

The 3 Tiers of Conflict

This chart illustrates the way conflict "evolves" over time. Use it to track our conversation today, and to inform your use of the worksheet on the reverse side.

Collaboration Zone

In-Fighting Zone

Stagnation Zone

Conflicts of

Disagreement: about decisions, strategies, or processes

Quest: to prove we are *right*

Emotional Cues: frustration, uncertainty, curiosity

Sounds Like:

Conflicts of

Disagreement: about who we are or who we're identifying with

Quest: to prove we *belong*

Emotional Cues: defensiveness, aggression, co-dependence

Sounds Like:

Conflicts of

Disagreement: about values, worldview, and right/wrong

Quest: to prove we are *good*

Emotional Cues: righteousness, disbelief, moral superiority, rage

Sounds Like:

Keeping Collaboration at the Core of Conflict

Use this tool to track a current conflict you're in. The flowchart on the left side is a way to explore how the conflict deteriorated or escalated over time, and the one on the right offers some questions to catalyze repair and a return to collaboration.



Conflict of Idea

What was the **practical** beginning of the conflict?

How can I prioritize shared **outcomes** so that we can keep ourselves rooted in collaboration?

Conflict of Identity

How did the conflict get **personal**?

How can I prioritize shared **mission** so that we can put collaboration into this conflict?

Conflict of Ideology

What was the moment it became **polarized**?

How can I prioritize shared **humanity** so that we can get unstuck from this conflict?

While not every conflict is the same, every conflict has the same tendency: to move from simple disagreement to significant digging-in. Collaboration requires conflict, but conflict at the idea-level only. Conflict that goes deeper than that erodes trust and divides teams.