

The Discomfort Stage of Conflict

by Sophia



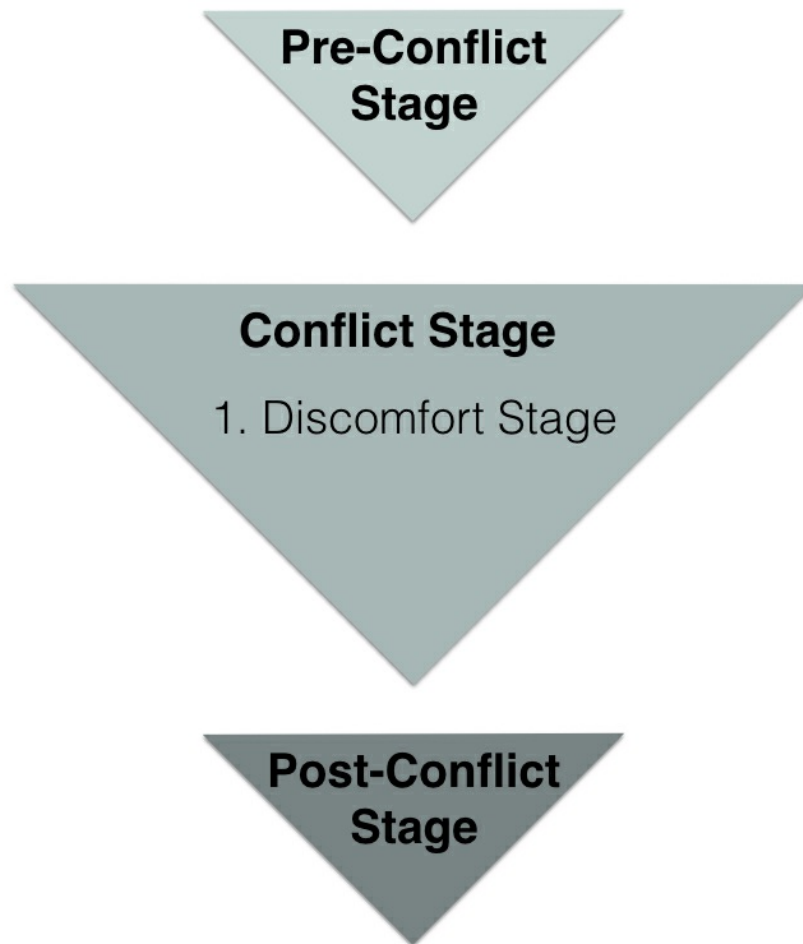
WHAT'S COVERED

While there are a number of ways that conflict can be broken into stages, all models look at three large phases: pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict. In this lesson, we will discuss the first stage within the conflict phase by focusing on:

1. The Discomfort Stage

Recall that 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.

The **discomfort stage** is the first stage within conflict. This is when the parties are aware of their needs not being met but do not yet understand how each other's roles impact unmet needs.



Let's look at some examples of the discomfort stage of conflict.

➞ **EXAMPLE** You are someone who likes to host gatherings in your home; you enjoy cooking. However, you're starting to feel uncomfortable because you have a lot of relatives. When they come to town, it always seems like you're hosting everyone at your home. This appears to become the tradition, and all the work is falling on you. You also notice that others really aren't offering to chip in. Yes, they'll bring some things like side dishes to your house, but you are starting to feel uncomfortable with this arrangement.

➞ **EXAMPLE** You have always enjoyed a good challenge at your job, but recently you've been asked to take on more. Some of these additional assignments used to be your coworker's responsibility. You don't feel quite comfortable with those tasks. You feel like you haven't received the right training, and though you're not quite sure, your gut feeling is that you're a little uneasy about this extra work you've been asked to do.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Let's say you have some new neighbors next door, and the yard seems really messy. You don't know quite how to describe it, but things don't seem to be kept up the way they used to be when the other neighbors lived there. You are now feeling a bit of discomfort.



THINK ABOUT IT

Think back to the last conflict you had. How would you describe the discomfort stage of that conflict?
How did it end up resolving?



TERM TO KNOW

Discomfort Stage

The stage of a conflict in which parties are aware of their needs not being met but are not exactly aware of the details of each other's role in needs not being met.

2. The Role of the Discomfort Stage in the Conflict Resolution Process

Because the discomfort stage is often where conflict begins, it's the easiest stage in which to resolve a conflict by tackling it early. Let's take a look at some examples of how to resolve a conflict during the discomfort stage.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Let's go back to you hosting relatives in your home. You've started to feel uncomfortable like it might be a little much. You could tackle the conflict early by calling another relative who lives in the same town. You might explain the situation like this: "You know I enjoy having people over, but it's starting to feel like a lot. Would you ever consider having the family come to your house? How could we work together and share the responsibility when people come to town?"

➞ **EXAMPLE** With the new neighbors, you might mention that you've noticed how the trash hasn't been picked up the last couple of times, and you're wondering about that. In this way, you begin to open up a conversation about your concerns.



BRAINSTORM

How might you go about solving the example conflict about being asked to take on more assignments at work?



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about the **discomfort stage** of conflict, and how opening a dialogue in this early stage can make the **conflict resolution process** easier and more effective.

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