

Is Conflict Good or Bad?

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, we'll discuss the common perceptions of conflict:

1. Perception of Conflict as Good
2. Perception of Conflict as Bad

1. Perception of Conflict as Good

When we perceive **conflict as good**, we see it as an experience that provides opportunities for growth or positive change. Here are some examples of how someone might consider conflict good.

↪ **EXAMPLE** If you've ever been a part of a protest movement, perhaps to save a natural resource, you might have felt the conflict that you were involved in was really worth it because the ends were so important to you. You were involved in this conflict for a purpose, so you saw it as positive.

↪ **EXAMPLE** When Federica's family decided to move to the United States for better economic opportunities, they faced a lot of hardship and conflict along the way, such as relationship conflict with the family members they would be leaving behind in their home country, structural conflict with the immigration rules of the U.S., needs conflict around where to settle in the U.S., and values conflict as they assimilated to the norms of their new community. However, now that Federica has been in the U.S. for ten years, she looks back on that period of conflict as positive, because ultimately the changes that immigration brought to their family made them stronger, more close-knit, and gave them more access to opportunities.

↪ **EXAMPLE** Let's say you're someone who always says yes when people ask you to do things, both at home and at work. You're now starting to feel a little resentful, like you're being taken for granted, so you decide to stand up for yourself and say no. You know this is going to lead to some conflict since people expect you to step in and do certain things, but you're willing to endure that conflict because this is an opportunity for you to grow as a person. You see this conflict as good because it's a positive source of change.



TERM TO KNOW

Conflict as Good

A perception that conflict is an experience that provides opportunities for growth or positive change.

2. Perception of Conflict as Bad

When we perceive **conflict as bad**, it's being considered primarily as a negative or harmful experience. This is a common way for us to view conflict, as we often fear it to a certain degree. Here are some examples of how someone might perceive a conflict as bad.

➞ **EXAMPLE** If you choose to fight something in court, you may lose money, or maybe some resources that are personal to you. This could be a hardship, so there's a lot of discomfort involved when a conflict such as this is perceived negatively.

➞ **EXAMPLE** A family moves into a neighborhood that has always been considered a quiet place for older people to live; however, this family has two teenage children who start hosting band practice at their home several times a week. This causes a conflict with the neighbors. The new family may be very nice, but this sort of change to an established environment might make people feel fearful or a little bit uncomfortable.

➞ **EXAMPLE** At home, you're being asked to step out of your typical role to do some things that don't quite feel comfortable or familiar to you. There is nothing inherently bad about this conflict, but you perceive this conflict as bad because of your discomfort.



TERM TO KNOW

Conflict as Bad

A perception that conflict is primarily a negative or harmful experience.



BIG IDEA

It's important to keep in mind that conflict in and of itself is neutral; it can come with advantages, disadvantages, or both. Whether a conflict is good or bad, whether it presents a danger or an opportunity, is really in the way we perceive it.

Remembering this will help keep the parties involved focused on ways to resolve the conflict, rather than on their own perceptions of the conflict.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned how and why **conflict can be perceived as either good or bad**. You now understand that conflict is really neutral, and the way we choose to label it is based on personal perception. Good luck!

Source: Adapted from Sophia tutorial by Marlene Johnson.



TERMS TO KNOW

Conflict as Bad

A perception that conflict is primarily a negative or harmful experience.

Conflict as Good

A perception that conflict is an experience that provides opportunities for growth or positive change.