

# Conflict resolution project | case study



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- Lynette Renberg

Conflict is a part of all our relationships and friendship we endure. It is important to understand the context and nature of conflict in order to preserve our relationships. The situation is Pat and Chris have been saving for their annual trip. For this vacation, Pat wants to go to the shore and relax by the water, Chris wants to go hiking and camping in the mountains. They have usually been able to work out their differences, but Chris feels strongly this year since last year they went with Pat's choice. Pat brings in a higher income and contributes more than Chris to the trip each year. I will be taking on the role of Pat in resolving this conflict with Chris.

The climate that seems to be forming is a negative one. Chris isn't regarding the facts that Pat does contribute more to the trip and isn't considering her choice of where to go. Also Pat isn't regarding where Chris wants to go for the trip and she still avoids the fact that Chris isn't putting as equal amount of money into the trip as she does. The climate could continue to be negative if their communication stays disconfirming. Disconfirming communication is when those show lack of regard to the conflict and the other person involved.

In the Knapp's Model of Stages in a Relationship, this relationship is at the differentiating stage. Both Pat and Chris are exhibiting differences that are causing conflict. This situation appears to be a symmetrical conflict style in which both partners use the same behavior. Both partners save up money to go on a trip together every year and they both decide together where to go with knowing each other has differences in where to go.

My character Pat has more power than Chris. Pat makes more money and puts more money into the trip than Chris does. Chris can confront Pat about how he feels about where to go for their trip, but Pat has more right and power to decide where they go until Chris pays just as equal amount for the trip to be fair. Pat wants to go somewhere with a shore to relax by the water and shouldn't have to pay more for the trip because it should be equally split between the two.

Using the Satir Model, one looks or analyzes their feelings, their partner's feelings, context or place, and topic is the issue of conflict. There are five stages of this model. Placating can lead to avoidance for one ignores or doesn't acknowledge their feelings. Pouncing or Blaming is when one ignores or doesn't acknowledge their partner's feelings by putting the blame on their partner and the outcome being a win-lose. Computing is when me, you, and context are cancelled out. The topic of conflict becomes the main focus. Distracting is a lose-lose style because no one's feelings are being acknowledged, there is no place to confront the situation, and the situation is being completely avoided. Interpersonal Style is when all elements are considered in which can lead to a win-win outcome. Everyone's feelings are being voiced at an appropriate time and place and the situation is being addressed in order to be resolved.

For this particular situation, it would be ideal to use the Interpersonal Style stage. That way Chris can express his feelings on how he strongly feels that he should decide where to go this year. Then Pat can express her feelings on how she contributes more money to the trip and how she would like to go somewhere with a beach and relax. As long as a good time and place is

chosen the situation can be addressed less defensively and hostile. Both Chris and Pat can talk things through by addressing each other's feelings, why there is a situation, and figure out together how resolve the issue so everyone is happy.

Another method to increase perception of the topic is by using the Pillow Method. There are also five positions in the pillow method to rationally approach a win-win outcome. By using the position five and acknowledging there is truth in all perspectives can leave compromise and consensus to achieve a win-win outcome to this conflict.

Here is a win-win situation that can occur if followed right. Identify the problem and unmet needs is Chris feels he should get to choose where to go and what to do this annual trip since Pat chose last year and it is acknowledged successfully. Then Pat can address her feelings on why she wants to go to the shore and the money situation of her contributing more. Chris confronts Pat and asks when a good time to talk about the trip would be. So they both set a date to talk. During the time and place decided to talk about the trip, Chris can describe to Pat how strongly he feels about going camping and hiking this year. Pat can then explain to Chris that she understands where he is coming from and she can explain how she is still contributing a lot to their annual trip and that she really wants to be near a shore to relax. Chris and Pat can then negotiate trip locations where it has camping, hiking, and a shore. Also maybe Chris can contribute a little more to this trip. Once they settle on a location then they can follow through on their solution and both enjoy a wonderful vacation together being happy with getting what they both want. During this process, if one party didn't agree or

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successfully pass a stage, then they would have to start over to the appropriate stage until both agree and successfully continue through the stages.

One part that will be difficult in my plan of action is both parties trying not to be defensive and stay sensitive to each other's feeling and unmet needs. The reason this can be difficult is because since one party (Pat) contributes more money for the trip they may become defensive and say since they make more money it doesn't seem fair that they would go with Chris' plans for camping and hiking. That could make Chris feel bad and put him on guard as well. Chris may feel that his feelings and unmet needs are not being acknowledged. Or another scenario is Pat could acknowledge Chris' feelings and compromise to letting him choose where to go on their trip in which would outcome to a lose-win situation.

With there being difficulty in the plan for a win-win outcome, here are some consequences of using a win-lose, lose-win, lose-lose, and compromise method. A win-lose outcome is competing where this approach to conflict involves high concern for self and low concern for others. If Pat pursued this outcome, then she would use her power of how she makes more money and pays more for the trip to get her way to going to a beach or where ever she wanted to go disregarding Chris' feelings and wants. A lose-win outcome is accommodating where one allows the other to have their way rather than asserting you own point of view. Pat could disregard her own feelings and wants by settling to go where ever Chris would like to go this year. Lose-lose outcome is avoiding where people non-assertively ignore or stay away from conflict. Pat and Chris could avoid the matter all together and just pick a

place to go without resolving their problems they both are feeling. This down the road could lead into a bigger conflict. Compromising which is a partial lose-lose outcome is when both parties at least give some of what they want, although both sacrifice part of their goals. Pat and Chris could compromise on where to go and how much each will pay, but this delays and setbacks the conflict in which both parties don't get what they really want to be resolved.

A personal experience where I could have used a win-win conflict style approach is with my ex-boyfriend. The situation was my ex-boyfriend started a new job working out of town at least three weeks every month and we hardly were spending time with each other. I was feeling neglected and didn't feel important to him. The outcome turned into a lose-win. I should have gathered my feelings and unmet needs better and set a date to talk to him about how I was feeling. Instead I had emotional outbursts because I bottled my emotions up and it all came out at really bad times. If we made a date to talk, then we both could have described the problem and our needs so we could be more understanding of each other. By acknowledging each other's feelings and points of view then we could have negotiated what we wanted to do or how to better our relationship. Once we figured out what would make each other happy and strengthen our relationship then we could follow through in our solution. However, with having so much conflict that was unsuccessfully resolved we ended up parting ways so we wouldn't hurt each other or continue being unhappy. My ex-boyfriend broke up with me while I still wanted to figure out a way to make our relationship work. It

became a lose-win situation because the outcome went in the way my ex-boyfriend wanted and it wasn't an outcome I wanted.

Conflict resolution has many stages and outcomes in all different kinds of situations. I have learned through this course on how to better my communication and resolve conflict for a win-win outcome in my relationships. Pat and Chris will resolve their conflict while keeping their relationship intact and have a wonderful vacation doing the things they anticipated doing. By following the conflict resolution model, can strength relationships and help resolve conflict by addressing the problem, being sensitive and open minded to each other's point of views, and negotiating to reach a solution that makes both parties happy.