

Conflict assignment

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An encounter with interpersonal conflict Conflict is something we all experience at one point or another in our life time. According to our author, “ Conflict is a part of every interpersonal relationship,... ” (DeVito, 2008-2009, p. 286). Since people have different views, conflict, a disagreement, is something we all must learn to deal with. The conflict I choose to write about involves a conflict I encountered with my ex-girlfriend a while ago. Me and my ex met through mutual friends we shared. However, these weren't all of our friends.

About half a year into the relationship we started to argue about where to go and which friends parties we would go to. Naturally, each of us was trying to argue the other to go to with our own friends. The problem, for the most part, wasn't that we disliked the other's friends, but rather that this parties were on the same time, usual, Friday and Saturday evening. Obviously, each time we had this argument one of us, if not both, got really frustrated and annoyed. Needless to say, because we were dating each other this soon effected other aspects of our relationship; we had to find some sort of solution.

At first we tried to avoid the conflict, either me or she would cave in rather quickly. After about half a year the arguments would become longer and longer, until eventually we both went out alone. In this paper I will explain how the five principles of conflict from our textbook (DeVito, 2008-2009) were present in our conflict. The first principle of conflict is that conflict is inevitable. (DeVito, 2008-2009). In the beginning me and my ex were trying to be nice and avoid the argument at all cause. We were in the beginning of a relationship and both of us were trying to please the other.

The first time we had a big fight was because her friend had a birthday party at her home, at the same time my best friend had a Super bowl party at his house. At the time, after a long argument we have decided to go to her girlfriend party. Assuming there would be a TV set there and I can at least see the game, I gave up, the argument was getting annoying. What still frustrates me is why she had the birthday on Super bowl Sunday. By what my friends told me, the Super bowl party my friend hosted was a great one, this didn't help my feelings. I felt really annoyed with giving up, which made me behave in an unpleasant way to my ex all the week to follow. Looking back, I think that if we had talked about it, maybe I would have felt better right away instead of holding the frustration within. The second principle is that conflict can have a negative and positive effect. (DeVito, 2008-2009). At the few times after that Sunday that the same issue came up, we had only negative effects. It felt that each time one of us gave up on the argument, the other would be annoyed for the whole week. This went on for a few weeks before we had a discussion to try and address the issue about this.

Since we were both annoyed and frustrated, it started to affect our general mood in other aspects of our life ??? we had to address the problem. So we talked for about 3 hours and came up with a solution of altering the weeks. One week I would decide on where to go, one week she would; Nothing could be more horrible. The very next week we were fighting on who's week it was and ended up going each to his/her own friends by ourself. The third principle is that conflict can focus on content and/or relationship issues. (DeVito, 2008-2009). Me and my ex conflict evolved around both of these.

Our conflict seemed to have started out as a content conflict, which friends to go out with. When I think back our conflict also involved another aspect, it was also a relationship issue. As our author states “... issues as who’s in charge,... ” (DeVito, 2008-2009, p. 288). In other words, we weren’t only fighting about who to hang out with, we were also arguing who is in control in our relationship. This is something that occurs in every relationship at some point. Just like no one likes to lose, no one also likes to be controlled by another. The fourth principle is conflict styles have consequences. (DeVito, 2008-2009).

At different stages of our conflict, which lasted for a while, we went through four out of five styles of consequences. Our author mentions these five styles as “ Competing, Avoiding, Accommodating, Collaborating and Compromising” (DeVito, 2008-2009, p. 289-290). At first we were nice and accommodating to each other, we were letting the other person win fairly easy. Then we began competing, both of us want the win, but we weren’t really winning anything beside a bad week to follow. When we tried to compromise with each other with altering hangouts we ended up collaborating in a very bad way ??? we went alone.

Just when we thought we had a good solution it turned out pretty bad. The fifth principle of conflict is that conflict is influenced by culture. (DeVito, 2008-2009). I didn’t really think about it at the time, but since we are both from different cultures, maybe by here culture it was up to the woman to take charge in a relationship. Perhaps by her her culture friends hangs out were very important and unattended them was against her norms. Maybe by

her culture back home man were making all the decisions and she was trying to change that.

I never really thought about this conflict this way. Once both of us went our own ways we stopped talking to each other for a few days. After that we agreed that our argument got way out of control. After discussing the issue again it became clear that our problem was pretty easy to solve. We agreed that instead of arguing and having a bad week, we can simply hang out with our friends by ourself. However, we also decided that since this would happen pretty often, we would also go out just by ourself at least once a week. This ended up as a good solution for both of us and it worked.

Later on we broke up because of different issues, but at least we didn't let this conflict be the breaker. Just like our author mentions "... conflict itself doesn't necessarily damage a relationship;" (DeVito, 2008-2009, p. 286). conflict doesn't have to damage a relationship, but if not addressed it can and will. After I have discussed and analyzed the five principles of conflict, I would devote the rest of this paper to discuss ways I might have corrected these conflict earlier. Some of these tips will be from our text book and some from own past experiences. A first suggestion would be to define the conflict. (DeVito, 2008-2009). Since at first we were avoiding conflict until things got built up, at some point we really didn't know what exactly we were fighting about. We could have looked at the problem from content and relationship perspectives and try to figure out what the conflict was really about rather than fighting almost every time. Conflict is a problem, like any other problem, the first step for a solution is to define what is the problem. We could have set together to begin with and understand what we were arguing

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about, who has the power in the relationship, instead of being annoyed and frustrated for a long time.

A second suggestion would be to focus on the present. (DeVito, 2008-2009). Since we were fighting almost every time we left the house and each time one of us felt he/she lost, we both tried to bring in old fights into the existing one. Instead of fighting over the past we couldn't have change, maybe it would have been better just to argue each issue by itself. However, it is really hard to detach from the lost of the last fight. When one is in an interpersonal relationship it is hard to detach one subject and time from the other.

I think in any conflict between people who share some history comes out to be an old fight being fought again. As I said before, we don't like to lose, we will take the option of trying to change that old lose into a win. The past should be left in the past, not brought up again. " let bygones be bygones".

A third suggestion would be to detach the emotional state. Although it is very hard to detach when involved with another, sometimes looking at the conflict from a neutral emotional ground can help. Emotion can changes the rules of the game. If one is a angry while fighting one might act in a certain way, same goes if one is sad.

Our emotional state can make us choose to use paths we wouldn't necessarily go. Detaching emotions is most important within the conflict itself. When in fight and emotions start to go up, one needs to watch what is going on. It is not uncommon in interpersonal conflicts that something is said when it shouldn't have. Again, in interpersonal relationship that has some

history, since we know the other person well enough we also know how to hurt them really easy. This tip is very hard to accomplish, but very helpful in dealing with conflict and reaching a common ground.

In my conflict with my ex it was really hard to detach, but it could have been helpful. Not once or twice we both found our selves saying things we really didn't mean to say. A fourth suggestion would be to use the six “ thinking hats” Edward deBono suggests. (DeVito, 2008-2009). I wish I had knew about these thinking hats sooner, they are a very helpful tool for any conflict, and/or problem solving in general . The six hats represent different ways to finding possible solutions to a problem. To my opinion it is in best interest to both sides of a conflict to reach a solution, the sooner the better.

With using these “ thinking hats” a solution is bound to come up, as long as the thinking period takes places with both parties. In my conflict, it could have been helpful to have this tool, maybe we would have come up with a solution earlier and avoided unnecessary conflicts. Or maybe we could have change the outcomes of the conflicts for negative to positive. A fifth suggestion would be to take responsibility of your own actions. As far as my experience, with my own conflicts and with others, sometimes the conflict can be solved by admitting ones own mistakes.

Not once or twice in my conflict with my ex we would avoided an argument if we told the other we were wrong. At one of our fights we ended up trying to hurt each other emotionally but never admitted this until much later. If we admitted this was our courses of action, maybe we would have realized we need to come up with a solution acceptable to both sooner. To conclude tis

paper I must say conflict resolution is a very hard subject. Conflict itself can get so intertwined with many aspects of a relationship and different factors, that I must give credit to those who try to solve conflicts professionally.

I have discussed a personal conflict I have experienced and applied the five principles of conflict from our textbook (DeVito, 2008-2009). I have also brought up three suggestions for solution that originated in our textbook (DeVito, 2008-2009) and two other from my own knowledge and experience. I feel that now, I am better equipped with communication tools that can help me overcome interpersonal conflicts I will encounter in the future. I know now better than to avoid or stubbornly argue a conflict. The conflict can actually have positive outcomes if addressed correctly, that may help a relationship.