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Homepage von Peter J. Reichard

04 - Conflict resolution by changing perspectives



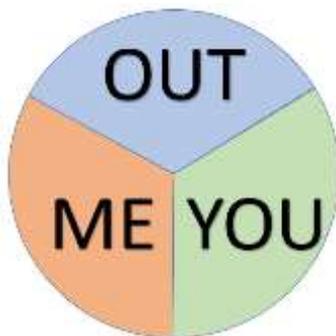
→ [German version](#)



Photo: pixabay

A fierce argument or a serious rebuke are examples of conflict triggers. They should be thoroughly analyzed in order to resolve the conflict in a subsequent discussion. In the following, thoughts on how the [1] [time for reflection](#) can be used for situation analysis and discussion preparation.

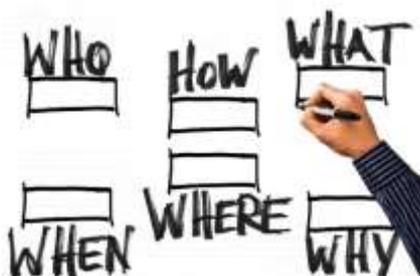
Basis and goal



In order to prepare for a conflict discussion, a **thorough analysis** of the behaviour of the two participants from different perspectives is necessary, that's a [2] [change of perspectives](#). As a participant, you open up **additional possibilities for perception and interpretation**, i.e. a **more objective view** of the conflict. This also reduces your emotional involvement. With more understanding for both your concerns, you can prepare yourself for a conversation that will enable the conflict to be resolved through understanding.

Preparations

Take about an hour for the analysis in a room where you will not be disturbed, as close as possible to the unpleasant encounter. One after the other, you reflect your own impressions and feelings in the role of "ME", your opponent in the role of "YOU", and finally an uninvolved observer of the conflictual encounter in the role of "OUT".



In doing so, you answer the questions listed for each role (who, how, where, what, through what, with what, ...). You transfer these to one piece of paper each with the headings ME, YOU or OUT respectively.

Photo: pixabay

If you have already practiced perspective changes several times, it is not difficult for you to put yourself purely mentally and emotionally into the respective role. Otherwise, the "role change at the round table" helps you to change your position in your thoughts and feelings and to take a different view.

Role change at the round table

Preparations

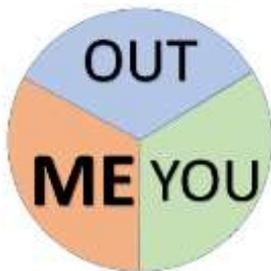
For this purpose, set up a place and chair for each role at a round table. For example, you arrange these three seats as shown in the figure above.

You then place on each of the three table sections

- the note with the questions destined for the respective role,
- one blank sheet each with the inscription ME, YOU or OUT, and
- one pen each.

Also place a chair in front of each of the three table sections. Then take a seat on the "ME" chair.

Your own memories



This role does not yet require a change of perspective, but leads you to a **self-reflection** of what is happening. So take the **place** of "ME" (red) in your thoughts and emotions, where you recall your memories of the annoying meeting.

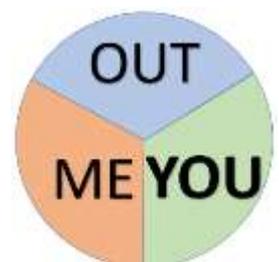
To do this, answer the following questions, for example:

1. What exactly did my counterpart say, claim or imply?
2. What facts did he name or assume?
3. Which body language signals - facial expressions, gestures and tone of voice - did I perceive in him?
4. What exactly touched me so emotionally?
5. How did I possibly give my counterpart reason to become so abusive?
6. What signs are there that something that upset me was deliberately directed against me?
7. What do I want to achieve with the upcoming conversation?

Make a note of your answers on the sheet entitled "ME".

Your counterpart

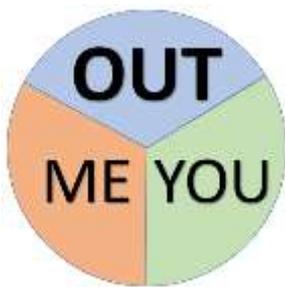
In the second step, you take on the **role** of the person "YOU" who annoyed you, and at the round table also its **place** (green). Ask yourself the following questions in this role.



1. What **cause** has upset me so much against "ME"? What factual reason?
2. Why did I behave **so aggressively** towards "I" instead of talking quietly to him?
3. What other experience has possibly contributed to appearing so unrestrained towards "ME" now?
4. Which **reaction** of "ME" made me even more angry?
5. What important considerations did I have in mind for "ME", and what goal did I actually want to achieve with it?
6. How do I judge the incident in retrospect?
7. What do I want to achieve in the conversation that "ME" suggested?

Write down your thoughts on the sheet overwritten with "YOU".

The independent position



Put yourself in the role "OUT" of an unbiased fellow human being who has observed the conflict between "ME" and "YOU" attentively without intervening. Take his place (blue) in the table round mentally or really.

From this observer position you answer the following questions, for example:

1. How did the emotional encounter between "ME" and "YOU" **develop** from my point of view? Who first lost self-control? What seemed to be the **trigger**?
2. Which **emotions** were observed in "ME" and which in "YOU"?
3. How was it shown whether one of them or both reacted **hypersensitively**? Which exactly in which of the two?
4. How could I possibly perceive **mutual bias**? With whom and with which utterance?
5. What was a possible **misunderstanding** between the two?
6. Which **intention** did "YOU" seem to have, and which "ME"?
7. What could a **compromise** look like? What could "YOU" and "ME" agree on?

Note your answers on the sheet overwritten with "OUT".

Gain clarity of purpose

In a fourth step you leave the table round mentally and if necessary actually. This takes you to a position outside the round table. This could be your desk, for example. In epistemology such a position is called "**meta-level**".

Photo: pixabay



The **meta-level** is a view in which a process or an object is viewed from the outside, from a "superordinate" perspective, unbiasedly and as comprehensively as possible ("multi-perspectively") in order to recognize it as objectively as possible.

There you will now become an advisor for "ME". You start this task by reading the three notes carefully one after the other. The notes make you aware of the conflict from three points of view in a synopsis. You have thus managed to extend the mere concern of the "ME" by other perceptions and interpretations, i.e. an increase in objectivity. For the consultation of "ME" you underline particularly important answers.

Search balance

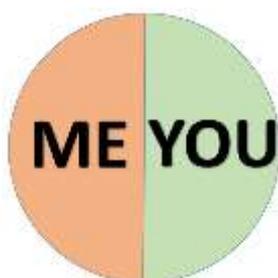
From this "superior" control room you can clarify which **result** the intended call should have. Also, how "ME" can work towards this. The notes to the 7th questions - especially those of "OUT" - are helpful for this. Questions 5 to 7 addressed to "OUT" also deal with the [3] **balance** of interests. For "YOU" to only "*read the riot act*" would perhaps be a satisfaction for "ME". That wouldn't be a conversation, though, but a kind of one-way street on which "YOU" and its state of mind and intentions would remain indifferent and unattainable. **Satisfaction of both** arises only through a reconciliation of interests, thus at least with a compromise, better still through consensus. As an "advisor", you have to consider at the meta-level which proposals are suitable.

Regretting the regrettable

Most people are reluctant to apologize for their own bad behavior. However, there is a way out: If you expect an **apology**, you are often already reconciled when your counterpart regrets what has happened. **Regretting is not an admission of guilt**, but a bridge that can lead to reconciliation. If "ME" myself had "fueled" the argument, the counselor should draw his attention to this conciliatory and self-respecting possibility: "*I regret that I upset you so*". It is also easier to wring regret from the "YOU" than an apology, e.g. with an - admittedly suggestive - question like: "*In retrospect, don't you also feel sorry for the fact that we have clashed in such a way?*"

For a successful conversation, at least as important as clarity of purpose is the **inner attitude** with which "ME" enters the conversation. The "advisor" should urgently draw "ME"'s attention to this.

Your inner attitude



Even if someone does not keep to the form and makes inaccurate claims, it is not proof of your self-competence to "bawl him out" - figuratively speaking. The wrong person has the same right to humane treatment as you.

It speaks for you if you respect that and give him the opportunity to explain himself and, if necessary, to see his mistakes.

That's why every human being has

- the right to make mistakes,
- the task of recognising and, if possible, making amends for them, and
- the opportunity to learn from them.

That's why I even call mistakes "**my friends**", which I change frequently after learning from them. [4] [Sabine Gessenich](#) referred to my article [5] "[Learning from mistakes](#)".

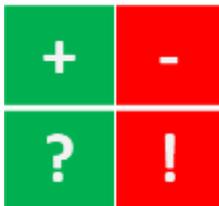
Your influence

You have no way of directly influencing someone else's behaviour unless you convince them to change their behaviour. The only behavior that you can immediately change is your own! You may find this statement sobering or disappointing. But it is also a challenge. It is easier for you to cope with it after the change of perspectives, because new perspectives open up new possibilities for action. But keep in mind: **The only sure adjustment is your own behaviour.**

Your behaviour

This consideration should determine you not to conduct the conversation aggressively, but in an effort to communicate. That is what it serves if you refrain from accusations and accusations. Think carefully about how to start the conversation. You probably know the proverb:

The questioner leads



So: Ask, as relaxed as possible. First: *"How much time should we take for today's conversation?"* My advice: At the most an hour, better only half an hour. Talking over a long period of time is usually unsatisfactory.

Then to the **reason for the conversation**: *"Did I understand you correctly with the statement I remember so well: ...?"* Do you abstain from your own evaluations and do not let your concern be noticed. Ask about the **occasion**, the **facts** and the **intention** of the statements you made. Ask whether your counterpart can imagine what **feelings** this triggered in you, and whether he wanted it that way. *"What can you tell me so that I understand your concern better?"* or *"What exactly did you want to achieve for me?"*

Why write it down?



Thoughts are fleeting. But what you write down is more clearly conscious and remembered longer. In addition, better notes can be checked and corrected than past thoughts. –

But perhaps writing is too annoying for you? Then you might consider recording voice notes on your smartphone, for example. This is particularly useful for people whose preferred organ of perception is their hearing. The written form is preferred by those who remember optical and haptic impressions best. However, the audio note is not suitable for use in a conversation, but can be used to create a written note with the same text.

External conditions

Do not sit opposite the person you are talking to, but rather over the corner and to the left of him or her. With this **seating arrangement** you avoid confrontation and show appreciation. Clarify at the beginning whether the **time frame** will be adhered to and watch over it during the conversation. If the time frame of one hour is not sufficient, it is better to arrange a new appointment afterwards. A watch placed visibly on the table is better than repeated glances at the watch. Your **note** can help you not to lose the thread.

Communicate mindful

The conversation itself succeeds "**at eye level**" and with satisfying results, if you also use the technique of "**active listening**".

The "**symmetrical communication**" and the "active listening" will be introduced in detail in later chapters.

Save results



At the end of the interview, you should at least note down the (interim-) **results** in key words and secure them by asking questions. If certain **actions** are agreed for the future, a **control agreement** should also be made and noted: "*When will we find out whether we have achieved this and how can we improve it if necessary*".

The **exchange of notes** can underpin the confidence that the **transparency of the results** will provide a good **basis for the future relationship**.

Translation

I used the help of <https://www.deepl.com/translator> for the translation.

LINKS



German version:

<https://p-j-r.de/publicationes/bildung/selbstkompetenz/237-konfliktloesung.html>

- [back to top](#)

[1] "Time for reflection leads to better solutions" describes how time can be gained to think about a conflict and its resolution:

https://p-j-r.de/pdf/articles/time_to_think.pdf

- [back to \[1\]](#)

[2] My video clip illustrates the term "Perspektivwechsel" and the meaning, possible applications and benefits of the method of the same name:

<https://youtu.be/klidyJQlykk>

- [back to \[2\]](#)

[3] "Balance suchen" contains tips for finding balanced compromises:

<https://p-j-r.de/publicationes/bildung/kompetenzentwicklung/54-balance-suchen.html>

- [back to \[3\]](#)

[4] *Sabine Gessenich*:

<https://lernberatung-ingelheim.de/sabine-gessenich/>

- [back to \[4\]](#)

[5] "Aus Fehlern lernen" conveys a better attitude towards oneself and others:

<https://p-j-r.de/publicationes/bildung/kompetenzentwicklung/68-aus-fehlern-lernen.html>

- [back to \[5\]](#)

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Teaser: Conflict resolution by changing perspectives

A conflict discussion needs to be well prepared in order to succeed. The behaviour and intentions of the participants must be analysed from many perspectives, e.g. by reversing roles, and then one's own behaviour must be thoroughly planned.