



Conflict Transformation

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What is it?

Conflict transformation is a comprehensive approach that addresses personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions of conflict, using the potential for conflict as a catalyst for positive change in all of these areas. Instead of seeing conflict as a problem to be managed and resolved, the process of conflict transformation evokes, embraces, and explores differences. It is closely allied to the related concepts of peacemaking and conciliation. Essentially, conflict transformation is geared toward the development of healthier communication patterns, in the service of goals such as personal growth, building relationships, reducing or eliminating violence, addressing human rights, and increasing democratic participation.

Who uses the concept?

Conflict transformation as a concept emerged from the social, political, and cultural struggles of the later 20th century. It is used by academics, peacemakers, artists, religious organizations, facilitators, activists, and advocates for social change and social justice, across a broad spectrum of society. Organizations devoted to the practice of conflict transformation include the CMM Institute for Personal and Social Evolution, the American Friends Service Committee, The Mennonite Central Committee, and the Theatre of the Oppressed, among others. John Paul Lederach's writings are foundational for our understanding of conflict transformation.

Fit with intercultural dialogue?

Intercultural dialogue is a key practice in conflict transformation, since the focus is on communication for the purpose of better understanding, and the development of relationships, across the boundaries of culture. The more that intercultural dialogue works toward collaborative efforts for progressive social change, the more closely it is allied to conflict transformation.

What work remains?

Conflict transformation is highly relevant to human rights work. Practitioners in both of these areas should be more cognizant of one another, so that their efforts can be better integrated. The theory and practice of conflict transformation, still relatively new, is a vital and rich area for development in relation to many areas, including international peacekeeping, cosmopolitanism, forgiveness and reconciliation, and arts approaches to conflict.

Resources

- Galtung, J. (2004). *Transcend and transform: An introduction to conflict work*. London: Pluto Press.
- Lederach, J. P. (1995). *Preparing for peace: Conflict transformation across cultures*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- Lederach, J. P. (2003). *The little book of conflict transformation*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.