

5. CATEGORIES OF CONFLICT



Target group:

Young people aged 16-30
Youth workers aged 18+



Group size:

10-30 participants



Duration:

60 - 90 minutes



Type of activities:

Drama exercises
Personal sharing
Active involvement



Resources:

Standard



Atmosphere needed:

Safe space for sharing



Aim

To get an understanding of different types of conflicts, what they can be about, and what is behind a conflict, to bring you one step closer to solving the conflict.

Learning outcomes

- To be made aware of different categories of conflicts.
- To gain experience in talking about conflicts.

Introduction

Give a brief introduction, mainly to welcome the group to the workshop. Highlight that we are going to do an exercise that is harmless, that we are in a safe setting, and that no one will be put on the spot, but that you contribute as much as you want, and we do the whole of the exercise together.

EXERCISE 1. BRAINSTORMING (15 MIN)

Explain to the group that in this session we will try to see that there are different causes of conflict, and that some of these may have many similarities with each other, whereas others may have more differences. Conduct a brainstorming in the plenary to the question “What are potential causes of conflict?”. Write all suggestions down on a flipchart visible to everyone.

EXERCISE 2. THEATRE PLAY (45-60 MIN)

During the next exercise participants will try to visualise some of these similarities and differences between conflicts by acting out some of these causes of conflict.

Divide the group into smaller groups of 4-5 participants. Ask each group to select one cause of conflict from the flipchart, prepare a short scene or still image they will act out for the other participants. They are not to reveal what is the conflict in their scene. Give the groups some time to prepare.

One group at the time acts out their scene. Ask these follow-up questions to the audience after each scene:

- a. What have we seen in this scene/image? (Try to describe what you actually have seen. Focus on observations.)
- b. What do you think the conflict is about?
- c. Is it always clear what a conflict is about?
- d. Could there have been something else behind?
- e. To the group that performed: what was the conflict about?

The facilitator must be on hand to guide the process all the way and be ready to probe the participants with additional questions if needed. By the end of the dramatisation part, the facilitator offers some input to simplify the different categories of conflict. See below.



Debriefing (15 min)

When all groups have acted out their scenes, move to a plenary debrief.

Debriefing questions:

- How did it feel for you to think about, and act out a conflict?
- Have you got a better understanding of conflict?
- Why is it useful to know about different categories or forms of conflict?
- Is it necessary to talk about conflict?

INPUT

To simplify what conflicts tend to be about, we use four categories of conflict:

- Resources or substantive issues:
 - a competition over perceived incompatible needs;
 - to achieve what you want, someone else will have to give up something;
 - zero-sum thinking (a gain for one side can only mean a loss for the other side).
- Relationship:
 - the presence of negative emotions, misperceptions, poor communication, stereotypes, etc.
- Identity/role:
 - if someone does not recognise my position or distinctiveness.
- Values:
 - perceived or real incompatibilities in belief systems;
 - what is good or bad, right or wrong, etc.

One conflict can fit into more than one category. Although this is a simplified set of categories and most most conflicts can probably fit into one or more of these.

All conflicts are about some interests. But we may have to dig to discover the interests. Normally, we see the positions of the parties involved. The interests are only behind the positions. The key is to keep digging and asking questions to find out what the conflict is really about.