

Gathering for Conflict

Words of the Day

When faced with conflict I (am) ...

Chalice Lighting

We light this chalice to shine on our time together. In its light we celebrate the relationships and understanding we are creating in this place and time. May our sharing be deep. (*Light chalice*)

The Basket

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support

Shared Readings

Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional. *Max Lucado*

I think America is just so in love with conflict. *Chuck Palahniuk*

If you avoid conflict to keep the peace, you start a war inside yourself. *Cheryl Richardson*

Learning to ignore things is one of the great paths to inner peace. *Robert Sawyer*

Difficulties are meant to rouse, not discourage. The human spirit is to grow strong by conflict. *William Ellery Channing*

If you want to bring an end to long-standing conflict, you have to be prepared to compromise. *Aung San Suu Kyi*

The world needs anger. The world often continues to allow evil because it isn't angry enough. *Bede Jarrett*

Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love. *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

The quality of our lives depends not on whether or not we have conflicts, but on how we respond to them. *Tom Crum*

I said peace is sometimes narrowly interpreted; it's the absence of conflict between nations ... But peace is more inherent, more basic to human life, human beings, what we feel about each other, what we feel about life around us and what we see in our future.

Muhammad Yunus

When conflict is reconciled, some hard feelings remain;
This is dangerous.
The sage accepts less than is due
And does not blame or punish;
For harmony seeks agreement
Where justice seeks payment.
The ancients said: "nature is impartial;
Therefore it serves those who serve all." *Tao Te Ching 79*

You can't change what's going on around you until you start changing what's going on within you. *Zig Ziglar*

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, Courage to change the things I can, And wisdom to know the difference. *Reinhold Niebuhr*

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round 1: Share your reflections on conflict and the preparation materials.

Round 2: Share additional thoughts or reflect on what others have shared.

Closing Circle

Extinguishing the Chalice

We extinguish this flame and we remember the warmth of our community, the light of our wisdom, the generosity of our sharing. We keep these in our heart until we meet again.
(*Extinguish the chalice.*)

Song/Chime

Announcements

The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to let the facilitator know if I will be absent or need to quit
- to share with the facilitator the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others
- to do the reading and thinking about the topic ahead of time
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, giving advice, or advocating a specific view
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn and to stay on the "I-message."

Preparation for Conflict

Conflict, in its many forms, is a fact of life. From minor daily aggravations to major long-term tensions within the workplace or family, we are faced with personal conflict in our lives. Some conflicts can be worked out rationally, but others end up generating discord and anger. Some conflicts resolve themselves if we ignore them, but others grow in complexity and intensity if not addressed.

As children, we initially learn how to respond to conflict by watching how adults handle disputes. As we mature, we develop different strategies for coping with disagreements. Some of us thrive on the energy created by conflict and enjoy the clashes. Others hate discord and disagreements and avoid conflict at all costs. Most of us are somewhere between those extremes and our reactions depend on many factors such as these:

- Are we dealing with strangers, co-workers, friends, or family? How important is a continuing relationship with the people involved?
- Is the conflict strictly intellectual, or does it involve one of our emotional sore spots?
- How important is the issue to us? What will the long-term ramifications be?
- Is it a one-time argument, or is it a long-standing source of contention?
- How do the other people involved behave?

Dealing with conflict can have a spiritual dimension. Christianity teaches us to *turn the other cheek*. That is wise advice in many situations that are not especially important or that cannot be resolved. On the other hand, when we encounter harm being done to ourselves or others, avoiding conflict perpetuates injustice. What about the inherent worth of every human being? Should we have respect for those with which we clash, or have they lost the right to our respect when they engaged in discord? And just where does forgiveness and reconciliation fit into the settling of conflicts?

Below are a variety of thoughts for you to consider as you ponder the subject of conflict.

There are three ways of dealing with difference: domination, compromise, and integration. By domination only one side gets what it wants; by compromise neither side gets what it wants; by integration we find a way by which both sides may get what they wish. *Mary Parker Follett*

Conflict is drama, and how people deal with conflict shows you the kind of people they are. *Stephen Moyer*

Every conflict we face in life is rich with positive and negative potential. It can be a source of inspiration, enlightenment, learning, transformation, and growth – or rage, fear, shame, entrapment, and resistance. The choice is not up to our opponents, but to us, and our willingness to face and work through them. *Kenneth Cloke and Joan Goldsmith*

I don't like conflict. *Nigella Lawson*

The more we run from conflict, The more it masters us;
The more we try to avoid it, The more it controls us;
The less we fear conflict, The less it confuses us;
The less we deny our differences, The less they divide us. *David Augsburger*

True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice. *Martin Luther King*

Refuse to fight small battles with petty people. Life is bigger and better than that.
Amy Reese Anderson

My long experience has taught me to resolve conflict by raising the issues before I or others burn their boats. *Alistair Grant*

Conflict cannot continue without your participation. *Wayne Dyer*

Only by creating peace within our own mind and helping others to do the same can we hope to achieve peace in this world. *Geshe Kelsang Gyatso*

Questions to Ponder

1. How was conflict handled in your family of origin? How has this affected the way you handle conflict?
2. Do you find conflict energizing, nerve-wracking, or somewhere in between?
3. Think of times when you avoided a conflict. When was it appropriate and beneficial to not engage? When did it cause underlying problems to grow and become worse?
4. Think of times when you engaged in conflict. When did it help resolve a problem? When did it cause continued anger and divisiveness?
5. What strategies have you found to be helpful in dealing with conflict? What strategies intensify the conflict?
6. What personal traits can you cultivate that will help you deal with conflict more effectively?

Words of the Day

Before coming to the gathering, think of a few words, phrases, or metaphors that describe how you deal with conflict. The prompt for the Words of the Day activity will be to complete this sentence: “When faced with conflict I (am) ...”