

Certified Course  
**Understanding Conflict**

*We can't solve what we can't grasp*

*The overall purpose of this course is to go at the lowest level of analysis, the individual level, and start building the understanding of conflict from bottom-up. It endeavors to focus on the individual-level analysis of factors, forces and concepts that shape the occurrence and unfolding of conflict and then present the different paths toward resolution. The course is eminently practical, using case studies, group discussions, personal experiences, simulations and role plays to help the participants acquire the fundamental knowledge concerning conflicts and the major methods of their resolution.*

**Goals of this class:**

- ❖ *to bring all participants to a common comprehensive definition of conflict and its key concepts*
- ❖ *to cast awareness of the hidden, intricate connection between inner and outer conflicts along with the conditionality of conflict occurrence on the quad grievance-identity-blame-power*
- ❖ *to help the participants develop a "spatial" view of conflict, defined by the triad cognition-emotion-behavior*
- ❖ *to develop the participants' ability of matching phases of conflict with the appropriate instruments and tools of intervention*
- ❖ *to clarify the distinctions between different methods of conflict resolution and build the participants' ability of choosing the appropriate method of resolution*
- ❖ *to enhance participants' capacity of connecting all elements of conflict into one holistic understanding of the phenomenon, together with the tools to resolve it effectively, constructively and peacefully.*

**Module 1**

**The one decision to engage in conflict**

This module is designed to "level" the playing field of understanding conflict by bringing participants to a common definition of conflict based on key concepts like parties, perception, goals, incompatibility and interdependence. It also emphasizes the conscious, deliberate nature of conflict occurrence; that conflict is the result of

individual decision-making processes; and that there is always a choice, one choice between avoidance and engagement, which humans make for a list of reasons that we will jointly explore. At the end, there will be discussion about the meaning of terms like disagreement, competition, conflict, fight and about the role of rules (being them customary norms, organizational procedures or national laws) in conflict transformation.

## **Module 2**

### **The two types of conflict – inner and outer**

We explore here the fundamental dichotomy between conflicts we have with ourselves versus the conflicts we have with others. At the beginning, we investigate the causes and the forms of interior conflicts, the way they emerge and then influence our behavior; further on, we survey how our inner tensions reflect upon and impact those surrounding us and how they create tensions with people we come into contact with; and then we take the path in reverse, exploring how conflicts with others can lead us to a better understanding of ourselves, of our fears, needs, desires, values and habits; finally, we close the discussion by identifying the connection between self-control and the capacity of helping other deal with their own conflicts.

## **Module 3**

### **The three dimensions of conflict – cognitive, emotional, behavioral**

The third module identifies and defines the three dimensions of conflict and then explores each one of them separately. We will analyze thoughts and rationality, then move towards the deeper depths of our psyche, investigating emotions and how they drive us in conflict situations. Finally, we match thoughts and feelings with actions, exploring how our inner psychological processes reflect upon our behavior and how our behavior moves us into conflict with others. Conversely, we learn a few tricks of controlling our behavior in order to lower tensions, signal willingness to listen and cooperate and build trust.

## **Module 4**

### **The four pillars of conflict – grievance, identity, blame, power**

This is the arch stone of the course. We identify the four pillars of conflict by exploring personal experiences and then endeavor to define them, one by one. As such,

we first bring up the list of grievances that we consider they can lead to conflict; second, we link grievances to identity and analyze how the later generates the former, including here a discussion about the key concept of expectation and how miss-managed expectations lead to the formulation of grievances. Third, we consider blame in its many forms – self-blame, blame of direct sources of grievance, blame of indirect sources, blame on the system or occult forces (here we dwell briefly with the formation of conspiracy theories and how they might become sources of conflict) – and how blame is connected with the previous two pillars. Last, we address the concept of power, in both positive and negative forms, how it is linked with the idea of hope and how the perception of having the power to redress a bad situation can lead to conflict. We conclude with the mapping of the complex connections between these four pillars and between them and the occurrence of conflict.

## **Module 5**

### **The five phases of conflict – latency, manifestation, escalation, de-escalation and resolution**

The fifth module leads the participants in a journey through the chronological unfolding of conflict, from the initial period of latency, when the causes of conflict gather slowly beneath the surface, to the triggers that make conflict manifest, leading to the complex processes of escalation, stalemate and de-escalation, to finalize with the mechanisms and tools used to settle the conflict and prevent its re-occurrence afterwards. Each phase of the conflict is matched with the possible/desirable interventions that could prevent, mitigate, limit and subside the conflict, together with identification of the methods of conflict management that are deemed appropriate to each phase and type of intervention.

## **Module 6**

### **The six paths to solve conflict – coercion, negotiation, mediation, arbitration, litigation and freezing**

Our last module explores the main paths to conflict resolution, in a realistic, empirical way (as opposed to the idealistic, normative approach preferred in many academic and activist circles) that makes way for coercion and force as present and, in certain conditions, legitimate ways of bringing conflict to an end. We will explore the differences between these paths, their specific roles in solving conflict and their regular

results. There will also be a discussion concerning the ups and downs of each path and what are the criteria to decide which path is appropriate in certain situation (here we bring to open debate several real life cases, going from personal all the way to international conflicts). pillars (the core of understanding conflict), five phases and six path to resolution, in a holistic essay of depicting the conflict phenomenon in its entire complexity.

*6 modules, 12 hours of effective training, 550 RON/participant; to be organized F2F or online, depending on the requirements of the participants and the pandemic situation at the moment of course inception.*

***Participants who book in advance both conflict management courses (Understanding Conflict and Effective Conflict Resolution) are entitled to a 15% discount on the total price (935 RON package final fee).***

*For enrollment, download the application form, fill it out and send it, together with a copy of your ID card, to [muresanu@fspac.ro](mailto:muresanu@fspac.ro).*