

Pollack, Jeremy

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## Loc 91 | Highlight

fundamental yet challenging truth of conflict and peace psychology: Two people can have completely different understandings of the same event.

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## Loc 93 | Highlight

Conflict is a natural part of social life. In fact, it's one of the key drivers of innovation, deeper relationships, and personal growth.

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## Loc 97 | Highlight

all types of conflicts can follow a creative or destructive path

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## Page 3 | Highlight

Therefore, a peaceful relationship is one that satisfies our innate desire for trust. Think of it this way: When you trust someone deeply, you naturally like and appreciate them and want to be around them. When you do not trust someone, however, you likely feel threatened and want to avoid them and may be forced to defend yourself against them. Simply put, with trust comes peace, and with distrust comes avoidance and/or conflict. In this context, trust implies our core needs are supported; distrust implies our core needs are threatened. As such, like many scholars in the field of conflict resolution, I think of conflict within this framework: Conflict may be defined as the existence or perception of an impediment to one's core needs, values, or goals. Interpersonal conflict specifically refers to when other humans are perceived to impede or threaten one's needs or goals from being met.

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## Page 4 | Highlight

interpersonal conflict stems from a real or perceived threat to one's core needs,

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all humans possess six fundamental psychological needs: identity, safety, care, autonomy, growth,

and stimulation.

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do. When individuals have a shaky sense of identity, they may feel lost, confused, insecure, and/or hopeless.

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Confident people trust themselves enough to handle new information and changes to their external environment, including how they might fit into it.

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psychological safety? This type of safety consists of two components: (1) the expectation of future physical safety and (2) the sense that one is safe to be and express oneself authentically.

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When people do not feel psychologically safe, they will likely feel anxious, insecure, and defensive. When they do feel safe, they will feel confident, hopeful, free, and at ease.

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People who feel cared for by others generally feel valuable, confident, and secure. Those who do not feel cared for or like they belong will often feel hopeless, lost, and insecure.

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Autonomy is the power to choose how, where, and with whom we live. This need often manifests as a desire for control, which every person experiences to some degree.

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Essentially, growth is a person's need to progress in life, such as by setting goals and

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acknowledging their achievements.

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The brain can't always distinguish between an actual threat and a perceived threat. It responds to psychological threats, which are common in interpersonal conflict, in almost the same way it does to physical threats.

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Try repeating this useful mantra to disarm your nervous system: "I am safe. No one is actually threatening me."

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**Page 8 | Highlight**

any process through which people build trust that their needs will not be impeded or threatened by the other person.

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**Page 8 | Highlight**

two essential questions when it comes to resolving conflict:

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**Page 8 | Highlight**

How do we build trust between the individuals?

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How can we creatively satisfy the needs of everyone involved?

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**Page 9 | Highlight**

Conflict resolution is a process in which the goal is to resolve the conflict, thereby reestablishing trust between parties so they can rebuild their relationship and put that particular conflict behind them.

**Page 9 | Highlight**

Conflict management involves the establishment of processes and systems that are designed to minimize the negative effects of conflict and to support the safety and autonomy of the parties involved, despite the persistence of their conflict. Conflict resolution can happen between people who care about their relationship,

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**Page 9 | Highlight**

Conflict management is more appropriate when people need each other to achieve their individual goals and/or cannot easily separate.

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**Page 10 | Highlight**

we can choose to be creative or destructive with the energy produced by conflict.

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**Page 10 | Highlight**

Conflict has been the catalyst for almost all positive change in society because every failure or mistake is an opportunity for learning, innovation, and growth.

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**Page 14 | Highlight**

Any good conflict resolution strategy begins with strong communication.

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**Page 15 | Highlight**

Remember that conflict resolution is all about establishing or rebuilding trust between people.

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**Page 15 | Highlight**

The less we interact with individuals, the more our minds fill in the gaps with whatever minimal information we have about that person,

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**Page 15 | Highlight**

we must communicate with individuals as often and as authentically as possible, while doing our

best to suspend our assumptions. We begin to trust an individual when we feel they recognize and respect our values, beliefs, and needs. When the opposite occurs, conflict is sure to follow, inevitably ending in avoidance or defense.

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**Page 15 | Highlight**

learning to communicate in ways that clearly indicate respect, honor diversity and uniqueness, identify shared goals and values, and dispel misconceptions, misinterpretations, and perceived threats.

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Reflective listening is a two-part skill that involves both active listening and reflective acknowledgment of what the other person is communicating.

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**Page 16 | Highlight**

Similar to reflecting, paraphrasing is a way of summarizing what you heard.

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**Page 17 | Highlight**

Sometimes, people just want to feel heard.

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**Page 17 | Highlight**

When the individual is done speaking and does not prompt you to respond, you might just say something along the lines of “Thank you. Understood.”

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**Page 17 | Highlight**

you sense you are walking on eggshells with someone, the best option is to let them speak. Not much you can say in that moment will help the situation anyway.

**Page 17 | Highlight**

“I” statements, also called “I” messages, are ways of communicating how one feels or what one believes without making an accusation or judgment about someone else.

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**Page 17 | Highlight**

This skill is essential when you are confronting someone about a problem you are experiencing with them. Try writing out your “I” statement ahead of time so you’re prepared to communicate the message effectively and without accusations or judgments.

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**Page 19 | Highlight**

93 percent body language and tone

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7 percent content

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You want to appear calm and confident (even if you don’t feel it internally).

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**Page 19 | Highlight**

keeping your hands open and in front of you,

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**Page 20 | Highlight**

If we are too loud or intense, we will come across as aggressive, which is likely to trigger the other person’s defenses. If we are too quiet or robotic, we are likely to indicate indifference or inattention, which can incite intensity or disinterest.

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**Page 20 | Highlight**

calm, compassionate, and confident.

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**Page 21 | Highlight**

Asking open-ended questions is important for allowing the other person to arrive at their own conclusions.

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“How do you feel about that?”

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**Page 25 | Highlight**

proactively remove yourself as a threat to others’ needs and to mitigate real or perceived threats to your own needs before a situation devolves into conflict.

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**Page 28 | Highlight**

Set aside time.

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a weekly family check-in

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**Page 28 | Highlight**

regular one-on-one meeting

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Establish a “conversation protocol.”

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**Page 28 | Highlight**

only during designated times.

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**Page 28 | Highlight**

when challenges should be discussed.

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| a shared language

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**Page 29 | Highlight**

| Because there is so much room for misinterpretation of tone, having challenging discussions via email or text can often lead to further conflict and challenges.

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**Page 31 | Highlight**

| No matter what someone does, if you resent them, it will be nearly impossible to give them credit for anything. Your mind will naturally seek out evidence for the belief that they are somehow wrong and discount evidence to the contrary. Assuming you have to talk to this person, or even collaborate with them, such resentment is almost certain to end in conflict.

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**Page 33 | Highlight**

| separate the behavior you witnessed from the meanings and judgments you placed on it (see

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**Page 33 | Highlight**

| Letter from you.

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**Page 35 | Highlight**

| Take responsibility for any part of the issue you can own.

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**Page 35 | Highlight**

| Response from them.

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**Page 35 | Highlight**

| Response from you.

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**Page 35 | Highlight**

willingness to move forward peacefully.

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imagined friendly contact with a perceived foe can activate the same brain areas as actual contact, which can lead to feelings of reconciliation.

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**Page 35 | Highlight**

Ultimately, holding on to resentment will only hurt you:

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**Page 35 | Highlight**

maintaining a negative dynamic with another person can take a psychological toll.

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**Page 37 | Highlight**

inability to set clear expectations with the people around him is creating all kinds of issues in his life.

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**Page 37 | Highlight**

If we do not set clear expectations for others and clearly understand their expectations of us, we are bound to come into conflict with them.

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**Page 37 | Highlight**

clear relationship agreements,

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**Page 39 | Highlight**

What is the relationship's value? Every relationship contains a cost-benefit equation, or a balance between the value of that relationship to you and the effort required by you to manage the relationship.

**Page 39 | Highlight**

Am I getting enough out of it for what I have to put in? Do I need or want this person in my life?

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**Page 39 | Highlight**

Are you willing to let go of your original expectations?

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**Page 39 | Highlight**

How capable is the relationship of evolving?

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**Page 44 | Highlight**

Stop assuming.

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**Page 44 | Highlight**

seems to be aggressive or avoidant because of their style, you'd be far less likely to feel defensive.

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**Page 44 | Highlight**

Seek clarification.

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**Page 44 | Highlight**

“Penelope, when you keep asking me questions before I can answer, I assume you want to intimidate me. Is that your intention?”

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**Page 44 | Highlight**

Honor their intention.

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**Page 45 | Highlight**

Remind yourself of your (mis)perceptions.

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Text and email are potent setups for communication-style conflicts. Some people use exclamation points and emojis to brighten the tone of their messages.

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**Page 49 | Highlight**

In general, when it comes to communication, if we do not respect someone's unique sociocultural background, we may intentionally or unintentionally be discounting or threatening that person's core need for identity.

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Educate yourself. Find opportunities in or near your community to expand your cultural horizons.

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**Page 50 | Highlight**

"Thank you for telling me that. I'd like to take some time to think about it all."

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**Page 51 | Highlight**

Let go of your desire to be right.

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**Page 51 | Highlight**

Aim for mutual understanding rather than persuasion.

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**Page 51 | Highlight**

no one cares how much you know until they know how much you care. Empathize on an individual basis.

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**Page 52 | Highlight**

Remember what you have in common.

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**Page 52 | Highlight**

Safety forums.

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**Page 52 | Highlight**

Fun activities with common goals.

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**Page 52 | Highlight**

Intercultural or diversity programs.

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**Page 53 | Highlight**

Diversity, equity, and inclusion training.

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**Page 55 | Highlight**

One of the most basic and important psychological needs is a stable sense of identity. When we feel our identities are not recognized or respected, this will quickly lead to defensiveness and conflict.

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**Page 57 | Highlight**

Not hearing people out or rejecting their ideas quickly will lead people to feel defensive, defeated, and demotivated to engage.

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**Page 58 | Highlight**

Give the person time and space to be heard.

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**Page 58 | Highlight**

(Listening also ensures you are clear on what you heard.)

**Page 58 | Highlight**

Repeat what you heard.

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**Page 58 | Highlight**

Reflect value and consider their idea.

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**Page 59 | Highlight**

Present challenges and ask for solutions.

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**Page 59 | Highlight**

morning.” Explicitly taking the time to consider their ideas rather than immediately rejecting or presenting challenges is a clear indication that you respect their input and partnership.

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**Page 61 | Highlight**

Efficiency is not always worth damaging a relationship.

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**Page 64 | Highlight**

Know your triggers.

**Underline:**

Know your triggers.

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**Page 64 | Highlight**

identify triggers as they occur and disarm the fight-or-flight response that typically accompanies them.

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**Page 64 | Highlight**

Scan your life for triggering events,

**Page 64 | Highlight**

write out how it made you feel and any thoughts (judgments, interpretations, or assumptions) associated with that situation.

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**Page 64 | Highlight**

Next, write out the key words or themes you recognize in each situation.

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**Page 64 | Highlight**

can spot a pattern to the themes or key words across situations.

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**Page 65 | Highlight**

Set a commitment for yourself.

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**Page 65 | Highlight**

Separate behavior from meaning.

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**Page 65 | Highlight**

Now prepare to separate the behavior the person is referring to from the meaning they have placed on it.

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**Page 65 | Highlight**

Recognizing that the story isn't real is a great cognitive technique for keeping calm and preventing the conversation from spiraling into conflict.

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**Page 65 | Highlight**

Take a break.

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**Page 67 | Highlight**

Breathe.

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**Page 67 | Highlight**

2-2-4-2.

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**Page 71 | Highlight**

Since we cannot read people's minds, we often have no idea why others do the things they do. Instead, we surmise the intentions and thoughts of others based on our past experiences and our understanding of why we might do those things, a phenomenon psychologists call theory of mind.

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**Page 72 | Highlight**

important to separate the behaviors that bother us from the meanings and assumptions we place on them

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**Page 72 | Note**

Theory of mind

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**Page 72 | Highlight**

When [insert name of person] [insert specific behavior without judgment], I interpret it to mean [insert intentions and assumptions].

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**Page 72 | Highlight**

[Insert name of person], when you [insert specific behavior without judgment], I interpret it to mean [insert intentions and assumptions]. As a result, I feel [insert feelings]. Do you actually believe [insert intentions and assumptions]?

**Page 73 | Highlight**

Okay, thank you for clarifying that. That makes me feel better. Going forward, would you mind [insert specific behavior]?

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**Page 73 | Highlight**

“Anna, can you tell me what I’m doing specifically that is bothering you?”

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**Page 77 | Highlight**

Sometimes the person who hears about a conflict becomes uncomfortable with the speaker’s pain.

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**Page 77 | Highlight**

jumped straight into a solution;

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**Page 77 | Highlight**

came off as dismissive of Lian’s real feelings and core needs;

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**Page 77 | Highlight**

Ultimately, giving someone support in the right way at the right time is crucial to helping resolve conflict and preventing additional conflict between the supporter and supported.

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**Page 78 | Highlight**

If I had to break down interpersonal conflict resolution into just two parts, I would say there is the caring part and the solving part.

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**Page 78 | Highlight**

In almost every case of interpersonal conflict, people must feel



**Page 78 | Highlight**

Thomas Gordon's "12 Roadblocks to Communication." Many of the following "roadblocks" only become roadblocks if you jump into these actions without first hearing and caring for the individual. In fact, some of these can be quite helpful, but only after the person feels heard, ready to move into solution mode, and open to receiving feedback.

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**Page 78 | Highlight**

Ordering, directing, or commanding. You've got to do something about it!

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**Page 78 | Highlight**

Warning or threatening. If you don't like it, you can leave!

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**Page 78 | Highlight**

Giving advice, making suggestions, or providing solutions. Have you ever considered . . . ?

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**Page 78 | Highlight**

Persuading with logic, lecturing, or arguing. Well, studies show . .

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**Page 78 | Highlight**

Moralizing, preaching, or telling someone what to do. The

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**Page 78 | Highlight**

Disagreeing, judging, criticizing, or blaming. Well, it's your own fault.

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**Page 78 | Highlight**

Agreeing, approving, or praising. You're totally in the right.

**Page 79 | Highlight**

Shaming, ridiculing, or labeling. You should be ashamed of yourself.

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**Page 79 | Highlight**

Interpreting or analyzing. I bet what's really happening is . .

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**Page 79 | Highlight**

Over-questioning or probing. And why do you feel that way?

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**Page 79 | Highlight**

Reassuring, sympathizing, or consoling. I'm sure it'll be fine.

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**Page 79 | Highlight**

Withdrawing, distracting, humoring, or changing the subject. You think you've got it bad! Wait 'til you hear about .

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**Page 79 | Highlight**

**RULE OF THUMB: OFFER SUPPORT, NOT ADVICE** If someone is not explicitly asking for advice, do not give them advice.

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**Page 79 | Highlight**

Support comes in many forms, but it is first and foremost a compassionate ear. It can feel helpless to listen without advising, praising, questioning, or injecting any of the previously mentioned roadblocks. However, allowing yourself to be uncomfortable and sit with the person in their pain for a few moments before jumping into a solution is key to conflict resolution (see Passive Listening).

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**Page 80 | Highlight**

not to label someone's need for care as complaining. Complaining should be clearly identified only

when the venting happens consistently and the individual is never willing to move toward a solution.

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Page 80 | Highlight

During a conflict, remember to consider people's core needs. Everyone needs to feel heard, respected, and cared for before they can begin to problem-solve.

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Page 80 | Highlight

Sometimes just hearing and caring for the other person will resolve the conflict.

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Page 80 | Highlight

You may find some of the roadblocks from this chapter useful once the individual feels cared for and listened to.

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Page 84 | Highlight

DO acknowledge and apologize for your behavior. In other words, when you apologize, you are agreeing that your actions took place.

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Page 84 | Highlight

DON'T agree with the other person's interpretation of what your action implied about your private thoughts or feelings—unless their interpretation is correct. DO apologize as soon as you realize you ought to. DON'T wait to apologize or hope it will simply go away, because conflict tends to fester if not attended to in a timely manner. This may seem obvious, but I can't tell you how many conflicts have persisted because someone couldn't work up the courage to apologize. DO admit it to someone when they're right or you're wrong. If you realize you messed up or that the other person is right, telling them as much really helps lower defenses.

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Page 85 | Highlight

DON'T use an apology as a manipulation tactic. It has to be authentic. DO make your apology about you, not them. DON'T apologize for their feelings or interpretations, such as by saying "I'm

sorry you feel that way” or “I’m sorry you think that.” Apologizing for someone else’s emotions dismisses their feelings and does not acknowledge your behavior. It’s sort of like saying, “What I did was fine. What you’re feeling is not fine, so I feel sorry for you that you feel that way. Too bad.” This will only make the situation worse.

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**Page 85 | Highlight**

Listen calmly. Depending on the situation, this listening can be either reflective (see here) or passive (see here). 2. Acknowledge and apologize for the behavior. 3. Acknowledge the effects your behavior had on the other person and/or the situation. 4. If you made a mistake, admit what you should have done. 5. Acknowledge why you did it the way you did and take responsibility. It’s not their fault. (If you haven’t made a mistake but realize your behavior has caused pain or strife, you can apologize here rather than in step 2.) 6. Make a plan to correct the behavior going forward. You can also ask for their suggestions to adjust the offending behavior, particularly if you aren’t sure what you’ve done wrong.

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**Page 87 | Highlight**

Apologies help satisfy the other person’s core needs for care, identity, safety, and sometimes autonomy.

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**Page 89 | Highlight**

learn to speak up in a calm, respectful manner. That is, they might learn to be assertive.

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**Page 90 | Highlight**

speaking one’s truth and setting boundaries in a calm, respectful way

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**Page 90 | Highlight**

avoidance-aggression spectrum.

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Avoidant.

**Page 90 | Highlight**

Passive. This is a more active form of avoidance.

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**Page 90 | Highlight**

simply go along with it, often at the expense of their own needs or goals. They become people pleasers.

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**Page 90 | Highlight**

Aggressive. People are often aggressive because they do not understand how to effectively process their feelings or communicate their needs;

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**Page 90 | Highlight**

Passive Aggressive.

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**Page 90 | Highlight**

are afraid of confrontation, yet they do not understand how to effectively communicate their needs when they feel emotionally triggered.

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**Page 91 | Highlight**

Assertive. Being assertive is an act of care for yourself and others. It is a way to stand your ground while being supportive and considerate of others' needs.

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**Page 91 | Highlight**

Start positive.

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**Page 91 | Highlight**

Describe what's bothering you. Use "I" statements

**Page 91 | Highlight**

Ask and acknowledge.

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**Page 92 | Highlight**

Set new boundaries.

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**Page 92 | Highlight**

Collaboratively problem-solve.

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**Page 92 | Highlight**

Writerly Advice If you absolutely must communicate about an issue via text or email, try your best to use soft language rather than definitive language, with questions that invite input or response, as well as emojis that indicate tone, provided they're appropriate for the relationship or context.

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**Page 96 | Highlight**

Behavior: The thing I don't trust or like about them is . . . Example: He talks about how much money he's making. Category: A category that defines the thing would be . . . Example: The topic of conversation. Feeling: That thing makes me feel . . . Example: Jealous and insecure. Effect: That feeling makes me want to . . . Example: Stop talking to him. Solution: If I teamed up with the other person to fix this thing, I would ask them to . . . [be as specific as possible] Example: Talk less about his company and what he's buying and more about our families and my life.

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**Page 96 | Highlight**

[Name], would you be open to doing a little problem solving with me? I've been struggling with [insert the category]. The problem is not you—it's just my interpretation when I notice [insert the behavior]. When I see/hear that, I feel [insert the feeling]. Are you aware that you [insert the behavior]? Do you think it would be possible to [insert solution]? Or do you have any other ideas as to what I can do to help address this?

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**Page 99 | Highlight**

In general, when you frame the conflict as an opportunity for collaboration, this partnership or

**Page 99 | Highlight Continued**

“team mindset” creates momentum and engenders feelings of alliance that are generally key to resolving conflict.

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**Page 102 | Highlight**

Ask: What core need(s) does this serve? Care (connection with family) and identity (honoring tradition)

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**Page 102 | Highlight**

1. Idea phase

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**Page 103 | Highlight**

2. Evaluation phase

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**Page 103 | Highlight**

all ideas are evaluated

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**Page 103 | Highlight**

3. Adjustment phase

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**Page 104 | Highlight**

4. Priority phase

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**Page 104 | Highlight**

5. Agreement phase

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