

# Conflicts and Me

Guidelines for a short Workshop on Reflecting on Conflicts

By Lilly Roll-Naumann

The following pages invite you to engage in an interactive process of reflection and (self-)exploration on the topic of conflict:

**What does this term mean to you? What is your attitude toward conflicts in society and in your own life?** Find out.

You can complete this interactive workshop on your own or with someone else.

You'll need: a pen, paper, some quiet time (about 1.5 hours), and an open mind 😊

Let's go!

# 1. Conflict Statements

Do you agree with the following statements about conflict?

If you would like, position yourself in the room: For example, imagine “complete agreement” by the wall and “no agreement at all” by the window, with the shades of gray in between.

1. I can recognize conflicts early on.

2. In good relationships there are no conflicts.

3. There is a solution to every conflict.

4. I am satisfied with the way I deal with conflicts.

5. I am afraid of or worried about conflicts.

6. There are some conflicts I would like to have.

7. Peace means: no conflict.



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Was it easy or difficult for you to answer these questions? What surprised you? What new things did you learn about yourself?

If you did the exercise with someone else: Exchange about your experience.

## 2. Conflict Mindmap

Binary questions like the one in exercise 1 are, of course, limited in their informative value. Not only do they lack depth, but they also leave room for interpretation: what one person understands by a particular statement may imply something entirely different to another.

So let us take it a step further! 

Take a sheet of paper or a page in a notebook. Now let your thoughts and associations run free:

**What comes to mind when you think of conflict? What feelings emerge?**

Take a moment and start writing and drawing.

When you are working with someone else, feel free to brainstorm together on a shared piece of paper.





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What picture do your associations paint?

Is there anything you would like to add after resonating with the Czech workshop participants?

What else might come to mind after you have given your initial associations some space? What other words and images arise as you reflect on your first thoughts?

Take a moment to review your mind map on the topic of conflict.

# 3. Understanding What Lies Behind Conflicts

Reflecting on one's own attitude toward the topic of conflict and the associated ideas is an interesting first step. But how can a specific conflict then be addressed and resolved?

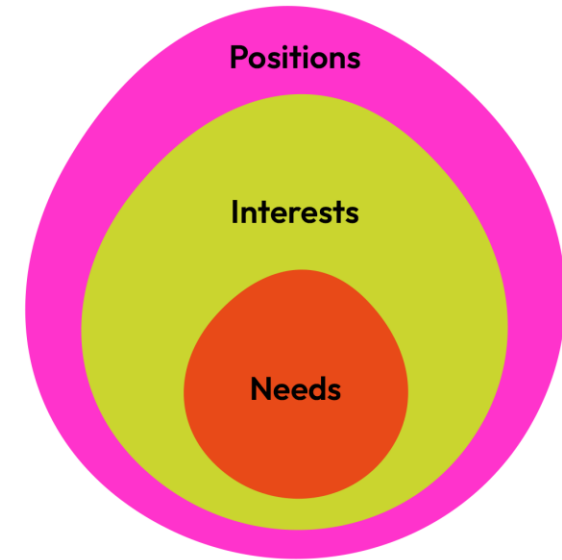
There are various approaches here – one of which is **conflict transformation**.

If you would like to learn more about this, check out our blog post [“Excursion into the World of Conflict Transformation”](#)!



A central principle of conflict transformation is to look for the **underlying causes**: What lies behind the positions of the conflicting parties?

The **Conflict Onion Model** illustrates that interests lie hidden behind seemingly irreconcilable positions (outer layer). Identifying these interests (middle layer) can already bring us one step closer to resolving the conflict. One level deeper are the needs (core): What lies behind the stated interests? Understanding them opens the door to entirely new, creative solutions. This is because needs can be met in many ways other than through the positions originally demanded. Ideally, this can lead to win-win solutions that address the core of the conflict.



**Positions (outer layer):** What the parties publicly demand or communicate (e.g. “We want X”).

**Interests (middle layer):** The reasons and objectives behind the positions (e.g. “We need access to water”).

**Needs (core):** Needs (Core): The universal basic needs that are often unconscious and therefore hidden (e.g. security, self-determination, belonging).

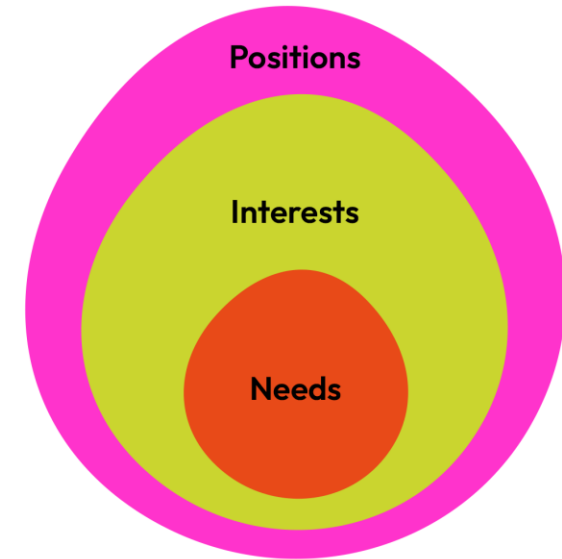
This illustration is based on „Die Konfliktzwiebel. Modell zur Analyse der Konfliktparteien.“  
by: J. Wanigesinghe, Servicestelle Friedensbildung Baden-Württemberg

# Example of the Conflict Onion Analysis

Imagine you are meeting up with a friend and she is late again. You say, “You’re always late.” → That is the **position** – what first becomes apparent in the conflict.

However, there may be an **interest** behind this, such as the desire to make better use of the time spent together.

At the core, there may be a **need** for reliability or appreciation.



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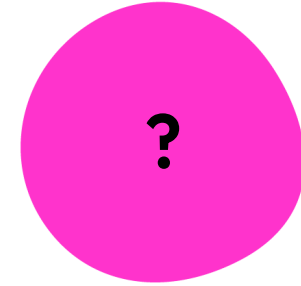
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Why not try applying this analysis to a conflict in your own life:

**What interests underlie your position – why do you want or demand this? And what fundamental needs lie beneath that?**



Once you have gained clarity on this, you can approach the other person with curiosity and try to delve deeper into the experiences, values, desires, and needs that lie behind the position they have expressed.

It is best to start with a simple introductory case rather than jumping straight into a highly escalated conflict that might be very stressful for you.

# 4. Conclusion

**What is your (preliminary) conclusion?**

To wrap up this brief interactive involvement with the topic of conflict:

**How would you summarize what you have taken away from this in a single word or a short statement?**

Thank you for giving this process a try, and hopefully you will continue to explore the topic of conflict with curiosity!

If you would like, feel free to share your answer to the final question or any general feedback with us [here](#).





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