

## **Interpersonal Conflict and Conflict Resolution**

### **Differing Perspectives**

Host:

Conflict commonly occurs when two parties hold polarized positions about an issue or event. Positions are best described as the entrenched ideas that one party holds about the relationship, process, or substance of a conflict. Positions are about what we want.

Man:

I think the patient should be told today.

Woman:

Bad idea.

Man:

Actually she does. It needs to be done and it should be done by me.

Woman:

Really. Well no-one should be telling her anything at the moment, so please wait. Don't say anything.

Man:

I'll say what I want!

Woman:

Don't. Just leave it alone.

Man:

Who do you think you are?!

Woman:

Hey! Who the hell do you think YOU are?

Host:

Our positions become fixed as we stubbornly hold on to our point of view. And when we focus on our positions, there is nowhere to go. There is often an escalation on both sides. Now the conflict becomes confrontational - emotionally, physically, or both.

Father:

I want you back by midnight.

Son:

I don't think so. Anyways, I'm not driving so I'm not going to make the guys come back just for me.

Father:

I don't care! Be back by midnight!

Son:

Or what?!

Father:

That's enough. End of discussion. Be back by 12 if you know what's good for you.

Host:

In conflict, everyone feels justified in their own point of view. They are locked in their positions. With no room to move, how do we unlock a conversation that is going nowhere and move to a richer place where resolution might be possible? Interests are defined as wanting to learn about something or someone. Interests are the causal reason behind the positions held in a conflict. If we are genuinely engaged and curious, we can move beyond positions to the underlying interests that fuel the positions. This creates a process for understanding the ideas of each party. Interests are about why we want what we want. Either party can explore underlying interests in a conflict. If both are willing to move beyond their positions, then resolution is possible. What are the underlying interests here? Let's look at how both parties might move past their locked positions.

Woman:

So. I know you feel strongly about this. Why do you think the patient needs to be told?

Man:

Our patients have a right to know what's happening to them, and to have a say in their - okay, you really don't want me to say anything. Can you help me understand why?

Woman:

We need more results. When the patient has all the information, then she can make the best decision.

Host:

When we focus on interests there is an opportunity to express our deeper concerns. This can lead to shared perspective, setting the stage for joint problem-solving and resolution. We may discover that we are not as far apart as we thought. When we begin to understand why others want what they want, there is an opportunity to generate solutions that benefit both parties.

Son:

What's your thing about midnight, Dad?

Father:

I just need to know that you're safe. I don't know the guys. You're really digging in your heels about being home by midnight?

Son:

Look - I just think I'm old enough to decide when to come home. I'm not 12 years old.