

Reflecting Inward Life Coaching

Conflict Resolution:

Setting Boundaries & Enlisting Support

Objectives

1. Define conflict
2. When do conflicts arise for you personally?
3. Acknowledging the hidden fear
4. Better communication techniques
 - a. [People Skills Quiz](#)
 - b. [Emotional Intelligence Quiz](#)
5. Understand and apply steps to set boundaries and to enlist support
 - a. If you are a teen struggling with a parent/guardian
 - b. Any other circumstance

What is conflict?

Disagreeing on an issue is one thing, but when we talk about conflict, we generally think of those situations that are more stressful because they involve our emotions. If you have not done the "[Social Trust](#)" Activity, I would suggest doing so before continuing so that you can get the full benefit of this Activity. As talked about in the "Social Trust" Activity, we are a result of our beliefs and past experiences, and those heavily influence how we perceive a current situation. So step is: try to understand them. Try to remember that the person with whom you are communicating has their own past learning experiences (and trauma) that have created their set of beliefs and perception of the situation. They are responding the only way they know how to and, if they are emotionally charged too, then they are just as afraid as you are about the situation and how it might impact their emotional safety. Ask them questions about their feelings on the subject. "I would like to understand your view and feelings better. Would you please tell me about your experience with _____?" works wonders! How would you respond if you were feeling

threatened and defensive and someone recognized your need to be understood and said that to you? We can't rely on others to bend to our emotional needs, so we need to recognize and control our own so that we can have better outcomes in our communication and interpersonal challenges.

Consider what things commonly lead to conflicts for you personally. What gets you frustrated and starts emotional debates?

Think about what causes these conflicts. What is happening with your thinking? What is your fear? (Remember that fear is not necessarily bad: it is needed to help us physically survive, when necessary. This is a fear that is not threatening your physical life, but your emotional life).

Complete the People Skills Quiz found [here](#). I also recommend taking the Emotional Intelligence Quiz found [here](#). Remember that the point isn't to criticize yourself about your current level of development, but to see where you are doing great and to set some goals and practice for improvement. *Scroll down to see your score on each of the categories and read suggestions for improvement.*

Setting Boundaries & Enlistment for Support

So, you're probably wondering: "what if my conflict is not so much about disagreeing as it is feeling like they don't respect, disregard, or are manipulating me? This is an excellent question! This means that you can respectfully invite them to acknowledge you as a human being by either 1) setting a boundary with them or 2) enlisting them to support you with a personal need. Setting boundaries is when a situation is dangerous or dire and is a firmly set, non-negotiable requirement *stated* with love and concern. Enlistment for support is an opportunity for them to understand you better and an invitation to join forces to make the interaction better in the future. This takes some [vulnerability](#) on your

part, but is generally easier for others to swallow and, thus, has a greater chance for a more positive outcome.

NOTE FOR TEENS:

If you are a teen in a power struggle with a parent, I highly recommend attempting to enlist their support if you feel safe and confident enough to attempt it in your personal circumstances. This takes maturity to do, and some parents will get on board because you are handling it calmly and respectfully. Setting a boundary with a parent as a minor could be seen (from the parent's perspective) as an attack and cause more harm than good. As a minor, our parents have more experience and are charged with doing their personal best to protect our wellbeing. Sometimes, due to their own trauma, they are not able to support us in the ways we need, which leaves us neglected in the things that will help us develop into a balanced adult. Keep working through the activities on my [website](#) to gain personal strength and resilience. If your circumstances are too dire, and you need additional support, see the next section.

FOR EVERYONE:

If you feel **unsafe** in your home, tell a trusted adult immediately. If you are being abused (hit, slapped, punched, shoved, put-down language, name calling, yelled at, etc.) call **1-800-799-SAFE (7233)** or text to **88788** when you are in a safe location. Call **911** in an emergency! Remember that you are valuable regardless of what others say about you or do to you. You deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Chin up! Believe in yourself and your strengths. I believe in you and will support you. ***Please reach out if I am your trusted adult*** ms.heather@reflectinginward.org.

Setting boundaries is ***firmly (but lovingly) non-negotiable*** and goes like this:

1. I am grateful that you _____.
2. When you _____ it makes me feel _____.
3. I need you to _____.
4. If you _____ I need you to _____ in the future.
5. If this is not something that you feel you can do, then _____ (set a reasonable consequence that you can control or can enforce).

Example:

1. Mom, ***I am grateful*** that you want to be involved in your grandchildren's lives.
2. When you come over drunk, it ***makes us and the kids feel*** uncomfortable.
3. I want you to be in their lives. As their grandmother, ***I need you to*** be the grandma who is clear-minded, wise, encourages them, and helps them problem-solve.

4. ***If you*** have been drinking, ***I need you to*** wait until you are completely sober before coming over in the future.
5. ***If this is not something that you feel you can do, then*** you will not be welcome in our home.

Remember to avoid trigger words (i.e. but, however, too, or any generally negative word) or attributing negative personal labels. For example, I didn't call *her* a drunk, I said that she *gets* drunk. I didn't tell her she was a bad person or that she was making bad decisions or was a bad example. I told her what I needed from her with the role of "grandmother." I didn't say she was unsafe or that we felt unsafe (although that is definitely an issue) because it would open another box of worms. Now, if you really are unsafe, tell her that! *"Mom, we do not feel safe when you have been drinking and need for you to stay away if you've been drinking."*

How would I control or enforce this? Keep in mind that I don't need to let her in the house to begin with, and if she becomes loud or aggressive, I could always call the police to enforce due to trespassing or drunk and disorderly conduct. I would do so without warning because warnings backfire many times and make them more aggressive. She was warned when I set the initial boundary.

Now it's time to try it! Where does someone consistently step over the line with one of your personal needs or beliefs?

1.

Be confident in your decision. If you have already worked through your emotional trauma and it is truly something you need to address, you deserve it. You have worked hard to overcome your unconscious fears and be true to yourself. If you're nervous, consider meditating to have an attitude of compassion toward them and/or reviewing your list of personal values and [VIA Character Strengths](#). Go into this conversation only when you are calm.

[Enlisting Support goes like this and ***invites people to understand*** you better:](#)

1. Something that I've learned about myself is that _____.

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2. When this happens I feel like _____ even though I know that's not true.
 3. It would help me out a lot if, whenever _____ you _____.
 4. Is that something you could help me with?

Notice you're not blaming them for anything. You are pointing out a challenge you have and asking them to see your perspective and make a slight adjustment to respect you. If they ask you for an example, be prepared with one. Don't shy away. They need to know that it is actually happening and that they are involved. If you think this makes you look weak, watch [The Power of Vulnerability](#) again! You would be surprised how many people will respect you for opening up and may even open up about their challenges themselves when they feel safe with you.

Example:

1. Diana, I've been thinking about something lately. Something that I've learned about myself is that I struggle when people insist that I do things their way, even when there is no right way.
2. It makes me feel incompetent and like I'm not good enough because my way is not good enough.
3. It would help me a lot if, whenever you feel like something can be done better, you explain how you do it and be willing to discuss other options so we can be on the same page and be more effective in our roles.
4. Is that something you could help me with?

Don't expect immediate, perfect results. You may need to remind them in the beginning by saying something like: "That's a good idea! May I share my reasons for doing it this way?" Give them a boost of positivity first (that's a good idea) because it will help them to see that you are considering their view and sooth their ego (which is fighting for safety and balance also).

Now it's your turn! What have you been struggling with consistently that you could recruit someone's help to understand you and improve the situation?

1.

Write in your journal how things went. What went well? What were the challenges? What would you do differently? What other opportunities are there for application of these techniques or related growth?



Note: Although we may practice and feel confident in our [emotional intelligence](#), some people we encounter may not be able to have either of these conversations, especially if they have a personality disorder. If your situation is one where you feel these recommendations will not be beneficial, please take a look at this article on [managing high conflict interactions](#).