Conflict Resolution Vocabulary and Strategies

Conflict Resolution:
1. **Intellectual:** Break down the conflict. Understand the many issues, wants, needs, and other factors contributing to the problem. If you don’t understand a conflict, it will likely repeat itself.
2. **Emotional:** Heal the emotional wounds. Make sure everyone feels safe, recognized, and accepted. If you don’t heal emotional wounds, the conflict can fester and re-emerge in new places.

*Difficult Conversations - Stone, Patton, Heen*

The process:
1. Explore each other’s stories
2. Disentangle *Intent* from *Impact*
3. Map the Contribution System (abandon blame)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s Happening?</th>
<th>Impact/Intent</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Stories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s A’s story?</td>
<td>What were A’s intentions?</td>
<td>What did A do to contribute to the problem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What was the impact on B?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s B’s story?</td>
<td>What were B’s intentions?</td>
<td>What did B do to contribute to the problem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What was the impact on A?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Identity Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What feelings underlie A’s attributions and judgements?</td>
<td>How does what happened threaten A’s identity?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Dignity Model - Donna Hicks

Dignity addresses the unseen emotional elements that lie beneath the reasoned arguments.

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS of DIGNITY**
*(What we extend to others and would like for ourselves)*

- **Acceptance of Identity**—Approach people as neither inferior nor superior to you; give others the freedom to express their authentic selves without fear of being negatively judged; interact without prejudice or bias, accepting how race, religion, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, disability, etc. are at the core of their identities. Assume they have integrity.

- **Recognition**—Validate others for their talents, hard work, thoughtfulness, and help; be generous with praise; give credit to others for their contributions, ideas and experience.

- **Acknowledgment**—Give people your full attention by listening, hearing, validating and responding to their concerns and what they have been through.

- **Inclusion**—Make others feel that they belong at all levels of relationship (family, community, organization, nation).

- **Safety**—Put people at ease at two levels: physically, where they feel free of bodily harm; and psychologically, where they feel free of concern about being shamed or humiliated, that they feel free to speak without fear of retribution.

- **Fairness**—Treat people justly, with equality, and in an evenhanded way, according to agreed upon laws and rules.

- **Independence**—Empower people to act on their own behalf so that they feel in control of their lives and experience a sense of hope and possibility.

- **Understanding**—Believe that what others think matters; give them the chance to explain their perspectives, express their points of view; actively listen in order to understand them.

- **Benefit of the Doubt**—Treat people as trustworthy; start with the premise that others have good motives and are acting with integrity.

- **Accountability**—Take responsibility for your actions; if you have violated the dignity of another, apologize; make a commitment to change hurtful behaviors.
The Ten Temptations to Violate Dignity from *Dignity* by Donna Hicks

1. **Taking the Bait.** Don’t take the bait. Don’t let the bad behavior of others determine your own. Restraint is the better part of dignity. Don’t justify getting even. Don’t do unto others as they do unto you if it will cause harm.

2. **Saving Face.** Don’t succumb to the temptation to save face. Don’t lie, cover up, or deceive yourself. Tell the truth about what you have done.

3. **Shirking Responsibility.** Don’t shirk responsibility when you have violated the dignity of others. Admit it when you make a mistake, and apologize if you hurt someone.

4. **Seeking False Dignity.** Beware of the desire for external recognition in the form of approval and praise. If we depend on others alone for the validation of our worth, we are seeking false dignity. Authentic dignity resides within us. Don’t be lured by false dignity.

5. **Seeking False Security.** Don’t let your need for connections compromise your dignity. If we remain in a relationship in which our dignity is routinely violated, our desire for connection has outweighed our need to maintain dignity.

6. **Avoiding Conflict.** Stand up for yourself. Don’t avoid confrontation when your dignity is violated. Take action. A violation is a signal that something in a relationship needs to change.

7. **Being the Victim.** Don’t assume that you are the innocent victim in a troubled relationship. Open yourself to the idea that you might be contributing to the problem. We need to look at ourselves as others see us.

8. **Resisting Feedback.** Don’t resist feedback from others. We often don’t know what we don’t know. We all have blind spots; we all unconsciously behave in undignified ways. We need to overcome our self-protective instincts and accept constructive criticism. Feedback gives us an opportunity to grow.

9. **Blaming and Shaming Others to Deflect Your Own Guilt.** Don’t blame and shame others to deflect your guilt. Control the urge to defend yourself by making others look bad.

10. **Engaging in False Intimacy and Demeaning Gossip.** Beware of the tendency to connect by gossiping about others in a demeaning way. Being critical and judgmental about others when they are not present is harmful and undignified. If you want to create intimacy with another, speak the truth about yourself, about what is happening in your inner world, and invite the other person to do the same.
Role Play Process:

1. Reenact dignity violation - you play you
2. Switch roles: Treat “you” as you would like to be treated
3. Switch back: “Antagonist” treats you as you would like to be treated

Steps of Forgiveness:

1. Create a sense of safety
2. Tell his/her story (unfiltered)
3. Reconnection (to yourself, to others)
4. Tell a different story - reframe/redirect
5. Forgiveness/Reconciliation - it doesn’t have to be harmony. It needs to be a cessation of open hostilities, of an end to the escalating revenge cycle. “It’s not okay what you did, and I can forgive you your vulnerability.”

**Getting to Yes - Fisher, Ury**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Underlying Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What “A” Demands:</td>
<td>What Needs Lie Beneath “A’s” Demands?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mr. Wilper and Ms. Saxelby’s Questions from the Balcony:

Dignity, Dehumanization, and Conflict

The following is a set of questions for self-analysis to help dissect and break down the complex tangle of assumptions and perceptions that we often experience during a conflict.

It is difficult to acknowledge the dignity of people on the other side of a bitter issue, but doing so is a crucial step towards repairing damage and coming to a solution. By recognizing the psychological forces driving us apart and mobilizing those that bring us together, we can better analyze the situation and negotiate the many sensitivities and complexities involved.

The first set of questions below emphasize our common humanity to help foster the recognition of dignity and solution-oriented negotiation.

The second set of questions use common lenses of dehumanization to help probe for obstacles that may be lying beneath the surface.

“Corrective Lenses of Humanity”

Sympathy/Empathy
What is this person going through? What challenges is this person dealing with? What might be his/her cognitive load? What circumstances were occurring when I have acted similarly? Might similar circumstances be present here?

Moral Identity
Who do I want to be in this conflict? Imagine looking back on this conflict ten years from now: How would I like to see myself?

Reciprocity
What can I do to offer trust to this person? How can I signal trust? What can I give as an unambiguous statement of trust? How can I stop a potential revenge cycle and start a trust cycle?

Reason/Utilitarian Calculus
Given where we are right now, where do we want to end up? How do we get there? What is the first step? Can we establish common goals?

Self-Awareness/Self-Control
What have I contributed to this situation? How can I re-direct my frustration to bring about a positive change? Can I abandon the emotional need to “get even” after my dignity has been violated? Can I be the keeper of my own dignity?
“The Clouded Lenses of Dehumanization”

**Charged Labels and Categories**
Is this person associated with a label or in a category that is culturally "charged?" Am I associated with a label or category that is culturally "charged?" If so, is this contributing to miscommunication or assumptions of negative intent? Do I feel that this person is labeling or categorizing me? (Charged labels and categories are traits or identifiers that a culture has associated with a stereotype or stock set of inferences.)

**Tribalism**
Does this person belong to a group that I can portray as “them?” Do I belong to a group that he/she may consider to be “them?” Is this contributing to any miscommunication or assumptions of negative intent?

**Status and Rank**
Does the rank of this person create barriers to honest communication?
Is there fear of the power that this person wields? Might he or she fear the power that I wield?

**Value Lenses**
Do you perceive that this person de-values the things I care about most? Might this person feel that you de-value things that he/she cares about most?

**Miscommunication and Conflict**
What impact does this person’s words and actions have on me? What is it about me that makes this impact possible? What do I infer are the intentions behind his/her words and actions? Why am I making these inferences? What impact do I infer that my words and actions have had on him/her? What might he/she infer about my intentions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Clouded Lenses” Contributing to the Psychological Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charged Labels:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribalism:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status and Rank:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Value Lenses:

Miscommunication:

Two Sample Conflicts:

Johnny and His Mom

a. Johnny is really frustrated with his mom and feels that she doesn’t respect his privacy. Johnny and his mom have an agreement: Johnny will not eat or play video games with his friends in the living room and Johnny’s mom will not go into his room without his permission. While Johnny was at school one day, his mother went into his room and cleaned it up. When he got home, she screamed at him for having dirty dishes all over his desk. Johnny understands that his room is not as clean as his mom would like it, but he feels comfortable in this space and wishes that she would just stay out of it. Since his mom’s clean-up, Johnny can’t find his math binder and he thinks that his mother might have thrown away several trinkets he made at summer camp. They weren’t worth any money, but they carried a lot of sentimental value for him. All of these things bother Johnny, but what irritates him the most is the fact that his mom broke their agreement. Johnny feels like she bends the rules when she wants to and that she uses “clean-up time” as an excuse to go through his personal belongings. He wants to talk to her about it but he’s afraid that she will just yell at him again for being a slob.

b. Johnny’s mom wants to respect her son’s personal space, but she also wants Johnny to maintain good habits. Once a week, Johnny’s mom knocks on his door and asks him to bring out any dishes or dirty laundry he has in his room. Several times Johnny has been rude in response or told her that he would do it later. She is annoyed by these exchanges and feels that Johnny doesn’t appreciate how lenient she is. One day, Johnny’s mom went into his room to grab the dirty dishes she suspected were in there. She was very irritated to find Johnny’s room in a state of utter disarray and ended up cleaning the entire room. While she was doing this, she
found some handwritten notes between Johnny and a girl named Veronica. When Johnny came home, she yelled at him for the mess, but she didn't mention Veronica, even though she is very worried that Johnny is getting involved with Veronica Jones, who was suspended earlier in the year for drinking alcohol on campus. Johnny’s mom feels bad about going into his room but she also feels like Johnny doesn’t leave her much choice.

**Melody and Allison**

a. Melody has just started at a new school and is eager to meet new people. So far, not very many people have taken an interest in Melody. The only person who talks to her regularly is Tim, her lab partner. Melody has a hard time with Biology and so she asks Tim for help a lot. She also really likes hanging out with him because he makes her laugh. One day at school, Melody heard some students whispering about her. She later found out that Allison, Tim’s girlfriend, had written some very mean things about Melody on Facebook. Allison told everyone to ignore Melody because she was a flirt who tried to steal people’s boyfriends. She also said that Melody was ugly and could not get a boyfriend anyway. Several of Allison’s friends “liked” these postings and wrote other hurtful comments about Melody on Allison’s wall. Since this incident, Allison’s friends have laughed at Melody in the hallway and one of them called her a bad name. Melody is very upset and feels like Allison doesn’t appreciate how hard it is to be the new kid at school.

b. Allison has been dating Tim for a month and she really likes him. She thinks that Melody is pretending to have trouble on her homework just so she can hang out with Tim more. Several of Allison’s friends have teased Allison about it and told her to watch out for the “new girl.” Allison was already having a bad day at school when she saw Melody and Tim laughing together in the hallway. She was very angry and ended up writing some really mean things about Melody on Facebook. Now that she has calmed down, Allison thinks that she shouldn’t have posted those comments, but she doesn’t want to apologize to Melody either. Allison enjoys all the support her friends have given her since the incident. Some of them even told Allison that Melody “deserved it.”