


Advising Jackal or Giraffe: The Nonviolent Communication Approach to Advising



Shannon Lynn Burton  
Michigan State University  
2021 NACADA Annual Conference

1

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Roadmap

- Complaint & Conflict
- Emotions, Trauma & Conflict
- Conflict Narratives & Biographies
- Power, the Environment & Conflict
- Needs & Conflict Styles
- Nonviolent Communication

2

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Complaint

“To be heard as complaining is not to be heard. To hear someone as complaining is an effective way of dismissing someone. You do not have to listen to the content of what she is saying if she is *just* complaining or *always* complaining.”

- Sara Ahmed
- (Feminist writer/Independent Scholar)

3

---

---

---

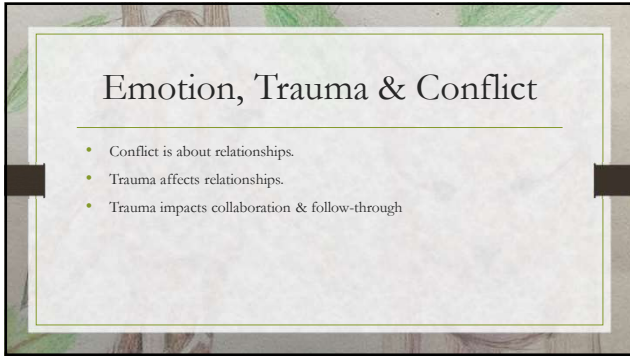
---

---

---

---

---



Emotion, Trauma & Conflict

- Conflict is about relationships.
- Trauma affects relationships.
- Trauma impacts collaboration & follow-through

4

---

---

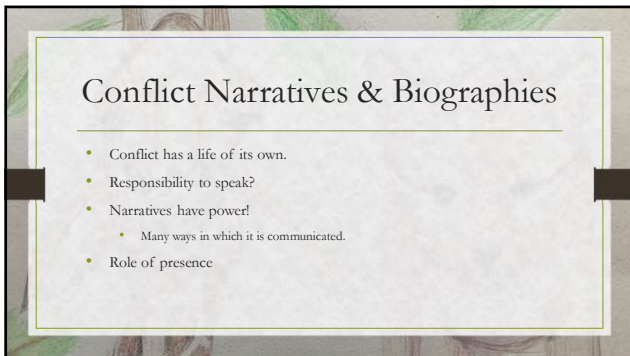
---

---

---

---

---



Conflict Narratives & Biographies

- Conflict has a life of its own.
- Responsibility to speak?
- Narratives have power
  - Many ways in which it is communicated.
- Role of presence

5

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Power, the Environment & Conflict

- University structure/system impacts
- Institutional Trust
- Physical Space

6

---

---

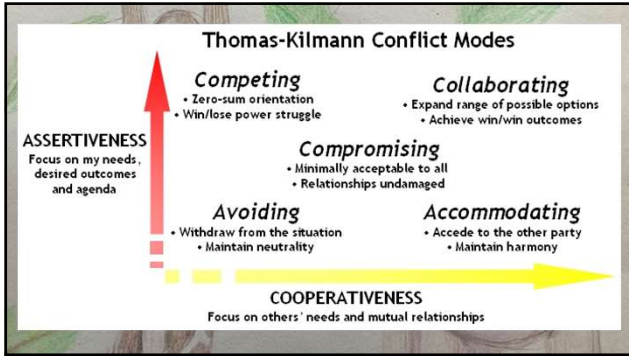
---

---

---

---

---



7

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Small Group Discussion

**10 minutes total**  
 7 minutes in small groups  
 3 minutes to share out re: observations

**Reflect:**  
 How have you historically managed conflict?  
 What are your reservations re: engaging in conflict?  
 What is your conflict style?

8

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Empathy

- Universal human need to be deeply understood.
- Being completely present with "what is alive" in another from moment to moment.
- It is following not leading.
- What it is not:
  - Sympathy
  - Suggestions
  - Fixing Things/Diagnosing
  - Investigating
  - Agreement

9

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Jackal vs. Giraffe

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jackal           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defensive/Accusing/Justifying</li> <li>• Dualistic (either/or   good/bad)</li> <li>• Guilt/Shame/Anger</li> <li>• See others as “enemy”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giraffe           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecting &amp; Understanding</li> <li>• Focus on Feelings &amp; Needs</li> <li>• Equality &amp; Mutuality</li> <li>• See others as Human</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
---	---

10

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Nonviolent Communication

  
Judgements

  
Observation

  
Feelings

  
Needs

  
Requests

11

---

---

---

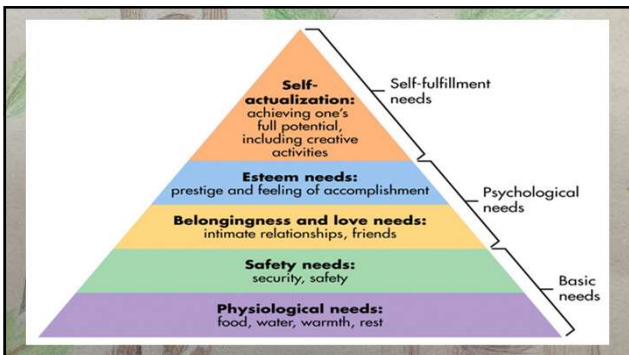
---

---

---

---

---



12

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Practice:  
NVC Dancefloor

13

---

---

---

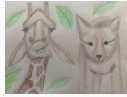
---

---

---

---

---



Practice:  
Scenarios

14

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Scenario #1

\*A fellow advisor comes to you to talk. Two of her advisees who share leadership responsibilities in the major's student organization, Nicole and Destiny, have not been getting along. For the first week or so, they seemed to be getting along fine, but then one day about two weeks into the semester Destiny sought her out and shared that Nicole had vocalized her support for Trump in the 2024 election. Destiny is a DACA student and afraid to make waves, but she shared with your colleague that she now feels uncomfortable co-leading the organization with Nicole. She said that Nicole doesn't know that she is a DACA student, and Nicole hasn't treated her any differently. Nicole has still been cordial, but when Nicole first discussed the upcoming election, she asked Destiny about her thoughts on the election, but the question felt almost challenging. Destiny said that Nicole had the right to support who ever she wanted, and that is where the conversation ended. Nicole hasn't really brought up politics since, but the conversation still looms heavily for Destiny. Destiny doesn't really know how to bring the subject up again without making it a big deal. The colleague doesn't really know how to handle the situation and has asked your advice on what to do.

15

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Scenario #2

---

\*Jason walks in the door to your office, one day and just starts talking. While you aren't expecting him, he says that he has been looking for you, or someone to complain to for a while. He wasn't vaccinated against COVID-19, and neither was anyone else in his family. He had chosen to attend school, anticipating in person classes. He had contracted COVID last year, and his physician shared that he did not need to be vaccinated because he had antibodies. When the institution made the announcement about mandatory vaccinations, his family was ready to pull him out of the university and send him somewhere that did not require the vaccine. After thinking it over, Jason decided that he would get the vaccine in order to attend. Jason's family did not agree with this decision and threatened not to pay for him to attend. After some time, his family finally relented. Jason feels as though his relationship with his family has suffered, and he partially blames the university for this circumstance. Although Jason received a vaccination, he feels angry and upset that he was forced to do so before he felt ready.

16

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Some next steps

---

- Identify your conflict skills, and the skills of those around you
- Do not be afraid to ask for help
- Identify opportunities for further training and development
- Continue to develop your skills

17

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

## Questions?

[sburton@msu.edu](mailto:sburton@msu.edu)  
(517) 353-8830



18

---

---

---

---

---

---

---


---

References

Ahmed, S. *Complaints*. Duke University Press, 2021.

Rosenberg, Marshall B. *Nonsensical Communication: A Language of Life*. Encinitas, CA: PuddleDancer Press, 2003.

Thomas, K. W., and Kilmann, R. H. *The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument*. Mountain View, CA: CPP, Inc., 1974.



19

---

---

---

---

---

---

---