

PSYCHOLOGY

L 11. Interactive side of communication.

L 13. The concept and structure of socio-psychological conflict

Interacting With Others: Helping, Hurting, and Conforming

Learning Objectives:

1. Summarize the genetic and environmental factors that contribute to human altruism.
2. Provide an overview of the causes of human aggression.
3. Explain the situations under which people conform to others and their motivations for doing so.
4. The continuum of passive, assertive, and aggressive communication

Helping Others: Altruism Helps Create Harmonious Relationships

- **altruism**
 - any behavior designed to increase another person's welfare, and particularly those actions that do not seem to provide a direct reward to the person who performs them
- **reciprocal altruism and the reciprocity norm**
 - If we help other people now, those others will return the favor should we need their help in the future.
- **social responsibility norm**
 - We should try to help others who need assistance, even *without any expectation of future paybacks*.

Helping Others: Altruism Helps Create Harmonious Relationships

Some of the Variables Known to Increase Helping

Positive moods	We help more when we are in a good mood.
Similarity	We help people whom we see as similar to us, for instance, those who mimic our behaviors.
Guilt	If we are experiencing guilt, we may help relieve those negative feelings.
Empathy	We help more when we feel empathy for the other person.
Benefits	We are more likely to help if we can feel good about ourselves by doing so.
Personal responsibility	We are more likely to help if it is clear that others are not helping.
Self-presentation	We may help in order to show others that we are good people.

Helping Others: Altruism Helps Create Harmonious Relationships

How the Presence of Others Can Reduce Helping

- The Latané and Darley model of helping is based on the idea that a variety of situational factors can influence whether or not we help.
- One factor is the number of bystanders: the more there are, the less likely that a victim will receive help.
 - *diffusion of responsibility* -- we assume that others will take action and therefore we do not take action ourselves

Conformity and Obedience: How Social Influence Creates Social Norms

Variables That Increase Conformity		
Variable	Description	Example
Number in majority	As the number of people who are engaging in a behavior increases, the tendency to conform to those people also increases.	People are more likely to stop and look up in the air when many, rather than few, people are also looking up.
Unanimity	Conformity reduces sharply when any one person deviates from the norm.	In Asch's research, when any one person gave a different answer, conformity was eliminated.
Status and authority	People who have higher status, such as those in authority, create more conformity.	Milgram (1974) found that obedience was greatly reduced when the person giving the command to shock was described as an "ordinary man" rather than a Yale scientist.

Conformity and Obedience: How Social Influence Creates Social Norms

- obedience
 - *the tendency to conform to those in authority*

Conformity and Obedience: How Social Influence Creates Social Norms

- We do not always conform.
 - There are individual differences in the tendency to conform, related to self-esteem and the need for approval.
 - However, individual differences are less important than situational factors in affecting conformity.
- **minority influence**
 - Sometimes a smaller number of individuals can influence the opinions or behaviors of the larger group.
- **psychological reactance**
 - a strong emotional reaction that leads people to resist conformity when they feel their freedom is being threatened

Aggression

Aggression is physical or nonphysical behavior that is intended to harm another individual. Aggression has both genetic and environmental causes. The experience of negative emotions tends to increase aggression.

Viewing violence tends to increase aggression.

The social norm that tolerates and even encourages responding to insults with aggression is known as the *culture of honor*.

The continuum of passive, assertive, and aggressive communication



	Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Definition	Communication style in which you put the rights of others before your own, minimizing your own self-worth	Communication style in which you stand up for your rights while maintaining respect for the rights of others	Communication style in which you stand up for your rights, but you violate the rights of others
Implications to others	My feelings are not important. I don't matter. I think I'm inferior	We are both important. We both matter. I think we are equal.	Your feelings are not important. You don't matter I think I'm superior
Verbal styles	Apologetic. Overly soft or tentative voice	I statements Firm voice	You statements Loud voice
Nonverbal styles	Looking down or away Stooped posture, excessive head nodding	Looking direct Relaxed posture, smooth and relaxed movements	Staring, narrow eyes. Tense, clenched fists, rigid posture, pointing fingers
Potential consequences	Lowered self-esteem. Anger at self. False feelings of inferiority. Disrespect from others. Pitied by others.	High self-esteem. Self-respect. Respect from others Respect of others.	Anger from others. Lowered self-esteem. Disrespect from others. Feared by others.

Interacting With Others: Summary

- Altruism is behavior that is designed to increase another person's welfare, and particularly those actions that do not seem to provide a direct reward to the person who performs them. The tendency to help others in need is in part a functional evolutionary adaptation and in part determined by environmental factors.
- Some helping is based on reciprocal altruism, the principle that if we help other people now, those others will return the favor should we need their help in the future.
- We also learn to help through modeling and reinforcement. The result of this learning is norms about helping, including the reciprocity norm and the social responsibility norm.
- Aggression is physical or nonphysical behavior that is intended to harm another individual. Aggression has both genetic and environmental causes. The experience of negative emotions tends to increase aggression.
- Viewing violence tends to increase aggression.
- The social norm that tolerates and even encourages responding to insults with aggression is known as the culture of honor.
- Conformity, the change in beliefs or behavior that occurs as the result of the presence of the other people around us, can occur in both active and passive ways. The typical outcome of conformity is that our beliefs and behaviors become more like those of others around us.
- The situation is the most powerful determinant of conformity, but individual differences may also matter. The important influence of the social situation on conformity was demonstrated in the research by Sherif, Asch, Milgram, and others.
- Minority influence can change attitudes and change how majorities process information.

The concept and structure of socio-psychological conflict

Learning objectives:

- Major Trends that Make Conflict Inevitable
- Major Types of Conflict
- Conflict-Resolving Approaches by Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann.

Major trends that make conflict inevitable

- Constant change
- Greater employee diversity
- More teams (virtual and self-managed)
- Less face-to-face communication
- Global economy with increased cross- cultural dealings

A modern view of conflict

Conflict is a process in which one party (individual or group) perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party (individual or group) .

A Conflict Continuum



- It is characterized by the parties' efforts to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, e.g., discover new ideas or relationships, etc.
- It is typically characterized by parties working together to resolve the conflict in a constructive way.
- Serves organization's interests.
- It is constructive / productive and characterized by de-escalation of the conflict.

- It is characterized by the parties' attempts to resolve the conflict in a way that harms or destroys the relationship.
- It is destructive and can lead to damage of relationships, tension, anger, and offense.
- Threatens organization's interests.
- It is destructive and often leads to escalation of the conflict, i.e., further conflict.

Antecedents of Conflict

- ✓ Incompatible personalities or value systems.
- ✓ Overlapping or unclear job boundaries.
- ✓ Competition for limited resources.
- ✓ Interdepartmental / intergroup competition.
- ✓ Inadequate communication.
- ✓ Interdependent tasks.
- ✓ Organizational complexity.
- ✓ Unreasonable or unclear policies, standards, or rules.
- ✓ Unreasonable deadlines or extreme time pressure.
- ✓ Collective decision making.
- ✓ Unmet expectations.
- ✓ Unresolved or suppressed conflicts.

Major Types of Conflict

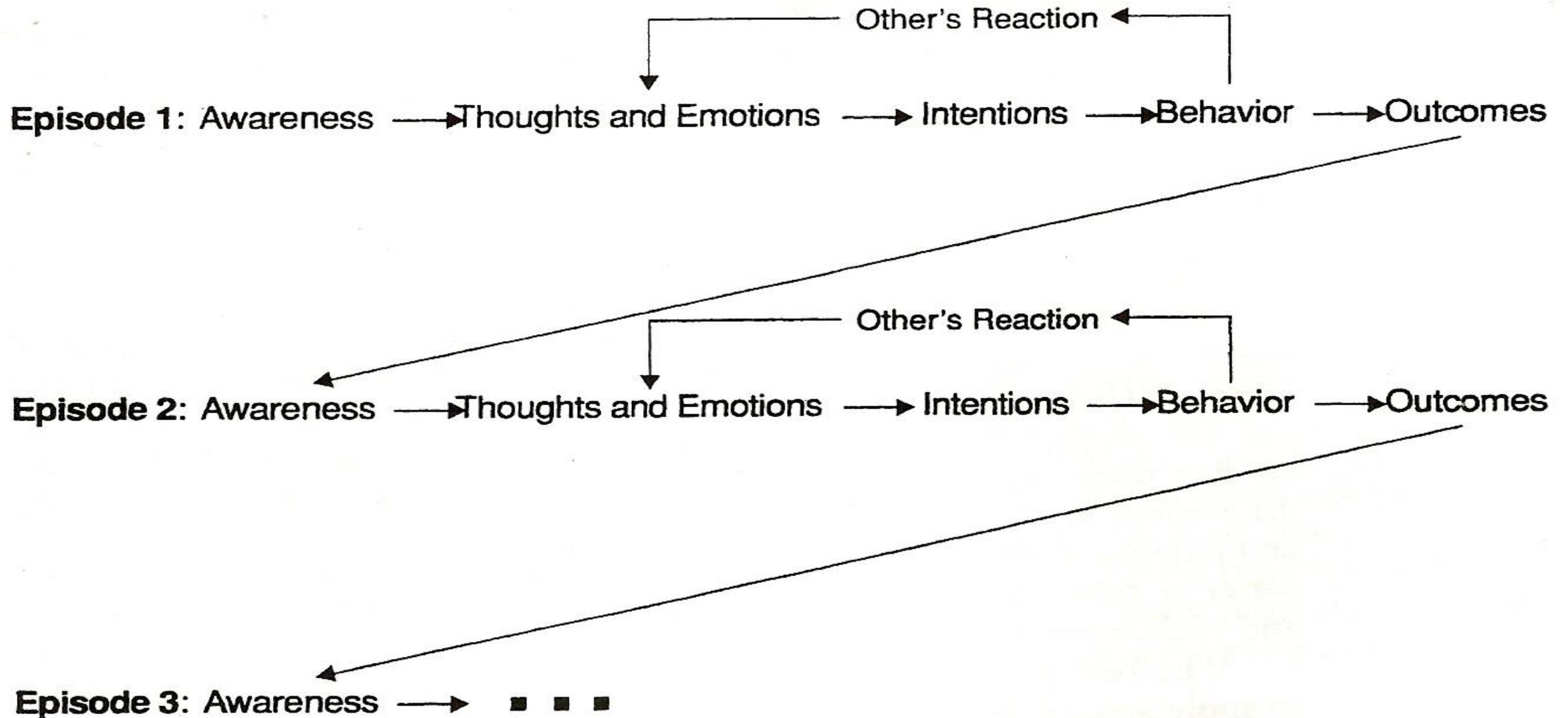
- ✓ **Interpersonal conflict** refers to a conflict between two individuals. This occurs typically due to how people are different from one another, and have oppositions driven by personal dislike or disagreement. We have varied personalities which usually results to incompatible choices and opinions. Apparently, it is a natural occurrence which can eventually help in personal growth or developing one's relationships with others. In addition, producing adjustments is necessary for managing this type of conflict. It can be resolved through some strategies such as avoiding, smoothing, forcing, confronting and compromising. Assertive behavior and "I am OK, YOU are OK" interpersonal orientation help to resolve such conflicts easily. However, when interpersonal conflict gets too destructive, calling in a mediator would help to have it resolved.
- ✓ **Intrapersonal conflict** occurs within an individual. The experience takes place in the person's mind. Conflict is psychological involving the individual's thoughts, values, principles and emotions. Also, so named goal conflicts arise as a result of two or more motives or goals to be achieved at a time. This type of conflict can be quite difficult to handle if one finds it hard to decipher his/her inner struggles. It leads to restlessness and uneasiness or can even cause depression. On such occasions, it would be best to seek a way to let go of the anxiety through communicating with other people and evoking positive changes.

Major Types of Conflict

Intragroup conflict is a type of conflict that happens among individuals within a team. The incompatibilities and misunderstandings among these individuals lead to an intragroup conflict. It is arising from interpersonal disagreements (e.g., team members have different personalities which may lead to tension) or differences in views and ideas (e.g., in a presentation, members of the team might find the notions presented by the one presiding to be erroneous due to their differences in opinion). Within a team, conflict can be helpful in producing decisions which will eventually allow them to reach their objectives as a team. However, if the degree of conflict disrupts harmony among the members, then some serious guidance from a different party will be needed for it to be settled.

Intergroup conflict takes place when a misunderstanding arises among different teams within an organization. For instance, the sales department of an organization can come in conflict with the customer support department. This is due to the varied sets of goals and interests of these different groups. In addition, competition also contributes for intergroup conflict to arise. There are other factors which fuel this type of conflict. Some of these factors may include a rivalry in resources or the boundaries set by a group to others which establishes their own identity as a team.

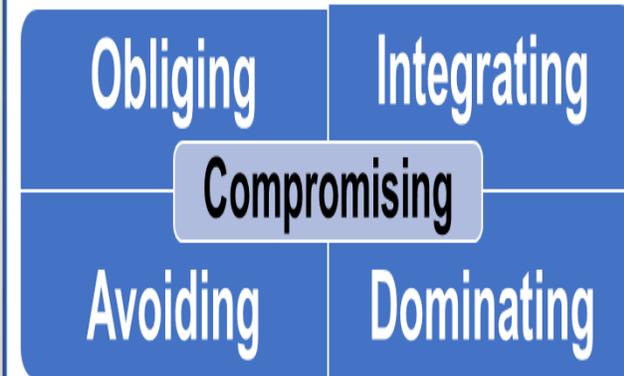
Conflict in organizations / teams



Kenneth W. Thomas's Process Model of Conflict Episodes

Conflict-Resolving Approaches by Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann

The dimension of vertical axis is concerned with conflict responses based on helping others get what they want, called the **Cooperativeness options**. The dimension of horizontal axis is concerned with responses based on our attempt to get what we want, called the **Assertiveness options**. This creates 5 basic types of response.



Assertiveness: focus on my needs, desired outcomes and agenda

The 5 Options of Conflict Resolution

- 1.** The **Competing** option is at the bottom right of the model which means you take a wholly **assertive and uncooperative** approach to resolving the conflict. It means standing up for your rights, defending a position which you believe is correct, or simply trying to beat the other side.
- 2.** The **Accommodating** option is at the top left of the model which means you take a wholly unassertive and co-operative approach. This might take the form of selfless generosity or charity, giving in to another person's orders when you would prefer not to, or yielding to another's point of view.
- 3.** The **Avoiding** option is at the bottom left of the model which means you take an unassertive and uncooperative approach to the conflict and don't deal with it. Avoiding might take the form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time, or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation.

The 5 Options of conflict resolution (cont.)

4. The **Compromising** option is at the center of the model because it is both assertive and co-operative but only to some extent. It's the approach of "half a sixpence is better than none". Both sides get something but not everything. It might mean splitting the difference between the two positions, some give and take, or seeking a quick solution in the middle ground.

5. The **Collaborating** option is at the top right of the model and is at the opposite extreme of avoiding. It means being willing to believe that when two parties are at loggerheads, it is possible for both sides to come out with what they want. Collaborating requires developed conflict resolution skills based on mutual respect, a willingness to listen to others, and creativity in finding solutions.

I-Messages and You-Messages

Using "I" language when resolving conflicts gives you an opportunity to take ownership of your feelings and thoughts.

Constructive conflict is We-oriented (result);

Destructive conflict is Me-oriented (result)

One of the easiest ways to defuse an interpersonal conflict is to avoid accusatory or escalatory language. One way to do this is by using statements about yourself and your feelings (called "I-messages" because they start with "I feel" or "I felt"), instead of "you-messages," which start with an accusation, such as, "You did this (bad thing)," or, "You are (another bad thing)."

The Upside of I-Messages

In other words, if you say, "I felt let down," rather than, "You broke your promise," you will convey the same information. But you will do so in a way that is **less likely to provoke a defensive or hostile reaction from your opponent.**

You-messages suggest blame, and **encourage the recipient to deny wrong-doing** or to blame back. For example, if you say, "You broke your promise," the answer is likely to be, "No, I didn't," which sets you up for a lengthy argument, or, "Well, you did, too," which also continues the conflict.

I-messages simply state a problem, without blaming someone for it. This makes it easier for the other side to help solve the problem, without having to admit that they were wrong (see also saving face).

Remembering to use I-messages can be difficult, however, because many people are not used to talking about themselves or their feelings (and in some cultures, this would be highly inappropriate).

In addition, when we are in a conflict -- especially an escalated conflict -- there is a very strong tendency to blame many of one's problems on the other side. So, stating the problem in terms of a "you-message" is much more natural, and is more consistent with one's view of the problem. But by making the effort to change one's language, one can also reframe the way one thinks about the conflict, increasing the likelihood that a resolution can be found.

The Downside of I-Messages

I-messages can be manipulative, and can give the recipient the impression that it is their responsibility to make sure that the other person is always happy. In an interesting essay entitled, "What's Wrong with I-Messages," Jane Bluestein argues that I-messages "are frequently used in ways that produce negative and unwanted results."

1. The problem occurs, Bluestein argues, when we use I-messages to try to control or change someone. For example, if you say, "I feel unhappy when you are late," you are really blaming the other for being late, and trying to get them to change their behavior. The focus of Bluestein's article is on parent-child relationships and communication, where she says that "I-statements make the child responsible for the parents' state of mind and convey the impression to the child that he somehow has the power to control how Mommy and Daddy act and feel."
2. This suggests that power relationships affect the use of I-messages. While equals would probably understand that they are not broadly responsible for the other's state of mind -- but just need to work out a solution to a specific problem -- a child or a person who feels greatly over-powered or out-ranked by another person may not recognize that. So I-messages, while useful in many circumstances, should be used with care regarding how they are received and interpreted.

When to Try I-Messages

I-messages are particularly useful when you are upset and want to express your feelings without escalating a conflict. They can be particularly useful when paired with active listening. If you have a sense that someone is upset with you, for example, you can start a conversation with an "I-message" such as: "I get the impression that you are unhappy about something--am I right?" and then you can active listen to their response to figure out what is going on. If they make some assertions that do not jive with your beliefs, rather than arguing, you can hear them out and paraphrase or summarize their statements to show you understand their point of view. Once you do that, then you can then use a second set of I-messages to explain how you see it, and then explore ways that you both can reframe to a shared story and/or a shared solution to the problem.

Also, don't get discouraged if I-messages don't work the first time you try them--or every time you try them. Using I-messages (as well as active listening) is not a conversational approach that most people are familiar or comfortable with. Both take practice to learn--just as any other new skill takes practice to learn. If it doesn't work well, try again at a later time or in another situation. Over time, you will learn in what circumstances and with what people this skill is helpful, and when it is not.

Practical needs – to reach a productive outcome

Personal needs - to be understood and involved

The Interaction Process: equips you with the skills you need to be successful as you discuss conflict resolution with others.

The way to resolve conflict

