Creative Conflict Resolution at School 19.11.2019

Dr. Eugenia Vathakou
evathakou@hotmail.com

Agenda – Aims

- **Conflict Analysis - Definition of conflict, structure, dimensions, dynamics**

- **Our stances towards conflicts**

- **Conflict Resolution / Transformation processes**

- **Conflict Resolution skills & tools**

- **Practice! Examples from our schools**

The aim of peace education

- To strengthen our theoretical and practical knowledge regarding human relationships, ourselves, communication, critical thinking, self-control, responsibility, respect, solidarity

- To learn a new way of thinking and cultivate a culture of peaceful conflict resolution

- To learn to reject violence as a way of communication and problem solving

- To adopt values which lead students to peaceful co-existence with others in every stage of their life

Negative consequences of conflict on students

- **Waste of resources (time, energy)**

- **Destroys relationships**

- **Increase of stress, insecurity**

- **Absences, low performance**

- **Counter-productive climate**

- **Vicious circle of confrontation/vindictiveness**
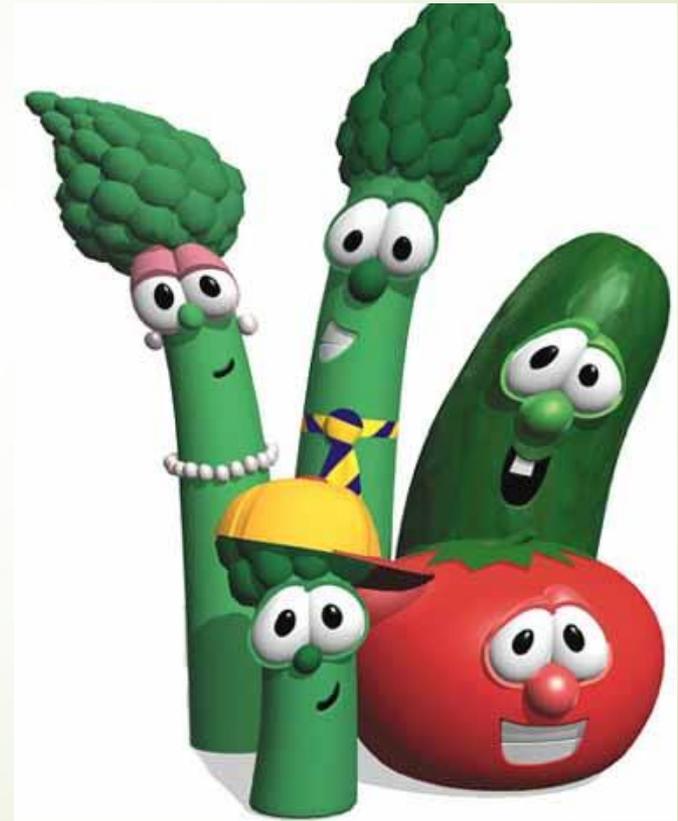- **Other…….**

Negative consequences on educators

- High levels of stress

- Decrease of motivation and interest

- Will to transfer to another school

- Increase of abcenses

Possible positive results of conflicts

- *Learning*
- *Co-development*
- *Inclusiveness*
- *Care*
- *Empowerment*
- *Improvement*
- *Feeling of justice*
- *Respect*
- *New Ideas*

Why do we perceive conflicts as something negative?

We have been trained to perceive conflicts as dysfunctional situations and **we can change it**

What is CONFLICT ?

- *Conflict is a situation between two or more parties (individuals or groups) who have, or think they have, incompatible goals.*

- *Need to clarify the following: Disagreement, difference, cursing/ name calling ("for fun"), fighting, hitting, arguing etc.*

The structure of CONFLICT

common characteristics (subjective and objective) in conflicts

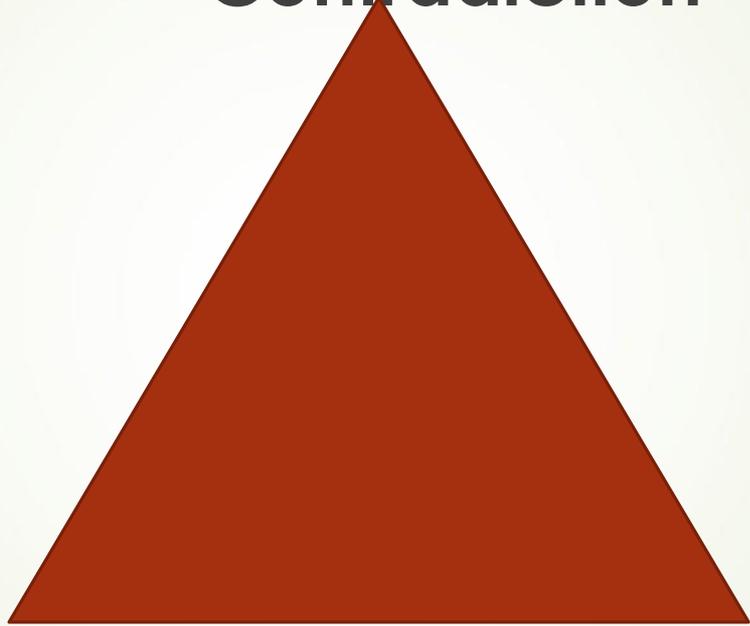# Basic Structure

lack of resources (money, food), security, a position etc.

Contradiction

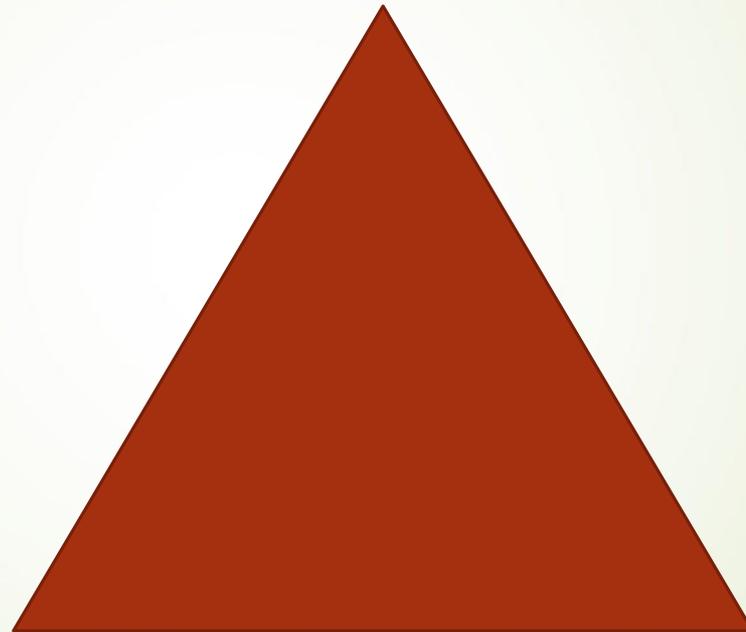Threat, warning, promise, violence etc.

Behavior

Attitude

Feelings, stereotypes, cognitive capacity, group dynamics, etc.

Three Conflict Dimensions

Emotional (feeling)

Behavioural
(action)

Cognitive
(perception)

- **Where does a conflict start from?**

- **Why a triangle?**

- **Think of your own example (1-3)**
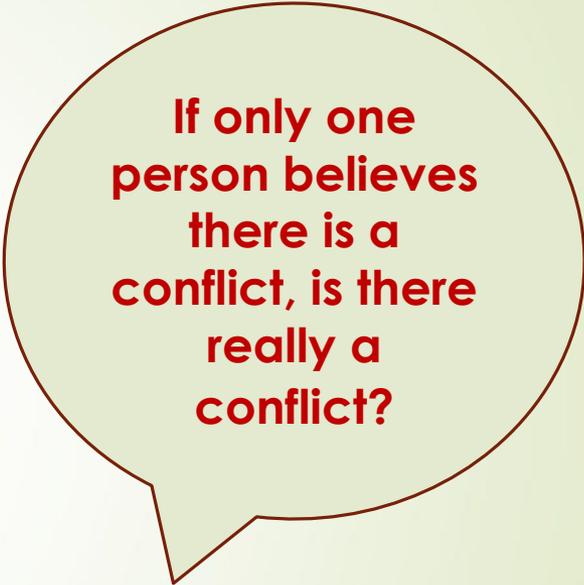
If only one person believes there is a conflict, is there really a conflict?

Behavior

Visible element

Attitude/ perceptions
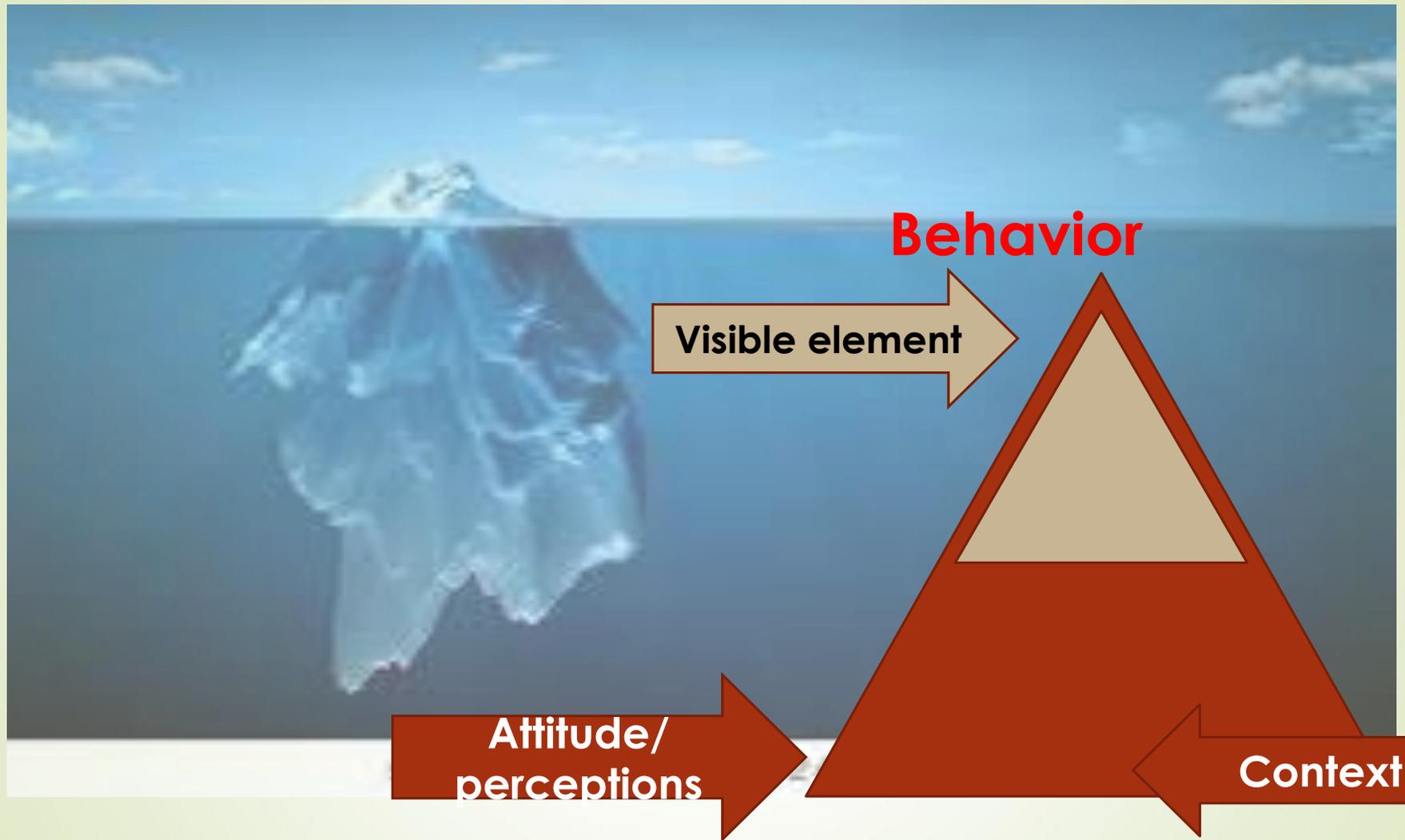
Context

Like an iceberg much of the reason for the conflict lies beneath the surface!!!

School context

- **Cultural elements (competition vs cooperation**
- **Bad organization (e.g. overloaded classes / program)**
- **Bad infrastructure**
- **Stress**
- **Favoritism**
- **Lack of information**
- **Working conditions**

1. Verbal harassment (cussing, capping, name calling, threats)

ALIMOS (42/8)	STUDENTS	TEACHERS
0	48%	38%
1-4	50%	50%
5+	2%	12%
BARI (153/12)		
0	59%	67%
1-4	37%	25%
5+	3%	8%
BIALYMSTOKU (537/34)		
0	63%	62%
1-4	30%	38%
5+	7%	0%

2. Nonverbal harassment (dirty looks, giving the finger)

CREMA (35/31)	STUDENTS	TEACHERS
0	60%	35%
1-4	40%	65%
5+	0%	0%
GODIN (112/22)		
0	25%	32%
1-4	63%	64%
5+	13%	5%
NEWARK (0/3)		
0	0%	100%
1-4	0%	0%
5+	0%	0%

3. Physical Harassment (pushing, fighting, hitting)

ALIMOS (42/8)	STUDENTS	TEACHERS
0	81%	88%
1-4	17%	13%
5+	2%	0%
BARI (153/12)		
0	89%	100%
1-4	7%	0%
5+	4%	0%
BIALYMSTOKU (537/34)		
0	87%	97%
1-4	11%	3%
5+	3%	0%

4. Insubordinate (talking back, refusing to listen, arguing)

CREMA (35/31)	STUDENTS	TEACHERS
0	54%	19%
1-4	40%	68%
5+	6%	13%
GODIN (112/22)		
0	14%	32%
1-4	46%	36%
5+	39%	32%
NEWARK (0/3)		
0	0%	33%
1-4	0%	67%
5+	0%	0%

The stages of conflict

► **Stage 1**: **Discomfort Stage or Latent Stage**

People become aware that **"there is a problem"**. No outright conflict may have occurred but there are tensions or an awareness that something is "not right" in a relationship or situation.

► **Stage 2: The Incident(s) Stage**

Minor events or incidents occur and a negative meaning is attributed to them. Opposing parties move from experiencing a minor tension to feeling a sense of mistrust. Thingsare done or said in ways that acknowledge that a problem exists.

► **Stage 3: The Tension Stage**

At this stage **tension increases rapidly**, as the situation deteriorates. Misunderstandings contribute to further conflict escalation.

► **Stage 4: Escalation**

All parties display open hostility and resort to the use of different forms of verbal and physical violence.)

Conflict Dynamics
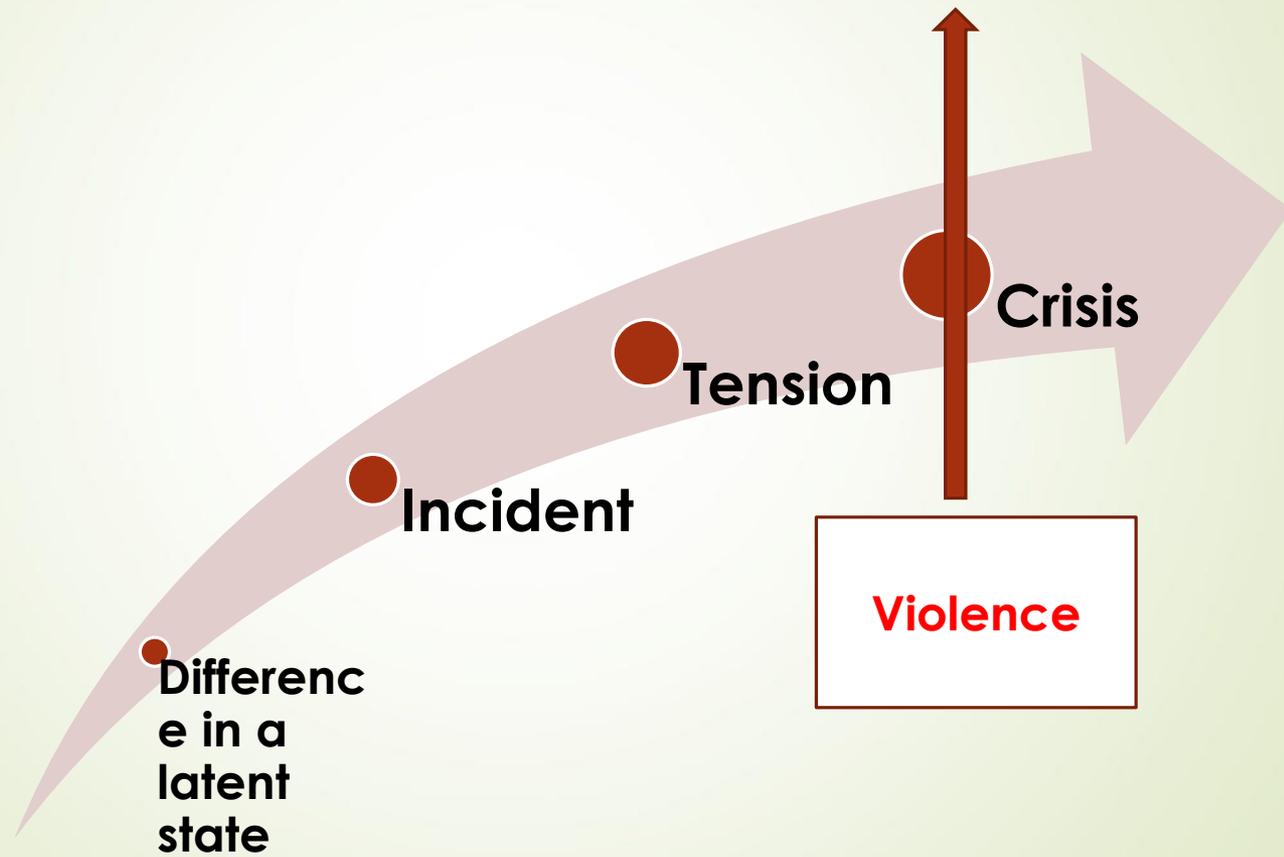
Our stances towards conflicts

- **Confrontation**

- **Avoidance**

- **Accommodation**

- **Compromise**

- **Cooperation – Problem Solving**

How do we learn our conflict stances?

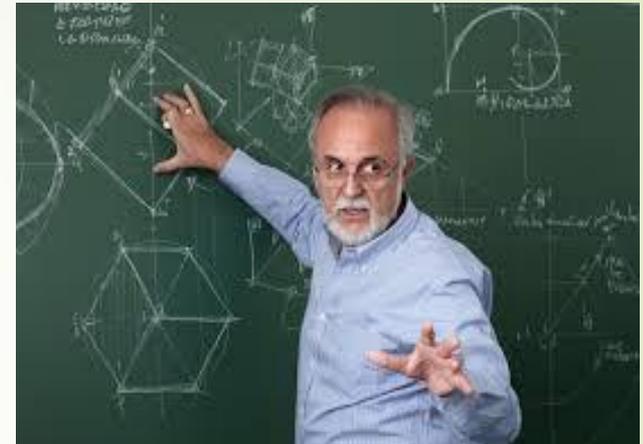## Role models

Role models in the FAMILY

Role models of FAMOUS

Teachers

Why do we avoid conflicts?

Fears:

➡ **What if I make things worse?**

➡ **And if (s)he will not listen to me?**

➡ **And if (s)he starts shouting/offending me?**

➡ **It will be solved on its own**

➢ **We have not learned to discuss/negotiate openly with the others about what we want/need**

It takes courage

- To express honestly and clearly our needs
- To sit down and listen to the other person
- To see our own role in a conflict
- To approach the other with empathy, open mind and respect

- Effective conflict resolution/transformation requires us to come out of what we already know and learn how to discuss

CONFLICT RESOLUTION / TRANSFORMATION AT SCHOOL

GOOD PRACTICES

Four (4) Conflict Resolution/Transformation strategies

- peer mediation

- process curriculum

- peaceable classrooms

- peaceable schools

Strategies for Peacable Classrooms/Schools

- Building a "community" culture

- Active involvement of children in co-developing, revising, or expanding "ground rules"

- Training on conflict resolution skills and techniques

- Training on peer mediation

- Mentoring adolescents who seek support on how to prevent or manage conflict

- Applying "logical consequences" rather than adopting a reward vs punishment model.

- Adopting a problem-solving approach

- Introducing activities that help develop or enhance creative problem-solving skills

It is important for anyone working with youth in a school setting to take time to investigate the roots of the conflict.

Conflict Management in Five Steps

1. Listen and try to understand the situation/circumstances

- Collect all relevant information, then assess and thoroughly reflect on the circumstances that triggered a conflict.

- It is important to clearly define your position and what is at stake for you in the conflict.

- It is equally important to understand the position and what is at stake for the other party.

2. Communicate with the other party

- Arrange a meeting with the other party at a suitable time and place.

- Put yourself in the other party's shoes.

- Make room for the other party to present and explain his or her views.

- Use the guiding principles and skills of active listening.

3. Brainstorm in search of a solution

➡ **Seek common interests and mutual benefits from the settlement of disputes.**

➡ **Propose as many new ideas as possible.**

➡ **Seek and offer "win-win" solutions.**

4. Work through the ideas proposed

- If the solution fails to bring the expected results, then choose the best of the alternative solutions proposed.

5. Choose the best solution

- Re-evaluate the ideas proposed.

- Define when you will decide which is the most suitable solution.

- Use the skills of both parties for the best possible results.

- Choose a "win -win" solution.

Which are the skills required for creative conflict transformation/resolution

Conflict Resolution Skills

- Communication skills

- Emotional intelligence and empathy

- Creativity in problem solving

How to become an active listener (I)

- **Use open ended questions (e.g. ≪could you tell me what exactly happened?≫)**

- **Paraphrase what you listen so as to make sure that you understood it and show that you listen to the other person**

- **Recapitulate (e.g. ≪your main concerns about this are ...≫)**

- **Non-verbal communication is equally important with verbal (e.g. the posture of your body and the movement of your hands)**

- **Express your position clearly and firmly but not aggressively**

Active listener (II)

- Recognize your feelings and the feelings of the other part

- Use «I» statements - do not try to describe what the other did and how he/she felt, let him/her speak for him or herself

- Express clearly the consequences of the common problem

- Refrain from the bad habits which do not allow you to listen carefully to the other person

- (e.g. interrupting the other or thinking what you are going to say next or working while the other is talking)

- Practice! In order to become a good listener you need practice

Conflict Analysis Tools

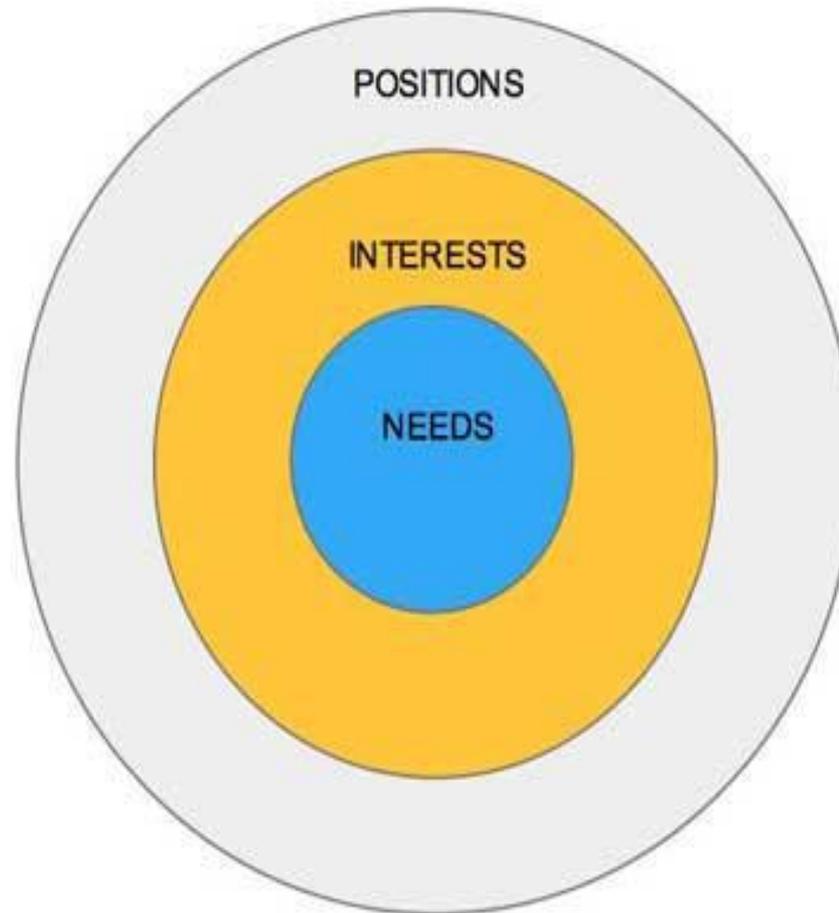# Conflict Analysis

- It is important to identify the factors that affect the root of a conflict and its potential for escalation when deciding upon your initial action.

- You cannot change or control how other people act in a conflict, and in many instances, you cannot change the situation itself; but what you can change is what you do or how you, yourself, behave in a conflict

The Onion Tool

The onion tool
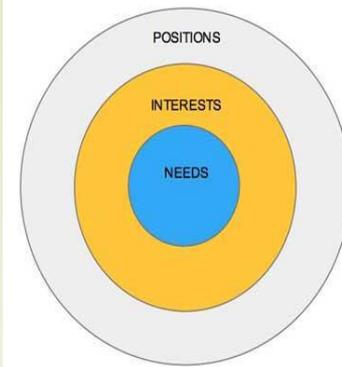
- In a conflict situation there is always more than what the different parties display or demand and calls for an in-depth analysis to identify the underlying issues.

- **Positions** – what we say that we want which are open and public for all to see and hear.

- **Interests** what the conflicting parties want to achieve.

- **Needs** what parties seek to satisfy.

- Sometimes the interests are the means to achieve an aim. At other times the interests coincide with needs. Whereas interests may be tangible and can be negotiated (e.g. a leading role in the classroom) basic needs are not negotiable (e.g. food, shelter, safety, identity).

When / why to use it

- To prepare for mediation

- To identify points of agreement

- To build on these points

The Conflict/Solutions Tree

or

Why – Why Tree
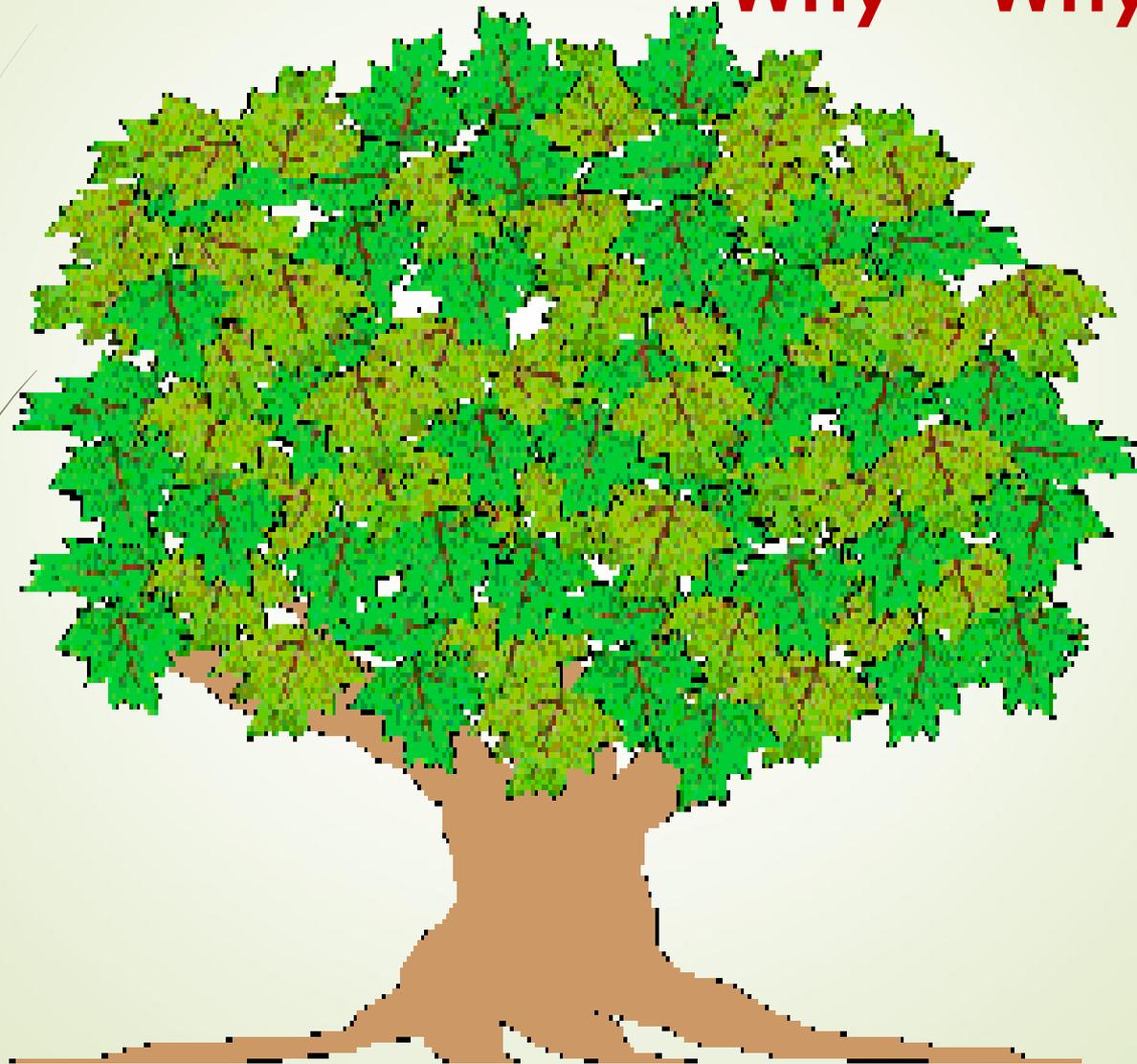
The Conflict/Solutions Tree: Introduction

➢ **What is it? A tool which help us to acquire a better picture of the deepest causes of a conflict/problem and its consequences**

African proverb: *A bat is not flying during the day unless there is a reason for that.*

➢ **Who is using it and how?**

The person(s) who face the conflict involving the right stakeholders
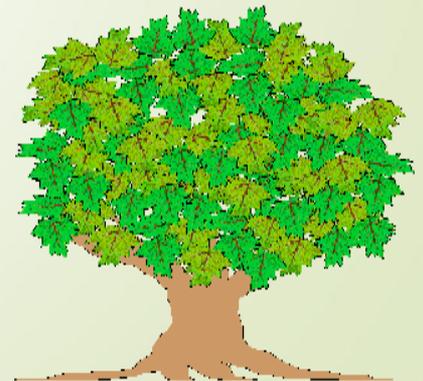
The Tree in 3 stages

- **1ˢᵗ stage**: Conflict/Problem analysis by systematically writing down its causes and consequences

- **2ⁿᵈ Stage**: Identification of solutions by converting every negative statement on it in positive statement

- **3ʳᵈ stage**: Selection of strategy
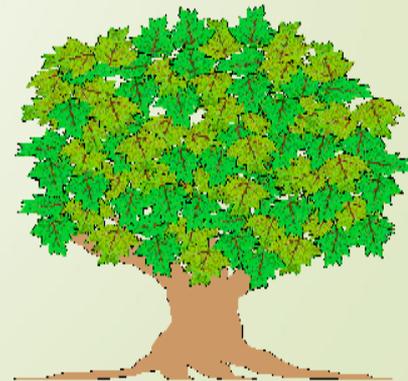
1st stage: Causes-Consequences

- Use brainstorming to discuss and agree on the main or most serious problem to investigate.

- Start the analysis of this key problem or conflict and investigate its causes by asking the question "why is this happening?"

- Problems or conditions which are perceived as causing the key problem or conflict are then put at the bottom of the tree diagram, further below, are identified the problems or conditions that cause these problems; thereby, causal chains are being formed.

- Prioritise the causes and then identify the consequences.

- Connect the causes with arrows.

- Revise and adapt accordingly the mind-map of the "Tree of Conflict" that was produced.

2nd Stage: The Solutions Tree

- The "Tree of Conflict" can be transformed into a "Tree of Solutions" by

- converting every negative statement on the Tree, into a positive one

- Every cause-effect relationship on the "Tree of Conflict" becomes a means-end relationship on the "Tree of Solutions", which is equivalent to a "Tree of Objectives to be achieved". Work from below, the lowest part of

- the Tree by rephrasing "problem statements" into "solution statements."

THE PROBLEM/CONFLICT TREE

The smooth and effective operation of shelters is in jeopardy

Consequences

Crises that can escalate to physical violence

Trust relationships destroyed

Waste of important for the children resources

Staff burn out

Main problem

Increased number of disruptive conflicts occurring in the shelters among professionals and UASC

Causes

Other causes: adolescence, mental health issues

Children disagree with the shelters' rules of operation

The team members do not work on problems when they appear

Staff members do not apply the shelters' rules correctly

Dysfunctional operational rules

They have not contributed to their developent

The existing operational framework does not cover their needs

Understaffing

They ignore the rules

Different behaviro to similar situations

The might does not make the right interventions

Feeling of weekeness/ ustration Lack of knowledge/ Distance from the

Inflexible relationships/processes

They do not know their needs

Lack of resources

Improper induction process

Differences of values not discussed

Interpersonal conflicts among staff not addressed

Ineffective financial managmnt/lack of

Lack of conflict resolution skills and techniques/tools

Lack of supervision

THE TREE OF SOLUTIONS

The smooth and effective operation of shelters ensured

Overall objective

Conflicts resolved before they escalate to crisis

Trust relationships strengthened

Good use of important for the children resources

Staff engagement improved

Specific objective

Decrease of disruptive conflicts occurring in the shelters among professionals and UASC

Other causes: adolescence, mental health issues

Children agree with the shelters' rules of operation

The team members work on problems when they appear

Staff members pply the shelters' rules correctly

Functional operational rules

Results

Children contribute to their developent

The existing operational framework does not cover their needs

Understaffing

They ignore the rules

Different behaviro to similar situations

The mngnt make the right interventions

Actions

Flexible relationships/processes

They know their needs

Sufficient resources

Proper induction process

Differences of values discussed

Interpersonal conflicts among staff addressed

Feeling of strength/fu fillemnt

Effective financial managemnt/Fundraisi

Improved conflict resolution skills and techniques/tools

Effective supervision

The management knows well what is happening in the shelters

3rd stage: Strategy selection

- **Design an intervention to address the problem.**

HOW?

- **Carefully address all the solutions or objectives that appear on the "Solutions Tree" (i.e. think about required resources, know how, etc.).**

- **Focus on what can be done and**

- **Design appropriate activities to achieve every identified objective.**

SPECIAL TOPICS to explore further

- 1. Peer Mediation specifics (follow up meetings, mediation procedures, keeping records of case studies)

- 2. Bullying

- 3. Crisis management / anger management

- 4. The components of power and powerlessness in conflict and conflict resolution

- PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!!!!

Conclusion

▸ A conflict can **teach** us how to use a situation in the best possible way transforming it in an experience for learning and leadership

▸ A conflict can be an **opportunity to grow, to improve a relationship and a school community!**

Any questions/comments?

"We can learn a lot, often more, from the work involved in answering a question than the answer itself".

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Dr. Eugenia Vathakou

evathakou@hotmail.com