

Conflict 101

What is conflict?

A perceived impediment or threat to one's needs, goals, or values.

The opposite of conflict is peace, which is...

A perceived satisfaction of one's basic needs, including the opportunity to pursue one's goals and embody one's values.

The concepts of conflict and peace have a tit-for-tat relationship just like any other concepts that share duality. For us to understand the nuances to keeping peaceful relationships and limiting the conflict that occurs, we must delve into the basics of human behavior.

Psychological Needs & Conflict

To survive and thrive, human beings require the fulfillment of a few basic needs. Physically, humans need food, water, temperature regulation, and security. We're also constantly looking to satisfy a set of basic psychological needs.

There have been many theories of basic psychological needs espoused over the last century, each identifying various potential needs and calling them by various names. Pulling from this philosophical and scientific literature on psychological needs, there are six psychological needs that, when undermined, consistently cause conflict.

The 6 Basic Psychological Needs

Security

- Physical
- Emotional/Spiritual

Security is a fundamental need because it provides a sense of stability and predictability. At its core, security ensures our physical safety and well-being. Without it, we would constantly be in a state of high alert. Knowing that we are safe allows us to relax and focus on other aspects of life, such as building relationships, pursuing goals, and enjoying what keeps us satisfied. A secure environment frees up cognitive thinking that would otherwise be spent on worrying about potential threats, enabling us to be more effective in other areas of our life.

Affiliation

- Inclusion/Belonging
- Connection

The need for social connections and relationships is the bedrock of civilization, family, culture and society. Having meaningful relationships provides emotional support and confirmation of who we are and want to be. Friends, family, and loved ones can offer comfort, advice, and a sense of belonging. Feeling connected to others helps us feel like we are part of a community. This sense of belonging is essential for our mental and emotional well-being. We are inspired and motivated by people we respect and have reverence for, they help us grow personally and professionally.

Self-Actualization

- Self-Esteem/Self-Respect
- Self-Worth/Significance

Self-actualization is important because it represents the fulfillment of our potential and the realization of our true selves. It encourages continuous personal development. A sense of accomplishment brings satisfaction and a sense of purpose, which we all seek at one point in our lives. When we become self-actualized individuals, we tend to be more resilient in the face of challenges. When we are true to ourselves, we can form deeper and more meaningful connections with others.

Independence

- Autonomy
- Sense of Control/Agency
- Choice

Independence gives us the freedom to make our own choices and decisions, fostering a sense of control over our lives. This autonomy is essential for personal freedom and self-determination. But, as we know, freedom often comes with a cost. Successfully managing tasks and challenges on our own reinforces our belief in our abilities. The greater the sacrifice, the greater the reward. When we are self-reliant, we can contribute more

effectively to our relationships and support others without feeling overly dependent. On the flip side, it can alienate us from compromising and being interdependent in a relationship.

Pleasure Seeking

- Stimulation
- Interest

Pleasure seeking contributes to our overall well-being and happiness. Engaging in pleasurable activities helps reduce stress and anxiety. It provides a break from daily routines and allows us to relax and recharge. Positive experiences and activities can lift our mood and counteract negative emotions. Many pleasurable activities involve social interactions; shared enjoyment can deepen bonds.

Moral Pursuits

- Growth
- Purpose/Meaning
- Goal Achievement/Progress

Morality helps guide our behavior and interactions with others, that is meant to contribute to a well-functioning society and personal well-being. This guidance helps us navigate social situations and make choices that align with our values. Adhering to moral values fosters a sense of self-respect and integrity. When we act in accordance with our moral beliefs, we feel a sense of pride. Moral values teach us to take responsibility for our actions and their impact on others. Living a moral life can provide a sense of purpose and meaning.

