

# Care to Confront

When and How to Confront Difficult Situations

## Outcomes Desired

- Understanding why confrontation is important
- Examine our resistance and responses to confrontation
- Identify the most difficult situations to confront and why
- Develop specific strategies for approaching both professional and personal confrontations
- Develop our own personal strategies for confronting with care

## Confrontation

*The 13 Letter Four Letter Word*

- Confront - "to come face to face with"
- What is it about us that causes us to avoid confrontation?
- Why do some individuals seem to be more suited to confrontation?
- Is the ability to handle confrontation situations innate or learned?
- Confrontation is more than just Fight or Flight.

## Confrontation

*The Socialization of Confrontation*

### Generational Differences in Confrontation

- Baby Boomers were socialized differently on the aspects of conflict... " \_\_\_\_\_ "
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQVCGKMESs>
- Younger generations were taught the skills of negotiation very early on - life is a series of negotiations to them
- <http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=youtube+negotiating+with+misbehaving+children&mid=9A56D190FEB98D44D7219A56D190FEB98D44D721&view=detail&FORM=VIRE7>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KgWXFajBZU>

## What If We Cared Enough to Confront?

### Historical Context and Significance

- The advance of Adolph Hitler in the late 1930's
- The atrocities of Idi Amin in Uganda
- The sinking of the Titanic

### The Economic Meltdown of 2008

- Brooksley Born – attempted to regulate and quantify the consequences of derivatives and credit default swaps in the late 1990's
- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZrNZ\\_2gLE&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZrNZ_2gLE&feature=related)
- Rating agencies failure to address the poor quality of bundled mortgage backed securities (someone inside had to know the ratings were wrong)

### Higher Education

- Penn State abuse scandal

What circumstances and consequences could we have avoided by caring enough to confront?

## Closer to Home

### Personal context

- Drug and alcohol abuse of loved ones
- Undisciplined behavior of children

### Work Context

- Needless terminations and appeals
- Avoidable bad hires
- Bad working relationships – leading to inefficiencies

### Social Context

- Is domestic and child abuse really occurring in a vacuum so secret that NO ONE sees it before it is too late?

What circumstances are important enough for you and I to care enough to confront?

## Types of Confrontations

- **Interpersonal** - when personal considerations, in the form of a clash between team members, take precedence
- **Ideological** - When people insist that the world works in a given way, they sometimes refuse to acknowledge anything to the contrary
- **Organizational** - The way you structure the interaction of people, responsibilities, and hierarchy understandably corresponds with the way you get things done
- **Operational** - Tasks that take too much time and effort to achieve are a sign of operational conflict. Your method of actually getting things done clashes with what you are trying to do.
- **Relational** - Your team might find that aspects of the larger organization make it difficult to achieve anything. There might be societal pressures or environmental conditions working to your detriment.

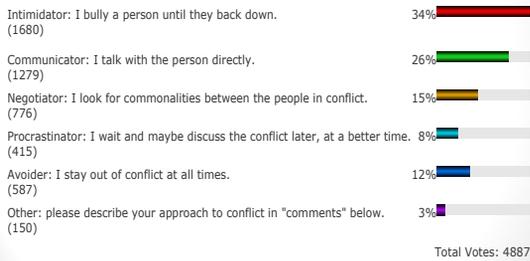
## Confrontation Styles

### Poll: How Would You Describe Your Confrontation Style?

- **Intimidator**: I bully a person until they back down.
- **Communicator**: I talk with the person directly.
- **Negotiator**: I look for commonalities between the people in conflict.
- **Procrastinator**: I wait and maybe discuss the conflict later, at a better time.
- **Avoider**: I stay out of conflict at all times.

## Poll on Confrontation Styles

### How Would You Describe Your Conflict Resolution Style?



## What Triggers Confrontation?

### Conflict Triggers

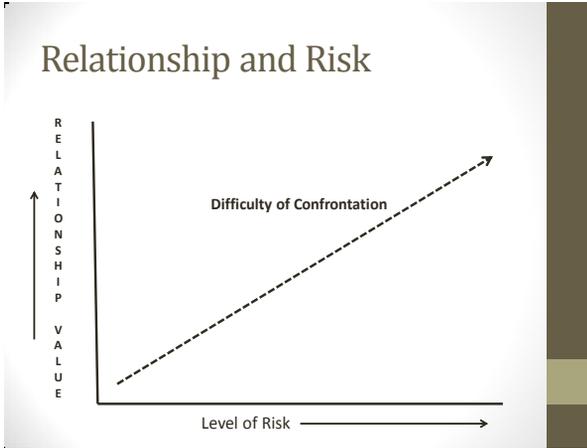
- Value Differences
- Experiences from the past
- Bad or inappropriate behavior
- Injustice
- Inequity or disparity
- Conflicting or misaligned goals
- Lack of commitment
- Inadequate or poor performance
- Lack of respect (for authority or for the individual)
- Failure to listen or be heard

## When Do We Have An Obligation to Confront?

- When our values or morals direct us to
- **When we are paid to do so**

## Risk Levels of Confrontation

- In the process of confronting, we must consider the relationship of risk and confrontation
- In every confrontation there are possible positive and negative outcomes
- The fear of damage to a relationship or to perception is the single greatest obstacle to a meaningful confrontation
- There is a scale and variance between the level of relationships and the risks of confrontation
- This scale and variance will determine the methods of confrontation



### Risk and Relationship

High Relationship Low Risk	High Relationship High Risk
Low Relationship Low Risk	Low Relationship High Risk

### Degree of Difficulty of Confrontation

High Relationship Low Risk	High Relationship High Risk
***Degree of Difficulty Increases According to Perceived Risk →	
Low Relationship Low Risk	Low Relationship High Risk

### Risk and Relationship

High Relationship Low Risk	High Relationship High Risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best Friends for Life</li> <li>• Relatives in the Gene Pool</li> <li>• Minister</li> </ul>	
Low Relationship Low Risk	Low Relationship High Risk

### Risk and Relationship

<p><b>High Relationship Low Risk</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best Friends for Life</li> <li>• Relatives in the Gene Pool</li> <li>• Minister</li> </ul>	<p><b>High Relationship High Risk</b></p>
<p><b>Low Relationship Low Risk</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Acquaintances</li> <li>• Employees down stream</li> <li>• WalMart Parking Competitors</li> </ul>	<p><b>Low Relationship High Risk</b></p>

### Risk and Relationship

<p><b>High Relationship Low Risk</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best Friends for Life</li> <li>• Relatives in the Gene Pool</li> <li>• Minister</li> </ul>	<p><b>High Relationship High Risk</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spouse</li> <li>• Boss</li> <li>• Top Vendors or Donors</li> <li>• Current Students</li> <li>• Peers</li> <li>• Those individuals you evaluate</li> </ul>
<p><b>Low Relationship Low Risk</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Acquaintances</li> <li>• Employees down stream</li> <li>• WalMart Parking Competitors</li> </ul>	<p><b>Low Relationship High Risk</b></p>

### Risk and Relationship

<p><b>High Relationship Low Risk</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best Friends for Life</li> <li>• Relatives in the Gene Pool</li> <li>• Minister</li> </ul>	<p><b>High Relationship High Risk</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spouse</li> <li>• Boss</li> <li>• Top Vendors or Donors</li> <li>• Current Students</li> <li>• Peers</li> <li>• Those individuals you evaluate</li> </ul>
<p><b>Low Relationship Low Risk</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Acquaintances</li> <li>• Employees down stream</li> <li>• WalMart Parking Competitors</li> </ul>	<p><b>Low Relationship High Risk</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highway Drivers – Road Rage</li> <li>• New Employees or Applicants</li> <li>• Donor Prospects</li> <li>• Student Prospects</li> <li>• Restaurant Wait Staff</li> </ul>

### Risk and Relationship

<p><b>High Relationship Low Risk</b></p>	<p><b>High Relationship High Risk</b></p>
 <p><b>Danger Area Decisions on Risk and Relationship</b></p>	
<p><b>Low Relationship Low Risk</b></p>	<p><b>Low Relationship High Risk</b></p>

## The Key to Successful Confrontations is Listening First – Advice from S. Covey

- It's vital to listen, to understand first. Otherwise we may be acting on assumptions that are totally incorrect.
- The principles behind this behavior include understanding, respect and mutual benefit.
- The opposite is to speak first and listen last – or not to listen at all. It's going ahead with our agenda without considering whether others may have perspectives that could influence what we have to say.

## The Key to Successful Confrontations is Listening First

- The counterfeit is pretend to be listening, while thinking about our reply and just waiting for our turn to speak.
- Listening is not just hearing what is said. Research shows that face-to-face communication regarding attitudes and feelings is 7 percent what people say, 38 percent how they say it, and 55 percent body language.
- Listen First also means to listen to ourselves, to our gut feelings, our own inner voice, before we decide and act.

## Confrontation Methods

1. **Forcing**—force outcome regardless of the desire of one party
2. **Collaboration** - a solution to the problem that most satisfies the concerns of both parties
3. **Compromise** - a solution to the problem that partially satisfies the concerns of both parties
4. **Smoothing** - giving in to preserve relationship with other party
5. **Withdrawal** - little or no significance to either party

## Conflict Orientation

### Outcome Dominant

- Forcing—force outcome regardless of the desire of one party
- Collaboration – mutual benefit process
- Compromise - concerned more about outcome than relationship

### Relationship Dominant

- Collaboration – mutual benefit process
- Compromise - concerned more about relationship than outcome
- Smoothing – putting the other person's needs above all else
- Withdrawal – avoidance to maintain relationship

## Forcing

- Also known as *competing*
- An individual firmly pursues his or her own concerns despite the resistance of the other person.
- This usually involves pushing one viewpoint at the expense of another or maintaining firm resistance to another person's actions.

## Examples of when *Forcing* may be appropriate

- In certain situations when all other, less forceful methods, don't work or are ineffective
- When you need to stand up for your own rights, resist aggression and pressure
- When a quick resolution is required and using force is justified (e.g. in a life-threatening situation, to stop an aggression)
- As a last resort to resolve a long-lasting conflict

## Possible advantages of *Forcing*:

- Provides a quick resolution to a conflict
- Increases self-esteem and draws respect when firm resistance or actions were a response to an aggression or hostility

## Some caveats of *Forcing*:

- May negatively affect your relationship with the other person in the long run
- May cause the opponent to react in the same way, even if the opponent did not intend to be forceful originally
- Cannot take advantage of the strong sides of the other side's position
- Taking this approach may require a lot of energy and be exhausting to some individuals

## Collaboration

- Also known as *problem confronting* or *problem solving*.
- Collaboration involves an attempt to work with the other person to find a win-win solution to the problem in hand - the one that most satisfies the concerns of both parties.
- The win-win approach sees conflict resolution as an opportunity to come to a mutually beneficial result.
- It includes identifying the underlying concerns of the opponents and finding an alternative which meets each party's concerns.

## Examples of when *Collaboration* may be appropriate:

- When consensus and commitment of other parties is important
- In a collaborative environment
- When it is required to address the interests of multiple stakeholders
- When a high level of trust is present
- When a long-term relationship is important
- When you need to work through hard feelings, animosity, etc
- When you don't want to have full responsibility

## Some Caveats of *Collaboration*:

- Requires a commitment from all parties to look for a mutually acceptable solution
- Requires more effort and more time than some other methods. A win-win solution may not be evident and a quick solution is not likely
- Once one or more parties lose their trust in an opponent, the relationship falls back to other methods of conflict resolution. Therefore, all involved parties must **continue** collaborative efforts to maintain a collaborative relationship

## Possible advantages of *Collaboration*:

- Leads to solving the actual problem
- Leads to a win-win outcome
- Reinforces mutual trust and respect
- Builds a foundation for effective collaboration in the future
- Shared responsibility of the outcome
- You earn the reputation of a good negotiator
- For parties involved, the outcome of the conflict resolution is less stressful (however, the **process** of finding and establishing a win-win solution may be very involved)

## Compromise

*Compromise* looks for a solution to the problem that **partially** satisfies the concerns of both parties

- Different from Collaboration in that it begins with the premise that a total win-win is not possible
- Compromise focuses on the process of recognizing that neither party can totally achieve their desired results
- Focus becomes – “What I am willing to give up to get the most important aspects of my desired outcomes”

## Examples of when *Compromise* may be appropriate:

- When the goals are moderately important and not worth the use of more assertive or more involving approaches, such as forcing or collaborating
- To reach temporary settlement on complex issues
- To reach expedient solutions on important issues
- As a first step when the involved parties do not know each other well or haven't yet developed a high level of mutual trust
- When collaboration or forcing do not work

## Possible advantages of *Compromise*:

- Faster issue resolution. Compromising may be more practical when time is a factor
- Can provide a temporary solution while still looking for a win-win solution
- Lowers the levels of tension and stress resulting from the conflict

## Some caveats of using *Compromise*:

- May result in a situation when both parties are not satisfied with the outcome (a lose-lose situation)
- Does not contribute to building trust in the long run
- May require close monitoring and control to ensure the agreements are met

## Withdrawal

- Also known as *avoidance*.
- This occurs when a person does not pursue her/his own concerns or those of the opponent.
- He/she does not address the conflict, sidesteps, postpones or simply withdraws.

## Examples of when *Withdrawal* may be appropriate:

- When the issue is trivial and not worth the effort
- When more important issues are pressing
- In situations where postponing the response is beneficial:
  - When it is not the right time or place to confront the issue
  - When you need time to think and collect information before you act (e.g. if you are unprepared or taken by surprise)
- When you see no chance of getting your concerns met or you would have to put forth unreasonable efforts
- When you would have to deal with hostility
- When you are unable to handle the conflict (e.g. if you are too emotionally involved)

## Possible advantages of *Withdrawal*:

- When the opponent is forcing / attempts aggression, you may choose to withdraw and postpone your response until you are in a more favorable circumstance for you to push back
- Withdrawing is a low stress approach when the conflict is short
- Gives the ability/time to focus on more important or more urgent issues instead
- Gives you time to better prepare and collect information before you act

## Some caveats of *Withdrawal*:

- May lead to weakening or losing your position; not acting may be interpreted as an agreement. Using withdrawing strategies without negatively affecting your own position requires certain skill and experience
- When multiple parties are involved, withdrawing may negatively affect your relationship with a party that expects your action

## Smoothing

- Also known as *accommodation*.
- Smoothing is accommodating the concerns of other people first of all, rather than one's own concerns.

## Examples of when *Smoothing* may be appropriate:

- When it is important to provide a temporary relief from the conflict or buy time until you are in a better position to respond/push back
- When the issue is not as important to you as it is to the other person
- When you accept that you are wrong
- When you have no choice or when continued competition would be detrimental

## Possible advantages of *Smoothing*:

- In some cases smoothing will help to protect more important interests while giving up on some less important ones
- Gives an opportunity to reassess the situation from a different angle

## Some caveats of *Smoothing*:

- There is a risk to being abused, i.e. the opponent may constantly try to take advantage of your tendency toward smoothing/accommodating. Therefore it is important to keep the right balance and this requires some skill.
- May negatively affect your confidence in your ability to respond to an aggressive opponent
- It makes it more difficult to transition to a win-win solution in the future
- Some of your supporters may not like your smoothing response and be turned off

## Risk, Relationship & Methods

<p><b>High Relationship Low Risk</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Forcing</li> <li>✓ Collaboration</li> <li>✓ Compromise</li> <li>✓ Smoothing</li> </ul>	<p><b>High Relationship High Risk</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Collaboration</li> <li>✓ Compromise</li> <li>✓ Withdrawal</li> <li>✓ Smoothing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Low Relationship Low Risk</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Forcing</li> <li>✓ Withdrawal</li> </ul>	<p><b>Low Relationship High Risk</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Collaboration</li> <li>✓ Compromise</li> <li>✓ Withdrawal</li> <li>✓ Smoothing</li> </ul>

## The DESC Method is Another Means of Caring Confrontation

- Respectful communication
- Describes the problem
- Explains the effect of the problem on others
- Suggests alternatives to the situation
- Outlines consequences if the situation is not addressed

## DESC Script

A structured, assertive, communication approach for managing and resolving conflict.

- **D** Describe the specific situation
- **E** Express your concerns about the action
- **S** Suggest other alternatives
- **C** Consequences should be stated

## DESC Example

- **D**- When you scream at me in front of my co-workers, you're making it personal.
- **E**- This reduces my credibility with the students and undermines my authority with staff.
- **S**- If you are upset about delays or other issues, please pull me aside and I will address your concerns.
- **C**- If your outbursts continue we won't have a working relationship, and students/faculty/customers will suffer.

## DESC Example

- **D**- When you give positive evaluations on employees who don't deserve them, it puts me in a difficult situation.
- **E**- This reduces both my credibility and yours with our supervisors as well as other members of the department.
- **S**- You must give honest feedback about employees if you expect them to improve. I am willing to work with you to help you improve upon this.
- **C**- If your evaluations do not improve I will have to make changes in the department that will affect you and everyone else.

## LEEN – Another Model for Caring Confrontation

- L - Listen
- E - Empathize
- E - Explain
- N - Negotiate

## Conflict with Direct Reports

- L - Can you help me understand why you are upset.
- E - That is understandable, I can see why you are upset.
- E - The reason we wanted to do this was because—
- N - Let's agree on a path forward.

## Conflict with Up Reports

- L - Help me understand how you see the situation.
- E - I understand why you see it that way.
- E - Let me explain the situation from my perspective and give you some additional information.
- N - Is there anything you would like for me to do differently as a result of this discussion?

## Conflict with Peers

- L - Tell me how you see the situation, what are the factors causing this conflict?
- E - I understand why you see it that way. I hadn't thought of it that way.
- E - Let me explain how I see things.
- N - How do we resolve this in a way that preserves our relationship and still accomplishes the objectives?

## Helpful Hints in Applying Confrontation Care

- Focus on the common goal: quality instruction or service, the welfare of the student, safety – it's hard to disagree with safe, high quality instruction or service
- Avoid the issue of who's right and who's wrong "Constituent Centered care – concentrate on doing the right thing"
- De-personalize the conversation – use "we" not "you" or "me"
- Actively avoid being perceived as judgmental
- Be hard on the problem, not the people

## Tools to Choose... Best Options

- Confronting cannot be effective with a one size fits all approach
- Each of the before mentioned methodologies should be viewed as tools to be chosen for specific confrontation circumstances
- The key to becoming an effective confronter is to know which approach to use in a particular situation
- This requires a certain degree of emotional intelligence

## Care Enough to Confront... The Home Stretch

*Answer the following questions...*

Who in my life is the most difficult for me to confront?

Who is the person in my life that I most need to confront?

## Caring Enough to Confront... Yourself

- The most difficult confrontation for any of us is with ourselves
- It is so much easier to see the faults of others and accept our own rationalizations for why we are the way we are
- But in order to truly grow, we have to become experts at confronting ourselves before we can be proficient in confronting others
- This process starts with facing the brutal and hard reality about our behaviors, our weaknesses and frailties and giving ourselves an honest assessment.

## Confronting Reality Stephen Covey – Modified For You

- This behavior is about taking the tough issues head-on- recognizing in yourself those things which are great as well as those you know you need to improve upon.
- Confronting your reality implies demonstrating courage, responsibility, awareness, and respect.
- The opposite of this behavior is to ignore it, to act as though it doesn't exist. Not caring enough to confront yourself
- The counterfeit is to act as though you are confronting reality when you are actually evading it, i.e., rationalizing and Self delusion

## Confronting Reality Stephen Covey – Modified For You

- When we openly confront our own reality, we facilitate open interaction within the deepest part of ourselves.
- Instead of having to wrestle with all the hard issues on our own while trying to paint a rosy picture for everyone else, engage the creativity, capability and synergy of someone you really trust in assessing and solving those issues.
- When we confront ourselves honestly, it makes the process of confronting others more natural

## In Summary

- Care enough to confront yourself. Come face to face with your own strengths and areas you need to improve. Have someone you really trust help you with this honest assessment.
- In every confrontation, LISTEN first before you speak. Treat every confrontation first as a lack of known information.
- Be aware of the risk/relationship dynamics in every confrontation.
- Use your emotional intelligence skills in determining which method of confrontation management is most appropriate for the situation.
- View every confrontation as an opportunity to grow. Remember that life is a learning process.

## References & Resources

- <http://personalityexplorer.com/home/FREEResources/ConflictManagementTechniques.aspx>
- <http://humanresources.about.com/od/conflictresolution/a/confrontation.htm>
- <http://humanresources.about.com/od/conflictresolution/a/fightforright.htm>
- [http://humanresources.about.com/od/interpersonalcommunication/qt/feedback\\_com6.htm](http://humanresources.about.com/od/interpersonalcommunication/qt/feedback_com6.htm)
- <http://humanresources.about.com/cs/conflictresolves/a/conflictcourage.htm>
- [http://humanresources.about.com/od/managementtips/a/conflict\\_solue.htm](http://humanresources.about.com/od/managementtips/a/conflict_solue.htm)
- <http://humanresources.about.com/b/2006/06/12/personal-courage-and-conflict-resolution-at-work.htm>
- <http://www.netplaces.com/leadership/conflict/types-of-conflict.htm>
- [http://stress.about.com/od/relationships/a/conflict\\_res.htm](http://stress.about.com/od/relationships/a/conflict_res.htm)
- Covey, Stephen, "The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything."