



Managing Conflict

Covenant Group Session Plan

Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

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Welcome, Chalice Lighting: *Here we are, together in this space. By our love and by our covenant, we make this a holy place. We light the chalice of Unitarian Universalism in honor of the light that lives in each of us, the light that shines among us, and the light we bring into the world.*

Personal Check In: Briefly share something from your life since we last met and how you are feeling now.

Opening Words: We can never make the world safe by fighting. Every nation must learn that the people of all nations are children of God, and must share the wealth of the world. You may say this is impracticable, far away, and can never be accomplished, but it is the work we are appointed to do. Sometime, somehow, somewhere we must teach this great lesson.

~Olympia Brown, *Singing the Living Tradition*, Reading #578

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. What *feelings* do you have when you think about conflict?
2. How do you typically deal with conflict? What is your most used “conflict management style”?
3. How do you use different conflict styles with different people or situations?
4. When have you had a conflict that resulted in a positive outcome? How did you contribute to the outcome?
5. Imagine a world with no conflict. How would life be?

Sitting in Silence (Reflect on questions just posed as you prepare to hear readings)

Readings- see below

Sharing - This is a time to speak without interruption and for deep listening. Deep listening means no interrupting, no fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting each other straight. Please share responses to one or more of the session questions.

(This is usually a good time to take a brief break)

Open Discussion -This is a time to respond to something another person said about the topic or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared their thoughts on this topic. Continue to practice deep listening.

Closing reading:

If there is to be peace in the world, there must be peace in the nations. If there is to be peace in the nations, there must be peace in the cities. If there is to be peace in the cities, there must be peace between neighbors. If there is to be peace between neighbors, there must be peace in the home. If there is to be peace in the home, there must be peace in the heart. ~ Taoist philosopher, Lao-Tse, sixth century BCE

Announcements/Plans

Check out: As we close today, how are you feeling now?

Extinguish the Chalice

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Readings

Conflict management is the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspects. The goal is to identify and handle disputes in a fair and efficient way.

Conflict Management Styles

Competing - Fighting for and defending what one believes is right (Win/Lose)

Compromising - Giving in to find a middle ground that is acceptable to all (Lose/Lose)

Accommodating - Yielding to another's point of view (Lose/Win)

Avoiding - Delaying or avoiding conflict altogether (No contest)

Collaborating - Cooperating and listening to all sides to build mutually agreeable solutions (Win/Win)

~Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann 1974

Peace is not the absence of conflict but the presence of creative alternatives for responding to conflict-alternatives to passive or aggressive responses, alternatives to violence.

~Dorothy Thompson, American Journalist

We have practiced diplomacy since the very beginning of the nation. Sometimes it has not worked, and we've had to go to war. I always believe you should try to find peace and reconciliation before conflict.

~Colin Powell, Former US Secretary of State

It is the great sadness of our species that we have not found a way to eliminate the conflict and to eliminate violence as a device to resolve our conflicts throughout the entire history of the human race.

~Neale Donald Walsch, American Author

Cooperation isn't the absence of conflict but a means of managing conflict.

~Deborah Tannen, American Author

If you want to bring an end to long-standing conflict, you have to be prepared to compromise.

~Aung San Suu Kyi, Burmese Activist

If you have a beautiful story, it has to have conflict. If you don't have conflict, it can't be a good story.

~Donald Miller, American Author

For good ideas and true innovation, you need human interaction, conflict, argument, debate.

~Margaret Heffernan, American businesswoman

Difficulties are meant to rouse- not discourage. The human spirit grows strong by conflict.

~William Ellery Channing, Unitarian Preacher b. 1780

Conflict is the beginning of consciousness. ~M. Ester Harding. British Psychologist

I am in politics because of the conflict of good and evil, and I believe that in the end good will triumph.

~Margaret Thatcher. Former British Prime Minister

When you have conflict that means that there are truths that have to be addressed on both sides of the conflict. ~Dolores Huerta, American Activist b. 1930

Peace is not the absence of conflict but it is the ability of handle conflict by peaceful means.

~Ronald Reagan, Former US President

Because people aren't perfect and relationships are messy, we all need to learn how to resolve conflicts.

~John Maxwell, American Author