

Using the E3 to Dissolve Conflict

“Greater understanding dissolves conflict”

Understanding Conflict:

At Behavioral Essentials, we approach conflict with two primary assumptions: greater understanding dissolves conflict and all conflict is ultimately inner conflict.

Conflict often arises from miscommunication, misunderstanding or lack of awareness about the perspectives, needs and motivations of others. It can also arise when one’s behavior does not align with their values. In many cases, conflict shows up frequently within communication, when the intention of the message from one party and the perception, or how that message was received from another, do not align.

Conflict can also arise from inner turmoil, unresolved emotions, or conflicting values within individuals. While conflicts may manifest externally, their roots can be traced back to internal struggles, beliefs, and perceptions.

The E3 is a valuable tool that can support conversations aimed at preventing and reducing conflict. It facilitates greater understanding by promoting enhanced awareness of the self and others.

Greater Understanding Dissolves Conflict

By increasing understanding among conflicting parties, it becomes possible to address underlying issues, find common ground and develop strategies to resolve current and future conflict. Greater understanding is critical for resolving conflict, as it:

- Facilitates communication
- Promotes empathy
- Encourages perspective taking
- Builds trust and rapport
- Identifies common ground
- Humanizes the other party
- Reduces stereotyping and bias
- Encourages collaborative problem solving

Greater understanding plays a crucial role in conflict resolution by promoting constructive communication, fostering empathy, building trust and encouraging collaboration and inclusivity. By cultivating understanding among conflicting parties, it becomes possible to resolve misunderstandings, bridge differences and foster more productive relationships based on mutual respect and cooperation.

All Conflict is Inner Conflict

Many of our reactions to external situations are influenced by our inner world. External conflicts are ultimately rooted in and often a reflection of inner turmoil, unresolved emotions or conflicting values within individuals. Below are a few examples of how inner conflict can emerge externally:

- Emotional turmoil: Unresolved emotional turmoil may manifest as interpersonal conflict, as individuals often project their emotions onto others or react defensively to perceived threats. In the workplace, a perceived threat may show up in the language, tone and nonverbal communication from one team member who may unknowingly activate this turmoil, resulting in a defensive response from their coworker.
- Unmet needs and desires: Unmet or unarticulated needs can lead to frustration, resentment or envy which can show up as interpersonal conflict. For instance, an individual who has struggled with receiving appropriate recognition throughout their life might envy a coworker who receives praise and behave in a negative way toward that individual.
- Projection and Externalization: Individuals sometimes unconsciously project their inner conflicts onto external situations, attributing their own unresolved issues or emotions to external factors. For instance, an individual might be jealous of a co-worker's promotion. Conflict emerges when that individual falsely claims another coworker is jealous.

The notion that all conflict is inner conflict illustrates that internal struggles and external conflict are interrelated. By becoming aware of, acknowledging, and addressing these inner struggles, individuals can cultivate greater empathy and resilience, resulting in less external conflict.

How to Use the E3 to Dissolve Conflict

1. Cultivate Self-Awareness

Reports: [The Line Chart & Coaching Report](#)

The first goal is to heighten self-awareness using the E3. This often starts with the Coaching Report to identify and discuss with an individual their strengths and growth areas. In these discussions, take the time to explore these two areas and discuss instances when traits may have held the individual back or caused conflict. This will build overall awareness especially around those traits that can cause conflict or challenges.

2. Cultivate Awareness of Others

Reports: [The Conflict Tool & The Conflict Report](#)

Once there is heightened self-awareness within the individual, the Conflict Report can then be used to facilitate discussions and highlight areas where two individuals could encounter conflict. These conversations would focus on what conflict could look like based on particular traits (i.e. one individual might score high on aggression while the other scores low). It can be beneficial to use the report to foster greater understanding of how each individual might communicate and receive communication differently. By promoting perspective taking, each individual can become more aware of and empathic toward the other.

The Conflict Report

It's easy to think of the conflict report as its own coaching report. It summarizes data with two individuals instead of one. The tool offers insights into potential conflicts by examining opposing and similar traits between individuals.

Based on data analysis and experience, we've determined the scores and scales that are most likely to lead to conflict, and the number of scales shown on the report will vary depending on the two people chosen. For example, two people could have no conflict points based on our algorithm, or they could have many.

Some of the potential conflict combinations include, but are not limited to:

- High Agg + High Agg
- High Ord + Low Ord
- Low Pro + Low Pro
- High Sup + Low Sup

It's important to note that conflict may not always arise from opposing scales; individuals with similar scores can also experience conflicts and have the data appear in the conflict report.

Even if individuals don't frequently collaborate, the tool can provide valuable insights into their compatibility, aiding in more informed decision-making.

How to Generate the Conflict Report using the Conflict Tool

There are two ways to generate the report:

From the Candidates/Employees Table:

1. From the candidates/employees table, begin by searching for the individual you wish to compare in the dashboard with another person
2. Search and select the other individual you want to compare
3. Click on the "Conflict Tool" button at the top of the table to generate the conflict report

From the Individual Profile:

1. From a candidate/employee's individual profile, select the conflict tool tab.
2. Search and select the individual you wish to compare the candidate/employee to in order to generate the conflict report

Using The Conflict Report to Facilitate Discussion

Use the cautions listed in the Conflict Report to facilitate a discussion. Discuss examples and build awareness of how each conflicting party might have felt in that instance based on their scores on key traits.

While it might not show up in the conflict report, it is important to be aware that some scales are more strongly associated with conflict than others. In addition to the Conflict Report, also use the Comparison Report to understand where each party scored on the following scales:

- Primary
 - Dominance
 - Aggression
 - Submissiveness
 - Support
 - Criticality
- Secondary
 - Autonomy
 - Self-Confidence

Facilitate additional discussion to understand whether any conflict has emerged around these traits.

In facilitating these discussions, once awareness has been established, it is important to then move onto collaborative problem solving to identify strategies to prevent future conflict. Consider the traits in the context of what each individual needs from the other to be successful in their work. For instance, someone lower on proactivity might need more structure and scaffolding to complete their assigned tasks. Their work might be better broken down into smaller pieces with regular follow-up from their manager to ensure completion and success.

- Create a plan of action for addressing the conflict, with a particular focus on:
 - Communication
 - Delegation (if appropriate)
 - Frequency of follow-up
 - Supporting an employee's ability to advocate for themselves

There are additional strategies that are helpful for mitigating conflict. We recommend that both parties practice the mindset tools below to further cultivate awareness and understanding.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

- PMR is a practice that relaxes your mind and body by tensing and relaxing muscle groups throughout your body.
- We recommend you learn this essential tool before any others because you must first understand what tension feels like before working on improving it.
- You will tense each muscle group without excessive straining and then suddenly release the tension and observe how it feels to be relaxed.
- Dr. Edmund Jacobson initially developed this widely-used procedure in the early 1920's and published "Progressive Relaxation" in 1939.
- According to the Mayo Clinic, it slows heart rate, lowers blood pressure, slows breathing rate, improves digestion, reduces the activity of stress hormones, and reduces muscle tension and chronic pain.

Source: Veteran Affairs "Progressive Muscle Relaxation"

How to do Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Step 1: Establish a comfortable posture. You can do this seated or standing, but for our initial purposes, let's start in a seated pose.

Step 2: Be aware that you are sitting in a chair. Be mindful of the parts of your body that are being supported. You might notice sensations in your hands. You can also be aware that your feet are touching the ground.

Step 3: Lift your heels and tighten the muscles in your calves. Notice what that tension feels like. Hold for a few seconds and release. Notice the difference.

Step 4: Now, straighten your legs out before you, lifting your feet off the ground. Tighten the muscles in our thighs. Notice what that tension feels like. Hold for a few seconds and let it go on an exhale. Notice the difference.

Step 5: To the best of your ability, tighten the muscles in your abdomen. Notice what the tension feels like. Hold for a few seconds and let it go on a sigh. Notice the difference.

Step 6: Press your palms together in front of you to tighten the muscles in your chest. Notice what that tension feels like. Hold for a few seconds and let it go on a sigh. Notice the difference.

Step 7: Take a few deep breath cycles here, inhaling low into the abdomen and exhaling slowly.

Step 8: Lift your shoulders like you're trying to touch your ears. Notice the tension, and with a sigh, let it go.

Step 9: Flex your arm to the degree you can. Notice the tension, and with a sigh, let it go.

Step 10: Clench your fists and hold. Notice the tension in your hands and forearms, and with a sigh, let it go.

Step 11: Scrunch up all the muscles in your face. Notice the tension and, with a sigh, let it go.

See the following video for a guided version of PMR [here](#).

Vagus Nerve Breathing

- The vagus nerve is vital to the parasympathetic nervous system, overseeing functions like mood, immune response, digestion, and heart rate. It plays a significant role in anxiety by transmitting calmness, nervousness, anger, or relaxation signals and triggers the fight or flight response.
- Deep breathing enhances heart rate variability (HRV), a measure of variation in heartbeats. A paper by Paul M. Lehrer and Richard Gevirtz explored how HRV biofeedback, including diaphragmatic breathing, benefits the vagal tone by promoting relaxation in the nervous system.
- Throughout history, Eastern cultures have emphasized diaphragmatic breathing; this was supported by a study conducted in 2010 to prove that it reduced the “fight or flight” response.

Source: Journal of Human Hypertension.

How to do Vagus Nerve Breathing

Step 1: Find a comfortable, upright seated or standing posture.

Step 2: Inhale slowly through your nose for three counts.

Step 3: Exhale gently through your mouth for 6 counts.

Step 4: Repeat for 3 minutes (20 rounds of 3-6 = 3 minutes), focusing on slow, deep breaths.

Feel free to adjust the timing, inhaling for 2 counts and out for 4 or 4 counts in and out for 8, finding what feels good. The essential thing is that the exhale time should be at least double the inhale time.

For something so simple, it's amazing how effective this practice can be.

See a guided video of Vagus Nerve Breathing [here](#).

Box Breathing

- The Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) has two branches: the sympathetic nervous system (SNS), for fight-or-flight response and the parasympathetic nervous system (PSNS) for calming.
- Mindful breathing engages the PSNS, promoting relaxation and stress reduction.
- Inhalation through the nose draws air deep into the lungs, slowing rhythm and stimulating the vagal nerve.
- Vagal nerve activation impacts heart rate and triggers neurotransmitter release, enhancing the PSNS.
- Navy Seals employ box breathing for composure and performance enhancement and have even been used to save lives. It helps keep the Seals calm and focused and avoid reactive thinking in critical situations.

Source: The Way of the Seal: Think Like an Elite Warrior to Lead and Succeed, Mark Divine

How to do Box Breathing

Step 1: Find a comfortable space, and sit upright, with shoulders rolled back.

Step 2: Inhale slowly through your nose for 4 seconds.

Step 3: Hold your breath for 4 seconds.

Step 4: Slowly exhale through your nose for 4 seconds.

Step 5: Repeat the process for 2 minutes.

For a guided video on box breathing, click [here](#).

Mindful Walking

- In 2016, a study noted improvements in mood and mindfulness skills and overall depression, anxiety, and stress.
- Mindful walking demonstrates embracing awareness of simple daily tasks and avoiding going on “autopilot” or being too focused on the destination.
- Combining the benefits of walking with mindfulness is a perfect storm of improvements to psychological and physical well-being.
- It is expected to improve: immune system function, cardiovascular/respiratory system, depression

Source: International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health

How to do Mindful Walking

Find an open space where you won't be disturbed. It is recommended you wear comfortable shoes for this activity.

Step 1: Begin by standing still, taking a moment to connect with your sensations. Notice your posture, the weight of your body, the sensation of your feet in your shoes, and the balance of your muscles. Bring your focus to the present moment and take a few deep breaths.

Step 2: Take a step forward, and as you step forward, breathe in.

Step 3: As you lower your foot onto the ground, exhale and become aware of the earth beneath you. Feel the rolling motion from heel to toe, sense the engagement of muscles and tendons in your feet and legs, and observe the subtle movements throughout your body.

Step 4: Continue walking, maintaining this rhythm of breath and movement. While practicing this, take note of what you see, hear, smell and feel. For example, listen to the rustling of leaves, take in the scent of freshly cut grass, feel the warmth of the sun, and observe the details around you, such as a fence ahead.

Continue steps 1-4 at your comfort level. The result should be a combination of heightened awareness and relaxation.

Mental Rehearsal and Visualization

- Mental rehearsal is a powerful technique utilized by Olympic and professional athletes. It involves preparing the brain for action by vividly engaging in challenging activities while employing effective coping strategies.
- This process creates new mental pathways, enabling individuals to connect real-life performances with potential obstacles they may encounter.
- Individuals can rehearse desired actions, form new brain pathways, and cultivate positive habit patterns by eliminating negative emotions associated with these challenges and replacing them with positive coping mechanisms.

Source: The Art and Science of Brief Psychotherapies: A Practitioner's Guide (Core Competencies in Psychotherapy) 3rd Edition, Dr. Mantosh Kumar

How to do Mental Rehearsal and Visualization

Find an open space where you won't be disturbed. It is recommended you wear comfortable shoes for this activity.

Step 1: Identify a desired goal or habit.

Step 2: Close your eyes and relax; the fewer distractions, the better. Take a breath in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Step 3: Go back and remember why you chose this initial goal or habit. Ask yourself, what did you want to accomplish? What is important and meaningful to you? Connect with that thought and feeling.

Step 4: Remember your big goal and initial habit and run through the first steps. The visual cue will tell you it is time to complete your habit. Visualize you completing the habit. Visualize yourself mentally rehearsing the habit from start to finish.

Step 5: Go back through and mentally rehearse your habit again, but this time do it more realistically, including some challenges you might face – for example, an unexpectedly busy schedule or sleeping through your alarm clock.

Step 6: Once you finish this initial habit, ask yourself how you feel. What thoughts are going through your mind? What are you most proud of? Imagine the ripple effect. How does your commitment to this habit positively impact the people around you?

Step 7: When you are ready, come back into the present. Practicing visualization often will strengthen the newly formed neural pathways.