The Roots of Conflict
- James Terrell

Conflict comes from the Latin word conflictus, which means to strike together. In our mediation training we emphasize that resolving conflict is a process that can be applied to help individuals, teams, companies, and even nations to move from striking together to working together. In the shorthand of Fisher and Ury of the Harvard Negotiation Project, it is moving from "no" to "yes."

In our experiential research of conflict we have discovered that there are several kinds of "no". There is the simple no that says, "No, we don't have the resources to add another position to the project at this time." In this case the "no" is just a fact. There is also a much different kind of "no" as in, "NO! We don't need to include someone from Special Projects on our planning team." In this case the "no" indicates a perceived threat to power, control, status, and/or compensation.

Collaborative Growth can help with the factual type of problem when more effective communication strategies can produce increased resources. Out conflict resolution services prove most powerful with the second type of "no". Here the glitch is personal, not factual. It's more than likely that the roots wind down into the subconscious and the early experiences of the nay-sayer.

If the 2 year old's favorite word is "NO!", it's because they are at the point in their development where their brain finally has achieved sufficient neural connections to foster the awareness of being a unique entity, distinct from their environment. The two-year-old's persistent cry of "NO!" is actually the wondrous proclamation, "I am ME, my own self." If the child's parents are able to affirm this while helping integrate the new found autonomy into its appropriate role in the family, self esteem begins to flourish. If instead it s met with denial and rejection, then validating their unique identity can remain as a hidden agenda throughout every relationship in the person's life. Especially in the workplace, that behavior is often considered passive aggressive.

> **COMMUNICATE WITH WISDOM**
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> **W**illingness - to learn, to listen with the ears of your heart.
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> **I**nitiate - take risks, address difficult situations instead of running from them.
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> **S**mile - enjoy the journey.
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> **D**o - the follow through that goes with your commitments.
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> **O**ther - be other-oriented. Pay attention to the positive goal of meeting their needs together with yours.
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> **M**indfulness - notice fully what is happening, then respond

Without oversimplifying human dynamics or over representing the effectiveness of our training, mediation, facilitation, and personal coaching services, we want to emphasize that all our strategies for conflict resolution include addressing the subconscious aspects of conflict in ways that empower your employees to act consciously on team goals and objectives with a lot less "NO!" and a lot bigger "YES!"