

# Selecting a Method or Crafting Your Own

by Sophia Tutorial



## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, we'll discuss various options for crafting or adapting a conflict resolution method to fit the needs of a particular conflict. The specific areas of focus include:

1. Selecting the Right Method
2. Four Mediation Styles
3. Other Resolution Methods

## 1. Selecting the Right Method

There are many variables that go into selecting the right method to address any particular conflict, such as the parties involved and the nature of the conflict itself.

While there are quite a few conflict resolution processes to choose from, each of them is organized around particular actions, in a particular sequence, with an end in mind. In other words, each **process** has its own **techniques**, or tools used in the conflict resolution process. The processes are made up of **steps**, or individual parts within the larger process.

Because each process uses different techniques and steps, few conflict resolution processes fit any conflict model perfectly.

When you, as an intervener, really begin crafting the method or model that you're going to use, you'll realize that no two resolution processes will end up being completely identical. This is why it's important to be able to modify and adapt the process to fit the needs of the particular situation, and there are a number of things to take into consideration when you're deciding how to do that.

Some common factors to consider are:

- Cultural differences
- Complexity of the conflict (e.g., distance, multiple parties)
- Length of the conflict

While the techniques and steps of a process can all be modified or changed depending on these factors, it's important to remember that the **core assumptions** remain constant.

A core assumption is not a technique but a fundamental approach to conflict resolution that underlies all processes. These are concepts such as separating the people from the problems and maintaining open

communication. You want to ensure these core assumptions are part of any process you craft or adapt.



## TERMS TO KNOW

### Process

An organized set of actions performed in a particular sequence in pursuit of a given end.

### Technique

An individual conflict resolution tool.

### Step

An individual part of a process.

### Core Assumptions

As opposed to techniques, the fundamental approaches to dealing with conflict that underlie conflict resolution processes.

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## 2. Four Mediation Styles

As you've learned, mediation is often the ideal method of conflict resolution to use when possible, and there are four different types of mediation you can choose from.

Depending on the situation, you might choose some elements from each of these styles to adapt and modify for your crafted approach.

- *Facilitative Mediation*: A common style of mediation in which the mediator does not offer any opinions or suggestions. Taking a completely neutral stance, the mediator is simply there to facilitate the conversation, and move the parties towards a mutual agreement.
- *Transformative Mediation*: A style of mediation based on transforming the relationships of the parties involved in the conflict. The goal of this type of mediation is to examine the relationship issues at play, whether or not the parties end up reaching an agreement.
- *Evaluative Mediation*: A style of mediation that allows the mediator to offer some suggestions or opinions, if the parties would like that input.
- *Mediation-Arbitration*: A style of mediation, also known as med-arb, in which the mediator can actually switch roles. If the parties are unable to come to a decision, the mediator can move out of the mediation role and into the role of an arbitrator in order to make a decision, per the parties' request.

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## 3. Other Resolution Methods

Aside from mediation, there are several other forms of conflict resolution that you can choose from when adapting or crafting your process.

- *Arbitration*: A process in which the parties agree to allow a neutral third party to make the final decision regarding the outcome of the conflict. The third party could be a single arbitrator or a tribunal comprising several arbiters making the decision together.
- *Conciliation*: A process that involves an intervener meeting separately with each party, then moving back and forth between them in order to get concessions from each. This is a particularly useful model if

there's a geographical distance making it really difficult for the parties to meet together, or if the parties simply don't want to meet in the same room.

- *Shuttle Diplomacy*: A process similar to conciliation in that both involve the intervener shuttling back and forth between the parties to meet with them separately. Shuttle diplomacy is quite often used in diplomatic situations or political resolution processes that necessitate the intervener moving between the parties.

However, the difference between shuttle diplomacy and conciliation is that while shuttle diplomacy focuses on tangible issues (e.g., proposals, negotiations, agreements), conciliation brings some non-tangible issues (e.g., emotional factors) into the discussion as well.



#### BIG IDEA

There are a wide variety of conflict resolution processes, each with its own techniques and steps. As an intervener, you can choose from any of these models in order to craft a method that will fit the particular conflict and parties involved.



#### SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that there are a variety of different conflict resolution processes, and each involves **techniques, steps, and core assumptions**. While techniques and steps vary by process, all processes involve the same core assumptions.

You now understand that when crafting or adapting a process, you as an intervener have a number of options. There are **four mediation styles (facilitative mediation, transformative mediation, evaluative mediation, mediation-arbitration)**, as well as several **other resolution methods (arbitration, conciliation, shuttle diplomacy)** from which you can choose. All of these processes can be adapted depending on the specific needs of the conflict and the parties involved. Good luck!

Source: Adapted from Sophia tutorial by Marlene Johnson.



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