



WHAT ABOUT CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN EVERYDAY PROFESSIONAL LIFE? FROM CONFLICT OPPONENTS TO CONFLICT PARTNERS

First of all: Conflicts are completely normal. They are simply part of life – in every relationship, in everyday life and of course also in the office. People feel, think, want and act differently – within a culture, across national borders and even in virtual spaces. Conflicts can and do happen. Why is this worth mentioning at all? Because many people have a great aversion to conflict. Some avoid confrontation and perhaps prefer to put up with unspoken problems, while others become angry, perhaps even aggressive. In the long run, this can disrupt the atmosphere and unnecessarily cost energy, also in international teams. Professor Amy Edmonson, currently Professor of Leadership at Harvard Business School, found that 89% of US respondents surveyed consider psychological safety in teams to be absolutely essential in order to be able to work innovati-

vely and well together. For this, dealing with conflict openly and constructively is indispensable.

De-escalation: How can we deal with conflict in a meaningful way when things threaten to escalate? Here it is worth looking at Peter Glasl's model, which distinguishes between three phases:

In the **win-win phase** it is still possible to negotiate a constructive outcome so that both sides come out of the conflict well. In the **win-lose phase**, on the other hand, it ends badly for at least one side, for example through dismissal. An

actual **lose-lose conflict**, though ends in disaster for all parties involved.

This model can help us to reflect on what kind of conflict we are heading towards. Thus, in the next step, we can think about how to deal with a potential escalation or what we can do to completely avoid one.

Phase I »win-win«

1. Hardening
2. Polarization & Debate
3. Deeds instead of words

Phase II »win-lose«

4. Image and coalition concerns
5. Loss of face
6. Threat strategies

Phase III »lose-lose«

7. Limited destruction strikes
8. Fragmentation
9. Together into the abyss

Engagement

- » Wenn du wissen willst, was dein Nachbar von dir denkt, so fange Streit mit ihm an. (Afrika) / If you want to know what your neighbor thinks of you, pick a fight with him. (Africa)
- » Lass' der Zunge ihren Lauf, aber halte die Hände im Zaum. (Russland) / Let the tongue run its course, but keep your hands in check. (Russia)

Dynamic

- » Wenn das Herz verletzt ist, dann ist die Sprache stürmischer als der Wind auf dem Meer. (Ägypten) / When the heart is wounded, speech is stormier than the wind on the sea. (Egypt)
- » Eine Wunde, von Worten geschlagen, ist immer schlimmer als eine Wunde, die das Schwert schlägt. (Arabische Länder) / A wound struck by words is always worse than a wound struck by the sword. (Arab countries)
- » Es ist gut, die Wahrheit zu kennen, aber es ist besser, von Palmen zu sprechen. (Arabische Länder) / It is good to know the truth, but it is better to speak of palm trees. (Arab countries)

emotional offen / emotionally open

Here are three general tips:

PAUSE: Anger makes you blind. The brain, or more precisely the amygdala (also called the tonsil nucleus) is constructed to do so. If you're highly emotional, you can't think straight. So take your time when the anger comes.

APPOINTMENT: Make an appointment for the conflict to be aired, only with those involved.

RULES: Every relationship needs rules: No insults. No interruptions. Even more difficult: No insinuations. And for professionals; Listen actively and try to figure out what the other person is actually trying to get across.

It becomes more complex when conflict involves people of different cultures, because the way conflict is dealt with is also culturally shaped. **This model gives an initial overview:**

There is no **ONE** set of instructions on how to resolve conflicts between colleagues from different countries. One aspect is certainly helpful - always and everywhere, namely to check one's own attitude: Why is this or that so particularly important to me? What are the underlying interests and values? And for what exactly?

In a second step, one should be interested in the same questions to one's counterpart, open oneself to new views and let them stand value-free. Then there is room for mutual respect and the possibility of peacefully finding a win-win solution together.