CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Definition: *Conflict* is when two or more people have different viewpoints, and at least one of those people has emotional distress about it. *(Laird Schaub)*

Key Principles

1. Separate the People from the Problem
2. Focus on Interests, not Positions
3. Disentangle Intent from Impact
4. You're At Choice (on how to approach resolving any conflict)—remember, you can't control the other person, but you have power over your own choices

Menu of Options—There is no one right way to address or resolve a conflict. You might:

- Walk, journal, dance it off, go for a run, do your own private spiritual work to let it go.
- Do an "innerwork" exercise such as those listed on Kavana's website. These are exercises for getting in touch with your own piece and empowerment—for example looking at what you have to learn from the other person, or imagining a conversersation with them where the conflict is resolved.
- If you choose to vent to a friend, be careful not to draw that person into blaming the other. If you are listening to someone vent, don't fan the flames; instead, be constructive and encourage them to take responsibility. Invite options on how they are going to proceed with the other person.
- Approach someone on your own, being thoughtful about how to set up conditions where the other person will feel respected and safe.
- Request help and support from people who can help hold a fair and neutral space for conversation.

Reflective Listening—a tool of 1st resort

- You always have the power to offer good listening to someone you are in conflict with. If you do, chances are high that you will gain more understanding and also that they might be willing to listen to you next.
- Keep your reflections as clean as possible, avoiding adding your own spin or interpretation.
- You don't have to parrot back the same words. Focus on their story and especially the feelings involved, and offer back the essence of what you heard.
- Be nonjudgmental, listening with as much genuine heart and compassion as you can muster.
- This takes practice. Be open to feedback on improving your reflective listening skills.

5 Steps to Conflict Resolution Engagement (much drawn from *Difficult Conversations*)

1. Breathe, ground, center. Remember the key principles and that you're at choice.

2. The "Identity" Conversation (starting with yourself)
What key pieces of who you see yourself to be are relevant to this encounter? What part of your self-identity is being questioned or challenged? Three core identity pieces that are important to most people:

- Am i competent?
- Am i a good person?
- Am i worthy of love?

Vulnerability comes from the all-or-nothing syndrome: either their story is right and i'm terrible, or i'm 100% right and they are dead wrong. Reality is more complex than that.

Three things to accept about yourself:

- You will make mistakes
- Your intentions are complex and mixed
- You have contributed to the problem

3. Share Stories: the "What Happened" Conversation
The point of this is to *listen & understand* the other person's experience. You don't need to agree with their story. Different people notice different things based on their history, and then interpretations add a further layer of difference (the "ladder of inference"), and our conclusions naturally reflect self-interest. Reality is complex. Along the way, listen for hints of the other person's identity and how they see themselves.

4. The "Feelings" Conversation
Feelings are there for a reason and need to be heard. Key place to use reflective listening skills. A lot of the energy of a conflict is tied up in emotions. Acknowledge feelings before attempting any problem-solving. Also keep on listening for hints of the other person's identity.

5. How might we proceed? Seek Win-Win Options.
Do you have specific requests that would help things go better in the future? What can you offer that might help the other person in this? What are both people ready to agree to? If trouble arises again, what will you each do independently? Are there other sources of help or support you can call on?

Queries for Group Consideration During a Major Conflict

If this issue has been with your group for a long time now, what are you going to do differently today in order to help create a shift?

What do you appreciate that has been done by someone you disagreed with on this issue?

What do you feel proud of in how you've handled this issue? What do you feel you sorry about?

What do you understand of the other party's concerns? What do you think their understandable, legitimate internal story is about what's been happening? Can you fairly represent their viewpoint in a discussion?

What key piece(s) have you not felt heard about so far? What do you most want others to understand?

What is your power in this situation?

What have you contributed that made it turn out the way it has so far? What might you want to do differently now? What responsibility can you take for co-creating a better future?