

Dudley Weeks, Ph.D. - Eight Essential Steps to Conflict Resolution 1992

Weeks invites us to think of conflicts with other people as potential partnerships. Thus, when you have a conflict with a person they become your “conflict partner.”

Step 1 Create an Effective Atmosphere – focus on building a frame that allows a space to build an improved relationship

Step 2 Clarify Perceptions – “If we perceive something to be a certain way, even if we are incorrect, in our minds it is that way, and we often base our behavior on that perception.” This process asks us to clarify “perceptions of the conflict, of the self, and of the conflict partner.”

Step 3 Focus on Individual and Shared Needs – This is one of those simple yet important ideas. People should think both about their own needs (not wants) and the needs of your conflict partner.

Step 4 Build Shared Positive Power – Focus on self, partner, and shared power. Think in positive terms. “Positive power seeks to promote the constructive capabilities of all parties involved in a conflict.” My preference is that people in conflict are not parties; instead, they are people!

Step 5 Look to the Future, Then Learn From the Past – “Even though the past does indeed matter, we deny our own power and the power of development and change if we allow ourselves to be defined by the past, to be trapped in perceptions that use past patterns to limit present and future possibilities.”

Step 6 Generate Options – This step “can often break through the preconceived limitations we bring with us into the conflict resolution process.”

Step 7 Develop ‘Doables’ / The Stepping Stones to Action – “Doables are specific acts that stand a good chance of success, meet some individual and shared needs, and depend on positive power, usually shared power, to be implemented.”

Step 8 Make Mutual-Benefit Agreements – develop agreements that can meet some of everyone’s needs, accomplish some shared goals, and define power as positive mutual actions to deal constructively with conflict.