Theoretical Overview

by Sophia Tutorial

☰ WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, we will discuss five different theories of conflict resolution:

1. Cooperative Model
2. Human Needs Model
3. Principled Negotiation
4. Conflict Styles Theory
5. Conflict Transformation

1. Cooperative Model

The **cooperative model** is an approach to conflict resolution that encourages parties to see themselves as partners working together to solve problems.

⤳ **EXAMPLE** You might see this in a community, where people are coming together with common interests, such as the best ways to:

- Develop the community
- Preserve safety
- Grow business

The community members see themselves as partners working to solve whatever problems might arise.

⤳ **EXAMPLE** You can also see the cooperative model within a personal relationship. You may have a conflict with someone over a differing viewpoint, a different belief system, a goal, or a need.

You want to sit down with that party and cooperate to see if there's a way you could move past your differences in order to meet both of your needs.

🗎 TERM TO KNOW

Cooperative Model
An approach to conflict resolution that encourages parties to see themselves as partners working jointly to solve problems.

2. Human Needs Model

The **human needs model** presumes that certain universal human needs, often described in hierarchical terms, influence parties' goals in conflict.

In other words, there are basic human needs that we all have, and these needs fall on a scale. At the bottom of that scale are survival needs, such as food, shelter, and safety. If those needs aren't met, then we aren't even going to think about anything else.

> ↪ EXAMPLE People who have lost their jobs may be having difficulty paying their rent/mortgage, putting food on the table, and supporting their families. Those needs are going to be foremost in any sort of a negotiation or conflict resolution process.

> Other people may not have to worry about those basic human needs because they have a job and money coming in. Their needs are at the higher end of the scale, and may include things such as self-esteem; their most important need at the moment might be recognition for work well done.

📄 **TERM TO KNOW**

Human Needs Model
A model of conflict resolution that presumes certain universal human needs, often described in hierarchical terms, influence parties' goals in conflict.

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3. Principled Negotiation

The next style of conflict resolution that we'll discuss is called **principled negotiation**, which is a form of negotiation that focuses on meeting parties' underlying interests rather than on their competing positions.

> ↪ EXAMPLE Once again, you may have people in a community that are talking about zoning restrictions; they have different ideas about what they want to see. The goal here would be to focus on their underlying interest, which is creating a safe environment that is going to be enjoyable for everyone.

Because of the focus on a common interest between parties, principled negotiation is a very useful model in many circumstances.

📄 **TERM TO KNOW**

Principled Negotiation
A form of negotiation that focuses on meeting parties' underlying interests rather than competing positions.

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4. Conflict Styles Theory

Conflict styles theory is an approach to conflict resolution in which the key to resolving conflict is selecting and working within the most appropriate style of resolution.

Thus, this particular method really recognizes that people have different styles; one method won't work the

same way for everybody.

When using conflict styles theory, we want to ask what the best style of conflict resolution is for these specific parties, in this specific context, in this specific conflict.

📄 **TERM TO KNOW**

Conflict Styles Theory
An approach to conflict resolution which sees the key to resolving conflict as selecting and working within the most appropriate style of resolution.

5. Conflict Transformation

Lastly, there is **conflict transformation**, which is an approach that sees the key to resolving and preventing conflicts as changing the fundamental relationship between the parties.

The theory of conflict transformation is very much relationship-based; the idea is that if the parties can come together in order to:

- Communicate differently
- Understand one another and the relationship
- Hear each other's stories

The process in itself can bring about enough change for the underlying conflicts to be resolved or at least begin to be resolved.

📄 **TERM TO KNOW**

Conflict Transformation
An approach to conflict resolution which sees the key to resolving and preventing conflicts as changing the fundamental relationship between parties.

⭐ **BIG IDEA**

While these theories have both similarities and differences between them, it's important to remember that they all continue to grow and develop as we learn more through research and practice.

📋 **SUMMARY**

In this lesson, you learned about the five theories of conflict resolution: **cooperative model, human needs model, principled negotiation, conflict styles theory, and conflict transformation.** Good luck!

Source: Adapted from Sophia tutorial by Marlene Johnson.

📄 **TERMS TO KNOW**

Conflict Styles Theory

An approach to conflict resolution which sees the key to resolving conflict as selecting and working within the most appropriate style of resolution.

Conflict Transformation
An approach to conflict resolution which sees the key to resolving and preventing conflicts as changing the fundamental relationship between parties.

Cooperative Model
An approach to conflict resolution that encourages parties to see themselves as partners working jointly to solve problems.

Human Needs Model
A model of conflict resolution that presumes certain universal human needs, often described in hierarchical terms, influence parties' goals in conflict.

Principled Negotiation
A form of negotiation that focuses on meeting parties' underlying interests rather than competing positions.