

From: Hale, Anne E (1981) Conducting Clinical Sociometric Explorations (pp 105 -108)

Conflict Resolution Facilitator Training Model (Hale)

This model is presented as a process which assists persons in developing the role of facilitator in conflict resolution situations. It is abstracted from psychodramatic method and provides for the application of action methods in a sequence of events which may occur, one after the other, or, interspersed throughout the exercise. Of importance is not so much the order of events but rather an increasing recognition of the elements which affect the potency for resolution. This model is not a "how to" for conducting encounters, although there maybe confrontations which may benefit from the method which is implied here,

The model is best used by first practicing the role in interpersonal conflicts with the significant other absent Once the facilitator-in-training is comfortable with the model, then he/she may begin facilitating encounters with both parties present progressing to intergroup and multiple-protagonist sessions when fluent with the method.

The Facilitator Training Model

- 1) Person states his/her position in the conflict directly to the other person. (An empty chair is used in the case of the absent other.) The position is stated:
 - a) Clearly
 - b) Firmly
 - c) Honestly
- 2) Person is encouraged to ventilate pent up tension and emotions evoked by the conflict, the other person, and/or their behavior. Ventilate:
 - a) Freely
 - b) Loudly and physically
 - c) Maximally
- 3) Person identifies the interference resulting in barriers to communication, resistance to change, and inability to affect a resolution. Interferences may involve:
 - a) Ghosts—persons from his/her past having the same or similar impact: a transference figure.
 - b) Parental Injunctions—a tape, script, or life stance which has a strong influence on his/her behavior and may need to be re-examined in light of this conflict situation.
 - c) Physical and Socioeconomic Realities—here and now constraints or "facts of life" which need to be acknowledged or re-examined.
 - d) Third parties—persons directly involved in the conflict, who may even be primary causes of the conflict and who have either an interest in the outcome of the conflict or in the continuation of it.

4) Role reversal

(When directing a conflict resolution with a significant other absent, have the person reverse roles with the absent other and repeat steps 1, 2 and 3 as outlined above.)

The subject of role reversal is frequently the future of the relationship based on new information. Double-bonding role reversal is useful at this point. (See Figure 1, p. 94 for graphic.)

- a) Ask one person to reverse roles and become the double of the other person while he/she remains in his/her own role.
- b) Place an empty chair to represent the person who is now being a double.
- c) Direct the person, and their double, to make clear statements about:

- i) feelings being experienced in the here and now
 - ii) ways to relate to each other and the issue in the future
 - iii) a possible contract
 - d) Help the double to stay in role by coaching him/her, using an echo, and taking a similar body stance.
 - e) Once the process has been completed, repeat it with the other person taking the role of double. If the significant other is absent, simply role reverse.
 - f) Have the person being doubled reply to the statement of feelings and the prospective contract, with his/her own feelings, and his/her own suggestions for resolution.
- 5) When each person is back in his/her own role, they finalize the contract, reach an agreement, how they will deal with this conflict situation in the future.
- 6) Persons rehearse new behaviors which they have agreed upon in the contract. A role training session can be introduced in a supportive environment.
- 7) If additional group members are present they may wish to respond to the persons by sharing what was evoked in them' the conflict situation progressed.

The Role of the Facilitator/Director

The facilitator role requires alertness, objectivity (neutrality), flintiness within flexibility, and the ability to maintain the integrity of the process. Other than creating an equitable atmosphere in which to explore the conflict the facilitator can have no vested interest in the outcome of the conflict. The facilitator negotiates his/her role, explaining that a model is being used which will give him/her practice in the role of facilitator. The facilitator explains that he/she is engaged in a process of learning and that it may be necessary to stop the action and receive help from the training director.

Often, one party in the conflict will be more skilled at asserting him/herself, or have more power, self-esteem: the facilitator seeks to effect equity of warm-up, rather than equity of "airtime". When one party requires assistance in being articulate, direct or clear, the facilitator restores the balance of power by providing on-the-spot skill training.

The facilitator allows the person(s) to begin at the point where there is access to the most spontaneity. If they attempt to make clear, firm, honest statements of their position, and are unable to do so because of increasing pressure to allow feelings to emerge, have the person move into ventilation. Once the pent up tensions and emotions have been released there will be more "room" psychically to return to the statement of position phase.

The facilitator observes nonverbal cues and has the person(s) expand these as away to facilitate maximal ventilation. Some props may be necessary. Encounter bats (batacas) are useful for bringing home emphatic points and for hitting. Cardboard boxes can be torn up if the person wants to rip into something. Stacks of pillows may be useful for the person wishing to throw things. An auxiliary, or twin-sized mattress may be used for the person who needs to "shake some sense into you". Whatever the mode of expression, the facilitator provides props which will protect the safety of participants: Once expressed, the ventilation phase automatically de-escalates. The facilitator finds ways to monitor the further expression of ventilation and prevents destructive lashing out from contaminating subsequent stages in the encounter, restructuring the destructive conflict patterns. An example of doing this would be by remarking, "When he does that just ignore it and focus on what is really important right now," or "I am not comfortable with you doing that right now. You stated that you had felt the ventilation to be complete. It certainly seemed that way to me as well. Have you a fear of this next phase in the encounter? What can I do that would be helpful to your right now?"

There is considerable information about interferences which is shouted out in the heat of the ventilation phase. As the spontaneous actor emerges the observer falls away. Therefore, it becomes necessary for the facilitator to observe, listen and recall for the participants information which will provide clues for identification of interferences. For example, a person may be quite angry with the other person's behavior and be shouting

"For Christ's sake, I had enough of that from my first husband without having to take it from you" (Ghost); or, "That was a despicable, sneaky thing to do! It doesn't matter whose paycheck it was. Money that either of us makes belongs to both of us. That's what marriage means!" (Injunction/life stance); or, "I'm sick of you going around afraid to take your next breath in case you drop over with a heart attack. The doctor said for you to let up on jogging. He didn't say permanent bed rest!" (Physical realities); or "You promised your daughter a fancy wedding with all the trimmings. Now she tells me you want to shorten the guest list. What am I supposed to say to that? You never do what you say you are going to do." (Third party). If videotape is available participants can take advantage of immediate replay and identify the interferences for themselves.

The role reversal phase includes the use of the double as a way to promote connectedness and to provide the person(s) with the opportunity to demonstrate their availability to cooperation via an active form of understanding. "Studies show that persons who successfully early out this effort at understanding increase their level of cooperation when their positions are ultimately compatible or can be made so by relatively minor compromise or change of position. However, the drawback of this tactic is that if the positions are basically incompatible either because the resources are indeed so scarce that no accommodation is possible or because the parties are not interdependent enough to have to come to resolution together, then the level of competition is actually increased by the role reversal technique (Johnson, 1967). Thus the tactic is no panacea and can be used quite naively by the untrained leader. No tactics are sure-fire cures for destructive conflict only the participants involved in the conflict can make the final decision to cooperate." The reader is referred to the description of this form of role reversal on page 94 of this chapter. The participants may be unable to act as doubles. In this case there are several options:

- have the person who is to be the double sit slightly to the right and behind the person, using the time to reflect silently. The person continues to address the empty chair; or
- have a double from the audience be a double for both parties; or
- move on to the contract negotiation stages thereby eliminating this stage.

The facilitator refrains from giving the participants solutions to their problem. The facilitator may provide opportunities for the persons to engage the interference which they have identified and direct the contract-making to involve decisions about how these interferences can be handled in the future. The role of the facilitator at this point is primarily that of offering non-judgmental observations and giving concise, clear information. Stay out of the decision-making process and avoid advice-giving. To do so allows the participants to experience being successful in reaching conclusions jointly.

Many persons using this model will be doing so in the framework of a psychodrama training group. There may be a tendency to move into the more familiar, personal psychodrama. The intrapsychic factors, which become apparent and which may warrant further exploration and catharsis, will tempt the facilitator to move from the encounter into a psychodrama. For the purposes of learning to direct conflict resolution situations, it is recommended to remain with the model which was part of the original contract. It is allowable for the facilitator to "tag" the debilitating factors at the moment of discovery and to assist the person in feeling and acknowledging the warm-up which is present. If immediately explored, and the other person is allowed to leave the conflict resolution contract without resolution, the person making the discovery may be left feeling they had the problem all along when in fact the situation was co-produced. Deciding what to do about the unfinished personal constraints can be part of the contracting phase. Another reason to stay with the model despite temptations to work in a protagonist-centered mode is that this provides a containment experience for both the participants and the facilitator.

The facilitator may want to provide auxiliary egos and doubles. It is true that the help of therapeutic assistants can increase the effectiveness of the process. However, for training purposes it is recommended that the facilitator work without assistance, thereby increasing the opportunities for the facilitator in training to connect with the participants and provide for a complete, unassisted role reversal experience. The elimination of the auxiliaries more closely resembles many therapy situations when clients come as couples to see one individual. This model can be used as a training method for the use of psychodramatic techniques in one-to-one therapy.

When using this model for conflict resolution when both parties are present, the facilitator decides which is more helpful:

- to have the persons freely interacting with one another in steps 1, 2 or 3, or
- to have each person complete separately the first three steps of the process.

As a guideline, if the participants appear to be familiar with the content and the emotions displayed, and it is clear that this is "old territory," prefer the more structured approach. By observing, and not interacting, the person observing may learn something, and the person involved in the action may feel freer to produce new material. Conversely, if this appears to be providing the disputants with a "new" experience in relating, do not interrupt the flow of the interaction until it becomes clear that more structure is warranted.

If the encounter has been taking place in a group setting, the facilitator assists the participants in reentry into the group. This may be accomplished by having the group express non-verbally and spontaneously their feelings for one, or both, of the participants or having the group respond to them in some way that is comfortable. Persons having advice, questions and negative statements should be assisted by the facilitator in identifying the projection.

The Role of Training Director

It is recommended that the training director, or the person presenting the model to others, describe the steps involved in the model and then demonstrate the method in a conflict situation with an absent other. A "stop action" procedure can be employed to allow students to ask pertinent questions and get immediate information.

The training director can also use the "stop action" procedure while the facilitator-in-training is working with a client. It is useful to have the facilitator identify his/her own soliloquy at key choice points, or at moments of difficulty. If it appears that the facilitator is losing the neutral stance or is making judgements which inhibit the persons in conflict the training director can assist the facilitator in identifying his/her own projection and facilitate the facilitator's reentry in the process.

Once the facilitators-in-training have practiced the model with absent others, the training director can demonstrate the model as used with both parties present.

Conclusion

The model, while being flexible, is just that - a model. The spontaneity of facilitators, their own personal experience being on the receiving end of their own encounters, and the courage to come face to face with the persons in conflict is the best learning experience. The anxiety over "what do I do if nothing works to resolve the conflict?" diminishes as the facilitators develop confidence and belief in the people with whom they work. No positive outcome is an outcome. Trust that it leads the person to their "next step" with each other.