

THE GOOD FIGHT

CONFLICT **STRATEGIES FOR NICE PEOPLE**

HOW-TO-GUIDE

LIANE DAVEY

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OVERVIEW

THE GOOD FIGHT

IN THIS HANDBOOK, there are six techniques you can use to get out of the spiral of unproductive conflict and start contributing to constructive solutions. I call these six techniques the Conflict Strategies for Nice People because each one unlocks a workable solution in a way that's calm and respectful.

The strategies work in different situations and for different reasons. What they all have in common is they make use of listening and validation so if you need to work on those, check out my book *The Good Fight*.

These techniques take some effort and practice, but once you become proficient at using them, you'll find yourself in far fewer unproductive conflicts. You will have cracked the conflict code. Read on to learn how to use:

- the **Two Truths** strategy when you completely disagree with someone's idea
- the **Root Cause** approach when you don't like a proposed solution, but you agree that there's a problem.
- the **Impact technique** to help someone spot the flaws in their own logic
- the **Hypothetical technique** when someone resists your proposal
- the **Common Criteria** strategy when you have to make a contentious decision
- the **Own the Misunderstanding** approach when you just can't figure out what someone is talking about

Solve for Two Truths

Situation: Someone makes a statement you disagree with

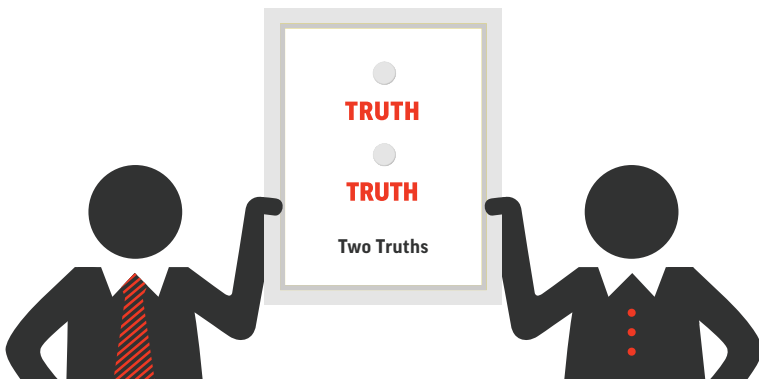
Bad Impulse: You jump straight to why they're wrong

Realization: They don't have to be wrong for you to be right

Technique: Validate their perspective, express your opinion as an "and," then solve for both being true

Example: "You think we need room in the budget for a customer event AND I think we need that money for employee training." "What are our options?"

Why it works: Engages problem solving mode, which is inherently collaborative instead of combative



Expose the Root Cause

Situation: You disagree with a proposed solution.
but you're aligned about the problem

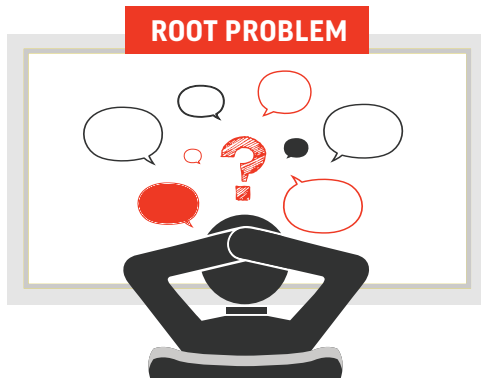
Bad Impulse: To criticize the proposed solution

Realization: We're allies trying to solve the same problem

Technique: Confirm the problem and then propose
alternative solutions

Example: "You think we have too much turnover and you'd
like to implement retention bonuses. I agree we have a
retention issue, what could we do to decrease
turnover that doesn't cost money?"

Why it works: Starts with common ground and
then allows you to explore options together



Question the Impact

Situation: Someone proposes a bad idea

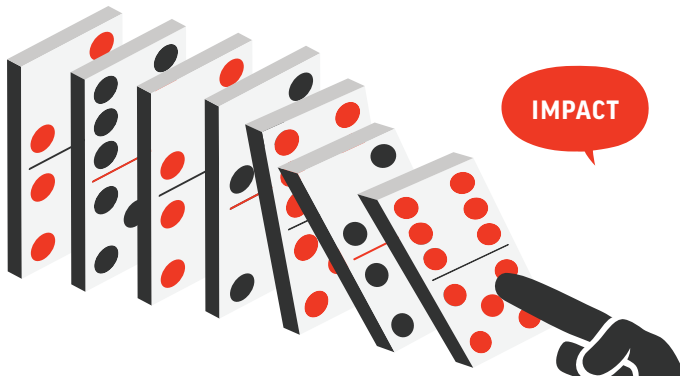
Bad Impulse: To shoot the idea down

Realization: People are much less defensive when they spot the holes in their logic themselves

Technique: Ask open-ended questions about the impact of the proposed plan, drawing their attention to your area of concern

Example: “You’d like to take this in a different direction in your region. How will that affect our efficiency and consistency across the country?”

Why it works: Allows the person to come to their own conclusion without making them defensive



Explore Hypotheticals

Situation: Your idea is rejected

Bad Impulse: To contradict them

Realization: If you can make the person feel like an ally, they'll be more open to considering the possibilities

Technique: Validate the objection and put it to the side. Ask questions about your proposal as a hypothetical. Then solve for the objection

Example: “I get that Product Development will never go along. If we did get them to go along, what could the new model look like?”

Why it works: Gets the person visualizing what's possible and becoming more excited about the possibility



Establish Common Criteria

Situation: You're in a battle trying to make a contentious decision

Bad Impulse: To push hard for your own solution

Realization: If people feel you're considering the things that matter to them, they'll settle into a more logical view of the options

Technique: Solicit all the criteria you should be using to make the decision. Then collect all the options. Only then do you evaluate the options on each criteria

Example: "For me, the most important criterion is how it affects morale. What's the most important criterion for you?"

Why it works: People relax when they see that their perspectives will count in making the decision

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COMMON
CRITERIA

Own the Misunderstanding

Situation: On different wavelengths with someone

Bad Impulse: To give up and show your frustration

Realization: Staying out of a power struggle will help you stay focused on the issues

Technique: Be self-deprecating and ask for help to understand what the person is trying to achieve

Example: “I’m missing something here. Tell me how this will address our Q3 sales gap?”

Why it works: Doesn’t challenge the power of the other person, leaves you in the subordinate position and opens the conversation so you can use other techniques too



CONFLICT STRATEGIES CHEAT SHEET



1. When they say...



2. And you think...

THEIR POSITION

"We should do X."

OPPOSITION

"I think we should do something completely different than X!"

THEIR RESISTANCE

"That will never work because of ABC."

CONTRADICTION

"Oh yes it will...!"

THEIR PLAN

"We are going to launch ACME on Friday."

JUDGMENT

"That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard!"

THEIR IDEA

"We should do X."

CONFUSION

"Why in the world would we do X?"

THEIR ORDERS

"I'm your boss, I said do it."

MISUNDERSTANDING

"But that's the opposite of what she said last week."

THEIR SOLUTION

"Doing x is the only answer!"

FRUSTRATION

"That's the worst thing we could do in this situation!"





3. The productive conflict strategy is...

SOLVE FOR TWO TRUTHS

“Your truth is X.” “My truth is Y.”
“What should we do to solve for both X and Y?”

EXPLORE A HYPOTHETICAL

“Let’s park ABC for a moment and talk about what it could look like if we were able to address ABC”

QUESTION THE IMPACT

“You think we should launch ACME on Friday. How will that fit with the launch of Omega on Monday?”

EXPOSE THE ROOT CAUSE

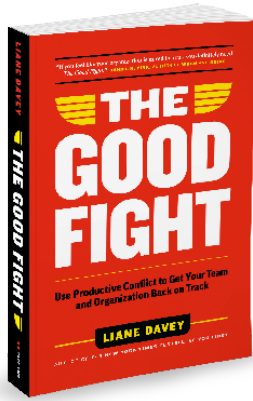
“You want to do X. What are you trying to solve by doing X?”

OWN THE MISUNDERSTANDING

“Help me understand where Priority A fits relative to Priority B from last week.”

CREATE COMMON CRITERIA

“Let’s get all of our criteria out before we start evaluating our options.”



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DR. **LIANE DAVEY** is a *New York Times*–bestselling author, a regular contributor to the *Harvard Business Review*, and the host of the ChangeYourTeam blog. As the cofounder of 3COze Inc., she advises on business strategy and executive team effectiveness and has worked with leaders at companies such as Amazon, Walmart, Aviva, 3M, TD Bank, and Sony. Liane has a PhD in organizational psychology and has served as an evaluator for the American Psychological Association’s Healthy Workplace Awards. Liane is married to her business partner, Craig, and they have two teenaged daughters.

LianeDavey.com

