The Circle of Conflict Adaptation
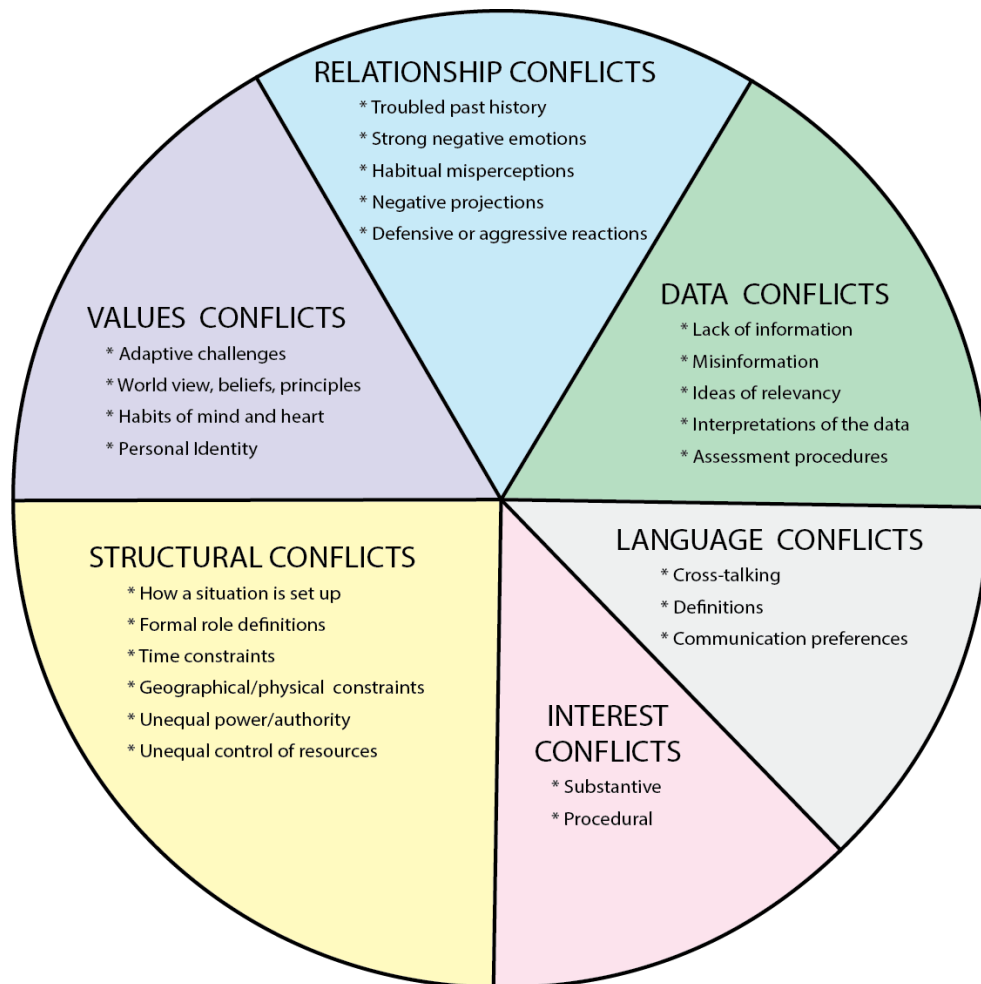### Based on Christopher W. Moore's Circle of Conflict
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1.   What is the Circle of Conflict?[1]

Christopher Moore's Circle of Conflict identified five sources of conflict: values, relationships, data, interests and structure. The circle is adapted to include language as a source of conflicts and expands values conflicts to include adaptive challenges[2]. The adapted circle depicts the six sources graphically. Understand that conflicts often have multiple

sources. The size of each segment reflects the likelihood of that source being present. Sources of conflict that are difficult to resolve tend to persist over time.

RELATIONSHIP CONFLICTS
* Troubled past history
* Strong negative emotions
* Habitual misperceptions
* Negative projections
* Defensive or aggressive reactions

DATA CONFLICTS
* Lack of information
* Misinformation
* Ideas of relevancy
* Interpretations of the data
* Assessment procedures

VALUES CONFLICTS
* Adaptive challenges
* World view, beliefs, principles
* Habits of mind and heart
* Personal Identity

LANGUAGE CONFLICTS
* Cross-talking
* Definitions
* Communication preferences

STRUCTURAL CONFLICTS
* How a situation is set up
* Formal role definitions
* Time constraints
* Geographical/physical constraints
* Unequal power/authority
* Unequal control of resources

INTEREST CONFLICTS
* Substantive
* Procedural

2.   Applying the Circle of Conflict

   a) Observe what people are saying and doing,
   b) Identify and name one or more sources of conflict, and
   c) Take action where you can to address and resolve conflict.

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[1] Moore, *The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict;* 2nd edition, 1996, pp. 60-61.

[2] Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line,* 2002.

VALUES CONFLICTS	
• People leaving the room (flight). • Strong disagreements about what is right or wrong (fight). • Avoidance of specific topics. • Defensive or aggressive reactions that prevent discussion of topics threatening to identity or perceptions of "the way the world is."	• Label the type of *values disagreement* (e.g., cultural, political, religious, ideological) to illuminate potential cross talk. • Adopt group norms to overcome triggered reactions to values conflicts, e.g., patient, non-judgmental listening. • Explore assumptions or experiences to identify the source of differences in principles or competing commitments[3]. • Use appreciative inquiry to illuminate worldviews and/or belief systems and to catalyze mutual acceptance of differences.
RELATIONSHIP CONFLICTS	
• People choosing where to sit to avoid someone. • Awkward silences and meaningful glances in response to who is speaking. • Tension seemingly unrelated to the substantive topic.	• Explore *relationship barriers* by noticing when they occur and how the tension shows up - between which people or groups. • Find ways for the people holding the tension to experience each other in new ways. As mutual understanding develops, move to address the pain in the relationship though redress, acceptance or forgiveness.
DATA CONFLICTS	
• Differences about data relevance. • Different interpretations of the same data. • Different ways of collecting data. • Using different criteria for developing data.	• Bring the *data challenges* explicitly into the conversation and name the differences in the use, definition and interpretation of data. • Encourage the use of the "best available data" and work together to develop "better data."
LANGUAGE CONFLICTS	
• Same words meaning different things. • People unaware that they are not in the same conversation. • People "listening for" different things.	• Identify the *language differences* and invite a focus on the meaning underlying the words, rather than the words themselves. • Model and encourage common language with common definitions. • Explore MBTI[4] communication preferences.
INTEREST CONFLICTS	
• Zero sum mentality. • People holding a position. • People not exploring each other's interests or articulating their own.	• Illuminate the *competing interests* underlying people's positions and use Interest Based Negotiation[5] to achieve a "win-win" solution by: 1) separating the "people from the problem," 2) building relationships, and 3) adopting criteria to choose options BEFORE making decisions.
STRUCTURAL CONFLICTS	

• People looking to other group members for "permission" to speak.
• Fear or anger about the "way things are."
• Assumption of hierarchical authority in collaborative settings.
• An "inner circle" assuming disproportionate influence on decision-making.
• Speech and/or behavior inferring that one gender, race, class or culture are "subordinate" to another.
	• Name the *structural factors* influencing behavior.
	• Catalyze conversations about the structural factors and how they impact people's roles and authority.
	• Name the "unspoken" systemic or organizational frameworks influencing assumptions about who has power and who does not[6].
	• Develop strategies to:
	  o For structural factors within the authority or influence of the group move to action, and
	  o For structural factors not within the influence of the group, identify who does have influence and engage them.

3.   Conflict Orientation

Everyone has an orientation towards conflict. Take time to reflect on yours and that of others[7]. Find opportunities to practice the following that supports movement from talk to action:

   a) Conflict is normal and necessary to the work of achieving results, and
   b) It is possible to address and resolve conflicts.

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[3] Kegan and Leahy, "*The Real Reason People Won't Change,*" Harvard Business Review, November, 2001.

[4] Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Consulting Psychological Press.

[5] Fisher and Ury, *Getting to Yes*, 1981.

[6] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture Based on the Competing Values Framework*, 2011.

[7] Pillsbury, *Results Based Facilitation: How to Move from Talk to Action, V5.61.*