TOOLS FOR NAVIGATING CONFLICT

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The following tools have been adapted from Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action

#1 CONFLICT TREE

**What:**

Graphic tool used to explore conflict by separating root causes, central issues, and the impact or effects.

**Why:**

- Initiate discussion of cause and effect of conflict
- Facilitate a process of agreeing on core issue
- Assist with setting priorities for addressing conflict
- Helps connect causes and effects together
- Can help clarify if a perceived conflict is a misalignment of actions/behaviors or of goals and values

**When to use:**

- As a group, when a decision needs to be reached about which issue to address or how to move forward
- To explore conflict from a culturally-responsive lens and looking at conflict and challenges rooted in oppression and issues of equity, inclusion, diversity and belonging

**One way Use (can be used as an individual activity as well):**

1. On a large sheet of paper posted on a wall, draw a picture of a tree with roots, trunk and branches (with leaves).

2. Give each participant index cards or sticky notes to write a few words or draw symbols to indicate a key issue they see in the conflict.

3. Have people place all their cards where they go (roots=cause, trunk=core problem, branches and leaves=effects)

4. One person facilitates discussion to reach consensus of their placements and to explore the following questions:

   - Is the organization or group focused primarily on roots, consequences or core problems?
   - What core problem should be addressed first?
   - What would a next step look like?
What: Analysis method that seeks to assess and understand the perspectives and needs of different entities involved in conflict. You as a person helping navigate the conflict can complete it on your own for each party or each party involved can complete and share their own as a part of navigating the conflict. (Note: Do not ask people to complete and share if there is significant distrust and harm within a group)

Why:
- Move beyond surface level communication
- Expose underlying elements that are central to conflict
- To help find common ground and shared elements

When to use:
- To understand dynamics of a conflict situation
- When parties are defensive, unwilling to be vulnerable, etc.
- When there may be a disconnect between values and actions
- To lay the foundation for mediation or negotiation by showing what each party needs in order to be satisfied
- In preparation for dialogue facilitation

Helpful questions to ask:
- What do they say they want?
- Why do they want that?
- Why is that important to them?
- What problem are they trying to solve or address?
- What need are they trying to fill?
#3 ABC TRIANGLE

**What:** Analysis of each key party's attitudes, behaviors and context. Similar to the onion but goes a little deeper into context.

**Why:**
- Perspective taking of major parties involved
- Explore how three sets of factors influence each other.
- Consider how these factors relate to needs and fears of each entity
- Understand how the greater context (e.g., power dynamics, surrounding culture & climate, external factors, etc.) is impacting the individual in the conflict

**When to use:**
- Early in process to consider what motivates different involved parties
- Can be completed when the different entities are involved in analysis process (each party would complete their own) -- Note: Do not ask people to complete and share if there is significant distrust and harm within a group
- Later to identify what factors might be addressed by an intervention

**How to Use:**
1. Identified the major parties involved in the conflict.
2. Draw an ABC triangle for each entity involved.
3. Around each triangle, list key issues related to A, B and C from the viewpoint of that party**
4. Indicate what are key needs and primary fears (in center of triangle).
5. Compare triangles and look for overlaps, similarities and differences.

**Note:** Be careful if completing it alone of your own perceptions, assumptions & biases.