

# Managing Friction: Dealing with Conflict, Difference, and Accountability in Relationships

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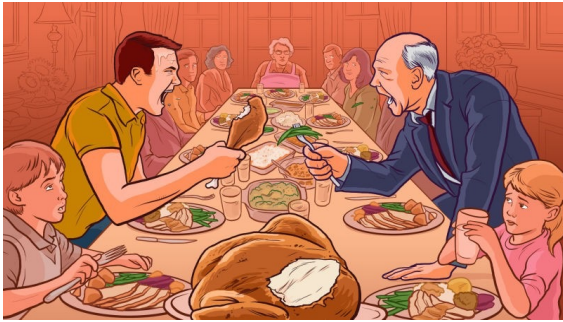
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## How are we supposed to manage Thanksgiving?



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## Goals of the Presentation

- Learn more about communication styles
- Understand healthy and unhealthy communication
- Understand the role of conflict in communication
- Learn more about accountability in relationships

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## What Makes Up Good Communication?

- Curiosity
  - A genuine interest in what the other person is saying or their point of view
- Understanding
  - Willingness to listen and hear what they are saying
- Validation
  - Recognizing that you hear them and are willing to connect
- Empathy
  - Understanding it from their point of view – especially if this is different from your own.

Goodman, 2021

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## What about Complaining?

- Excess emotional suppression can cause considerable harm
- Complaining can be healthy for you
- Complaining brings about emotions to real world issues that make us feel helpless
- Complaining can also be about showing your superiority
- Can be a source of manipulation
- Can be used to hold people accountable for their actions
- Complaining for the sake about complaining

Goodman, 2022

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## Accountability

Definition of accountable in English:

# accountable

Line breaks: ac|count|able

Pronunciation: /əˈkaʊntəb(ə)l/

ADJECTIVE

Required or expected to justify actions or decisions; responsible:

'ministers are **accountable to** Parliament'

'parents cannot be **held accountable for** their children's actions'



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## Accountability vs. Responsibility

### Responsibility



### Accountability

- Ensuring the step and process are completed
- One person is accountable
- Accountable for the work's completion/final decision
- To have ownership of the project
- Directs, validates, approves

Hall & Ferris, 2011, Hall & Ferris, 2024

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## Accountability in Life

- Leading by example
- Allows to you remain consistent with your values
- Prevents bad decisions
- Maintains your integrity
- Provides a system of supports
- Provides an opportunity to learn from mistakes
- Helps in decision making
- Keeps your ego/narcissism in check
- Helps you focus on goals
- Maintains health self-confidence and esteem

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## Accountability in Therapy

- Maintains the integrity of the therapist/client relationship
- Sets appropriate boundaries
- Creates a healthy environment for honesty and non-judgment
- Creates an healthy environment for challenging
- Holding the client accountable for their behavior helps foster positive change
- Help the client manage risk
- Model appropriate accountability
- Holding the client accountable helps them manage better in the real world

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## Accountability in the System

- Consistency in performance and expectations
- Establishing values in your role. Continue to maintain those values
- Empowering others
- Advocacy and support
- Maintaining ethical standards and expectations
- Holding others accountable when they do not hold to ethics/values

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## Conflict!

- Can be individual or group-based
- Shared issues can only be addressed if there is no violence
- If one individual or side is violent, it is NO LONGER CONFLICT. It is violence, abuse, and criminal

Valliere, 2024



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### Interpersonal Violence is not conflict

- The sides are not equal
- Instead of conflict, the dynamics of the abuse are reinforced
- The conflict cannot be considered even as one side has power over the other
  - Abuser maintains a power imbalance
  - Victim is less likely to challenge or maintain conflict with the abuser
  - Abuse, control, manipulation, and other factors are all reinforced

Valliere, 2024

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### High Conflict

- Negative, unhealthy
- Binary attributions
- Rigidity
- Righteousness
- Identity politics
- Exacerbates the issues
- Is more likely associated with violence

Ripley, 2021

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### Conflict Entrepreneurs

- Continued attempts to reinforce the conflict while not pursuing solutions
- Reinforce distortions
- One-sided. Validate complaints
- Contrarian view
- Reinforce the conflict, continue the drama
- Make assumptions
- Confirmation bias

Ripley, 2021

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## Conflict Avoiders

- Engage in attempts to avoid conflict and discussions
- Ignore/ghost the problem
- Accommodate the aggressor
- People pleasing
- Martyr/self-sacrificing
- Passive aggressive



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## Consequences of Avoiding conflict

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resentment</li> <li>• Loneliness</li> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Emotional suppression</li> <li>• Reinforces fear/anxiety</li> <li>• Failure to grow</li> <li>• Failure to set limits</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor leadership/modeling</li> <li>• Accommodation</li> <li>• Estrangement from others</li> <li>• Passive aggression</li> <li>• Fostering distrust</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

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## Expectancies

- These are based on our preconceived notions about a person, argument, or situation
- They often define or set the blueprint for our experience
- Can set people up for uncomfortable emotions
- Can contribute to resentment
- More about how we view people than how they actually are

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### Questions to Ask Yourself

- Of these ideas that influence my worldview,
- Can I understand the difference? How?
- Am I only listening to people who support my view? Why?
- Do I become defensive or feel attacked when someone offers another view?
- Do I attempt to make change?
- Do I feel comfortable being wrong?

Norman, Eyre, & Hynes, 2022



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### Be Aware of How You See Others

- Biases apply to our beliefs, but also how we perceive the beliefs of others
- People are not defined by their beliefs
- Be mindful of the Binary Bias
  - Most people's beliefs are not to the extremes, but somewhere in the middle
- When we are challenged, we often take on one of the extreme stances on things



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### Theologian, Prosecutor, & Politician

- We become **Theologians** when our values and beliefs are threatened.
  - We preach to protect our ideals
- We become **Prosecutors** when we are able to find flaws in another person's arguments
  - We attack inconsistencies, analyses, and facts
- We become **Politicians** when we attempt to win over an audience.
  - We seek approval from the masses

Tetlock, 2002



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## Conflict Can be a Good Thing

- Task Conflict vs. Relationship Conflict
- Task Conflict is a good thing
- Agreeable people can be nice to be around
- Disagreeable people can be skeptical and critical
  - Disagreeable people are important for our own improvement
  - They inspire change
- Be Disagreeable!
  - Be a giver, not a taker

Grant, 2021

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## Being wrong (It's actually a good thing – I swear)

- We are less open to new information if it challenges or conflicts with our worldview/core beliefs
- Triggers a fight or flight response
- Challenges our narcissism
- We need to separate ourselves from our views/argument
  - My stance on \_\_\_\_\_ does not define me
- Retrospective/hindsight analysis
- Re-evaluate and update your beliefs
- Realize when you are too emotionally invested in an area
- Laugh at yourself
- Don't agree to disagree!
- The Myth of the Flip-Flopper

Grant, 2021

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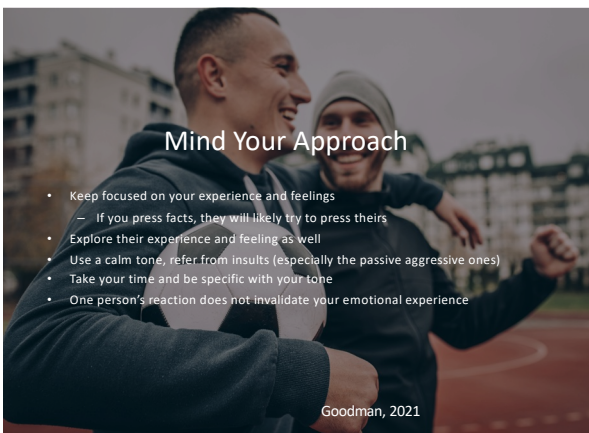
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## Mind Your Approach

- Keep focused on your experience and feelings
  - If you press facts, they will likely try to press theirs
- Explore their experience and feeling as well
- Use a calm tone, refer from insults (especially the passive aggressive ones)
- Take your time and be specific with your tone
- One person's reaction does not invalidate your emotional experience

Goodman, 2021

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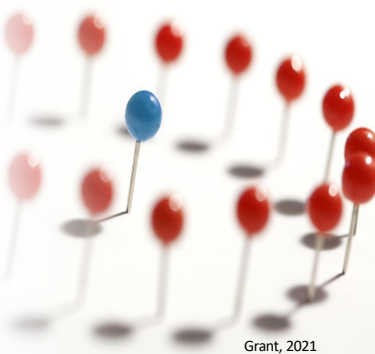
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### Be Mindful of Your Approach

- Avoid taking on an adversarial approach
  - This is a discussion, not combat
  - This is the best way to close off someone else's mind
- Avoid being a logic bully
  - Try to win all of your debates with the best information
  - Essentially shuts the person down and restricts their ability to argue back or discuss their own views



Grant, 2021

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### Focus on the "How" not the "Why"

"Why did you do that?"  
"Why do you think that?"

- Focusing on the why is best way to alienate and lose your argument
- Listen to what people are saying. Ask exploratory questions, not critical questions
- Focus on the How and not the why
  - How did you learn about this?
  - How did you make these views your reality?
- Ask them what it would take to change their minds



Grant, 2021

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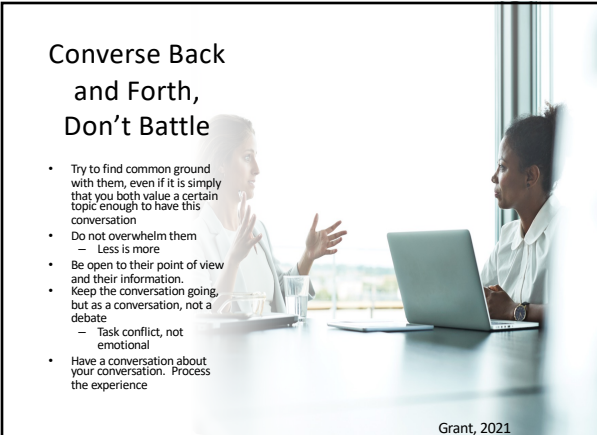
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### Converse Back and Forth, Don't Battle

- Try to find common ground with them, even if it is simply that you both value a certain topic enough to have this conversation
- Do not overwhelm them
  - Less is more
- Be open to their point of view and their information.
- Keep the conversation going, but as a conversation, not a debate
  - Task conflict, not emotional
- Have a conversation about your conversation. Process the experience



Grant, 2021

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