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Conflict Resolution Network,
PO Box 1016 Chatswood NSW 2057 Australia.

Website: <http://crnhq.org> Email: resources@crnhq.org

The Gentle Revolution

Resolving the Collision of Gender-Linked Values

by Helena Cornelius,

Director of Conflict Resolution Network,
Psychologist, conflict analyst and mediator

Values – rules for the road

Values are our rules for the road. They determine what behaviours and paradigms we regard as acceptable. They colour our perceptions of morality, beauty, justice, sound practice and fair play. They underlie our decision-making about goals as well as our methods of achieving them. Values determine mind-set, offer a consistency of behaviour over time and govern the 'how' as well as the 'what' of behaviour. They are the mechanism behind the clock face, the workings of what we loosely call 'personality'.

The degree of our commitment to a value indicates how core to our personality it is, and gives some indication of how flexible or inflexible we are, and hence how hard it will be to find a meeting ground in a conflict situation.

We express values as:

- preferences;
- opinions;
- beliefs; and
- principles.

This list follows our increasing commitment to the value we hold and indicates how deeply it resides in the core of our personality.

People hold some values consciously, such as being for or against abortion, or for or against gun control. But often people take their values for granted. These unconscious values emerge only when the person reflects on why they choose to act in a particular way, perhaps in response to being questioned. These unconscious viewpoints are often expressed in very personal terms. Don't expect a handy label.

The formation of values

Most people would rate core values or principles, such as self-preservation, honesty, loyalty, pride in good work, very highly. But we cannot presume that other people hold all the same values as we do, or that they give them the same priority, or that they should. Values are formed by:

1. Personal experience: In the light of everyday experience and the behaviour we 'discover' ourselves exhibiting, we are constantly redefining our preferences,

opinions and beliefs. These are our more lightly held values or attitudes. Core values or principles usually require life-changing events to dislodge.

2. Culture: Children learn values, openly or by implication, from others who hold that value; for example, in the family or at school. Men and women have usually grown up in and continue to be affected by different subcultures. These subcultures influence our values and the order of importance they hold for us. Certainly there is a large overlap. Men's and women's lives are different, but not *that* different.

In times of conflict, values may express as opposite polarities — when a particular value is called into question during a conflict, people tend to polarise and move to opposing extremities — their conflict corner. At these times, particularly when they are in opposition to someone of the opposite sex, many men may align more closely with values from the stereotypically masculine style, women with values from the stereotypically feminine style.

If we move to our conflict corner, a polarised extreme, we are liable to play out the conflict as a win/lose game. Whoever shouts louder or has the greater power or manipulates best, wins. On the day it can seem great, but winning when the other person is losing sows the seeds for resurrection of the conflict. Long-term solutions that won't backfire or break down will usually require us to acknowledge and accommodate other people's values as well as our own. Each of the following eight gender-linked values is inherently valid in itself and each needs due consideration and respect. *This is the essence of the win/win approach to conflict resolution.* The objective of the gentle revolution is to balance the masculine and feminine ultimately within each person. To do so requires that both masculine and feminine values are validated and advanced. I'm deeply committed to this approach to conflicts because I believe that masculine and feminine perspectives together create solutions that are whole, balanced and therefore viable in the long term.

Language

We probably cannot make one definitive statement about 'all men' or 'all women'. I have made a distinction not always apparent in common usage. In this book, the adjectives *female* and *male* denote sex type, and *feminine* and *masculine* refer to psychological qualities which might reside in either sex. In order not to limit discussion, I often indicate the person by the *value* that is motivating them at the time, to avoid naming a specific *gender*. My comments are relevant to the *cross-value* conflict. This is often, but not always, a *cross-gender* conflict.

THE 8 GENDER-LINKED VALUES

EQUALITY AND STATUS

Characteristics: equality

I use the term *equalisers* to describe those people motivated by the value of equality at a particular time. They are often, but not always, women. A number of characteristics cluster around the equality value. Equalisers:

- *Prefer to share power with others rather than use power over them.*
- *Create a level playing field.*
- *Want equality of opportunity.*
- *Measure with a yardstick of fairness.*
- *Tolerate different viewpoints.*
- *See everyone as basically the same.*

- *Consult.*
- *Seek power for the opportunity to self-actualise.*

Characteristics: status

I use the term *status-watchers* to refer to people at the particular time they are motivated by the status value. They will often, but not always, be men. Status-watchers:

- *Shoulder responsibility.*
- *Measure status by output, position, resources or strength.*
- *Test relationships to check their relative standing.*
- *Accept legitimate authority.*
- *Validate hierarchies.*
- *Observe power issues carefully.*
- *Regard people as basically different.*
- *Demand respect.*
- *Seek status as a yardstick for self-respect.*

What is the good intention?

It's easy to misjudge people whose value systems are very different from our own, particularly if their actions impede our own needs or what we believe is for the best. Identifying a good intention will temper our negative judgment. Even if we don't directly mention our appreciation of other people's good intentions, our own identification of it will subtly affect the way we communicate with them and significantly improve the climate of negotiations. Behind almost every action, no matter how inconvenient or hurtful it is to us, lies a good intention in the eyes of the doer.

We don't have to agree with the underlying value or motivation, merely understand it so we can open up discussion. When we identify the other person's *best* intention, we offer ourselves a reality check. Of course, there may be some other pretty poor intentions, but refrain from angry confrontation until you find at least one positive (or acceptable) purpose for their behaviour. Good conflict resolution begins with respect for the other person and the values that they stand for.

While the range of people's good intentions is enormously broad, a number arise directly out of the equality value. Equalisers often adopt rules for equitable relationship. These include:

- supporting the rights of friends and colleagues;
- avoiding arousing others' jealousy;
- using fairness as a yardstick for evaluating;
- negotiating from a win/win perspective;
- encouraging others' participation in decision-making.

Good intentions of status-watcher may include:

- striving for self-improvement or self-reliance;
- building self-respect;
- creating a clear chain of command;
- using a strategically sound approach;
- supporting justice and law.

Spotting the underlying values

The underlying value will influence decision-making and sensitivities in a wide variety of situations. *Listen to people's language.* It often tells us about the

values they are using. Here's a summary of a phone conversation I had recently. I've italicised some of the status and equality clue words that reverberated throughout.

A representative for a group of hospital staff, mainly women, phoned the Conflict Resolution Network. We chatted. She thought her group probably needed some sort of team-building workshop. They had serious morale problems to deal with. She described for me the *hierarchical structure* of operating theatres where *control* and the issuing of orders and instant *obedience* were necessary for efficient operating practice. The doctors and surgeons (mainly men) have superior *status* by virtue of position and education.

'We know they have to be in charge, but we wish they had more of a *win/win* approach. Surely, we deserve a *fairer* deal?' she said.

'You want it to be more *even-handed*?' I asked.

Her next comment betrayed her group's deep hurt and anger. 'Sometimes doctors treat us like dirt. Some of the men, in particular, act like we're their slaves.' Although very dissatisfied, they kept their conflicts hidden. Status-holders in their hospital system had the power to deal with troublemakers summarily. 'Do I call it "*equal rights*?"' queried my caller.

'What would it look like if you had it?' I asked.

'Well,' she said, 'the other day we had a new woman surgeon on duty. We had a car crash patient in theatre. When the operation was over, it needed a big clean-up — there was lots of blood around. This woman surgeon just pitched in and started helping. "You don't have to do that, you know," I said to her. "I do know," she replied, "but I'm already dirty so I might as well help." She wasn't *setting herself up as higher* than us. How could we encourage more of that sort of attitude from the men?'

Not an easy one, I thought. Time pressures in the hospital system must make status issues worse. 'I'm really not saying that they should help clean up,' she said, 'but we need something to change their attitude. They think we won't look up to them if they treat us like *equals*, but in fact we'd *respect* them much more.'

Her group was quietly desperate and feeling totally unheard. The senior hospital staff of doctors and administrators weren't tuned in to equality language and values. The nurses and orderlies were just as dedicated to goals of efficiency and patients' wellbeing. They believed they were entitled to a team relationship. They accepted their lower positional status, but didn't believe it required the type of work atmosphere they presently endured. This group didn't really need structural changes. They wanted changes in day-to-day communication and attitudes.

The language and concepts this woman used in trying to define the problem, pointed clearly to her group's thirst for recognition beyond relative status.

It would be very wrong to think that status-watchers don't include equality as a value at all. But when interacting in organisations they may focus first on status and position, and be slower to recognise that within positional power structures lie other possibilities for relating with others.

EQUALITY: stumbling blocks and stepping stones

Equality has a number of potential stumbling blocks. Values such as equality often reside below consciousness, but that doesn't mean they're inactive. At times we'll need to choose a more considered response. We sharpen our conflict resolution expertise when we ask ourselves: 'Will I react or respond?'

React: To behave impulsively. To act out of conditioning (habit), whether or not that action is appropriate. To be swept away by emotion.

Respond: To behave thoughtfully. To act out of freedom, tailoring action to the circumstances. Emotions guide but do not rule.

Stumbling block: Being too modest

'It's nothing, really.'

Equalisers may be very alert to and uncomfortable with situations in which they are envied by others. Acutely sensitive to unequal power relationships, some will underplay their achievements to avoid alienation from less successful friends and workmates.

Stepping stones

Delight in our successes is healthy self-actualising. Over-inflation of ego is different, but can be easily confused with self-actualising. Modesty will always have its place. If we don't want to irritate others, we need to practise self-disclosure about achievements with discretion. However, sometimes it's important to sing your own song, to blow your own trumpet. If your achievements are unknown, you may not be given the respect you deserve.

Stumbling block: Taking offence at inequality

'I do so much for them. What do they ever do for me?'

If you are frequently doing favours for someone else, you like to know you can count on that person to reciprocate sooner or later. Equalisers are more likely to be keeping score than status-watchers. To preserve equality, favours can't always travel only in one direction.

Stepping stones

For equalisers: When you need support from people who usually receive it from you, make sure you let them know. You may need to initiate a conversation about rebalancing the whole relationship, if it is too one-sided.

For those receiving support: Be aware of misusing support. If you have received a lot of support from an equaliser, whether or not they are your superior, seize opportunities to return the support at moments when they look like they could do with it. Many competent people disguise their distress. You'll be balancing the score and that will be more important than you might realise.

Stumbling block: Continued resentment

'I'll never forgive them!'

In the animal kingdom, status conflicts are usually associated with the male of the species. These conflicts are generally violent and short — when dominance is established they're over. Fights also occur between females, however, and these are often far more vicious.

It's not that different for humans. Women aren't always the sweeter sex. In fact, women can be more vindictive than men, and can hang onto their anger a lot longer.

Here are a number of common conflict triggers for a woman:

- she feels power has been used over her unfairly or manipulatively;
- she believes someone has usurped or undermined her equal status;
- someone won't give her the support which she feels, in fairness, she deserves;
- someone has been deceitful or spread lies, destroying the trust on which her equal relationship with them has been built;
- someone has abused her goodwill and tolerance, another trademark of her equality stance.

A woman probably won't get over any one of these slights in one short dispute. Unless the incident was a pure misunderstanding, she probably is quite likely to

hold a grudge for a long time. Male equalisers are quite likely to have similar reactions.

Stepping stones

Resentment is frozen anger. It is a deadly poison in relationships. To head towards forgiveness you might ask yourself these questions:

- Is there something you need to say to the other person in order to communicate your problem clearly?
- Is what you wish to say appropriate?
- Could you make a time to discuss the issue in private? The middle of an open-plan office is rarely the right setting.
- What else would help you get over your anger and hurt?
- Are you able to ask for what you wish?
- Do you need to broaden your tolerance (not necessarily your approval) of some negative qualities the person displays so that you can forgive the other person and wipe the slate clean?

The real purpose of anger is to create change.

STATUS: stumbling blocks and stepping stones

Stumbling block: Domination

'You'll do it because I say so.'

Overt obsession with control: When people openly display excessive controlling behaviour, they often presume it is a requirement of their rank. They have misjudged the responsibilities of leadership. This misjudgment is often fuelled by underlying emotional issues such as:

- perfectionism — a need for order and system, often to avoid being overwhelmed; or
- a need to establish status based on other people's subservience.

Covert obsession with control: Controlling behaviour doesn't only occur with people who are formally in charge of others. If the person doesn't actually have authority over another, the way they exercise their demands may be more *covert*. Many men complain about women's covert controlling behaviour. Possibly it is the presence of a focus on equality *alongside* the status value that leads women's to adopt covert behaviours. Also, they are less likely to hold the rank usually necessary for overt control.

Stepping stones

When is it appropriate to ask someone to change? When is out of line? Here are three questions to ask yourself when a 'should' arises in your mind:

1. Does the problem affect you?
2. Can you live with the problems their way creates?
3. Does their way work?

Stumbling block: Territory protection

'Get off my patch!'

Status is often defined by personal territory. Territory is the area over which you have control, the 'patch' over which you have power or ownership. It may be *physical territory* — your office — or *non-physical territory* — your job responsibilities, or the number of people under your supervision. Some status-

watchers can invest enormous amounts of time and energy in disputes over territory.

Disputes over territory issues can be very vindictive and need to be handled with the utmost care, so that neither the individual nor the company loses out.

Stepping stones

- Talk more openly about territory issues as they arise.
- Recognise the legitimacy of someone's concerns over territory infringements.
- Use every possible means to develop win/win outcomes that don't leave one person dissatisfied.

Stumbling block: Undervaluing others

'She couldn't do that. She's only a secretary.'

Status-watchers with one eye usually on their own status, can easily and quite unconsciously discount others' skills and abilities. Undervaluing other people keeps status-watchers feeling they're on top and in control. This attitude, however, is extremely frustrating for those affected by it, and often results in the repression of people's potential.

Stepping stones

Discounting other people's skills and abilities is insidious and unkind. We can guard against being prejudiced and lobby for change in organisations where prejudice occurs. Large organisations often have equal employment opportunity divisions to address these problems. In organisations without a formal department, the disadvantaged group — for instance, women or migrants — may need to network closely with each other to explore every avenue for change. Positive change may require long and careful work. Helpless resentment will not achieve the goal.

AGREEMENT AND COMPETITION

Characteristics: Agreement

Agreers exhibit a number of characteristics. Generally, agreers:

- *Keep the peace.*
- *Emphasise similarities and common ground.*
- *Are urgent about concluding disagreements.*
- *Modify behaviour and suppress needs readily to fit in with others.*
- *Need harmonious teamwork for job satisfaction.*

Characteristics: Competition

Competer's style contrasts with that of agreers in a number of significant ways. Competers are likely to:

- *Enjoy the challenge of competitive strategies.*
- *Value competition because it drives people forwards and tests worth.*
- *Accept some aggression as part of the 'rough and tumble'.*
- *See interaction with others as inevitably competitive.*
- *Use and receive one-upmanship as a comfortable, light-hearted way of relating.*

What is the good intention?

Agreers' good intentions start from the premise: *other people will be considerate towards me, as long as I'm nice.* Competers generally base their behaviour on the

premise: *other people probably won't look after me, especially if I appear to be a pushover. I must watch out for myself.*

It's important to remember that self-interest is not a crime. Agreers sometimes need to give themselves, as well as others, permission to pursue it more actively.

Three stepping stones for finding the good intention

The following three steps for finding the good intention apply not only to agreement and competition, but also to any set of values that is not our own.

STEP 1 Recognise how you may have suppressed your urges for a style opposite to your preferred style. Acquaintance with your suppressed urges dissolves the 'sound barrier' when others are doing things you don't approve of.

STEP 2 Acknowledge the good intentions of the style that is not your own. This opens a chink of empathy, one of the most helpful ingredients of good conflict resolution.

STEP 3 Start listening. You may need to invite reticent agreers to talk to you. It's important not to later use what they say as ammunition against them, or you're unlikely to hear the truth from them a second time.

AGREEMENT: stumbling blocks and stepping stones

On the whole, agreement-oriented people are great to be around. When agreers take the path of least resistance, other people's lives go pretty smoothly. The agreer, however, may be drowning in a private sea of frustrated emotions and disappointment.

Stumbling block: Arguments lost

'I thought it was obvious I disagreed. That didn't stop him!'

When agreers argue with competers, not only is there a clash about the *substance of the problem*, there is also a style clash to be addressed. It is usually the agreer who backs down.

Agreers may see only two alternatives: losing repeatedly to competers or sacrificing their own principles by 'playing dirty'. There is a third way, however — *appropriate assertiveness*.

Stepping stones

Agreers can remain true to their core values and not lose out when arguing with a competper. This might imply that they:

1. Adjust their expectations. Agreers cannot rely on the competper to tune in to what they need and consider their needs. Also, they cannot presume that they will be offered the space to put forward their point of view. They may have to grab it.
2. Master a win/win approach and use the approach very assertively.
3. Don't go along with things they really disagree with in order to please.
4. Oppose dominating or narrow-minded approaches.
5. Are not always 'nice'.
6. Show their anger clearly but in a controlled way.
7. Plan strategically to 'call in the troops' if their own efforts are not sufficient.

Many agreers when they first resolve to become assertive are a bit clumsy and heavy-handed about it. Pent-up frustrations from past losses are liable to spill into the present situation. Unsure about how much pressure it takes to win, they push far too hard. Their judgment on how far it's fair and responsible to take an issue can be defective. Their new-found assertiveness dramatically changes the dynamics of their relationships, and others around

them may resist major adjustments. Gradually things do settle down, as the person carves out a network of mutually respectful relationships.

8. Use 'I' statements, which are an invaluable tool for an assertive win/win style. A well formulated 'I' statement is often an excellent opener to an assertive approach to a difficult issue. It aims to communicate clearly and cleanly.

Clear: Your statement of the problem is precise and explains what is the matter.

Clean: Your statement does not attack or blame the other person, and does not aim to hurt.

Stumbling block: People pleasing

'She'll promise the moon ... while you're in her office.'

Agreers are people pleasers. They can find themselves agreeing with whoever they are talking to at the time. The agreeer must not appear to blow with the wind. Unless they have clearly established their impartiality, they are likely to be perceived as a turncoat.

Stepping stones

Conflicts are generally best addressed early. If issues that could have been addressed are ignored, they can lead to further misunderstandings, mounting tension and, ultimately, a crisis.

Stumbling block: Failure to achieve positive results from conflict

If we avoid addressing conflicts, we lose the opportunity to search for new and better solutions to problems.

<p style="text-align: center;">The win/win approach</p> <p>Sometimes problems seem like a giant jigsaw puzzle. Win/lose solutions are an incorrect assembly of the pieces. It takes care and thought to get all the parts into the right position so that a win/win picture can emerge. This requires a win/win approach and the expectation of finding an acceptable win/win outcome.</p> <p>It certainly can be very difficult to maintain win/win strategies when the other person is playing a win/lose game.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Elements of the win/win approach</p> <p>The win/win approach demands two commitments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To work towards better solutions that give everyone more of what they really need in the long term.2. To engage in as much consultation and joint decision-making as the situation will allow. <p>A win/win approach is not the same as a win/win outcome. The commitments above do not guarantee a perfect result. But even if the result is less than a perfect win/win outcome, the use of the method makes a vast difference to long-term relationships.</p> <p>When you know how you really want to play the game, you will become wonderfully inventive about new options. You may not even see problem situations as conflicts any more. They'll look much more like opportunities for positive change.</p>

COMPETITION: stumbling blocks and stepping stones

Let's remember that the spirit of competition is responsible for some of the finest qualities people can display. When we unite to face a common enemy, we place ourselves in testing circumstances that will ultimately prove our worth. We learn courage and endurance, as few things worth fighting for come easily. We learn to

shoulder responsibility as others rely on our skills, and we learn trust as we rely on other team-mates to do their part.

Despite all this potential for good that can come from competition, competitors can get it horribly wrong.

Stumbling block: Leadership style relies too much on warrior skills

‘She’ll never cut it when the going gets rough.’

A highly competitive culture is self-perpetuating, keeping out anything unlike itself. Competitive leaders recruit senior managers who display the traditional qualities of the hero warrior — the victor of battles. These qualities include:

1. dominance;
2. courage;
3. confidence;
4. tactical analysis.

Women’s agreement-oriented subculture generally encourages a very different set of leadership skills. These are:

1. consultation ;
2. an ethic of care;
3. communication and conflict resolution expertise;
4. whole system awareness.

The gentle revolution is still essential. Many men still need to learn that the contributions from masculine and feminine perspectives can serve to balance each other, equalling better leadership. Today’s environment needs both sets of skills.

<p><i>Real authority = dominance + consultations</i></p> <p><i>Right action = courage + ethic of care</i></p> <p><i>Enabled and empowered teams = confidence + communication & conflict resolution expertise</i></p> <p><i>Strategic thinking = tactical analysis + whole system awareness</i></p>
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While our best leaders will be strong in all aspects, organisations will benefit greatly by putting together teams of leaders with differing strengths, if the full range of those strengths is valued.

Stumbling block: Poor listening skills

‘You haven’t heard a word I’ve said.’

Often when people are in competitive mode, they don’t really listen.

The secret of good listening is not only waiting for your turn to speak but *taking in* what the other person has said, staying with their topic and their feelings. An appropriate response may be a question that gathers more information about what they are trying to communicate. Make sure you really listen to the answer! Listen to their criticisms, but look beneath what they say to their thwarted needs, no matter how badly expressed.

FEELING – ACTIONS-AND-OBJECTS:

Characteristics: feeling focus

People with a feeling focus display certain characteristics. Usually they:

- *Believe that feelings, and sometimes intuition or creativity, are what really matter.*
- *Closely observe their emotions, creativity and intuition throughout the day*
- *Are relatively willing to disclose vulnerable feelings. .*
- *Believe workplace climates and processes should support employees.*

- *Believe discussion of feeling cements a team.*
- *Think emotions can be a guide to action.*
- *Tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty relatively well.*
- *See life as fundamentally an inner journey.*
- *Try to extract emotional meanings from their experiences.*

Characteristics: actions-and-objects focus

The usual attention point for actions-and-objects focusers is external reality, rather than their internal world, as is the case for feeling focusers. This outer focus may lead actions-and-objects focusers to display many or all of the following characteristics. They:

- *Are happiest when they are doing something.*
- *Focus on the external world, or the world of ideas.*
- *Resist the expression of vulnerable emotions.*
- *Focus almost exclusively on tasks and output when in the workplace.*
- *Build rapport through the exchange of concrete information and conversations about activities and objects.*
- *Use logical thought to plan action.*
- *Are often willing to take risks.*
- *Believe life is about mastery of objective facts and circumstances through action.*
- *Aim for competence and want others to trust and respect their abilities.*

What is the good intention?

Feeling focused people and actions-and-objects focused people often find themselves at odds. Often the conflict between them cannot be solved until the other person believes their perspective has been heard, understood and respected. We each need to cultivate an understanding of the good intentions of people whose primary focus is different from our own. In situations where there is a clash between focuses, it is generally true that each perspective has a contribution to make. A good solution will nearly always incorporate something from both perspectives.

Appreciating others' differences can help us appreciate and grow ourselves. Negative judgments about others are often negative judgments about repressed areas of our own nature. Many psychologists believe that, in order to display the qualities we presently espouse, we may be suppressing our potential for their opposite. Wholeness and integration comes when we know how to manifest both a feeling and an actions-and-objects focus.

Spotting the underlying values

We can often spot these underlying values in everyday conversation once we are attuned to them. We can hear the values in common expressions such as: 'I don't want to hurt her feelings', or 'Just give me the facts'.

Mapping

The conflict resolution skill of mapping is of enormous help when a feeling style clashes with an actions-and-objects style. Mapping is a method of clarifying the differing needs and concerns that are driving the conflict, and is used when two or more parties to the conflict are together. It builds up a picture of the whole problem in context, and makes place for people's deeper values, as well as their immediate concerns.

Someone who understands the method can usually initiate the mapping process quite easily. Although mapping is often done using pen and paper, the

steps do not always have to be written down. Instead, the points can be brought up in discussion by asking questions and making statements about everyone's needs and concerns. Sometimes one person will do a map of a conflict alone as a preliminary to tackling the issue together, making informal guesses about what is motivating the other people involved.

Mapping meets the feeling focuser's need for understanding and acknowledgment as well as the actions focuser's need to objectify the situation and consider the problem via an analytical, logical and practical process. The person initiating the process can start with a feeling (e.g. distress, anger at injustice), then ask, 'Why do you feel that way?', and with a little probing they will arrive at the feeling focuser's needs and concerns. Or they can start with the actions focuser's 'solution' — their preferred action in the circumstances — and ask, 'Why does that seem like the best answer to you?', and once again they will arrive at needs and concerns. Even though they are seeing the problem from two very different perspectives, mapping helps them arrive at equivalent conflict source points. Mapping may help both parties with practical work-based issues and with deeper values clashes. It's also a very useful tool for group planning.

Identifying needs and concerns

What does the actions person need?

What does the feeling person need?

The purpose of mapping at this point in their argument is to go behind each person's position and find out what supports it. The major focus in mapping is:

Step back from conflict about solutions and get down to needs and concerns.

It's a shift from *confrontation* to *exploration*. When you're mapping, ask questions that draw out the needs and concerns behind each person's stand. If it's impractical to ask them directly, put yourself in their shoes and consider how they'd be likely to answer. To develop a full map, you'd look at the needs and concerns of all relevant parties.

Values exploration

You may also uncover relevant *values* with 'why?' questions. It is not necessary to distinguish them from needs and concerns, but it is worthwhile watching out for them, as people don't shift their values quickly and get angry if solutions do not accommodate them.

Drawing your map

1. *Define the problem area to be resolve.*
2. *Name the parties.*
3. *List needs, concerns and, if appropriate, values.*
4. *Design new options.*

The mapping process makes the scope of the problem clearer and provides the opportunity to tailor solutions to its various aspects. As well as pointing towards solutions, mapping provides an opportunity to understand other people's concerns more deeply and often suggests alternative practises to avoid conflict in the future.

FEELING FOCUS: stumbling blocks and stepping stones

We all need an intelligent balance between head and heart. Both men and women need aware contact with feeling and enough distance to direct its development and control its use.

Stumbling block: Extreme emotional reactions

'How could you criticise me like that?'

Criticism hurts. Both men and women suffer when criticised, but those more in touch with their feelings may be seriously rocked. Actions-and-objects focusers are more likely to fend off criticism by lashing out at the criticiser. Feeling focusers, on the other hand, will mull over the painful words and become stuck in mental rehearsals of defences that they never deliver.

Stepping stones

A robust conflict, with open exploration of the issues involved, might serve the situation better. Alternatively, a mapping process could help: formally with pen and paper, or informally through detailed discussion of each other's needs and concerns. It is possible for them to reach some good solutions together.

Stumbling block: Difficulty confronting others

'I just can't tell them what they're doing wrong. But it's driving me mad.'

Feeling focusers are prone to paint a surface veneer of agreement over discord, keeping their true feelings on the matter hidden and thus undealt with.

Stepping stones

Sometimes the kindest thing you can do for another person is to give them considered and appropriate criticism.

If you get a defensive response to a legitimate criticism, sometimes it's best just to make your point and not worry that they seem to be ignoring it. Don't necessarily demand an admission or an apology. Often you'll see you've made a difference by their future actions.

Stumbling block : Focus too open

'If only you'd get to the point!'

Feeling focusers are sometimes excessively inclusive when presenting reports to colleagues. While each detail seems very important to them because it affects relationships and decision-making, actions focusers often prefer to make quicker assessments based on just the main facts. An over-inclusive feeling focuser can really annoy them and make them tune out.

Stepping stones

Feeling focusers should tailor their report to the person receiving it. Are too many details going to bore or irritate an actions-oriented listener? Sometimes, you will look more efficient if you present the bare facts first. Wait to be asked for the extra information. In more formal presentations, numbering your points often helps actions people follow your line of reasoning.

Willingness to resolve

How can you move on from conflict? The key step is a willingness to resolve. It demands a willingness to let go of bad feelings left over from the conflict and to overcome the desire for revenge — even if it is as subtle as withdrawing contact. Of course, with some people you may have to set limits. But you need to be sure your motive is necessary self-protection, not retaliation.

The feeling focused person achieves self-mastery when they understand their emotions, and accept both the positive and negative aspects of themselves. This doesn't mean *acting* from their negative side, but it does mean *being aware* of it. When reactions such as anger, envy and the desire for revenge are out of awareness, they are out of control.

Soliciting a win/win approach when the other person is in the grip of destructive feelings may require courage and great emotional strength on your part in order to break out of ingrained habits of attack/defend and win/lose thinking. It may also require giving up assumptions about how things are, and how things *should* be. Transforming negative emotions into win/win approaches to resolution demands that your emotional intelligence is finely tuned, robust and resilient.

ACTIONS-AND-OBJECTS FOCUS: *stumbling blocks and stepping stones*

Stumbling block: Task at the expense of people

'At least you could ask me how my holiday was before we get started.'

Actions focusers are goal-oriented. They want to know: *What needs to be done?* Feeling focusers are more oriented to the process — in particular, the human interactions involved in achieving a goal. They want to know: *Is everything alright?* Both focuses provide useful watchdog services, though they may not want to hear each other's news.

Stepping stones

The ability to focus on goals is an important key to organisational success. But there are moments when a focus on process, particularly if it's going wrong or could go wrong, is more important. Single-mindedness can be a great source of strength, but it may limit the leader's ability to take in diverse opinions.

Focusing only on goals can also mean you miss the pleasure of the journey. Putting some focus onto the human element might add creative buzz and camaraderie — the best antidote to burnout.

Stumbling block: Poor skills in the domain of feeling

'What you should do is ...' 'Yes, but ...'

Most people prefer to find their own solutions to problems. Actions focusers often won't talk about a problem until they've run out of ideas. So they believe that if another person is *talking* about a problem, then they must want advice now. However, feeling focusers often use talk to *clarify* their process well before they've exhausted their options.

Stepping stones

If someone is using you as a sounding board, don't try to hurry their conversation along too quickly. Remember, listening alone may be the best support you can offer. There is a place for your input, but it's usually further down the track and is best phrased as extra information rather than instructions. For example: 'You know what I saw someone do in similar circumstances...', or 'I've tried ... and it's worked', or 'One possibility you might want to explore is...'. You leave the power to take up your suggestion or not with the person. People learn far more when they work with solutions they have chosen.

Men are beginning to reclaim their emotional life that has been stolen by their need to conform to outdated masculine stereotypes. They are beginning to tell the truth, even to each other, about their fears, confusions, hopes and grief. They are

beginning to see the problems that arise from being too angry, too distant, too clever or too busy.

When we start looking at our emotions in depth, often there are no answers — a huge challenge to the outcome-oriented person. Emotions can be dark and confusing and seem to be, dare I say it, feminine. Action focusers may need to be vigilant in order to reclaim the whole of who they are: feeling *and* actions focused, internally and externally directed, analytic and global thinking, masculine *and* feminine!

INTERDEPENDENCE — AUTONOMY:

Although the values of interdependence and autonomy are frequently gender related, obviously this is not always the case. As you read, consider how closely you and those you know fit or diverge from the stereotypes. Knowing there are many exceptions, we often do see that:

- women generally place a higher priority on *interdependence* (social relationships, closeness and intimacy);
- men generally place a higher priority on *autonomy* (individualism, adventurousness and independence).

Characteristics: interdependence

The interdependence value will influence a range of attitudes and behaviours in the workplace. Interdependent players may:

- *Believe we don't get anywhere alone, nor do we have to.*
- *See people as a resource for support, information and advice.*
- *Accept responsibility to care for others.*
- *Place their own personal goals second to group goals.*
- *Prefer a consultative approach.*
- *Prefer collective group activity.*
- *Closely observe the patterns of interconnections between people.*
- *Use their social context to define themselves.*

Characteristics: autonomy

While autonomous players may relate very well to other people, unlike interdependent players they are likely to have a clearly defined sense of self as separate from others. They will express this in a number of ways. They may:

- *Aim to be an independent, powerful contributor to the organisation.*
- *Like the freedom to make independent contributions.*
- *Make tough decisions and see them through.*
- *Prefer to have total responsibility for a task.*
- *Form strong personal opinions.*
- *Rise to leadership positions easily.*
- *Protect individual rights.*
- *Value self-sufficiency and ego-strength, and expect others to act responsibly.*

What is the good intention?

Excessively interdependent people can indulge in self-righteousness about their consultative, interactive style, while excessively autonomous people can be equally self-righteous about the responsibility they exercise.

While interdependent and autonomous players probably have very different agendas influencing how they relate to each other, good conflict resolution demands they respect each other's viewpoint. The following exercise could sharpen your awareness of what may be driving another person to the conclusions they are reaching.

Spotting the underlying values

The purpose of recognising each other's differences is to help us forge meaningful and productive relationships based on mutual respect, less clouded by negative judgements. When interdependence or autonomy values are at issue, they influence people's communication patterns. By observing these variations, we are able to pick up important clues about a person's underlying values. Consider whether they:

- Seek someone else's advice or make decisions alone.
- Seek people out or withdraw when distressed.
- Use either rapport-talk or report-talk.
- Have different needs.
- Work from different morality bases.
- Guide decisions of ethics and rules with situational concerns or with abstract principles.

Effective teamwork

An interesting balance between interdependence and autonomy was suggested by a group of firefighters who seemed to me to have raised the elements of effective teamwork to the level of high art. They have to be highly disciplined, obeying instructions instantly and performing precisely the role they were assigned that day. In a fire, their lives depend on each other, both as individuals and as team. I asked them what they saw as the keys to effective teamwork. Their experience suggests useful principles for all team-builders in the workplace.

- Mutual support
- Communication
- Trust
- Respect for everyone's abilities
- Respectful familiarity with the team leader
- Team as community

INTERDEPENDENCE: stumbling blocks and stepping stones

Interdependence causes problems for many women and for a considerable number of men. Establishing an identity separate from others can be a lifelong struggle, with many stumbles on the way. Conflicts can highlight lessons we must learn and motivate us to define for ourselves a workable balance between interdependence and autonomy.

Stumbling block: Too dependent on others

Interdependence implies *mutual dependence*. When support doesn't go both ways, we're either too reliant on others or we are being excessively helpful. Both are inappropriate forms of dependency.

Excessive reliance on others – 'You're so much better at it. Will you do it for me?'

A number of quite intelligent women habitually play ‘helpless and incompetent’, particularly around men. When relationships are dependent rather than interdependent:

- we may expect that others should know what we need without us asking;
- we may rely on others for things we ought to be able to do for ourselves;
- we may manipulate others to help us when they don’t really want to.

Stepping stones

Interdependent players may need to regularly monitor their dependent behaviour, asking openly for what they want from others, being clear about how much help they’re really asking for, without demanding, expecting the answer yes or manipulating. They can take steps to enhance their own self-reliance. Whenever they manage alone a task they would once have relied on others to help them complete, they can celebrate their growing competency.

Stumbling block: Merged attachment to others inhibits personal power

Lack of clear boundaries – *‘I can’t say no.’*

Boundaries are the way we use our energy to protect ourselves from others intruding into our personal space. Good boundaries are part of having a clear self-identity. Interdependent players may have a poor sense of self-identity, another problem of merged attachment. If we have diffuse boundaries, we get upset when others are upset, deeply disturbed when others are angry and we are unable to distinguish clearly between our own needs and someone else’s needs. We may feel guilty if we are unable to do what another person asks us to, even when there is nothing we can do about it. We may be unable to say no to requests from others, even though we cannot or do not want to respond.

Stepping stones

To establish a separate self, we must be able to separate our own needs from other people’s needs. While at times we may postpone our own needs, we will be comfortable asserting what we want. This is personal power-interdependence style.

In the process of pulling away from others, the interdependent player may appear to undergo a personality change. Suddenly, the person that others could always rely on to be accommodating and helpful seems to have deserted ship. Personal power for the interdependent person takes a huge leap forward if this transition stage is successfully accomplished and the sense of moral obligation about serving others’ needs has fallen away. Then helping others become a choice, not an obligation.

Stumbling block: Creating ‘them’ and ‘us’ situations

‘Did you hear what they’re plotting against us now.’

In masculine, autonomy-oriented workplaces, women can find that socialising together to create a deeper connection helps to counter feelings of alienation. Between themselves, they can provide a community of mutual support. But this has its dangers. Women grouped for solidarity against men may also unite their opposition! Heavy adversarial approaches can make interdependent people highly uncomfortable and so they will often band together as a group. When they become involved in ongoing conflicts, they can be poisoned by gossiping and can stir each other to greater division. Internal fractures in the group are also likely when these dynamics get out of hand. Petty rivalries and infighting can become particularly bitter.

Stepping stones

If you find yourself involved in such struggles, asking yourself these questions might help:

What is at stake here? Are we being competitive? If so, why? Is it:

1. the need for recognition?
2. a cover for feelings of inadequacy?
3. an urge to establish a separate identity?

Or is it:

4. representative of a genuine difference of opinion that needs to be resolved?

Look for solutions to these problems rather than participating in ugly rivalries.

AUTONOMY: stumbling blocks and stepping stones

We seek autonomy to be free, to feel independent and have our own sense of identity. Ultimately, autonomy is the freedom to be ourselves; to be self-reliant, empowered, willing to lead and able to function alone; being prepared to stand up for a different opinion we believe in.

Often we clutch at autonomy by standing against others rather than alongside them. Are we seeking autonomy by shutting other people out? Are we rejecting the influence of other decision-makers in our work? Do we see leadership as an all-or-nothing role rather than a flexible function that may rotate within the group? Are we failing to recognise and respect our daily reliance upon other people? Or are we failing to build solid channels of communication? When we succumb to these stumbling blocks, the drive towards autonomy can become a limiting rather than a freeing force in our lives.

Stumbling block: Resentment about taking orders or advice

'No one's going to tell me what to do.'

Many men deeply resent taking orders from women. Their need for autonomy seems to come to the fore when women rather than men may be controlling what they do. Autonomous players are liable to resent anyone who takes away their sense of being free to choose exactly what they do and when.

Stepping stones

Being an autonomous player, you have a strong need to be the captain of your own destiny. One way is to learn to align your own free will with the instruction you have received. Of course, you do ultimately have *some* choice. You could refuse to do the work demanded. However, that will have consequences, probably serious ones. For this reason alone, you can *choose* to do what's asked. But fear of negative consequences isn't usually a very good motivation for an autonomy-driven person. You generally need to find a more immediate reason. The challenge is to rethink the situation so that you can put your whole self behind the task.

Stumbling block: Hidden dependence

'I'm not dependent. Make me a cup of coffee, will you?'

Some men affirm their separateness from others because they believe the alternative is unwelcome dependence. When this is their underlying reason, they have not achieved true autonomy. They are instead caught up in rebellious individualism. Some men are so conditioned to expect subservience from others, some are so used to being nurtured, that they don't realise how often they *are* relying on others anyway — both in the workplace and at home.

The unthinking assignment of menial tasks to women because 'that's what women do' is a common source of deep resentment for women.

Stepping stones

Very autonomous people can take the service of others for granted. When they are conscious of their interdependency on others, they will respect and recognise their reliance on those who do more routine tasks on their behalf. When other people do things for us, it needs:

- thanks;
- praise;
- acknowledgment of the interdependent relationship;
- adequate financial reward; and
- appropriate opportunities to advance to tasks with greater levels of responsibility.

Stumbling block: Inability to sustain contact

‘He never takes a moment to just talk.’

For many autonomous players, too large a dose of interaction takes them beyond their comfort zone.

Autonomous players and interdependent players sustain different quantities of contact. This difference is most obvious at times of stress, when the interdependent player will usually attempt to engage with other people, while the autonomous player is likely to withdraw. Sometimes autonomous people will appear to be attending when they are not really listening and at other times they don’t even pretend. In sustained periods of stress, it can be all too easy for autonomous people to move into isolation and let important relationships fall into disrepair.

The very autonomous person may find connection with others difficult at the best of times. Sometimes it’s due to an introverted personality style. Sometimes it masks insecurity or a fear of closeness with others.

Stepping stones

Allow time when you’re not overly stressed to connect on a personal level with others who desire it. It doesn’t have to be deep and meaningful, but it does have to be personal so they can build a sense of connection with you. Connection is a two-way process — learning about the other person as well as allowing yourself to be known to them. True autonomy is not incompatible with a degree of reliance on others, or with recognising and fulfilling others’ reasonable needs for intimacy and involvement.



For psychological wellbeing, both autonomous and interdependent players need to create a balance between both sets of values and possess the flexibility to adjust to circumstances. Both need to develop a strong sense of self and an ability to set clear boundaries. Both need to be able to give and receive support without negative consequences. True autonomy gives you a clear sense of your separate self with a capacity to create real connection with others.

ALTERNATIVES FOR HANDLING VALUES COLLISIONS

Challenging and changing values

The deep anger generated by values conflicts can become an instrument for positive change. People’s values are not easily brought into question. They have a long history. They are generally unlikely to be open for reconsideration. Yet if we fail to address the values collision, it is likely to fester and become a serious communication breakdown.

It is not the differences in values per se that lead to conflict, but rather the claim that one value should dominate or be applied generally even by those who hold different values. *Values are our guide to what’s right for us.* Problems arise when we use our values to dictate what’s right for other people, too.

When communicating your point of view, limit your use of ‘oughts’, ‘shoulds’ and ‘musts’. Useful alternatives are: ‘The way I see it ...’, or ‘What seems important to me to consider is ...’.

When someone is expressing values you personally disagree with, you may wish to make it clear that their value is personal to them: ‘So do you feel that it’s really important to preserve your status in this situation’, or ‘So you feel a bit of healthy competition is a good thing here?’, or ‘So you want to keep relationships between staff harmonious?’. You move the emphasis away from moral imperatives and back to statements of legitimate, but personal, opinions.

In dealing with a clash of values where the other person’s value is not particularly honourable or suitable, it is sometimes wiser *not* to encourage them to state the value they hold. Let’s consider here a psychological theory called *cognitive dissonance*, the term used for the inner tension that causes us to alter either values or behaviours. When our values and behaviour conflict, we restore their alignment by changing one or the other. If there is a discrepancy between what is publicly declared and what is privately believed, this is usually resolved by the person shifting the *privately* held value to align with the publicly stated one. So be careful. People cement in place values they publicly declare. If someone can be encouraged to state in public a *positive* value, the positive value is more likely to motivate future action, even if at the time they don’t really believe it.

The theory of cognitive dissonance maintains that although values/behaviour modification is a two-way street, the heaviest traffic is in the direction of behaviour driving the revision of values. Thus, if you are able to get people to alter their behaviour, their values are likely to shift gradually, too.

It’s important to remember that most people maintain a fairly consistent set of values throughout their lives. I believe this applies to the eight gender-linked values discussed in this book. Experience will modify behaviour to some extent and thereby impact on the value and refine it, but in the crisis of conflict people return to their preferred ‘corners’ that have probably been established since childhood.

A request for more appropriate behaviour is often the most appropriate way to handle values collisions without directly discussing the value itself. If we get our intervention right — that is, it appears *relevant* and *achievable* — we may also be catalyst for some values reassessment.

Values collisions are particularly likely to occur at times when society’s attitudes are in a state of flux. Both men and women struggle with defining new boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Expectations are changing so rapidly, that people often don’t know where they stand.

As we absorb what the media, legislation, latest best business practice and colleagues are saying, we are swept away from rigidly defined masculine and feminine stereotypes and values. The new workplace mix of men and women is taking us into uncharted waters. We cannot fall back on prescribed, clear gender roles any longer. Individuals must work out their own personal response to the enormous choice. In this sea of new relationships, conflict resolution skills and techniques for handling values collisions are life rafts. They can give us the courage to tackle the tough issues.

A willingness to resolve conflict, first in yourself and then in the other person, will be the major breakthrough. As soon as you start focusing attention on the conflict resolving or dissolving process, things generally begin to change for the better — and often very rapidly.