

Conflict Resolution: The importance of phase awareness

Process Work considers conflicts as potentially transformative processes. Mindell describes typical phases of our awareness regarding conflicts:

Phase 1:

No awareness about a conflict. At this phase, we usually say “let’s be happy, let’s enjoy!”. We feel comfortable, there is no problem at all. Life is flowing along nicely.

Phase 2:

Tension or conflict becomes obvious. At this phase, we can’t avoid something conflicting in ourselves, with others or in the atmosphere. We are one-sided, insist on one viewpoint and try to assert our position. Nature needs phase 2 to become aware about her diversity. After we struggle long enough, this tense phase or battle eventually exhausts us, and we may be ready to leave phase 2 for phase 3 or phase 4.

Phase 3:

At this phase you find the “the other” or the disturbing energy within yourself and even open up to it a little. “Role switch” is happening. This is an important key towards conflict resolution. When you switch role and dream into the “other side” of the conflict, you start to understand the other side, its dreaming and values. In phase 3 of individual and organizational processwork, we deal not only with roles but also with “ghost roles” - that is, places, historical issues, or people mentioned but not present, as well as double signals.

Phase 4:

Detachment and a sense of unity on the essence level. At this phase, you feel more relaxed because your mind is open to accepting the natural flow of life. You begin to understand the nature of the world. At this stage, you also gain insight into what happened from phase one to phase three.

Mindell stresses the importance of phase awareness in the following citation:

“...many methods work in phases 1, 3, or 4 when people are ready to sit down and talk. But those methods do not work when people are strongly polarized and involved in phase 2, fighting, fearful, and struggling with something inside or outside. Without a phase orientation, we often think something is wrong with people who are not responding to our interventions, instead of realizing that we need greater diversity and phase awareness.”

Mindell, Arnold. Conflict: Phases, Forums, and Solutions: For our Dreams and Body, Organizations, Governments, and Planet (p. 6) Kindle Edition

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