



Handout 8-2: Tips for Transforming Conflict Into Partnerships

Conflict stems from the following assumptions:

- Moralism is the cause of conflict (right versus wrong).
- Conflict escalates because of the absence of communication, trust and relationships.
- Passion (the strongest feelings surfacing) sustains conflict.
- Shame is a powerful stimulant for conflict.
- The problem with conflict is our difficulty in responding to it.
- Conflict forces most of us beyond our comfortable limits.
- Conflicts are usually resolved in three ways: 1) by power — who has more power; 2) by rights — determining who is right; and 3) by interest — reconciling the underlying interests of both parties.

The following provides some helpful tips to transform conflict into partnerships:

- Transformation takes place when the parties encounter the one question that separates them and when parties recognize the other's usefulness.
- Collaboration can resolve conflict by reconstructing the way people connect with one another; it helps chart the future. Collaboration implies a relationship. Collaboration can become a source of power.
- Physical and emotional safety must exist. If partnerships are going to be built, safety is essential. It is important then to establish some agreements about how you will relate with one another. Worker safety must always be the primary focus when addressing potentially conflictual situations.
- Focus on future planning, not past events ("What will we do now?").
- Conflicts do not need to be resolved in order to move forward.
- Everyone has a part; each is "responsible" and "powerful." Responsibility and power are like two sides of the same coin – you can't have one without the other. If we are going to ask the father to have responsibility, then he will also need to have power.
- Sustain efforts to bridge apparent incompatibility of positions.
- Achieve flexibility (in behaviors, in courses of action, in responses, etc.).
- Keep these three keys in mind: vision, balanced power and relational thinking
 - To have vision is to have a common goal.
 - Abstain from the exercise of power, and work toward shared power, which is dynamic and makes the best of all resources in the interest of the whole.
 - Learn to pay attention to the needs of others for the common goal.