

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION & CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION:

July 2025 CT Conference



DISCOMFORT + SUPPORT = GROWTH

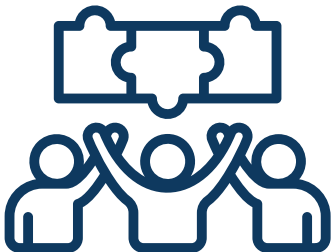
At its foundation, international education is engagement with difference. This engagement inherently leads to conflicts at many levels, from the personal to systemic. Individually, global learners are exposed to new forms of verbal and nonverbal communication, different values, and the unease of living and learning in a new culture. Structurally, global learners may encounter contexts, histories, and governments that are in conflict with their lived experiences. Education and experiential education scholars have described the vital role of conflict, dissonance, or discomfort in all learning. Encountering conflicts at all levels is a goal of global learning experiences, since it is through these conflicts that growth can take place.

PREPARATION FOR AND RESPONSE TO CONFLICT MATTERS

Conflict transformation (CT) provides a framework for harnessing conflicts in meaningful and productive ways. When international educators see conflicts as opportunities for learning, they can hone their policies and practices to prepare faculty, staff, students, and partners to welcome conflict and engage with it in ways that lead to transformative learning at the intrapersonal (within self), interpersonal (with others), intercultural (in groups), and global (in systems) levels.

DEFINING CT IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CONTEXTS

By understanding conflict as a dynamic gift, we can move toward more compassionate, resilient, and transformative intercultural engagement—empowering learners to not only adapt but also reimagine the systems they move within.



THESE TRANSFORMATIONS:

- build open-mindedness and self-awareness,
- invite engagement with difference and promote compassionate intercultural interactions,
- form stronger relationships, and
- increase resilience to sociolinguistic unease, discomfort, and discord.

MIDDLEBURY SCHOOLS ABROAD invite students into culturally and linguistically immersive study abroad settings. By combining the challenges inherent in total immersion with targeted support we guide student learning through new cultural, linguistic, social, and political environments. On the next page we share goals and objectives that international educators can use to integrate CT into activities, classes, and programs. These actions and ways of thinking prepare students for productive and transformative engagement with conflict at all levels.



GOAL 1: Recognize the generative potential of conflicts, analyze them at all levels, and identify tools and resources that can be used to unleash that potential.



GOAL 2: Examine familiar and unfamiliar **conflicts from new perspectives** and in new settings with curiosity and creativity.



GOAL 3: Build **resilience to engage** with the uncertainty, discomfort, and discord inherent in intercultural and linguistic immersion and take action.

KNOWLEDGE

What information or ideas does a learner need to transform conflict?

Define CT as a framework for seeing the generative potential of conflict that is distinct from conflict mediation or resolution.

Describe and differentiate between the varied levels at which conflict can occur: intrapersonal, interpersonal, community, organization, and system.

Identify the various elements of conflict situations, including issues, patterns, histories, relationships, positions, and systems.

Distinguish between different CT tools and approaches such as structured dialogue, mediation, and restorative practices.

SKILLS

What should learners be able to do with the knowledge they acquire to transform conflict?

Document conflict episodes and the forces behind them with appropriate tools such as conflict mapping, the conflict wheel, needs and fears mapping, the conflict tree & others.

Evaluate a conflict's transformative potential and possible responses based on varied personal and cultural styles or approaches to conflict.

Engage with conflict in intercultural settings by listening to understand, identifying cultural and personal differences in perception, and bridging conflicting positions to support mutually beneficial problem solving.

Select, recommend, or apply appropriate CT tools and approaches.

ATTITUDES

How might learners think about or conduct themselves in relation to conflict to engage in CT?

Openness to conflict: willingness to take risks and lean into the discomfort and discord that is inherent in human interaction and cross-cultural immersion.

Engage with human differences, including language and culture, with humility, vulnerability, curiosity, and flexibility.

Recognize the relational nature of conflict: adjust emotional and intellectual responses to connect with others and make sense of their perspectives and approaches.

Imagine new possibilities for moving beyond harmful conflicts and into relationship-centered systems.