

EVERYONE CAN WIN audio script edition

Skill 7: Willingness to resolve

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Am I ready to move beyond personal issues towards forgiveness?

This is skill number 7 Willingness to resolve

It's from the book, *Everyone can Win*, about handling conflict constructively.

Willingness to resolve is sometimes it's all you need for the conflict to dissolve.

Can you remember a time when you were so hurt, angry or resentful that you didn't want to fix the problem? Perhaps there's someone in your life right now who angers you so much you'd rather have nothing to do with them. What stops you from wanting to resolve such a conflict?

Are any of these relevant?

- How unfair the other person has been.
- How bad their behaviour was.
- Your need for self-respect. Or is it pride?
- Are you still justifying that you were right and they were wrong?
- Do you need an apology first?
- Do you see your revenge as restoring some justice to the situation?



- Have you been too deeply hurt?
- Are you just too angry to even think about forgiving them?
- Or perhaps, your resentment is so old and deep you wouldn't know how to let it go?

There are benefits in all these positions, our good reasons for not letting go. However, becoming *willing* to resolve is a key step in conflict resolution. Sometimes it's all you need to find the way through. But it's not always easy to get there.

We need to understand the benefits in hanging onto the problem and then move beyond them.

By keeping our distance, are we avoiding a difficult issue we don't want to know about? So we're tempted to leave the stand-off as it is. Willingness to resolve can begin with a quiet moment exploring *our pay-off for not resolving it*, and compare it to the pay-offs if we do solve the problem: these might include relief, deeper understanding, feeling better about ourselves, or perhaps some new perspectives. You might move closer to the other person. But then again, this might already be a finished relationship. You might have already avoided the other person for years, but if you haven't handled your willingness to resolve, you're actually still connected to them. There are strings between you both that still pull and sometimes yank you around. Dealing with your unwillingness to resolve can bring real completion to a finished relationship.

For things to change, first I must change.

It does not have to happen face to face, but it does require an internal shift. How might we get there?

Hurt and anger are like two sides of the one coin. We'll often resist examining the underside. To come to a place of peace if we're still angry, we may need to experience our pain; if we're still hurting we may need to find our anger. Is it hiding in cold spite or resentment? There is a grim satisfaction in being very cold to people with whose values we deeply disagree. Have we over-simplified by pigeonholing them as the 'baddie'? Can we acknowledge the other person's full range



of qualities, including the good. If we can, we soften our resistance to their viewpoint, even if it's not our own.

Sometimes it's difficult to admit that we, too, have a part in the conflict, and we too have put some logs on that fire. No matter how right we think we are, or how terrible they seem, we are part of the scene. Maybe we handled a situation badly, treated someone with a lack of respect, or hurt someone so much they felt that they had to retaliate. Can we concede our own faults as well as theirs? My own overwhelming and unthinking need to rescue has robbed more than one person of their self-respect around me. I need to acknowledge my deep regret in causing another person that sort of pain. On our way to becoming willing to resolve we may need to recognise how we've hurt the other person. Our apology might be another step towards our own forgiveness of the way they have also wronged us. Sometimes we will need to forgive ourselves.

Would I rather be right or happy?

How important is being right compared with resolving the problem? Sometimes we keep hammering the point to defend our position or our actions. Maybe we can't see the cost of hanging on to our position so hard. And the cost may be financial as well as emotional. It might be better, and better late than never, to just to 'get off it.' It's not giving in - we are just not justifying our stance anymore. We're closing the debate. Your willingness to resolve says: 'You believe this, I believe that. I'll do what I have to, you'll do what you have to. So be it.'

People caught up in resentment are often defending against a blow they feel we've struck to their self-esteem. They'll sound self-righteous, while underneath they feel rejected or betrayed. They may be quite vicious in their self-defence. If you can see through to what's really going on for them, you may begin to see them as just 'mistaken,' or 'vulnerable' rather than 'malicious.' Seeing through their aggressive façade makes it easier for us to forgive them.

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WHEN I FORGIVE, I FREE MYSELF.

Forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting. If someone has hurt, offended you, you're unlikely to forget it. If you've been abused, of course you never will. The best you may ever achieve is to try to understand what motivated them, look without emotion at the flaws in their character and forgive them for not knowing or being able to do better. We move from "How dare you! You should not have!" to "You did. That was so. I've fully acknowledged my own pain. Now I'm moving on."

That way you free yourself from continuing to suffer. Until you do, you remain trapped by the other person's offensive behaviour and it continues to hurt you.

Certainly, you may never want to put yourself in the same situation again. Once you have forgiven them, it's much easier to make wise decisions about this. Perhaps you'll find some other strategies to sort out the issues between you both. You may want to limit how and how frequently you relate to them. Perhaps you'll decide it's best to close down all contact. Ending a relationship because it's not healthy or supportive for you is quite different from ending it out of anger and resentment.

Forgiving is really up to you alone. It can't be dependent on what they do. After all, the other party may believe they've done nothing wrong, or they may no longer be accessible to you. We cannot wait for them to change.

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Sasha

Sasha was well into her thirties and desperately wanting to marry and have children before it was too late. When her boyfriend ended their two-year relationship, she was devastated and absolutely furious with him. He'd announced he was unable to commit to a future with her. She had invested two years and all her emotional energy in the relationship. Months later, she would wake in the night, rehearsing in her mind all the things she wanted to scream at him. One day in tears she cried, 'I wish I could forgive him and move on, but I'm so angry I can't seem to let go.'

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Sasha was in fact taking a first step in forgiving him. She was getting clear that she was *willing to become willing* to forgive him. Primarily she wasn't taking this first step for him, but for herself. The alternative – staying locked into her pain and anger – was excruciating.

Stephanie Dowrick in her book, *Forgiveness and Other Acts of Love*, writes:

'Let's suppose those first stages (of forgiveness) go something like this: forgetting about the matter some of the time; not actively wishing the other person harm; feeling that you are able to be patient with yourself... Wanting forgiveness to come and waiting for it may be all that one can do.'

'The process of assimilating our scars may take months, years, decades. The original events will not have changed, but you will.'

Forgiving the other person hasn't got a lot to do with the words we say. In fact, we might not say anything at all. Forgiving is a shift in attitude that arises from ourselves, an inner shift that comes from the heart. Of course, we will not come to this



acceptance right away. We will need time to withdraw, incubate, get angry and allow ourselves to experience our pain. That's how we heal our wounds. We may not be able to shorten this natural process.

Although we might not be able to condone the other person's actions, we might be able to accept that we all have imperfections and faults, sometimes major ones, that come with being human. It can help to try to understand what motivated them to behave as they did. Sasha needed to take into account the reasons behind her boyfriend's inability to commit, sense the weight on him of his history of abandonment. His rejection of her actually had very little to do with her. Though her desperation to have a baby did play a part. Her body clock ticking away was something she just had to accept. It was a given in the situation.

I've known of family members who have maintained a stand-off of mutual resentment and haven't spoken to each other for twenty years. Neither will accept an invitation if they know the other person will be coming. Each is waiting for the other to make the first step. They think they're apart but in fact, their mutual resentment locks them together both emotionally and energetically. It's sadly ironic really.

As long as we say, 'I can't let go until they do', we're still locked in to them, whether the other person is physically present or not. Your forgiveness frees you. Sometimes your changes may free the other person to change, too, but most important, you're no longer locked into the past. Our relationships are constantly changing and that changing relationship changes us as well as the other person.

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I met **Leung** some time ago. His story went like this:

He'd moved to Australia mainly to escape from an impossible relationship with his mother. Over the years they'd had some fierce scenes and very bitter feelings. He was the second son in the family and he believed he wasn't as clever at school as his older brother. He felt his mother always compared him to his brother and that he, the second son, was second best in her book. For twelve months they had not even spoken to each other on the phone.

One day, in a personal development workshop he unlocked some of his resentment about all this. I remember it was a very significant shift for him. He stopped defending against her disappointment in him, and let his pain and anger about that just be so for him. He saw that she'd been trying to help him, but she just wasn't doing it very well.

He arrived home late that night and within minutes his phone rang. It was his mother calling from Singapore. She was ready to talk again. Normally he'd freeze up on her, but his recent insights helped him to accept the love she was trying to offer.

Why did she ring just then? Had she intuitively responded to the work he'd just been doing on himself? He had let go of his anger. Something had changed when he changed.

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INFORMED OR INFLAMED?

Have you ever noticed that a particular person or characteristic really annoys you, but doesn't really annoy others? Have you watched someone get really irritated by something that doesn't particularly distress you at all? Negative views and strong reactions are usually filtered through pain or anger deep inside us. We are looking out at the world through 'coloured glasses' of rights and wrongs, likes and dislikes, past experiences and upbringing. We can see the distortion when others' reactions are more extreme than the situation calls for. When you're the one who's furious, it all seems perfectly justified.

There may be someone in the office who talks a great deal about themselves. Others in the office may simply think: 'There she goes, showing off again. I wonder why she needs to do that?' They're not unduly influenced by unconscious prejudices, though they disapprove and may even express their dislike of how much she talks. But a woman who grew up under the shadow of a more attractive and outgoing sister is hooked by the situation. It plays on her unresolved jealousies. She just can't stand how the office chatterbox behaves. The situation inflames her, rather than informing her. This offers us a useful rule of thumb.

We can ask ourselves:

'Am I informed or am I inflamed?'

When a situation inflames or angers you, this tells you as much about you as about them. When your response is relatively free of undue negative feelings, the situation has merely informed you of a problem. If that's the case, you only have the difficulty itself to deal with. Whenever you are inflamed, ask yourself, why do you respond that way? The more someone irritates you, the more you know you have something to learn about yourself in this.

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Unexamined anger blocks our willingness to resolve. We will find it easier to let go, once we understand the fundamentals of *unconscious projection*.



Projection occurs when our own unconscious thoughts and feelings appear to us to be lodged in the minds and behaviour of others, not in ourselves. We push something out of our awareness and see it, instead, coming towards us from others. Many conflict situations present an opportunity to examine our own projections.

Some psychologists find it useful to work with the idea that our personality is a complete package of human characteristics – the full spectrum of human potential, the good, the bad and the ugly. Our upbringing allows us to be conscious of only a part of who we are. The famous psychiatrist, Dr Carl Jung, used the word ‘persona’ to describe these conscious aspects of personality. Whether we judge these aspects as good or bad, the significant point about our persona is that it is known to us. It is made up of things that we accept to be true about ourselves. The persona is our self-image.

Jung used the term ‘shadow’ to describe the unconscious part of ourselves – our unconscious desires, feelings, intentions, abilities or beliefs. It is the potential that has not unfolded: aspects of ourselves that we are not ready to know about; our emotional responses that are too painful to fully experience. It also includes the opposites of all our conscious wants, dislikes and values. It includes abilities or talents we are not ready to accept or express.

Few of us acknowledge all the bad things about ourselves, and few of us have enough self-esteem to acknowledge all the good. Positive or negative when unaccepted, they become the shadow side of our personality.

Our shadow follows us around. It still shows up, but indirectly. Our unacknowledged anger can work like this: we accidentally spill tea over the person we are angry with. Consciously we certainly didn’t mean to do that. Or we may inadvertently comment how we hate red on a day that they are wearing that colour. Our aggression may be passive and quite unseen by us. But we’re expressing it by ignoring, excluding and avoiding someone in particular. Others may be much more aware of our repressed feelings than we are. We often have a very misleading self-image. We think we are being kind while unconsciously we are being cruel.

There’s an aggressive element in all of us. It’s much less dangerous when we can let ourselves be aware of it and examine it when it is triggered, and then hold it in check with our other caring, ethical and law-abiding qualities.



When you are inflamed rather than informed – look within. You are probably caught in a projection from your shadow. It’s an opportunity to become more aware. So consider its hook, the symptom and the projection.

The hook: the behaviour in the other person that is inflaming you, in itself a neutral event, though you’re not feeling that way about it at all. It will be something they said or did that draws your anger. Or it might just be a mannerism, a style of relating, a repeated behaviour, that rubs you up the wrong way. Whatever it is, you’ve been hooked– like a fish.

The symptom: that’s your own high emotions, usually variations on anger and hurt.

The projection: the unconscious material, your shadow, that is causing this strong reaction in you. That’s the bit to look at really carefully.

It can help you break free of the projection if you name the part of their behaviour that particularly inflames you, the hook, and describe in a neutral way. ‘They didn’t want to go on holidays with me.’ ‘They didn’t speak to me at the party’, ‘They said my report was sloppy.’ The hook may be just a particular look in the other person’s eye, an innocent gesture or unconsidered action. Focus on of the aspect of their behaviour that’s upsetting you and just describe it without adding any emotions.

Next consider why that might arouse such anger or resentment in you. Find reasons that have to do with you rather than them. If you’re inflamed, you’re projecting something extra onto the current situation. Something more than that what is inherently there. You won’t know what that is until you do a little self-exploration. It’s absolutely worthwhile. You can’t get to the future while the past is hooking you. How will you unhook? Look for what the projected material is really about. Here are three possible processes that feed our projections:

NUMBER ONE IS Unresolved personal history.

An event may trigger our emotional baggage – unresolved stress or anger from a similar situation in our past. We all carry some emotional scars.

Here are some examples:



- Your job requires you to deal professionally with someone who is abusing a child. Anyone would demand justice and protection for the child, but you are so distressed you miss some important facts of the case. The situation triggered memories of abuse in your own childhood.
- Your boss criticises everyone's work. Nobody likes it, but you become particularly anxious and depressed. Did you face destructive criticism some time in your past? Do they remind you of a teacher who really had it in for you?
- An intimate relationship breaks up and your distress and depression seem bottomless. Grief in this situation is natural, but you have an extreme reaction. What are you remembering? Abandonment by a parent through divorce or death are good candidates for the primary cause. If you didn't deal completely with the distress then, it is highly likely to resurface now.

These examples might give you some idea of the sorts of unconscious material you might need to go looking for if you're having an extremely emotional reaction during a conflict.

NUMBER TWO IS ... Suppressed needs.

You can become excessively inflamed in a situation where you haven't recognised that you have a need that's not being met. Say, when someone lets you down you become unreasonably angry or deeply hurt. Perhaps a friend cancels an activity you planned to do together. Suddenly you notice how much the outing actually meant to you. Is your need for companionship undernourished? Perhaps you are inflamed because someone else takes the credit for work you have done. Are you underestimating your own need to be recognised? When we are unaware of our needs underlying a situation, we are unreasonably inflamed when they are not supported.

The THIRD factor that can feed our projections is Unacceptable qualities or characteristics.

Do you see in another person a quality that you would not allow in yourself? You may be projecting your own *unacceptable* qualities onto others. We've forced many aspects of ourselves out of awareness as we try to comply with the rules imposed by



our upbringing. Anger, hatred, jealousy, or destructiveness, or even vanity, pride, greed or selfishness are all good candidates for suppression. Arrogance is another. Wherever you go, you'll meet those exact qualities in the people you deal with – and it will probably make you wild. Or perhaps, feel contempt when you see it unchecked in others. Our work is to come to terms with these exact qualities within ourselves, notice we have them too, though we've learnt to keep them in check. Only then can we be informed rather than inflamed when someone else is expressing them without the careful disciplines we've learned.

So what sort of thing should we go looking for if we suspect that we've been inflamed by qualities in the other person that we'd never permit in ourselves? Here's some examples:

- You feel alienated from someone who frequently explodes in anger. You yourself would never let loose in such a volatile way. Is it worth asking yourself how you deny or push away your own anger?
- You are critical of someone who flaunts their sexuality. Are you jealous? If so, what is that jealousy based on? Do you suppress your own sexuality?
- Someone speaks to you disrespectfully. You react with a curt remark. You don't think you are being unreasonable, but others say it is out of proportion. It's time to look within.

If you have children of your own, they'll present you with hooks on which to hang your projections almost every day! Perhaps your teenager speaks rudely to you. You react with shadow material flaring up. They quickly become aggressive and cut you off. It doesn't take much for them to feel alienated from you at this crucial time. Their rebelliousness means that now you've much less scope to influence the important values they're in the process of developing. As parents we need to become particularly alert to our personal issues and set them aside when dealing with our youngsters.

Your unwillingness to accept your own good qualities can make you project ideal virtues onto another. You put them on a pedestal. The loved person is idolised – until the day that the scales of projection fall from your eyes. Don't get me wrong,



I'm not against romantic love, I'm all for it. Just not the sort that comes from projection.

So, whenever you are inflamed rather than merely informed by a situation consider your own projections onto it. These may be fed by:

- Some unresolved personal history, or
- Suppressed needs that have just been obstructed, or
- Unacceptable qualities, qualities that you would never allow yourself to express.

It's always worth weeding the garden of our own mind, quite apart from considering what the other person may or may not have done. It will help us take charge of ourselves and respond more appropriately.

If we can go further and treat each conflict as something we can use for our growth, we add meaning to all our major life events. Blame, resentment and regret hold us back from taking this ultimate responsibility. Your learning may be as straightforward as recognising where you have contributed to a problem, or you might begin to see a place where you don't consciously respect each aspect of yourself enough. Our life, and especially our conflicts, offer us opportunity after opportunity for us to find our hidden self. We have to see our limitations before we can move beyond them.

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TRY THIS 'HOT BUTTON' EXERCISE

The aim of it is to explore your own projections and discover why you over-react to certain people. What 'hot buttons' do they seem to trigger off in you? Something in their behaviour is not just information, something you wish they didn't do, you get inflamed! If you're inflamed rather than just informed, you are projecting a personal issue onto the situation. Get clear about that and your response will become more



appropriate. Whatever it is you need to fix about their behaviour, it's better done without your over-reaction.

After you've listened to these instructions you may want to turn off this audio and try it out.

Imagine someone who might irritate or upset you if you were with them for a long time. What if you were stranded on a desert island together? What 'hot buttons' of yours are they likely to trigger? The facts of how they behave are less important for this exercise than what we 'dump' onto them from our own subconscious. You can choose from someone you work with, a person you live with or close friend or a parent or child. You can make notes as you go.

Here are the questions.

- Consider one quality of theirs or a particular way of behaving that sometimes gets on your nerves?
- Can you describe exactly what the problem about that is for you? What feeling does it arouse in you or what can't you do around them when they act this way? The trick is to focus totally on your own reaction, name it. You might want to write down several thoughts until you have just the right one.
- Now look at why *you* feel this way, not because the other person is right or wrong. Just choose reasons that only concern you. Your answer will probably fall into one of these three processes we've been discussing:
 - your own unresolved personal history;
 - a need you have that is squashed when you're around them;
 - or is it a quality or way of behaving that you don't permit in yourself?

What's your personal reason for your irritation?

- Next, summarise these thoughts in an 'I' statement. Now, this statement is only for yourself. It's about you becoming more consciously aware of your



own issues that are triggered around them. It's not for you to deliver it the other person. Here's a sample:

I find it difficult to follow the rules. I can't block off my emotions and fall in with everyone else. I was controlled by my father and I can't stand it when anyone else tries to put boundaries on me. I have the desire to run. I must feel free.

Take some time to construct your own.

And then consider:

- Does it give you some new insights into yourself?
- Does it suggest you do things a bit differently?
- Does it change your attitude to this person or at least to that sort of behaviour a bit?
- Do you now feel a bit softer, perhaps less judgemental towards them?
- Complete the exercise by finding something you can acknowledge them for, something that makes you glad they are in your life?

Whenever we're relating to someone else, we do better when we pay at least as much attention to what is going well between us, as to what frustrates us. We're getting it right when these are balanced. But it might be very hard to do until we examine the personal issues that arise for us when we're around them.

You can repeat this exercise with various people in your life, particularly those that often annoy you.

If you're inflamed, rather than just informed – look within.

If you're inflamed, there's always a bit of work to do on yourself first before you get things out of proportion.



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WHEN AN ISSUE JUST WON'T SHIFT,

what do we do?

We all store many unresolved issues accumulated over our lifetime, locked away in our bodies. Even the traumas faced by our parents and grandparents may have their mark within our psyches. The big ones are passed on from generation to generation. Our own and our inherited issues become our own personal holding patterns and they are shaping our interactions in present time. They form the constellation of who we are – our particular personality.

Of course, we try to get on with life as best we can, and so we suppress old hurts and shove them down out of awareness. But that might mean that we're time bombs awaiting emotional discharge! If the current situation holds enough similarities to something painful in our history, old emotions can flood our awareness. They overwhelm reason and even common politeness. These stored emotions attached to our history feed into the stories we create about the current situation and may take us a long way from current reality.

Whenever the situation is ambiguous, we'll reference similar previous experiences to reduce confusion and find the similarities. Unacknowledged emotions misguide our perceptions, and behaviours. Out comes our defensive rebuke, our inflamed response. Are we able to have it, feel it and then move right along? If we can, the situation has not triggered much of our back story.

However, when our emotions are profound, it's a profound invitation to turn within. Do we have the courage? We won't always.

But could we be willing to be willing? What would that mean? Perhaps we can lean right into our wounded place, non-defended, open to where and who we are for now. Perhaps we just come to terms with our limitations. We're not flogging ourselves or demanding we change. We are owning our personal constellation of flows, resistances and sensitivities.

We may hold a wound that will not heal. It guides us instead in directions that are safe and protective of our psyches. If we've been traumatically uprooted in our lives, we may never again allow ourselves to re-root and to really belong anywhere or with anyone again. I was traumatised around food as a child. I'd love to let it go, but it won't let go of me, at least not yet. These holding patterns are us. They have their



own validity. We may not be ready, and sometimes we'll never be ready to resolve this piece of the puzzle of all of who we are.

As we look deeply inside ourselves at a wounded unresolved place, it may change, and it may not. Perhaps our attention takes it one step further in its journey towards completion, but no further. We know it's enough for today and we must let that wound just *be*. Sometimes the scar from a held trauma softens over time, but it may take many years to do so. The evolving over years is then what's important, allowing it to unfold at its own pace.

Other people can help by being a witness to our journey – if we can trust them enough. We'll need to know that they are willing to be with us, where we are, and not insist we move when we know we're not ready. We'll need to know that they will quickly back off when they've unintentionally trodden on our very tender places. But we might have to remind them.

Others will unwittingly trigger these scars we hold. Try not to build a big case against them when they do. Just respect your own fragilities, your hidden hurts and gently look within to know yourself a little better.

Can *we* be an honouring witness for others too? Do we find another person very opinionated or too easily offended? Can we let most of it pass by? And honour them as a work in progress too?

If we live with a teenager, we need to recognise that they are just at the beginning of their road to self-acceptance. They're still caught in the moment by the pain of relating to their world. Can we accept our work colleague who one day is friendly and the next snaps at us? They are dealing with inner troubles that have little to do with us. Can our willingness to resolve be an open door for others to come back into relationship with us when they are ready?

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WHEN THEY'RE NOT WILLING TO RESOLVE

How will we best manage that? For smooth resolution of conflict both parties need to be willing to resolve. We have discussed ways in which you can bring yourself to that state of mind. Frequently your greatest challenge will be to guide the other person to that point too. Although you might understand that they have their own suppressed needs, unacknowledged personal history or unacceptable qualities, it will rarely be appropriate for you to point this out.

To get a better response provide a better stimulus.

Therefore, consider these alternatives:

Correct your part of the problem

When someone else is projecting onto you, you probably have a part. How are you *hooking* their projection? To clean up your own act, it's always worth looking at what is behind someone's complaint about you. The important thing is to adjust what needs correcting while maintaining a sense of proportion. There is no value in punishing yourself with guilt because you have upset them. The largest part of their inflammation is their problem – you're just correcting your piece of it.

Is there something you'd like to apologise for?

There's no need to grovel, but you may want to check if there's something you'd be OK not to do again, if you know it distresses them. Obviously, it's not the whole of the problem, but the apology may help them move on.

Look at how you come across.

Ask yourself these questions:

- How am I using my power? Do I disempower or empower them? Am I playing victim, persecutor or rescuer roles? Did I offer clean choices, or did I make threats?
- Did I manage my own feelings first? Is my own shadow in the way of resolution?



- Did I really listen to them? Did I block the flow of empathy with something I said?
- Did I use ‘charged’ language or did I use ‘clean’ messages?

Look at where misinterpretation seems to have occurred.

- Did we misinterpret each other’s position, motives, requirements, values, feelings?
- How can I clarify the issues?
- Do I need a mediator to help with this?

Put yourself in their shoes

- How might they be feeling?
- What could be their needs and concerns around the issue?
- Do they need to save face?
- What could make it worthwhile for them to want to resolve the situation?
- What needs of theirs might be met if it were resolved?

Try a positive statement

For example: ‘I’d really like to clear this up, how about you?’ Use it as a diffuser during conflict, or a reopener, when the dust has settled and the atmosphere is calmer and the dust has settled.

Discuss the mutual advantages of resolving the problem.

What would make it worthwhile for them to want to resolve it? Paint a picture of how it could be if you were both able to co-operate or get along well again. Have a chat about what you both want more of in the relationship.

If they cannot participate, you will have to consider whether or not they gain more from the problem than from its solution. If this seems to be the case, you may need to distance yourself. Disengage and understand that you are not responsible for another person. Work towards your own resolution. Your changes may free the other person to change, but, most important: **your forgiveness frees you.**



SUMMARY

- What is the pay-off for hanging on to the problem? Would you rather be right or happy?
- If you're not ready, can you become willing to be willing to resolve?
- Your internal shift may come when you really acknowledge the pain underneath your anger, and the anger underneath your pain.
- Your forgiveness is up to you alone. Your forgiveness *frees* you!
- Are you informed or inflamed? Have you been hooked by something they said or did? What are you now projecting? Your own unresolved personal history? Your own suppressed needs? Or your own unaccepted negative qualities? What's influencing your strong reactions?
- Honour the fragile aspects of yourself. We all hold emotional scars that can't heal yet. We're all works in progress.
- The other person might also be hooked-in by a conflict, and locked in to their unwillingness to resolve.
- If you want a better response, provide a better stimulus.

Consider how you come across.

Correct your part of the problem.

Is there anything you should apologise for?

Has something been misinterpreted?

Can you offer or discuss a benefit in resolving the stand-off?

Remember: For things to change, first I must change.



If you'd like more details on all of this, have a look at our website, at Conflict Resolution Network. Our headquarters are at crnhq.org. You can download a transcript and explore our study notes on Willingness to resolve. Our reminders on 'Informed or inflamed' are definitely worth a look. There's a free [manual for trainers](#) there too. And for ongoing reference, you might want to purchase the book, [Everyone Can Win](#). It's the inspiration for this series.

In this episode, we've explored how to get our emotional baggage out of the way. It concludes the personal skills you need to be a good conflict resolver. Now it's time to harness up those skills with some very practical strategies. So, in the next episode we'll look at all about Mapping a conflict, so that all the issues are on the table.

So do press your 'Play' button for that one, sometime soon. Perhaps subscribe to this series wherever you listen to podcasts. And if you like what you're listening to, you could really help us spread the word if you leave us a review there. And let your friends know about it too. Good conflict resolution skills might be just what they need right now.

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