

CLEMSON UNIVERSITY OMBUDS OFFICE

Understanding Conflict

TESSA BYER, UNIVERSITY OMBUDS

You're in the midst of a conflict. Someone has said or done something that you don't understand or agree with. Things are escalating. Use the questions below to begin to understand what might be happening here. You can also turn these questions around to understand what is going on within yourself. For any question that you don't know the answer to, ask the other person and get their perspective. Invite them to be a partner in resolving this.

UNDERSTAND GENERAL CONFLICT DYNAMICS

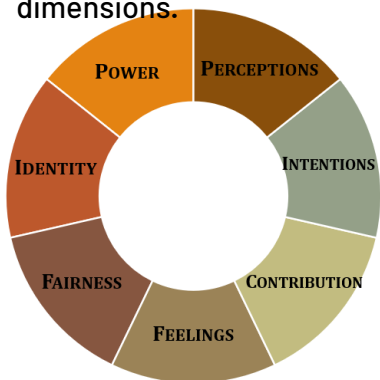
- Are they in fight, flight, or freeze mode?
- What caused them to be in fight, flight, or freeze mode?
- What do you know about them (personality, communication style, strengths, weaknesses) that can help explain their actions?
- What do they say they want? What do they really want?
- Do they feel their dignity has been violated?

ASPECTS OF DIGNITY

- Acceptance of Identity
- Inclusion
- Safety
- Acknowledgement
- Recognition
- Fairness
- Benefit of the Doubt
- Understanding
- Independence
- Accountability

CONFLICT DIMENSIONS

- Analyze your specific conflict along these 7 dimensions.



PERCEPTIONS

- What did they perceive to have happened?
- How did they reach those conclusions?

INTENTIONS

- What assumptions am I making about what they intended?
- What assumptions am I making about the impact this had on them?
- How can I find out what I don't know?
- How can I communicate what I intended?
- How can I communicate the impact this had on me?

CONTRIBUTION

- How did we each contribute to this situation?

FEELINGS

- How do they feel about this?
- What needs might be behind those feelings?
- How can I validate their feelings and move us past this?

FAIRNESS

- Was this fair?
- Did this feel fair?
- What was decided, and how does it impact them?
- How was this decided?
- How was the decision communicated?
- How does this impact them differently from how it impacts others?
- How were they treated?

POWER

- What types of power are at play here?
- Who has more power, and who has less?
- Who feels like they have more power, and who feels like they have less?

IDENTITY

- What does this situation say about their identity?
- What piece of their identity are they defending?

MAP THE CONFLICT AS YOU KNOW IT

- This can help you determine how you want to move forward.

Dimension	What you know and perceive (and can share)	What you don't know (and can ask about)
Perceptions		
Intentions		
Contribution		
Feelings		
Fairness		
Identity		
Power		

