

## **Training Title**

*Conflict Resolution: How to Remain One Body*

## **Indianapolis Facilitators**

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## **Goals**

- To have an opportunity to share the conflicts that may be troubling you (especially in your local VOTF group) and the feelings that these conflicts evoke.
- To have discussed these conflicts and to take away with you some workable/helpful solutions
- To take home with you written materials on conflict resolution that will be helpful for future reflection

## **Agenda**

Welcome, Prayer, Introductions	(5 min.)
Overview, Goals, Agenda	(5 min.)
Facilitators' Role Play (illustrating most common conflicts)	(5 min.)
Most Troubling Conflicts and Associated Feelings	(5 min.)
Solutions to Conflicts that Have Worked for You	(10 min.)
Facilitators' Additional Solutions	(10 min.)
Additional Resources/Handouts	(5 min.)
Evaluation, Closing	(5 min.)

## **Supplies**

Easel, flip chart paper, markers, tape

## **Handouts**

1) Habits in Conflict, 2) Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love, 3) Sample Meeting Guidelines/Agreements

## **Facilitator's Notes**

### **Welcome, Prayer, Introductions (5 min)**

#### Scripture and Prayer

(MT 5:23-5:24) Jesus said: When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

Jesus, you recognized so clearly that we will have conflicts with one another. Yet you call us to put reconciliation even ahead of worship. Help us in this next hour to learn a little more about how we can resolve our conflicts and be reconciled.

### **Facilitators' Role Play: A Couple of Unhealthy Ways to Deal with Conflict (5 min)**

#### **UNHEALTHY BELIEF 1: "Conflict is wrong, dangerous, un-Christian."**

Facilitator 1: At our meeting last night, Bob and Ted disagreed. You could tell that they were getting angry at each other. There was so much tension in the room. It made me feel very tense. Don't you think people should be able to get along? Aren't we supposed to love one another?

Facilitator 2: Yeah, I think conflict is really dangerous in a group. I've seen groups ripped apart. I agree it's wrong. It's un-Christian. It's like people don't really care about one another. If it keeps happening, I'd really advise you to get out of that group.

#### **UNHEALTHY BELIEF 2: "It is better to 'vent' with someone safe than try to deal with it directly."**

Facilitator 1: Look, don't tell anyone I told you this, but Betty was so obnoxious at last night's meeting. She'd kill me if she heard me say this, but I've just got to tell you.

Facilitator 2: I can't wait to hear. I've had the same problem with her. And I know it wouldn't do any good to try to sit down and talk about it with her.

#### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

- 1) What is the matter with these two ways of responding to conflict?
- 2) What could be a better approach?
  - a. Conflict isn't wrong; it's inevitable. It shows people feel strongly, care deeply. It is how we handle it that's important.
  - b. Important to talk directly with the person with whom you are having the conflict. MT 5: You're on the way to the altar – you remember a brother or sister has something against you – go first and be reconciled.

### **Most Troubling Conflicts and Associated Feelings (5 min)**

Briefly share one most troubling conflicts you have experienced (especially within VOTF) and associated feelings

### **Solutions to Conflicts that Have Worked for You (10 min.)**

Briefly share solutions to conflicts that have worked for you (especially within VOTF)

### **Facilitators' Additional Solutions (10 min)**

- 1) Have an agenda
- 2) Have a Facilitator
- 3) At the beginning of a meeting, come to some Agreements (see handout)

### **Additional Resources/Handouts (5 min.)**

(see handouts)

## **Evaluation, Closing (5 min.)**

### **Evaluation**

What are some aspects of today's training that:

You liked

You thought went well

You would like to see repeated when this training is offered in the future

What are some aspects of today's training that:

Can be improved (how?)

Should be changed when this training is offered in the future

### **Closing Prayer**

Loving God,

Captivate our imagination,

Empower our will,

Energize our spirit,

So that we will learn to take our inner convictions and live them more fully day by day.

Jesus, Savior and companion,

Strengthen our determination

To follow your way of service,

To open our hearts to forgive,

To embrace searcher, sinner and saint alike,

So that we will integrate your way, your truth, and your life into our lives.

God our Father and Creator, source of all that is,

Grace us to live your way of love as we meet one another on this journey of faith. Blessed be your name.

Amen.

# HABITS IN CONFLICT

## DIVIDED BY CONFLICT

### 1) CONFLICT VIEWED AS:

- Wrong, dangerous
- Sign of not caring
- Something to avoid at all costs

#### Typical Quotes:

"If he disagrees with me, that *proves* he's a dangerous, untrustworthy, or uncaring person. I'll tell my friends to pray that he repents."

"Conflict is *wrong*. If I keep my distance, we won't clash."

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### 2) MEMBERS BLUR ISSUES AND PEOPLE

- relationships suffer due to disagreements on issues
- treat those with whom they disagree coldly and disrespectfully
- reluctant to disagree with those they like or respect

#### Typical Quote:

"I don't see how we can possibly get along if she disagrees with me on..."

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### 3) INDIRECT COMMUNICATION FLOURISHES

- members talk about others, not with them

#### Typical Quotes:

"Don't tell anyone I told you this, but that pastor of ours..."

"Yes, it's that person over there. Did you ever..."  
She'd kill me if she heard me say this, but I just have to tell you what she said..."

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### 4) LONG LEDGERS, NEVER BALANCED

#### Typical Quotes:

"His grandfather never treated my grandfather right, so of course I always..."

"She really hurt me with that remark. It's just part of my cross."

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### 5) MEMBERS SPIRITUALIZE CONFLICT TO AVOID IT AND DIMINISH OTHERS

- equate personal opinion with God's will
- call for others to get their hearts right with God
- fear and laziness expressed in reluctance to exercise human skills and saying that "God will work this out for us"

#### Typical Quote:

"How can you call yourself a Christian when you're so angry?"

## BOUND TOGETHER BY CONFLICT

### 1) CONFLICT VIEWED AS:

- inevitable, neither right nor wrong
- opportunity
- evidence of involvement and concern

#### Typical Quotes:

"It's going to take some work to talk this through, but I can see she cares *a lot* about our church and me."

"I'm very nervous about disagreements, but I know it's an important part of being brothers and sisters to each other."

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### 2) MEMBERS SEPARATE ISSUES AND PEOPLE

- disagreements on issues do not impair relationships
- treat those who disagree with respect
- willing to disagree with friends, allies

#### Typical Quotes:

"Sure, we disagree strongly on this, but our relationships a lot more important to me than our disagreement."

"I see this question differently, but I'm still your friend."

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### 3) DIRECT COMMUNICATION USED EVEN WHEN DIFFICULT

- members go to those with whom they have issues

#### Typical Quotes:

"I'm feeling confused about our discussion last night. I'd really like to sit down and talk with you." "Great! Let's go out for coffee; I've felt pretty upset myself."

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### 4) SHORT LEDGERS, BALANCED PROMPTLY

#### Typical Quote:

"I guess I was pretty hurt by his comments. I want to have good relations with him, so I'd better sit down and talk with him."

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### 5) MEMBERS DRAW STRENGTH FROM SPIRITUAL DEPTH TO ENTER INTO CONFLICT WHILE MAINTAINING A GENTLE SPIRIT

- members discipline selves to listen, initiate confession or affirmation of fellowship, ask for forgiveness, pray for openness
- members pray together for God's help in resolving the conflict
- members state opinions and invite testing against Scripture, tradition, mutual discernment

## 6) MEMBERS VACILLATE BETWEEN FEELING TOO POWERFUL AND TOO WEAK

- one moment: "We'll/I'll show them a thing or two"
- next moment: "Poor me, I'm a helpless victim of his tyranny."

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## 7) ATMOSPHERE IS REACTIVE

- each side reacts to and attacks others without reflecting on the merits of other views

### Typical Quotes:

- "How can any sensible person say that?!"
- "That's ridiculous!"
- "We tried and it didn't work."

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## 8) LEADERS DISCOURAGE DISAGREEMENTS AND IGNORE PROBLEMS

### Typical Quote:

- "Please, try to be peaceful. We *must* be harmonious brothers and sisters."

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## 9) GROUP DISCUSSION IS SOLUTION FOCUSED

### Typical Quotes:

- "X is the answer!"
- "No, Y is best!"
- "Come on, Z is the only sensible way!"

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## 10) LOW TOLERANCE OF UNCERTAINTY

### Typical Quote:

- "Look, let's just put this to a vote now and be done with it."

## 6) MEMBERS TAKE RESPONSIBILITY TO SEEK CHANGE

- do not exaggerate own strengths (leads to ruthless behavior) or weakness (leads to false sense that others are to blame for end result)
- each person takes prompt steps to improve communication when difficulties arise

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## 7) ATMOSPHERE IS INTERACTIVE

- careful listening acknowledges others
- describe own emotions, needs and preferences ("I" statements) rather than attack others ("careful listening acknowledges others")
- describe own emotions, needs and preferences ("I" statements) rather than attack others ("You" statements)
- clear, thoughtful statements

### Typical Quotes:

- "So the way you see it, then, it would be best to..."
- "Thanks. I feel confident now that you understand my concerns. Now I want to make sure I understand yours."
- "My preference is that..."

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## 8) LEADERS INVITE DISAGREEMENTS

### Typical Quote:

- "Let's have as many different perspectives on this as we can. Before we can agree on anything meaningful, we have to take some time to *disagree* and look at all sides of this."

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## 9) GROUP DISCUSSION IS INITIALLY PROBLEM AND PROCESS CENTERED, FOLLOWED BY A DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

### Typical Quotes:

- "Let's begin by agreeing on how we'll go about reaching a decision on this."
- "Maybe we could first define what the problem is."
- "After that, let's list as many different solutions as we can."
- "Then we can look at the pluses and minuses of each."
- "Let's make sure everyone gets a chance to participate."

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## 10) CALMNESS AND CONFIDENCE ENABLE MEMBERS TO TOLERATE THE PERIODS OF UNCERTAINTY NECESSARY IN ALL GOOD DECISION-MAKING

### Typical Quote:

- "It took some time, but looking at all sides thoughtfully paid off in the long run."

## **AGREEING AND DISAGREEING IN LOVE: COMMITMENTS IN TIMES OF DISAGREEMENT**

"Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" ([Eph. 4:3](#)), as both individual members and the body of Christ, we pledge that we shall:

### **In Thought**

Accept conflict	1. Acknowledge together that conflict is a normal part of our life in the church. <a href="#">Romans 14:1-8</a> , <a href="#">10-12</a> , <a href="#">17-19</a> <a href="#">15:1-7</a>
Affirm hope	2. Affirm that as God walks with us in conflict we can work through to growth. <a href="#">Ephesians 4:15-16</a>
Commit to prayer	3. Admit our needs and commit ourselves to pray for a mutually satisfactory solution (no prayers for my success or for the other to change but to find a joint way). <a href="#">James 5:16</a>

### **In Action**

Go to the other.	4. Go directly to those with whom we disagree; avoid behind-the-back criticism.* <a href="#">Matthew 5:23-24</a> ; <a href="#">18:15-20</a> .
In the spirit of humility...	5. Go in gentleness, patience and humility. Place the problem between us at neither doorstep and own our part in the conflict instead of pointing out the others'. <a href="#">Galatians 6:1-5</a>
Be quick to listen	6. Listen carefully, summarize and check out what is heard before responding. Seek as much to understand as to be understood. <a href="#">James 1:19</a> ; <a href="#">Proverbs 18:13</a>
Be slow to judge	7. Suspend judgments, avoid labeling, end name calling, discard threats, and act in a nondefensive, nonreactive way. <a href="#">Romans 2:1-4</a> ; <a href="#">Galatians 5:22-26</a>
Be willing to negotiate	8. Work through the disagreements constructively. <a href="#">Acts 15</a> ; <a href="#">Philippians 2:1-11</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify issues, interests, and needs of both (rather than take positions).</li><li>• Generate a variety of options for meeting both parties' needs (rather than defending one's own way).</li><li>• Evaluate options by how they meet the needs and satisfy the interests of all sides (not one side's values).</li><li>• Collaborate in working out a joint solution (so both sides gain, both grow and win).</li><li>• Cooperate with the emerging agreement (accept the possible, not demand your ideal).</li><li>• Reward each other for each step forward, toward agreement</li></ul>

(celebrate mutuality)

**In Life**

Be steadfast  
in love

9. Be firm in our commitment to seek a mutual solution; be stubborn in holding to our common foundation in Christ; be steadfast in love. [Colossians 3:12-15](#)

Be open to  
mediation

10. Be open to accept skilled help. If we cannot reach agreement among ourselves, we will use those with gifts and training in mediation in the larger church. [Philippians 4:1-3](#)

Trust the  
community

11. We will trust the community and if we cannot reach agreement or experience reconciliation, we will turn the decision over to others in the congregation or from the broader church. [Acts 15](#)

- In one-to-one or small group disputes, this may mean allowing others to arbitrate.
- In congregational, conference district or denominational disputes, this may mean allowing others to arbitrate or implementing constitutional decision-making processes, insuring that they are done in the spirit of these guidelines, and abiding by whatever decision is made.

Be the Body  
of Christ

12. Believe in and rely on the solidarity of the Body of Christ and its commitment to peace and justice, rather than resort to the courts of law. [Corinthians 6:1-6](#)

\*Go directly if you are European-North American; in other cultures disagreements are often addressed through a trusted go-between.

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## **SAMPLE MEETING GUIDELINES/AGREEMENTS**

### **WE WILL...**

- Do our best to create a prayerful spirit in our meetings.
- No interruptions when someone else is speaking.
- Be careful not to dominate the meeting if we tend to be more vocal than others.
- Encourage participation by trying to include quieter people in the discussion, but also respecting those who prefer just to listen.
- Keep our meetings focused by sticking to the agenda and avoiding long tangents.
- Be flexible, open to new (and unscheduled) issues that may arise and that really need to be discussed at this meeting.
- Take our share of the responsibility for the group's work and follow through on commitments.