

# Crisis

*by Sophia Tutorial*



## WHAT'S COVERED

While there are a number of ways that conflict can be broken into stages, all models look at three large phases:

- Pre-conflict
- Conflict
- Post-conflict.

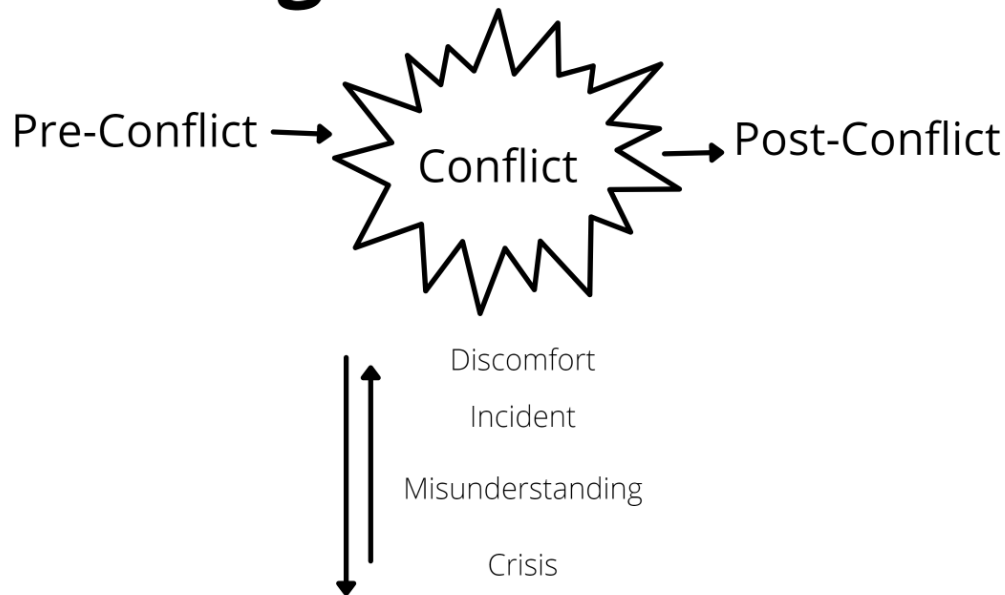
This lesson will discuss the fifth stage within the conflict phase by focusing on:

1. Crisis Stage of Conflict
2. Role in the Conflict Resolution Process

## 1. Crisis Stage of Conflict

As you learned in a previous lesson, the pre-conflict stage is when an issue may be brewing, but you're not really aware of what it is. Then, of course, there's the actual conflict stage, and the post-conflict stage when things are resolved.

# Stages of Conflict



Within the conflict phase, the very first stage is often the feeling of discomfort that something is wrong. Following discomfort is the incident stage, where something either minor or major happens to bring the conflict out in the open. Next often comes the misunderstanding stage, which leads to tension. The more misunderstandings there are, the more tension there is; this tension can ultimately result in crisis.

The **crisis stage of conflict** is when the ineffective communication between parties has escalated into open conflict—this is when you might have heated arguments, or retaliatory behavior, or other hallmarks of a damaged relationship in serious conflict. Parties may even act intentionally to harm each other, and they hold strong negative views of one another.

➦ **EXAMPLE** In your neighborhood, there's a new family with teenagers who have large parties on the weekends and play loud music. This is starting to get on the nerves of other people in the neighborhood. The new family lives right next door to you, and you've had a few conversations with them about the following issues:

- The music is loud.
- The parties tend to be messy.
- They don't clean up after these parties.

There has been tension when you've had these conversations, and your neighbors have defended their right to have guests and play music on weekends on their own property; they also suggested that you keep your barking dog inside the house, which did not seem relevant in your opinion.

The next day, your dog was barking so you moved her outside to the yard so that she wouldn't interrupt your lunch. A few minutes later, your neighbors turned on loud music on their outdoor speakers. It seems clear that they were retaliating for your barking dog. You and your neighbors are now in open conflict.

➦ **EXAMPLE** You and your siblings have been discussing what to do with your dad. He's older, and has been living in the family home. You and a couple of your siblings feel this is not safe anymore, and it's

probably time that he move into a care facility. He doesn't want to go, but you think maybe the move is best. This afternoon, you went over to check on him as you usually do, and you found that he'd fallen while the stove was on. This is now a crisis; something has to change.



#### TERM TO KNOW

#### Crisis Stage of Conflict

The stage of conflict in which parties cannot communicate effectively and act intentionally to harm each other, and view each other strongly negatively.

## 2. Role in the Conflict Resolution Process

As we've discussed before, conflicts can escalate and de-escalate between the stages depending on what is done to try to resolve the conflict during any one stage.

In general, it's good to resolve a conflict in the earliest stage possible. Crisis is the most difficult stage within which to resolve a conflict, but it can still be done.

➞ **EXAMPLE** The next time the neighbors throw a party, you consider calling the police to shut it down. But your spouse reminds you that this would be a further escalation of the conflict and potentially dangerous to people in the neighborhood. You and some of your other neighbors decide to try and set up a community mediation. Bringing in a third party may allow you to talk to the new neighbors about these issues and restore some harmony within the neighborhood.

➞ **EXAMPLE** After your father's fall, you call your siblings. You might say something like, "I'm going to call the doctor today. Let's all meet with the doctor and talk to him about what might be best for Dad." You are going to bring in a medical resource. You could also involve someone that the family trusts as a mediator to help you all have a conversation to resolve the conflict.



#### SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about the **crisis stage of conflict**, and that although this is the most difficult stage during which to address a conflict, the **conflict resolution process** can still successfully take place here.

Source: ADAPTED FROM SOPHIA TUTORIAL BY MARLENE JOHNSON.



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