

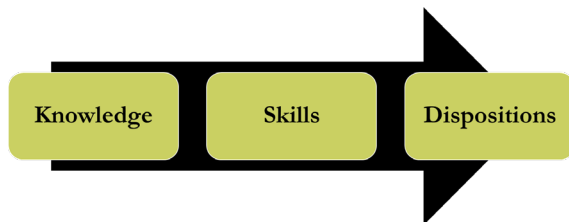
What is Conflict Transformation?

Conflict is part of the human experience. Many of us hear the word conflict and we think of destructive dynamics - the stress of fights with loved ones, “us versus them” political polarization, or violence and wars. This is what Amanda Ripley calls “high conflict,” and it can destroy relationships and communities.



Whether conflicts enrich our communities or harm them, however, depends on how we engage with them. Conflict itself isn't necessarily bad. As John Paul Lederach describes, conflict can be a gift. Conflict helps keep relationships and social structures honest, alive, and responsive to human needs and aspirations.

The field of conflict transformation (CT) explores how destructive conflicts can change and become relatively constructive. Transformation is possible and sometimes necessary at multiple levels – personal, interpersonal, and structural.



CT is a compass - it tells us what to tend to as we negotiate conflict. Within this broad approach, various streams of work share a commitment to fostering constructive conflict. The CT Collaborative at Middlebury seeks to expand the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of our students, staff, and partners.

KNOWLEDGE: Good conflict intervention starts with good conflict analysis.

- **Contextual knowledge** involves extensive learning about the actors, dynamics, history, and values that have shaped a conflict.
- **Critical self-awareness** asks: “Who am I in conflict?” People have different conflict styles, personality traits, histories, strengths, and challenges.

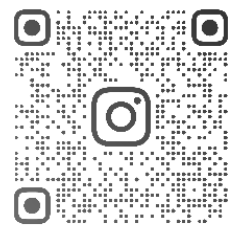
SKILLS: Several approaches to conflict can help disrupt destructive dynamics.

- **Structured dialogue** encourages participants to listen to understand.
- **Intercultural competence** engages across different frames of references and values.
- **Mediation** identifies the interests behind conflicting positions to support problem-solving.
- **Restorative practices** encourage accountability for harm while repairing relationships.

DISPOSITIONS: People can conduct themselves in ways that foster constructive conflict.

- **Curiosity** reveals deeper insights into views and experiences that are not our own.
- **Creativity** helps generate new possibilities to move beyond harmful patterns.
- **Risk-taking** is necessary, since first attempts may not succeed.
- **A relational focus** sees human connection as a place to redefine purpose.

For more information about the Conflict Transformation Collaborative at Middlebury, visit our website (go.middlebury.edu/ctc) or follow us on Instagram



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