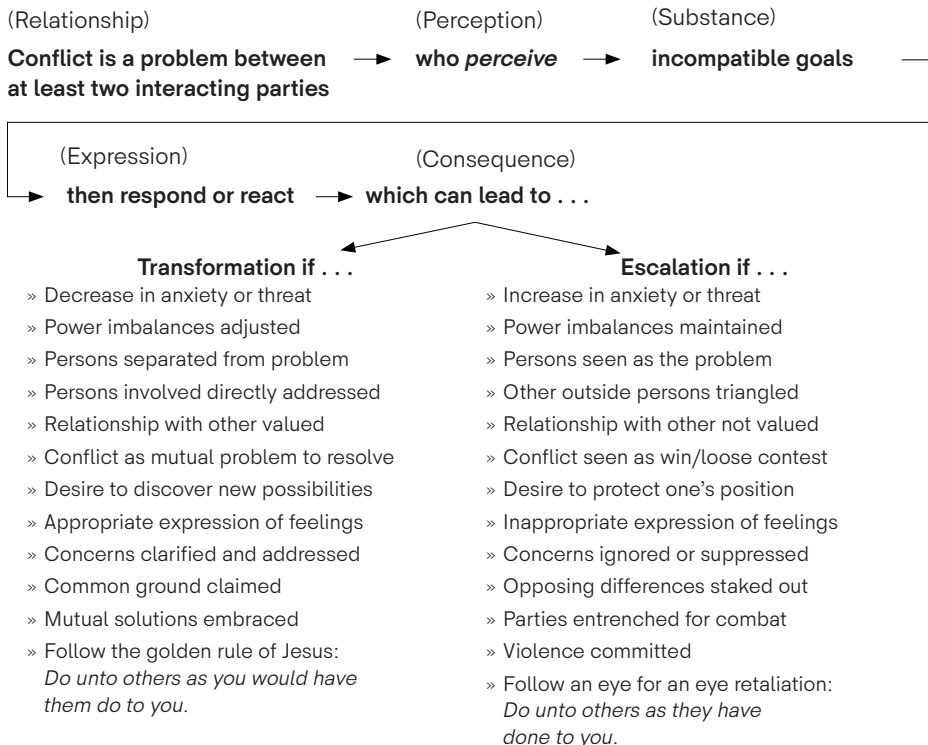


# Anatomy of Conflict and Responses

Interpersonal conflict is a problem between at least two interacting parties who perceive incompatible goals. The diagram below outlines the parts, process, and outcomes of conflict.

## Anatomy of Conflict



### Parts of Conflict

1. People (the who)—relational, perceptual, emotional elements
2. Problem (the what)—needs, issues, goals
3. Process (the how)—power, communication, decision-making

### Outcomes of Conflict

1. Constructive if goals met, relationship preserved, feeling of peace, positive change
2. Destructive if concerns unmet, relationship damaged, feeling of aggravation, harm

Conflict is neither good nor bad. It simply is. It's just a part of life and relationships. What matters is how we respond to conflict, as diagrammed in the anatomy of conflict. Positive responses can transform conflicts for needed change, growth, and peace. Negative reactions can provoke hostility, alienation, and violence.

There are five basic styles of response to conflict. These can be visualized on a graph of concern for one's relationship and concern for one's goal. Depending on the situation, relationship between parties, and their goals, each of these responses has their place. Each has certain pros and cons.

## Responses to Conflict

▽ YIELD

High Concern  
for Relationship

↗ MERGE

**Accommodate** *YIELD TO THE OTHER*

**How:** *Your way*

- Pro:**
- » Open ability to negotiate now or later
  - » Save time and effort if not important
  - » Show you can be flexible and caring

- Con:**
- » May neglect your needs
  - » May nurse resentment
  - » Can perpetuate negative patterns

**Collaborate** *RESOLVE TOGETHER*

**How:** *Our way for a win-win outcome*

- Pro:**
- » Satisfy the needs of each party
  - » Benefit relationship between parties
  - » Create constructive outcomes
  - » Provide a more sustainable solution

- Con:**
- » Takes time and effort
  - » Such processing may not be needed

**Compromise** *GO PARTWAY WITH OTHER*

**How:** *Halfway*

- Pro:**
- » Show your care to the Other
  - » Invite care from the Other for you
  - » Open the way to collaboration

- Con:**
- » Partway is often not far enough
  - » May not satisfy needs of either party

Little Concern  
for Goals

High Concern  
for Goals

**Avoid** *WITHDRAW FROM THE OTHER*

**How:** *No way*

- Pro:**
- » Allow time to cool off or process
  - » Withdraw from abuse or danger
  - » Delay for right opportunity
  - » Avoid engagement over trivial issue

- Con:**
- » May neglect needs of both parties
  - » May communicate lack of care
  - » Conflict may continue or compound
  - » Distancing or hostility may increase

**Compel** *FORCE THE OTHER*

**How:** *My way*

- Pro:**
- » Secure safety for self and others
  - » Establish basic human rights
  - » Take quick emergency action

- Con:**
- » Control and coercion don't last
  - » Force has little influence for change
  - » Easily escalates aggressive reactions
  - » Can easily harm relationships

◀ EXIT

Little Concern  
for Relationship

→ ONE-WAY