms from flaring up in the future, it's only transformative conflict that uses conflict as a vehicle for personal growth. It's worth repeating Carl Jung's declaration that "until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life, and you will call it fate."

Pursuing transformative conflict is courageous, as it demands that we challenge our beliefs and the stories we tell ourselves.

Not all conflict can or should be transformative. If a colleague is upset because you failed to deliver on a project deadline but didn't know you were tending to a sick kid, there likely isn't any deeper learning to discover. But many conflicts, when examined, create an opportunity to identify and restructure self-limiting beliefs that may be creating undue stress in your life while harming the relationships you care about most.

FROM CONFLICT TO COHESION IN FIVE STEPS

“A person’s success in life can usually be measured by the number of uncomfortable conversations he or she is willing to have.”

~ TIM FERRISS

You're about to learn a step-by-step approach to prepare for and engage in conflict that will help you identify and solve root issues in the shortest time possible. As you reflect on these conflicts, you'll have the opportunity to think about your thinking, which is where you may see flaws in your current beliefs and have the opportunity to reconstruct them more intentionally. This is where leaders build confidence as they are no longer on autopilot but rather grabbing the yoke and purposefully steering.

The process,⁵⁴ adapted from Marshall Rosenberg's work with nonviolent communication, contains five essential steps to address the root issue of a conflict that values both the task and the relationship. As you practice this, you'll grow more confident and effective at

navigating conflict while strengthening relationships, driving innovation, and achieving greater results.

THE PEACE PROCESS

The five steps are as follows:

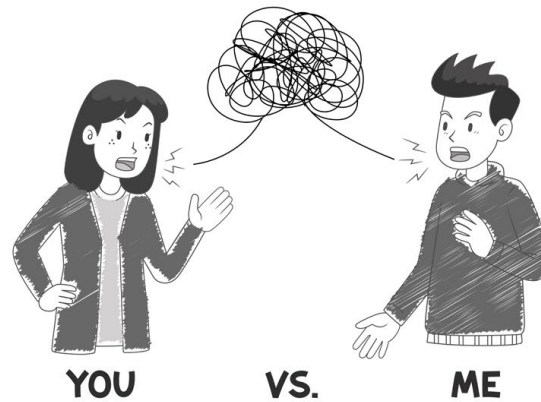
1. Pursue Alignment
2. Extract the Facts
3. Address the Story and Emotions
4. Compassionately Spar
5. Express Needs and Make a Request

STEP 1: PURSUE ALIGNMENT (FEMININE)

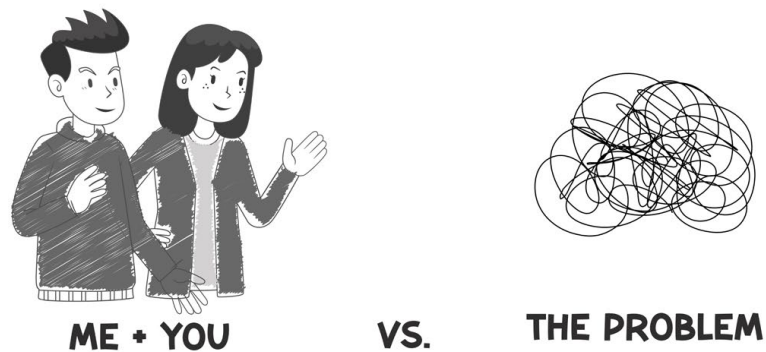
Pursuing alignment is the practice of shifting the issue from your way *or* my way to you and me working together in pursuit of a shared objective. For example, saying something like “I know we both care deeply about getting this product to market on time while also meeting our high-quality standards . . .” disarms the other person by establishing that you are both working toward a shared objective, before offering any constructive feedback. By pursuing alignment, you establish your role as a partner rather than an opponent.

This has a powerful and disarming effect on the brain, as it establishes a connection rather than a threat. Helping someone feel “*I’m in this with you*” causes the brain to release oxytocin, a connecting hormone that disarms the amygdala’s threat response; whereas leading with a critique or judgment causes the brain to release the stress hormone, cortisol, which prepares the body for battle. Pursuing alignment sets the stage for a productive conflict.

UNHEALTHY CONFLICT



HEALTHY CONFLICT



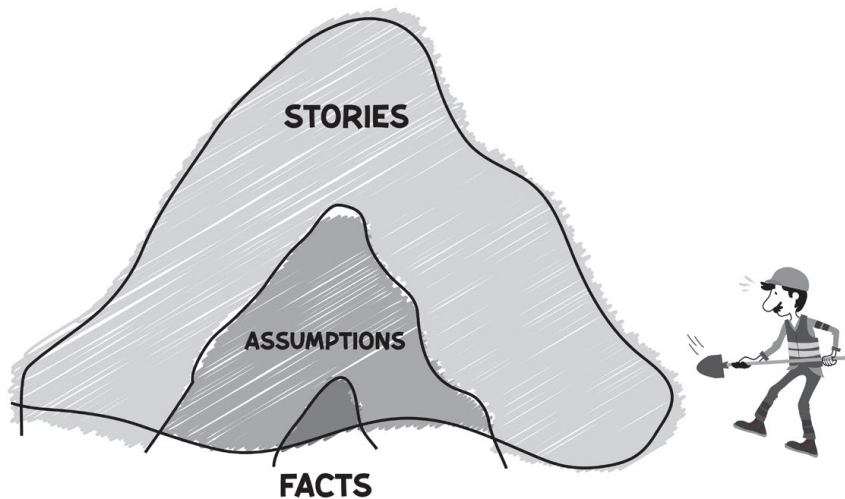
STEP 2: EXTRACT THE FACTS (MASCULINE)

Once you're both aligned around a shared objective, it's time to help the other person orient themselves to your reality. Remember, being disoriented creates uncertainty, which triggers a threat response. Clarify the facts that led up to the issue. These are non-disputable facts that you heard or saw. By sharing these data points, you help the other person understand what happened that caused you to be upset;

such as, “When I said I wanted to lead the Akerman project, I saw you roll your eyes and look at Mason” or “Once I finished sharing the timeline on the initiative, you said, ‘Good luck with that.’”

In this step, it’s important to avoid an analysis or an interpretation of these facts by saying something like “You don’t think I’m capable of leading this project” or “You obviously don’t believe in my ability to execute on this timeline.” While we may have assumptions, sharing them at this point will often derail productive conflict.

HOW TO MAKE A MOUNTAIN OUT OF A MOLEHILL



This step yields two benefits:

1. In sharing the relevant facts that caused you to be upset, you’re providing the context that helps orient the other person within a shared experience.
2. As you’re sharing these facts, you invoke *Ma*, which implicitly slows down the conflict, giving the other person processing time to orient to your reality. Remember, we’re

trying to expand the space between stimulus and response for the other person.

Extracting the facts sets the context for the next, further disarming step.

STEP 3: ADDRESS THE STORY AND EMOTIONS (FEMININE)

Now that you've shared the facts, it's time to connect the dots and address the story these facts bring up for you. Remember that Anais Nin quote, "We see the world as *we* are, not as it is"? As you share your story, it's essential to understand that it's *your* story through *your* lens, not the reality of what is. It may be spot on, partially accurate, or 100 percent off. None of that matters at this point. What matters is that this story is real for you, and once you share it, the other person knows what happened and *why* what happened upset you.

The story and the emotions are intrinsically intertwined. The story in your mind evokes the emotion. If there is no acknowledgment of your closing a large client, you may feel unappreciated because your story is that others don't value your contributions. As you share your story, it's important to share what emotions are coming up for you. This is hard because it requires you to radically accept and share your feelings. Doing this can leave you feeling exposed, but it is one of the most disarming and empathy-building techniques amid conflict. Most of us never learned how to do this, and we—men especially—aren't great at it.

The story you've created triggers an emotional response. If you didn't have an emotional response to the story, there wouldn't be

an issue. Many leaders repress their emotions, perceiving them as unproductive. This has the opposite effect, as it's often perceived as disorienting and inauthentic. Your team needs to hear the context of your story and the emotions surrounding it to feel connection and trust.

Being in touch with the core emotion is critical for productive conflict. For example, while it may be easy to say that you feel angry, that will not be as helpful for the other person to understand your emotional state as much as telling them that you feel embarrassed, disrespected, or unappreciated. This requires emotional fluency, which is the ability to effectively define the nuanced emotions that result from your story. You must dig under the broad emotions and get down to the emotional bedrock to effectively convey to both you and the other what's really going on.

Let's slow things down here and return to what's happening in the brain. At this stage, the amygdala's protective mechanisms trigger an internal dialogue to keep you safe.

"It's not a big deal—don't turn this into a thing."

"Don't be so vulnerable."

"You're the CEO of the company. Don't let them know you're feeling insecure."

This inner critic encourages you to avoid edges, portray confidence, and endure long-term pain for the benefit of short-term protection. This cognitive dissonance plays a tug-of-war within you, causing that feeling of standing on the ledge.

Sharing your emotions fosters safety for the others involved because you let yourself be seen in a vulnerable way. Vulnerability begets vulnerability. Being honest with what you're feeling is crucial.

Amid conflict, you may not be proud of the emotions that are present. You may wish they were different, but your ability to maintain an honest relationship with your truth will be critical in determining if the conflict will be destructive or productive.

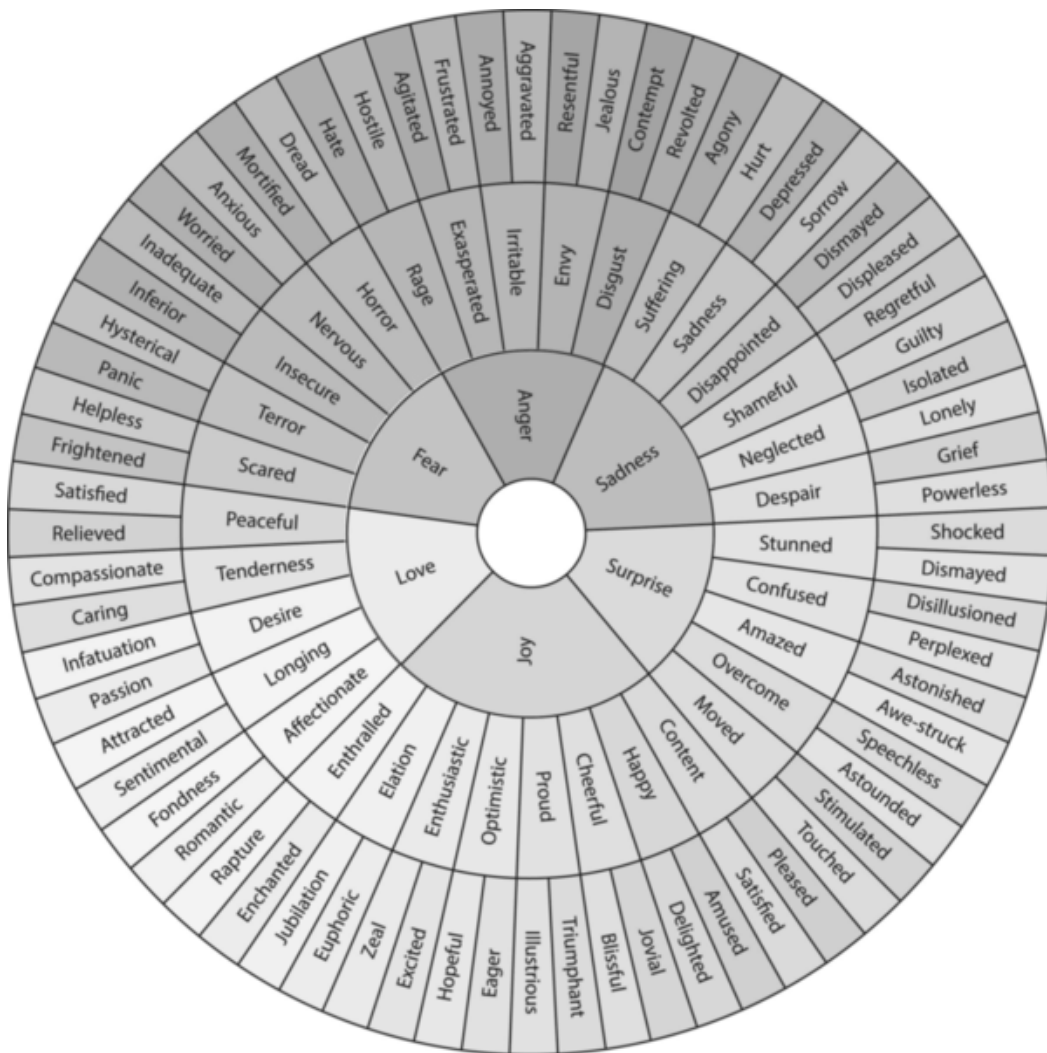
Here's how you share your emotions. It's both simple and challenging. Say "I feel" or "I am" [emotion]. It's uncanny how many times in the conflicts I facilitate, I ask someone to say "I feel X emotion," and they don't do it. What is usually said is "I feel like" When we say "I feel like," we immediately follow that with an analysis of the situation, which is not an emotion. Take the statement "I feel like nothing I do is good enough." By adding the word "*like*," we subtly yet effectively keep the focus on the shortcomings of the other by implying that they are not valuing us as they should. The real and often scary work comes when we can name and own the core emotion: "I feel inadequate."

Ouch. That's so hard. But once that truth is on the table, it's incredible how disarming and inviting that declaration is for the other. Sigmund Freud said, "Out of your vulnerabilities will come your strength."⁵⁵ Imagine a colleague sharing with you that they feel inadequate. Even if you thought they were underperforming, you'd likely feel more supportive of them and compassionate toward where they were coming from. Research has shown that labeling or naming our emotions decreases our brain's emotional response.⁵⁶ By naming it, we no longer need mental gymnastics to protect or hide our truth. Once we name it, the emotional charge we feel lessens. Our story now aligns with our reality. This is both scary and empowering. Your ability to work with your head begins with listening to your heart.

Recall a recent conflict that elicited emotions for you.

- What happened?
- What was your story?
- What emotions came up for you?

Below is a wheel of emotions that illustrates six primary emotions with more nuanced emotions within each category.



Now, let's try that again. Look at the emotional wheel and see if you can identify an emotion that more accurately describes how you felt.

STEP 4: COMPASSIONATELY SPAR (MASCULINE + FEMININE)

Now your cards are on the table. You've shared what happened, the story you created, and your feelings surrounding it. This step is where your story meets the reality of another. It requires the integration of the healthy masculine trait of taking courageous action with the healthy feminine trait of caring for the relationship. The objective here is learning and discovery. You're actively looking for motivations, differences in perspective, and validity in the perspectives of others.

When sparring, you may also discover personal feelings and motivations you weren't previously conscious of. Can you recall an instance when you were arguing with someone, and you had an insight into why this was so challenging to you, only once you were talking it through? "You know, in saying this out loud, I'm realizing that it's not that people keep coming late to the product meeting that's upsetting me, but it's really my ambivalence around the value of this meeting that I initiated."

Once in the ring, go slow and explore the edges. Be transparent about what's coming up for you and curious about the other's experience. As an example, you could say, "I'm sensing that while you're telling me you're on board with this plan, your body language is telling me you might not be. Am I reading that correctly?"

By proactively seeking dissent, you give the other person permission to share what's real and often difficult.

If the tension heightens, return to step one and reorient the sparring around the aligned objective you're both pursuing.

CONFUSION AND CURIOSITY ARE YOUR FRIENDS

Being confused is okay. In fact, it means you're exploring an edge. It's likely that, after you share the facts, story, and emotions associated with your experience, you'll be met with the other's reality, which may be quite different. Confusion is an essential, yet uncomfortable, part of productive conflict. Navigating confusion is ultimately how we make meaning. It's where we discover things within and beyond ourselves that we didn't know prior. Your ability to stay curious amid the confusion will create the space for understanding, connection, and resolution.

It's okay if you don't immediately see eye to eye. Stay in the ring. The temptation to attack or tap out is real, but the gold is only discovered when you spend time sifting out the sand. Focus on your feelings and your responses rather than reacting to theirs.

While in conflict, we often default to making statements; yet, asking questions is a disarming and effective tool to foster productive conflict. A question like "I'd really like to understand what you're saying, but I'm not there yet. Could you say a bit more about . . ." invites curiosity and creates space for the other person to feel heard.

We like to think we know the truth about ourselves and a situation, but approaching a conflict with a knowing mindset will only create black and white when the reality is often gray. Our job is to be

archaeologists, collectively digging and dusting to discover the truth. Everyone's reality amid conflict is like a puzzle piece that, only when candidly voiced, will create a shared picture of the reality.



By approaching this part of the conflict journey from a place of curiosity rather than conviction, we not only lay the groundwork for a path forward where everyone feels heard and understood, but we often have a more comprehensive understanding of the reality.

STEP 5: EXPRESS NEEDS AND MAKE A REQUEST (MASCULINE)

Once you've both shared your experiences, it's time to take action to resolve the issue by sharing the need you have that isn't being met, and make a request that, if satisfied, would address your need moving forward.

NEEDS

This conflict transpired in the first place because you had a need that wasn't met. Needs are fundamental human conditions that we all have: a need to feel respected, to feel connected, to feel safe, etc. Once we identify and articulate the need or needs that aren't being met, it's our responsibility to make a request that, if met, would address our needs.

NEEDS AND REQUESTS

- **Need:** Respect
- **Request:** "Would you be willing to invite me to any meetings where key decisions are made in the future?"
- **Need:** Connection
- **Request:** "Could we start our meetings with a brief check-in before we jump into the project status?"
- **Need:** Safety
- **Request:** "In the future, would you be willing to give me constructive feedback in private rather than in front of the team?"

The other person can either accept, refuse, or modify the proposed request. From my experience in facilitating hundreds of conflicts, most of the time, if the request is reasonable, it will be accepted. Sometimes, the other person isn't willing or able to meet the request, but they have an alternative idea that will work for them. If that idea genuinely meets your needs, great. If it doesn't, stay in the ring. It's your need, not your request, that needs to be met.

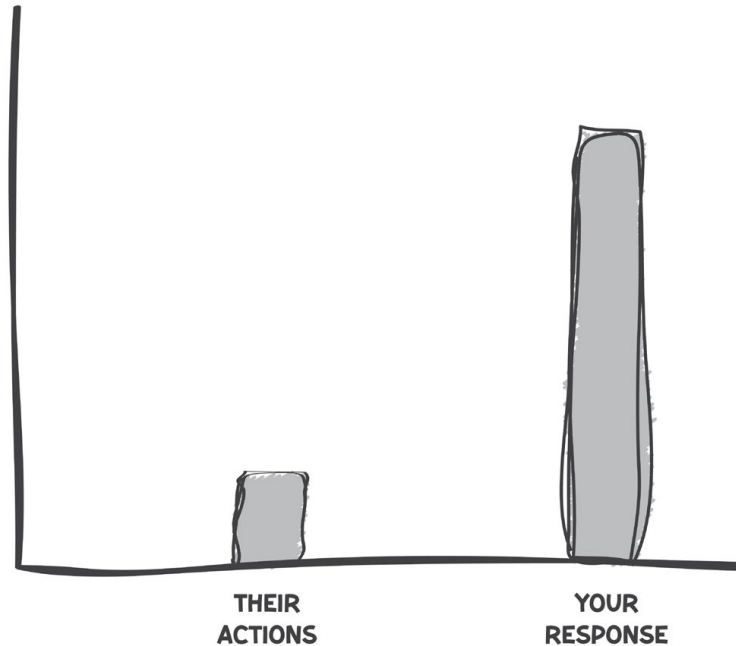
Occasionally, this exercise reveals that the other person isn't willing or able to meet your needs. You always have three choices: live with it, end it, or change it. If you can't change it, you have a decision to make. You can either accept that your needs will not be met or remove yourself from the relationship. It's not the ideal outcome, but I promise you, you'd rather know that they can't meet your needs than go on hoping something will change.

THE PEACE PROCESS IN ACTION

The PEACE Process enables you to navigate conflict with intention and integrity. Doing so increases the likelihood of a productive outcome by shifting the focus from conflict in terms of a "me vs. you" dynamic to an "us vs. the issue" dynamic. When we can do this, our mindset regarding conflict shifts from conflict as something to avoid to something that will foster productivity, growth, and connection.

What separates this process of conflict from many conflicts you've likely experienced is that you are taking responsibility for your experience; literally, your *ability to respond* to your thoughts, feelings, and needs, rather than react. While you don't have control over how the other person will respond, by taking responsibility for your experience, rather than running an analysis on the other person, you minimize the chances of them reacting rather than responding.

HOW MUCH CONTROL
YOU HAVE



The PEACE Process removes the judgment that often derails conflict. These are *the* facts, this is *your* story, these are *your* emotions. This is what *you* need. Taking responsibility for the conflict makes it much easier (albeit not easy) for the other person to join you in the ring in a way that leads to a productive outcome. By owning your experience without making assumptions about the other, you minimize the chance of the amygdala stepping in and running the show (because we all know how that goes).

Let's play this out.

Sabita and Kim are on the events team of a biotech company. Kim is the Head of Events, and Sabita oversees food services. One day, the team had three events running concurrently; more than they'd ever had before. Kim stepped in to take some food that had just arrived for

one of the meetings. Sabita saw Kim and several other team members dropping off the aluminum lunch trays and immediately felt defensive. “What are you doing?” she asked sharply. “I’ve got this.”

This was one of several examples of Kim stepping in to pick up the slack, which, over time, created a rift between Sabita and Kim. The team invited me to lead a team health workshop, during which this example came up. I taught them the PEACE Process, and we ran through it one step at a time.

I asked them to identify a goal they could both align around. [*Pursue Alignment*]

“We both want the events to go smoothly,” Kim replied, and Sabita nodded in agreement.

I asked Sabita to share the specific things that happened that felt challenging. [*Extract the Facts*]

“Sure,” she began timidly. “Well, I sent out the event schedule in the morning with the tasks and timing for my team, and Kim stepped in without me asking her and started taking on some of the tasks.”

“Thanks, Sabita,” I responded. “Anything else?”

“Well, at the event the week before, she asked me for the event program right before the event, which made me anxious, because, by then, it was too late to make any changes.”

“I know it’s natural to explain *why* this is upsetting for you, Sabita,” I offered, “but right now, I’m just curious about what happened. I’m hearing that Kim stepped in, without you asking her, to handle some of the food services, and asked you for the program right before last week’s event. Is there anything else?”

“No.”

“Okay, thanks,” I acknowledged. “Kim, do you recall these two occurrences?”

“Yes,” she said, “But—”

I interrupted, “If you’re okay with it, Kim, I’m just checking to see if you agree with these facts. I’m guessing there’s other information relevant to your experience, but would you be okay if we stay with Sabita’s experience for now?”

“Sure,” she said.

“Sabita, what is the story that these two instances created in your mind?” [*Address the Story and Emotions*]

She sat quietly for a few seconds and responded. “I feel like Kim doesn’t trust that I can do my job and needs to micromanage me to make sure I don’t screw up.”

“What emotions does this bring up for you?” I asked.

She shrugged her shoulders, held her palms to the sky, and said, “It makes me wonder why she doesn’t trust me.”

“That’s not an emotion,” I clarified. “Can you share what emotion—frustrated, confused, embarrassed—comes up for you when you’re not feeling trusted?”

She shrugged and took a deep breath. “It makes me feel anxious.”

“Great,” I affirmed. “What’s creating the anxiety?”

“I question myself and wonder if I’m not doing a good enough job.”

“I think that’s it, Sabita,” I said. “When Kim steps in, you question your ability to do your job. You feel anxiety and self-doubt. Is that right?”

“Yes.”

“Okay. Kim, I know you have your take on the situation, but would you be willing to share with Sabita what you’re hearing her say?” I asked.

A key point here: inviting reflective listening helps ensure what’s being heard is actually what’s being said. It also effectively slows down the conflict.

Kim responded, “That when I double-check her work or step in to help, it says to her that she’s not cutting it on her own. Or she wonders if she’s not doing a good enough job.”

I looked at Sabita. She nodded.

“Okay,” I continued. “Kim, can you see how Sabita could draw this conclusion? I’m not asking if you think it’s true. I’m just asking if it’s understandable.”

“Of course,” Kim said.

“Okay. Kim,” I said, “I’m sure you’ve got a story of your own. I’d love to hear it.” [*Compassionately Spar*]

“This is really helpful for me to hear,” Kim said as she looked at Sabita. “I genuinely thought I was helping and didn’t realize that you were interpreting my help as questioning your ability, but now that I hear you saying this, I see how you drew that conclusion.”

“How are you feeling?” I asked Sabita.

“Better,” she admitted, raising her eyebrows and tilting her head. “Maybe a little embarrassed that I jumped to that conclusion.” The corners of her mouth pinched into a smile.

I asked Sabita what her unmet need was and if she could make a request of Kim that would meet her need moving forward. [*Express Needs and Make a Request*]

“Yeah, I just need to know I’m trusted to do my job,” she said, as she looked at Kim. “My request is that if you ever want to step in, just ask if I’d be open to help. I think that would put my anxiety at bay.”

“Would you be open to that, Kim?” I asked.

“Yes,” she said.

There’s a felt sense of relief—like removing a splinter—that occurs when conflict is navigated productively. I find that when people have the courage to be genuinely seen amid conflict and ask for what they need, a courageous presence fills the room. The tightness releases as the people in the conflict feel heard, connected, and cared for.

While some conflicts will undoubtedly be more complex than this one, with practice, you’ll see that conflict is vastly more productive and efficient when you stick to these steps. Most conflicts derail when we assume that our story is *the* story and analyze the other’s motivation accordingly. Imagine if Sabita began the conflict by saying, “You need to stay in your lane. How do you expect us to do our jobs with you consistently hovering over us?” While that may have been what Sabita wanted to say, it likely would have required more time and energy to resolve if a resolution had been achieved at all. When conflict is engaged poorly, the rift between those in conflict often increases, which is why most of us avoid it altogether.

The process shapes the experience. Over time, you’ll realize that the process that guides the conflict is often more important than the content.

CONFLICT REMIX

While the PEACE Process helps navigate high-emotion conflict, not all conflict requires such a disciplined approach. For example, when emotions aren't heightened, it's sufficient to extract the facts, share your emotions, and make a request. For instance, the Head of Development for one of my non-profit clients felt frustrated every time the marketing team needed stories for social media posts, as these requests were often labeled "URGENT."

I asked the Head of Development if she had a request that would solve the problem.

"Yes," she said. "Could we go over all marketing needs for the week in our weekly team meeting?"

The Head of Marketing said, "Sure." Easy peasy. When the stakes are lower, a simplified process of sharing facts, emotions, and a request is sufficient.

- **Facts:** What's happening? URGENT requests from the marketing team.
- **Emotions:** How does that make you feel? Frustrated.
- **Request:** How can you have your needs met? Share marketing needs in the weekly meeting.

Practice the remix: **FER**—Facts, Emotions, Requests.

In this situation, starting with a shared purpose, sharing a story about the situation, and sparring are overkill. When the stakes are low, keep it simple.

However, you may begin with what you *think* is a simple conflict and find yourself in the ring. If so, take a breath and remember **EVR**—Echo, Validate, Request.

- **Echo:** Reflect what you hear the other person saying to show them you're getting it.
- **Validate:** Acknowledge their emotions to demonstrate you understand how they're feeling.
- **Request:** Share what you need. If a minor conflict is escalating, it's likely that both of you have unmet needs. Work together to identify and address them.

If you want to minimize your time in conflict with more significant results, practice these two *FER EVR*.

CONFLICT POSTMORTEM

Since most of our brain's resources amid conflict go into navigating it, it can be valuable to take time following the conflict, when emotions have subsided, to conduct a conflict postmortem. Remember, amid perceived threats, our brain conserves energy by shifting to the automatic pilot, which defaults to biases and protection. Reflecting on the conflict often reveals a deeper, hidden motivation that guided our actions.

CONFLICT POSTMORTEM QUESTIONS:

- What went well?
- What didn't go well and why?
- If I could do it again, what would I have done differently?

- Why did I do or say the thing I did?
- Was there a story I was trying to preserve?
- What am I learning about myself?
- What are one or two principles that I could apply next time?

You may upset someone by inviting them into the ring. But you didn't do it to be liked; you did it because you cared about them and the task at hand more than keeping the peace. John F. Kennedy said, "There are costs and risks to a program of action, but they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction."⁵⁷ Great leaders are committed to what's right, not what's easy. Comfortable inaction is easy. Productive conflict, like anything worthwhile, takes time, commitment, and discipline. It's a practice. You'll be sore after your conflict workouts. You may even get hurt. But you'll heal. And like the Japanese art of Kintsugi, the relationship will be stronger and more beautiful on the other side.

This journey can be messy and unpredictable, which is, of course, why we avoid it. But now you have a playbook. When you find yourself overwhelmed amid conflict, you now have techniques to regroup. You know how to navigate when you receive an invitation to the ring. You have a framework to reduce collateral damage and work toward shared goals. You may not yet be confident, but I assure you that with practice and continued reflection, you will grow increasingly capable of having productive conflict.

Accepting the call to enter the storm like a bison yields great rewards. Your confidence will grow. You'll tolerate less. Your

relationships will deepen. And you'll normalize the discomfort of conflict for others.

I hope the next time you see an opportunity to enter the ring, you tap your gloves and duck through the ropes. If you can stay in the ring when the temptation to tap out feels intense, it will teach you and your team a great deal. Remember, conflict results when there's relational misalignment. Use it to grow your team's cohesion and your self-awareness. The next chapter will show you how you can use the raw materials from conflict to help you evolve your mental model as a leader.