

Core Concerns: Autonomy

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, we'll discuss the role of autonomy in both creating and resolving conflict. The areas of focus include:

1. Autonomy as a Core Concern
 - a. In Conflict
 - b. In Conflict Resolution

1. Autonomy as a Core Concern

In Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, a **core concern** is one of five emotional or relational needs all humans feel within relationships or negotiations. All of these core needs fit into the esteem and love/belonging levels on Maslow's hierarchy.

Autonomy, or a perception that one is empowered to make one's own choices and act freely based on those choices, is a core concern that falls on the esteem level in Maslow's hierarchy.

We all have the need to feel that we're being recognized, respected, and that we have influence and the freedom to make our own choices.



TERMS TO KNOW

Core Concern

One of 5 emotional or relational needs all humans feel within relationships or in negotiation.

Autonomy

A perception that one is empowered to make one's own choices and act freely based on those choices.

1a. In Conflict

However, as a core concern, autonomy can sometimes lead to conflict in any of these relationship contexts.

- *Professional Workplace*: In the context of your job, you want to feel that you are recognized and respected for your work, and that you can be trusted with a project. When someone starts to micromanage you, it can make you feel as though your work is being infringed upon, or that you're not being trusted. In order to have control of your work, you want to be told the deadlines and expectations, but then be given the autonomy to complete the project.

- *Professional Team:* You arrive at a team meeting one day, only to have an announcement made that some huge changes are going to affect your role on the team and in the company as a whole. You may feel like this decision is being imposed upon you, and there's been no prior discussion. You were not asked for feedback, and you had no influence on the outcome. Oftentimes in this kind of situation, the feeling that you are not being given a choice can lead to backlash.
- *Home:* As children get older, they want to feel as though they can be trusted with making the right choices. However, as the parent, you have the right to set the guidelines: "You can take the car, but you have to be home by 11pm." Within those guidelines, teenagers want to feel that they can make some of their own choices, and that you trust them to do so. If you don't allow that, you may have some backlash from your teenager who perhaps feels that you're not trusting him or her.
- *Community Level:* You might live in a community where you don't want to have laws, regulations, and rules imposed on you without having the chance to give your input. You want to talk to the city council, go to meetings, and vote in local politics. Because you want to be heard and feel that you have influence, you don't want others imposing things on you without inviting your involvement.

1b. In Conflict Resolution

Within the conflict resolution process, it's important to honor the sense of autonomy. This process involves parties in conflict coming together to resolve the conflict in good faith, so each party needs to feel empowered to make his or her own choices and share what's important to him or her.

This empowerment is key to discovering the parties' underlying needs, or what they truly require in order to resolve the conflict.

As a mediator, the following conflict-resolving techniques are essential to the effectiveness of the process:

- Respect the autonomy of both parties
- Allow them to create their own agreement
- Enable them to work out their own issues



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that the esteem and love/belonging levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs also include core concerns; **autonomy is a core concern** that falls into the esteem category. You now understand that in the conflict resolution process, autonomy is important to establish because if both parties feel they have a sense of autonomy, they will then have the ability to reach their own agreement in the conflict. Good luck!

Source: Adapted from Sophia tutorial by Marlene Johnson.



TERMS TO KNOW

Autonomy

A perception that one is empowered to make one's own choices and act freely based on those choices.

Core Concern

Per Harvard Negotiation Project, one of 5 emotional or relational needs all humans feel within relationships

or in negotiation.