


Can conflict and polarisation be a doorway into growth and connection?



A hands-on training
for transforming inner and outer challenges
into empowerment and discovery

Irina Feygina, PhD

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Process-oriented approach to conflict

- Conflict as a process rather than a set of positions
- Process is the flow of experience, seen and unseen
- Facilitation is to follow and bring awareness to process
 - Within individual, group, field
- What is unfolding and trying to emerge?
- The intention is awareness, presence, and empowerment
- And deepening of relationship

What is at the root of conflict?

□ Conflicting identities

- Primary – known, close to our sense of self or mission
- Secondary – less known, mysterious, marginalized, rejected, taboo

□ Secondary likely to come in as a disturbance

- Examples: Relationship, body, dreams, altered states
- Identify the disturbance, its energy
- Pick it up, reclaim it, use it for what you need (e.g. in challenges)
- Within the disturbance is an ally, and an important part of yourself

Working with conflict

- The solution lies within the problem
 - Shift from focus on outside to inner experience
 - Finding the other in yourself
 - Every conflict is an opportunity to discover and integrate
 - Challenging work, requires commitment and repetition
 - Change your relationship to what is difficult
 - The situation may shift

Working with conflict

- How to learn from conflict?
 - See the process, not only stable positions and outcomes
 - Train in ways of discovering covert information
 - Signals, channels, feedback awareness
 - Value all voices, states of awareness, and frameworks of reality
 - Deep Democracy. Need central and marginal experiences to be heard
 - Notice interconnection and relationship between the parts

Working with conflict

- Importance of working creatively on conflict
 - Conflict and threat create rigidity and loss of creativity
 - Engage our capacity under stress and pressure
 - Discovering deeper drivers of behavior, improving approach
 - Maintain resilience in the face of long-term conflict
 - Avoid burn-out

Phases of conflict

1. Only aware of self and own experience
2. Engaged in polarized conflict with the 'other'
3. Able to take both perspectives and become the 'other'
4. Detachment, able to see and support the entire system
 - Conflict also has an underlying process
 - Have options in conflict, not only polarization
 - Identifying phase is helpful: support it, don't force change

Power and Rank

- ❑ Rank: the power we have relative to one another in relationships, groups, community, and the world
- ❑ Some kinds of rank are earned, while others are unearned: acquired through birth, or by membership in a particular race, class, gender, etc.
- ❑ Privilege: the benefits and advantages that come from one's rank
- ❑ A great deal of conflict comes from being unaware of one's rank, and/or identifying with one's low rank while failing to recognize (and misusing) one's high rank

Power and Rank

□ Types of rank

- Contextual – position within the current situation
- Social/economic/political – position within social hierarchies
- Institutional – position within an organization or group
- Psychological – emotional skills, communication, awareness
- Spiritual – resilience, perspective, detachment

Power and Rank

- Effects of rank on perception and interaction
 - Rank comes with signals and communication style
 - High rank: stereotyping and decreased awareness
 - Low rank: attunement, individuation, vigilance
 - Cannot hide your rank
 - But may be invisible to the person who possesses it
- Power marginalized due to misuse; Need to befriend
- Leadership: High institutional **and** psychological rank

Escalation

- ❑ Inconsistency between what you say and what you do
- ❑ Denying accusations
- ❑ Being unaware of rank
- ❑ Stereotyping
- ❑ Not reacting when you are hurt
- ❑ Not reading feedback, continuing to attack
- ❑ Indirectly hurtful – irony, sarcasm, gossiping
- ❑ Third parties and coalitions
- ❑ Condescending or patronizing

De-escalation

- ❑ Notice inconsistencies in your behavior and explore them
- ❑ Try to pick up 1% or more in the other person's accusations
- ❑ Take your side strongly; then take the other person's side
- ❑ Facilitate, support self and other
- ❑ Bring in your feelings: fear, neediness, hurt, jealousy, rage
- ❑ Notice your desire for revenge and be honest about it
- ❑ Notice when you are truly not interested in relationship
- ❑ Are my histories, experiences, issues coming up?
- ❑ Notice why you are escalating, or having trouble de-escalating
- ❑ Notice temporary resolutions and acknowledge them

Best practices

- ❑ Go deeply into conflict with awareness and focus; don't avoid it
- ❑ Learn to take your own side strongly and congruently
- ❑ Train in making clear, complete accusations
- ❑ Switch roles; develop fluidity
- ❑ Listen; acknowledge; work with emotions
- ❑ Catch places of high energy (hot spots) – slow down and explore
- ❑ Catch places of momentary resolution – feel, acknowledge, pause
- ❑ Learn to create space / detachment / ability to observe

Questions

Communication: Roles

- ❑ Individuals, couples, groups, and institutions create roles
- ❑ People step into those roles and identify with them
- ❑ Roles are more fluid than we perceive them
- ❑ We can step out of our roles and into others' roles
- ❑ Many can fill a role; a person is always more than a role
- ❑ Some roles are silent or unseen - bring them out
- ❑ A deeper form of relating and listening

Communication: Roles

□ Role switching:

- Find the other in yourself
- Experience being in another role
- Must be genuine, no irony or mockery

□ Benefits

- Gain access to the perspective of the other role
- Learn what moves the other side, what works and doesn't work
- Inform communication/connection through this learning
- Create fluidity, get unstuck from your role (e.g. break ups)
- Prevent burn out

Role Switching Exercise

Working on Disturber Exercise

Working on disturbing energy exercise

- Think of difficult situation
- Identify what is most disturbing for you about the case
- Explore its energy, get to know it, experience it in yourself
- What character has that energy? How can they be an ally?
- Use that energy to work on your life challenges or the disturbing situation itself

Thank you!