

# **Beyond Neutrality**

Confronting the Crisis in  
Conflict Resolution

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## The Power of Engagement

Resolving conflict is often the most effective way of avoiding it, and avoidance may be the number one problem we face in handling conflict constructively. Of course, a genuine and thorough resolution of all issues involved is a worthwhile goal, but few resolutions of difficult conflict actually achieve this. We are always faced with the challenge of deciding what level of resolution to seek, how to determine what the real issues are, and how to know when genuine progress has been made. As mediators or facilitators, for example, we are always considering how deeply to probe, how much dirty laundry to air, and how much to delve into the emotional and attitudinal dimensions of conflict, as well as its behavioral or substantive aspects. Disputants and their advocates have to figure this out as well.

When we consider the entire trajectory of conflict, from its onset through its conclusion, and the full spectrum of the roles we could be playing, we can see that the concept of conflict resolution is limiting. We can play roles that range from advisers, to mediators, to decision makers, to process designers. We can help people initiate conflict, and we can help them resolve it. We can assist people when their primary task is to get their issues noticed—to raise the level of conflict—and we can help them handle conflict and conduct themselves through the course of a conflict, well before the situation is ripe for resolution. And, of course, we can assist people

in recognizing and using the opportunities for genuine resolution when these arise.

If we embrace this whole trajectory and the multiplicity of ways in which we can assist people throughout the course of conflict, we can begin to think of ourselves as conflict specialists, and we can think of our task as helping people to engage in conflict powerfully and wisely. Engaging in conflict is our consistent and overriding purpose. While engaging includes conflict resolution since that is an appropriate goal and focus at the right point in the trajectory of conflict, it does not assume that to be the goal. Rather, engagement is about helping people be effective in addressing conflict at whatever point in its progression they may be, whether their need is to prevent it, identify it, escalate it, manage it, deescalate it, resolve it, or heal from its impacts. Rothman (1997) discusses the importance of "creative engagement in deep and persistent conflict," which he defines as occurring "when all sides can give voice to their essential concerns and can hear and recognize the essential concerns of the other side as well" (p. 8).

In this chapter, I discuss the concept of engaging in conflict. What does it mean? Why focus on engagement rather than resolution? What makes conflict productive, and how can conflict be viewed as an adaptive system? In what specific ways do people need assistance with engaging? By understanding the concept of engagement better, we can get a better handle on what our focus as a field and as conflict practitioners should be. We start by considering the problems with an exclusively resolution-oriented focus.

### **The Resolution Trap**

By automatically thinking in terms of resolution, we inevitably drift toward a shallower and more behavioral definition of the issues because those are the ones that are usually the most easily available to resolution processes. But by doing so, we inevitably avoid some of the deeper and more poignant aspects of conflict—the elements that often keep people at odds, in turmoil, and dissatisfied. Often,

addressing these would require encountering a considerable amount of pain, fear, or anger or making some very difficult choices.

We avoid conflict in this way all the time—as individuals, groups, and communities. For example, couples argue about chores, money, free time, or parenting rather than deal with their growing unhappiness with their lack of intimacy. And business teams grapple with work assignments and office space rather than face concerns about incompetent job performance or plummeting morale. As a society, we struggle about the fine points of affirmative action rather than face the destructive long-term effect of institutional racism and discrimination.

If we reach an agreement about the smaller issues, we achieve a temporary respite from having to deal with the larger ones. But in the long run, real concerns are not addressed, significant problems remain, and the long-term pattern of alienation or dissatisfaction is allowed to continue. Often people come to us because they don't want to deal with these more perplexing or frightening issues. Instead, they want a relatively painless, usually quick, and sometimes cosmetic resolution to easier problems, which can help them avoid facing their more profound issues. Sometimes it is best to avoid this deeper level, but if over time, these concerns are not dealt with by a community, an organization, or a marriage, they erode the structure of the relationship and the effectiveness of the system.

By offering people a service that is primarily defined along the lines of resolution, we are playing into this tendency, and as a field we pay the consequences. When a conflict is brought to us, we define our tasks in terms of steps toward resolution, and we instinctively focus on the part of the conflict that is amenable to resolution efforts. In this way, we can easily play into the conflict-avoidant tendencies that we all experience, and we can also play into the hands of those who have an interest in maintaining the status quo.

We all want to be helpful to others, and that has been an important motivator for engaging in conflict resolution work. We don't want to see people in pain or to leave a conflict in an unresolved and perhaps escalating state. If we can ease some immediate

and nagging pain, that is particularly satisfying to those of us who are motivated by helping impulses. But that is also why people are suspicious of conflict resolvers and why we are not used except within tight boundaries. People often sense that only superficial resolution is possible through our efforts. None of this is to say that resolution services are not sometimes exactly what people want or that they are not often very beneficial; rather, it is that our constraint and systematic focus on resolution reinforces the natural and universal tendencies to avoid conflict.

When disputants successfully take on the most challenging aspects of the conflicts they face, they are almost always stronger and more powerful as a result. But engaging in conflict in this way is difficult, at times dangerous, and always unpredictable (Cioke, 2000). Effective engagement is challenging but empowering. We have a role to play in helping disputants with this challenge, and it is a role that inevitably takes us beyond a resolution focus.

### **What Is Conflict Engagement?**

Engaging in conflict means accepting the challenges of a conflict, whatever its type or stage of development may be, with courage and wisdom and without automatically assuming that resolution is an appropriate goal. Effective engagement requires finding the right level of depth at which to engage. It also means being fully aware of the many different ways we could choose to avoid conflict, including trying to resolve it prematurely.

Certain conflict resolution roles are more appropriate for some phases of conflict than for others (for example, see Curle, 1971). Negotiation and mediation generally imply trying to explore the potential of reaching resolution. Conciliation or restorative justice processes generally involve some type of healing or working on relationships. Community organizing and advocacy approaches are oriented to changing the power dynamics and structure of interaction, and helping people find a voice so that they can raise their issues to the level of effective conflict. Therefore, engagement implies con-

sidering a multiplicity of levels to work at and roles to play in conflict. This is challenging for conflict resolution professionals because we usually market ourselves from the perspective of one or two roles.

### **Finding the Right Level**

What further confuses the concept of engagement is that each party to a conflict may desire or need a different approach to engagement. Those who do not want a conflict to grow or a fundamental practice to be challenged may want to prevent, suppress, or quickly resolve a conflict. Those who wish or need a more fundamental change may desire a conflict to escalate and take root. Consider this community conflict:

A middle-class community was upset about a community public health clinic that was being expanded and moved to their neighborhood. Although the existing facility was located only two blocks away, this felt like yet another intrusion into an area already containing more than its share of social services. Leadership of the clinic voiced a commitment to work with the neighbors to address their concerns, but also expressed a belief that their resistance was probably related to the high numbers of minority clients who used the clinic. Neighborhood leaders articulated concerns about traffic, parking, substance abuse (the clinic had a number of substance abuse treatment programs), and intimidating conditions their children would face at public transportation facilities that both adolescents on their way to school and clinic patients used.

A series of public forums was convened, and a small working group of neighborhood representatives, clinic staff, and city officials was also formed to look at these issues. Through these processes, a number of agreements were arrived at and commitments made. Policies regarding substance abusers who were "under the influence," oversight of particular clinic programs, design considerations for parking and traffic flow, clinic size, and

ongoing communication with neighbors were all discussed, and commitments from the clinic were elicited.

Based on the success of these negotiations in addressing many of the concerns that the neighbors raised, the city approved a permit that incorporated these new agreements into its terms. Nonetheless, many neighbors felt extremely skeptical and resistant to signing off on any agreement. Suits were threatened (and some were filed, although they did not go anywhere), and many neighbors insisted that they "had never really been heard or acknowledged," that they were being painted as "enemies of the poor," that their concerns had never been taken seriously, and that "we may not get our way, but we are not willing to give up simply because we are fighting an uphill battle." They appreciated the efforts of the facilitators to organize a forum for discussion, but they did not believe that the clinic or the city would ever really listen to them—despite the fact that the clinic's plans and operations were significantly altered as a result of these discussions.

This is a typical example of how muddy it can get to consider what "effective engagement at an appropriate level of depth" means. The decision about clinic location was representative of much broader issues concerning the ways in which the neighbors felt they were being treated by the city government.

Specifically, they felt that because they were a less established, and in their view less powerful, neighborhood, an unfair proportion of undesirable facilities was being located there, and furthermore they felt that they had no genuine voice in city decision making. To get at their real concerns, they needed to deepen and expand this conflict, whereas the city and the clinic wanted to make sure that this did not expand into a major confrontation about values and neighborhood relations, so they wanted to prevent or quickly resolve any conflict that might arise.

For the most part, the city and clinic met their goals, and this is partly because the design of the process was behavioral and solution

oriented. The neighbors did get some of their needs met, in particular their concerns about the specific impact of the clinic, but at the deeper level, their issues were not only never addressed, they were never given an effective forum for presenting them. Their more fundamental need (at least for a substantial number of neighbors) was for conflict escalation. Had a process been established to allow the city and the neighbors to look beyond the clinic, issues about the disproportionate location of public services in their neighborhood, the difficulty in obtaining a response from the city to neighborhood concerns, and their overall sense that they were being treated like second-class citizens would have at least been discussed.

By framing their concerns in terms of the impact of this specific facility, the neighbors contributed to the narrower focus of the discussion. One of the ways in which a conflict engagement approach might have helped them would have been by strategizing how they could increase their ability to raise their more fundamental issues—knowing that these might not be solved quickly or easily—while also accepting the proffered forum for dealing with the specific concerns about the clinic. Without engaging this conflict on a deeper level, there was no way for the neighbors to address their more fundamental concerns. If the deeper concerns of the neighborhood had been articulated more forcefully, there might have been a two-part process initiated: one addressing the immediate issue of the clinic, the other dealing with the neighborhood's overall relationship with the city.

### **Understanding the Developmental Tasks of Conflict**

Conflict is as varied and unpredictable as human relations. There are no set stages or established progressions for conflict. By referring to conflict as a trajectory, we roughly imply that there is a period of rising conflict and a period of diminishing conflicts and some discernable point between the two that is a point of crisis or denouement. But as with all other metaphors, there are truth and inaccuracy here.

Another metaphor might be to view conflict as a river that has its calm moments and its rapids; sometimes it even has treacherous

waterfalls that require avoidance at all costs. We can enter and exit this river at many different points, and just because we have made it through one challenging rapids and reached a calm stretch does not mean that another set is not around the next bend.

My point is not to find the perfect metaphor, but to avoid a misleading or limiting one. We use the metaphor of stages or steps to describe complicated processes, as if they are linear events, and that having accomplished one step, we are now ready to go on to the next.

I prefer two other metaphors for understanding the nature of conflict. One is that of a complex adaptive system, something akin to a living organism, which I discuss later in this chapter. The other is of a developmental process.

In other words, we can look at conflict as requiring a series of developmental tasks. They can be accomplished in different ways and in different orders, but at some point they need to be accomplished if a conflict is to be addressed effectively. The role of the conflict specialist is to help people engage with these tasks in a powerful and productive way. Let's consider several of these tasks:

- *Awareness*—becoming aware that there is something we are in conflict about or someone we are in conflict with. This can be a clear and rationally described awareness or an inchoate or experiential one. Interestingly, many people do not become aware of a conflict until they are well into the process—sometimes at the end of it.

- *Articulation*—giving voice to the existence of the conflict in some way. This too can be done directly and clearly, or it can be indirect and through actions more than words. This also means creating a story that explains the conflict to oneself and usually to others. This story can include positions, interests, values, frames of reference, metaphors, characterization of participants, a narrative of what happened, and all the other elements of a conflict drama. When we give voice to the existence of a conflict, we define and characterize it.

- *Mobilization*—mobilizing resources to assist in carrying on the conflict and bringing it to a level of intensity and action where participants want it to be. This can involve mobilizing our internal resources (such as our will, determination, clarity, energy) and external resources (allies, legal arguments, finances, organization).

- *Activation*—taking the action steps that bring about a response to further a goal. This can range from a direct communication with someone else to war. Usually when we describe conflict, we are talking about all the different ways in which conflict has been activated. Activation can be escalatory (raising the awareness and intensity of conflict) or deescalatory (taking conflict to a lower level of intensity). Both are often happening at once.

- *Connection*—finding a way of interacting with others with whom we are in conflict. This can be accomplished through negotiation, but it can occur in many other ways as well: through public actions, court fights, political struggles, private discussions, third parties, and many other ways. If we have not succeeded in connecting in some way with the others involved in conflict, we are probably not in a very powerful place.

- *Need satisfaction*. We engage in conflict to try to satisfy certain needs, but these needs may change through the course of a conflict. For example, an essential early need may be for voice and legitimacy, but at some point, we may be more interested in peace and security. Until we have reached the point where our needs can best be satisfied through deescalation or agreements, then we are probably not looking for a quick resolution.

- *Release*. At some point, we want the energy occupied by a conflict to be freed up, at least in part. We may be ready to give up the conflict, resolve it, or change our stance within it.

- *Process selection*. Disputants need a process by which to accomplish all the other tasks. We often think of our role as a process-oriented role, and that is certainly one of the tasks that people need help with, but it is not the only one. Often this involves designing processes, sometimes it means entering into existing ones, and sometimes it means continuing with an existing process in an effective way.

Prevention, management, resolution, or healing functions might be involved in each of these developmental steps. Conflict engagement as an approach is not committed to any one of those functions but implies helping people accomplish whichever of these tasks they are struggling with. As conflict specialists, we can do a great deal to assist with each. From within this broad concept of what we do, there are many particular strategies or actions we might take or roles we might play, but they are subservient to the larger goal of effective engagement.

One way of looking at the conflict specialist's job is through the lens of these developmental tasks. Our task is to understand which of the tasks disputants are most in need of assistance with and then to consider how we can help—what roles we should be playing and what strategies we should be employing. By looking at conflict in this way, we can escape the trap of automatically assuming our job is to take people through a predetermined linear process toward an inevitable end of resolution. Instead, we are helping disputants deal with the particular challenge to engagement that they are experiencing at any given time.

### Engaging or Transforming?

By arguing for an orientation to conflict that promotes engagement rather than resolution as a goal, I am making a somewhat similar point to what Bush and Folger have said in *The Promise of Mediation* (1994). In this influential book, they argue that mediation has the potential to transform disputants but that this potential is often squandered by an automatic and unwise assumption that outcomes and resolutions ought to be the focus of mediators. But if we consider the concept of engagement and transformation more deeply, we will see that they are very different concepts and the underlying approach of engagement versus transformation is really very different. The goal of engagement is to help people enter into conflict at whatever phase they are in and to work with them on accomplishing the developmental tasks of conflict with which they are strug-

gling. The goal of a transformative approach is to change disputants in some significant way through the conflict experience.

I believe effective conflict interventions can result in the transformation of individuals and groups, but I do not think that there is any way to take this on as a primary goal of a conflict specialist without imposing our values and purposes on disputants. Conflict is probably a necessary force for transformation, and transformation of some kind is often necessary to deal with conflict. By focusing on helping people engage in conflict fully and courageously, we probably increase the likelihood that the conflict experience will have a significant impact on disputants and may even transform them in some ways. But that is at most a secondary benefit. If we take that on as a primary goal, then we will in fact interfere with our ability to help people engage in conflict because we will have a goal that is very different and potentially contradictory to their needs from conflict.

In fact, I think Bush and Folger's view of transformation is actually quite narrow and fails to address the potential for the social transformation of conflict, the alteration of how conflict is conducted within and among cultures, societies, communities, and organizations. This concept is eloquently developed by John Paul Lederach among others (see Lederach, 1995, 2003; Kriesberg, Nordrup, and Thorson, 1989). Their vision is less restricted to an interpersonal context and does not impose the same agenda on disputants that Bush and Folger's approach does. In Lederach's view, we can help people transform their relationship to conflict through our intervention, but the most appropriate route to do this is through an elicitive approach, in which we help disputants articulate their own ideas and approaches to conflict and then assist them in carrying these forward. I believe this is a much more profound view of transformation, and one that is more akin to the ideas that I am discussing in this chapter.

I hope that as conflict specialists we do not prevent constructive transformation from occurring (destructive transformation—witness the Middle East—also occurs), and that we are sometimes even the agents or catalysts for transformation. But I also believe that people and conflicts transform themselves as they are ready to

and when circumstances allow. The concept of engagement is somewhat different from even this broader view of transformation, although it shares many of the same values.

I believe that our most appropriate approach to maximizing the potential gains people can realize from conflict is to focus on helping them engage successfully in the various development tasks of conflict. If we do this well, we will increase the possibility that they can transform themselves when they are ready and that they will resolve conflict as appropriate. Engagement is in some sense a more modest goal for conflict specialists, but it may actually be a more challenging and important goal as well.

This is not an abstract distinction. There are in fact practical ramifications to this stance. Empowerment and recognition, to use the key goals that Bush and Folger discuss, are appropriate under the right circumstances, but not all circumstances. When there is a disconnect between what disputants need in order to engage effectively and what we are trying to offer them because of our own values about conflict and transformation, then our goals, laudable though they may be, can get in the way of constructive engagement. We have to make sure that our own hopes for transformation or social change do not take over from disputants' sense of their own needs and goals.

Conflict engagement is both an organizing principle and a goal. It is what our work should be all about. When we can help people be fully engaged in conflict in a constructive, powerful, and effective way, we have accomplished something important. By taking this on as our purpose, we avoid the twin traps of focusing on premature and shallow outcomes or on a personal change agenda that might appeal to us but is not the reason disputants seek our services. Addressing the developmental needs of people in conflict can organize our approach to our work, help us stay in tune to our clients' needs, and define a path to participating in a far wider range of conflicts.

One challenge in helping people engage in conflict is to develop an understanding of what constitutes constructive, effective, and wise engagement. If we are going to help people engage in conflict, what

are the principles of engagement we are going to promote? This raises the question of how can we define constructive engagement.

### **What Makes Conflict Engagement Constructive**

Conflict is often incredibly destructive and should be avoided, but it is also necessary for social cohesion, social change, and personal growth. Our challenge is to help people engage in conflict in a productive and constructive way. This raises the question of what is a productive way of engaging in conflict, what makes conflict constructive rather than destructive, how conflict can be growth producing rather than disabling, and how it can be adaptive rather than dysfunctional.

Certain characteristics of how we engage in conflict, whether as disputants or intervenors, are both causes and indicators of a constructive approach, no matter what part of the process is occurring:

- *Congruence with our values.* None of us can be very effective in conflict over time if we are in violation of our own basic values. We can violate more superficial values about politeness, language, tone of voice, or even listening. But we cannot violate our core values about human dignity, truth, human life, or equality if we are going to engage in conflict effectively. People violate these values, and often gain a short-term upper hand in this way. But in the long run, this disempowers them and makes it considerably more difficult to address their real issues. People are more powerful when they are acting in accordance with their most fundamental values and beliefs, whatever they are.

- *Authenticity of voice.* When all those involved in conflict have found an effective and authentic voice, that is a way of speaking to their issues and needs in a way that addresses their most significant concerns and reflects their sense of how they see themselves in relationship to the conflict, then they are most likely to be able to carry on conflict effectively. People sometimes put on masks or take on roles that are not congruent with who they are, and this makes it

harder for them to speak to what is really important to them or to be heard by others in the way they intend and need to be heard.

- *Addressing the right issue.* When disputants are talking about the right issue and hearing the issues of most concern to others, they can be the most effective in conflict—even if that does not lead to resolution. This does not always mean speaking to the nice or polite issue. If a conflict in a workplace is in fact about the attempts of some to maintain positions of privilege based on ethnicity or gender, then it is far better to hear this and address the real issue than to work instead on a surrogate issue, such as seniority or job security. The right issue is subjective, changing, and hard to define, but finding it is critical to effective conflict engagement.

- *Getting to the right level of depth.* Issues and needs can be addressed at an overly superficial or overly deep level. Finding the level where an issue lives for people is part of the art of all forms of effective conflict engagement and perhaps all interpersonal relations: too shallow, and we are avoiding the genuine conflict; too deep, and we are wallowing in the mire.

- *Involving the right people.* The right issue at the right depth addressed to the wrong people or to the wrong range of participants is a prescription for frustration. For divorcing parents to argue about custody arrangements for teenagers without the involving the teens is not likely to be very productive. Community activists who are attacking a local governmental representative for what is a national policy do not often accomplish much.

- *Appropriate time frames.* Taking too short a view of a conflict or interaction can result in a failure to consider the real consequences of our action. Taking too long a view can lead us to feel that nothing we do will make a real difference. Historical context is important but not determinative. To look at a conflict from a variety of time frames and to be informed but not disabled by history are critical to effective engagement.

- *Allowing for change.* A fundamental ameliorating factor to deadlocked conflict is the idea that people change, relationships change, and circumstances change. We should never act in a way

that assumes that the people we are in conflict with cannot change, that we cannot change, or that our relationship cannot change. A principle of nonviolence is that all of our adversaries are our potential allies, and this is a principle that we can adopt in all conflict situations. By allowing for the potential of change, we can avoid precluding the possibility of change. This does not mean being naive or taking unwise risks, but it does mean not letting our pessimism or negativity become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

- *Attending to both the distributive and integrative dimensions of conflict.* Most conflicts, perhaps all, have an element that calls for creativity in understanding how conflictants can meet each other's needs and expand the available benefits to be distributed. This is often referred to as the integrative dimension of conflict (Thomas, 1983; Walton and McKersie, 1980). Conflicts also have an aspect that demands making the hard decisions about dividing up benefits when there is not enough to go around and people want more than they can get (the distributive dimension). If we fail to pay attention to the first, we fail to explore the potential for cooperation and leave a lot of unrealized value on the table. If we fail to attend to the latter, we are not being realistic about the hard choices that have to be made and the need for people to take difficult steps to protect their own interests.

- *Fundamental safety.* Engaging constructively in conflict is very hard and may not be possible if we don't feel we are fundamentally safe. Of course, we frequently engage in conflict from a fundamentally unsafe position, usually because we have no other choice. However, constructive engagement is much more likely if basic needs for safety can be addressed.

- *Grounded optimism.* It's easier said than done, perhaps, but when people are optimistic about their own ability to engage in conflict or the long-term likelihood that a conflict experience can lead to positive results, they can engage more effectively, more powerfully, and at the same time with more respect for the needs of others. Of course, ungrounded or baseless optimism is not real and therefore not effective.

• *Uncertainty.* If we are sure we are right, sure that we know what will happen over time, sure of our arguments and evaluation of others, sure that virtue is on our side, then we are not only harder to deal with, more rigid, and less appealing, we are also less effective in the long run. Uncertainty does not mean lack of clarity, determination, or consistency. Rather, it is the characteristic that gives us flexibility and, to some extent, humanity. Furthermore, given the nature of human interaction, uncertainty is realistic. We can't know what is going to happen. All the preparation and analysis in the world will not guarantee an outcome, particularly in the highly fluid context of intense conflict. So if we are not uncertain, we are not facing reality.

### Helping People Fight

Let's consider one particularly challenging part of the engagement process: helping people fight. Tempting as it might be to add the word *fairly* at the end of that sentence, that would take our focus off the fight part and onto the containment or management part of the task.

Sometimes fighting and escalation are necessary. People are prone to two key kinds of problems when fighting is necessary: they avoid the fight, or they fail to fight effectively. Conflict specialists sometimes have to help people face the necessity of escalating a conflict in order to meet their needs. Keeping in mind the first principle of constructive engagement, value congruence, we should consider why we might want to help people fight and how to do it.

In the early 1960s, I was active in the civil rights movement in the North and the South. Something that I have often thought about, given my commitment to nonviolent social change, is the impact on national and state policy of the riots in American cities and the rise of the Black Panthers with their implied or outright threat of violence. How much change would have occurred without the threat of social disruption and violence that these forces

represented? As necessary and influential as they were, would the work of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Conference on Racial Equality, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, or the NAACP have had the same impact were it not for the threat of violence and escalation that hovered over the times? Does this mean that the riots in the end were a force for social good? There was much accomplished, of course, before the rise of the Black Panthers, but would the changes that the civil rights movement achieved have gone nearly as far as they did without the disruption and even the chaos represented by these more militant groups?

These are not easily answered questions, but they point out that without at least the threat of escalation, or some other powerful BATNA (best alternative to a negotiated agreement), disputants are less likely to be effective in conflict. Sometimes we have to help people face the need to raise the ante, escalate a conflict, or threaten negative consequences in order to help engage in a conflict effectively. I am not promoting violence or the threat of violence here, just pointing out that without the possibility that a conflict may escalate, change may be impossible.

### The Value of Fighting

It may be that strikes are a ridiculous way to get to a new contract or address conflicts between labor and management, both with a strong interest in a profitable, efficient, and productive workplace. However, without the threat of striking or some similarly powerful action, it is hard for workers to have a genuine voice at the table. But the threat of strikes is not credible if they do not occasionally occur.

Therein lies a real dilemma for our field. If we always are helping people avoid strikes or similar job actions and never helping either management or labor prepare to deal in a powerful way with a breakdown in negotiations, then we are helping with only one side of an equation that necessarily requires both sides. Labor and

management have to do all they can to negotiate solid agreements, but if they do not prepare for the possibility of a breakdown in negotiation, they are making themselves very vulnerable and undercutting their own potential power.

In their comprehensive and insightful book about negotiation, *The Manager as Negotiator*, Lax and Sebenius (1986) discuss the tension between creating value and claiming value (the integrative and distributive dimensions). They point out that the more we focus on claiming value (getting the most for ourselves), the harder it is to discover the potential for joint gain and the more likely it is that a conflict will escalate. But the more we focus on creating value (enlarging the amount of value available to all), the easier it is to make oneself vulnerable to exploitation by others who are focused on claiming value.

To turn the Einstein quote on its head, we often have no choice but to prepare for war and peace at the same time. By preparing for war, that is, by developing the capacity to fight, to take a distributive approach to conflict if necessary, we make it clear to others (and to ourselves) that a more cooperative approach may be desirable. But we also have to prepare for and work toward a cooperative relationship, or we can get swept up in the momentum of confrontation. So if we are unable or unwilling to help people fight, to help with the distributive dimension, to assist with claiming value, then we will often also forgo the opportunity to help people consider how to create value—to work on the integrative dimension or to consider win-win possibilities. Preparing for peace is important. Being willing to escalate is often important as well.

### How to Assist with a Fight

How can we assist people to fight, from the vantage of our expertise and values as conflict specialists? In the next chapter, I discuss the roles we can play; here I focus on the skills and concepts that we offer. We can assist people to fight by working with them in four fundamental ways:

- Help them develop the legitimate power they can bring to the conflict—and prepare to deal with the power that is likely to be directed at them.
- Help them consider rights-based approaches to accomplishing their objectives.
- Help them understand the array of interests involved in a conflict and what these suggest for how to develop an effective conflict strategy.
- Help them examine their own values and those of others in a conflict to consider how a fight can be carried out in keeping with the system of values in play.

We bring other assets as well: understanding communication, the cultural context, historical factors, and the system within which a conflict is playing out. But our particular value may be in helping people consider the interplay of power, rights, and interests within the context of our own values.

### Conflict as a Complex Adaptive System

If we are to help people successfully engage, we have to face an important aspect of conflict: its unpredictability. As much as we might like to think that we can choose the optimal approach to handling a conflict through analysis, planning, and the application of our wisdom and experience, there probably is no such thing as one optimal approach. We can't predict with certainty how conflict will evolve, what the impact of a particular intervention will be, or what the long-term outcome will be. To understand this point, we only have to look at some of the many well-intentioned efforts, conducted by wise and well-informed people, that ended badly. The considerable efforts made during the last year of the Clinton administration to achieve a breakthrough in the Middle East and the many different initiatives to deal with North Korea are two examples that come to

mind. This unpredictability can be disconcerting, but it opens up some important insights about what we can do as a field to help people engage in conflict.

### **Conflict as a System**

To start, we have to understand conflict as a system of interaction; like all other systems, a change in any one part of it can lead to a realignment of the whole. This means that we need to understand that the direct and immediate conflict we observe may not necessarily be the most productive place to intervene or even the genuine source of the conflict. An ongoing conflict between a special education teacher and a regular classroom teacher may be best handled between the two of them, or the issue may actually be a reflection of a lack of clear leadership by the principal or an overall atmosphere of stress caused by poor school scores on standardized tests.

Where to intervene becomes an important question, but not one that can be answered with certainty. One question we can ask, however, is what simple change is most likely to stimulate the larger system to reorganize in a productive way. This cannot be answered authoritatively either, but it points our thinking in directions that are both broader and more focused—broader because we look beyond the direct conflict toward the larger context, more focused because we do not have to intervene in every problem that exists and instead have to look for that key change that can cause a system reorganization.

### **Conflict as an Adaptive System**

But conflict can also be viewed as a particular type of system—a complex adaptive system. In adopting this view, we think of conflict as a system of interaction that is constantly evolving and adapting to new inputs in ways that we cannot fully understand, predict, or control, but can watch with an idea of trying to enter something new into the system to see how this alters the nature of the interac-

tion. This is the concept of nucleation: the idea that a small change can have large effects through how it causes a system to reorganize.

In order to understand the impact of viewing conflict as a complex system, we need to distinguish it from a complicated system. Jones and Hughes (2003) contrast a complicated system, such as a computer network or a jetliner, with a complex adaptive system such as the human brain, an ecosystem, or a community conflict. A complicated system can be understood through linear and analytical processes. That is, we can break it down into its component parts, analyze them, and thereby understand the system. Furthermore, we can assume that a given input will produce the same output under similar circumstances. But this is not true of a complex adaptive system, because this system is constantly reorganizing and adapting itself to any new input, such as the intervention of a mediator.

When we try to analyze conflict as if it is a complicated system, we might look at the needs of all the individuals, the past relationships, the relative power, the legal framework, and thereby feel we can construct an approach that is going to produce predictable and consistent results. But when we look at it as a complex system, we realize that we can't really break it apart in this way; instead, we have to enter into it and in a sense join with it. This makes true neutrality, objectivity, and objective standards of fairness impossible.

For example, Jones and Hughes say:

First we must recognize the invalidity of the concepts of neutrality and impartiality and, in their place, recognize that mediators are coparticipants in the conflict who bring their own unspoken and often unrecognized biases to the conflict. . . .

As mediators, we must also embrace our own existence in the mediation as feeling beings with thoughts and share that realization with disputants. Only then can we begin to constructively engage conflict and individuals in conflict, and thus begin the incredible search for new understandings about conflict (pp. 492–493).

Taking the more linear and straightforward approach to understanding and intervening often helps us choose a direction in the middle of what feels like a chaotic system. This can be comforting and on occasion effective. But as any experienced mediator knows, what is a brilliant intervention in one situation will be a total flop in a different conflict; no matter how similar the circumstances appear to be.

Conflict is chaotic—or, more accurately, complex and adaptive. When we think of conflict as a complex system, akin to organic systems that have a great capacity to adapt to different stimuli, new situations, and unpredictable events, we can understand that there is no one best approach or specific set of steps that can be counted on to guide people through the turmoil. We then have to fall back on a very valuable but challenging asset, our ability to tolerate high levels of uncertainty, and to help others tolerate this as well. When we try to help people engage in conflict, we know we are helping them enter into a very uncertain and unpredictable system of interactions and that our guidance may help make their experience more productive or not. (For an interesting application of complex adaptive systems to consensus-building forms, see Innes and Booher, 1999.)

### **The Value of Complexity**

This uncertainty, unpredictability, and complexity make conflict engagement especially important. Disputants know that conflict is unpredictable, that no one knows for sure what will happen, that to enter into a conflict system (which they are probably already part of) will take them on a journey that they cannot map out. Anyone who pretends otherwise and acts as if conflict can be predicted or determined is not going to be a credible resource to disputants. But if we acknowledge the uncertainty of the process, the limits on how much can be controlled, and we are still comfortable with the value of what we bring, people will resonate to this.

Anyone who approaches people deeply embroiled in conflict—a dysfunctional couple, an embattled community, or Palestinians and

Israelis—with a process that they guarantee will improve the situation is probably fooling themselves and no one else. That does not mean that we cannot be useful, because we can. But we can do so only if we are clear about the unpredictability of the process, the systemic nature of the interaction, and the importance of looking for those few key actions that at the right time can help the system reorganize effectively. We can offer our conceptual and interactive tools—they are the source of our added value—but we should never think of these as enough to predict or control the course of a conflict.

The value of thinking about engagement as our primary focus in the complex system of conflict is the recognition that we are helping people take a more conscious and intentional role in the ongoing system of interaction, while acknowledging that the outcome is unpredictable and resolution is only one possible goal or end point. This does not mean that we are never resolution focused. It may be that our most important task is to press people to resolve a particular issue in order to foment a reorganization in the pattern of interactions. But it is hard to know what the specific impacts of our interventions will be. It is equally hard to predict which of the many ways in which we try to help people in conflict will have a significant beneficial effect.

Consider this example of unintended—and beneficial—consequences:

After months of fierce and unproductive interactions, the management and union negotiation teams decided to seek out the services of a mediator to try to change the way they were working together. Their last contract negotiations had been disastrous, leading to a strike that almost did the company in. But changing how they interacted was not so easy. Despite having received some training in interest-based bargaining and committing to a new approach to negotiations, discussions between them continued to be bitter and recriminatory.

I participated as a trainer-facilitator in a three-day retreat. During this time, many different interchanges and discussions

took place. We reviewed the history of the last negotiations and their hopes and fears about the next, and a number of commitments were made to do things differently. I don't think anyone, myself included, thought anything was really going to change—until two things happened.

In a conflict simulation exercise, one of the union people thought he was being double-crossed by a member of the management negotiating team, only to find out that it was another member of his own team that had made the decision that felt unfair to him. This was only a simulation, but it seemed to have a profound impact on him. He could immediately sense the difference in how he reacted to the behavior when it came from management versus when it came from a fellow union member, and this caused him to reconsider his entire approach to management.

Toward the end of the time together, one of the leaders of the union made an offer concerning a concrete way of doing things differently that the union viewed as a major concession. Management instinctively went through a process of reactive devaluation; if it came from the union, it must be manipulative. I said to the management team in a private meeting that offers like the one they had just received could be viewed as a glass that is half empty or half full, and which half they decided to relate to was significant. I also suggested that this was a time in which taking a risk and offering an olive branch might have an enormous impact, and this might not be an opportunity they would have so quickly again. This mixed metaphor—the olive branch to the half-full glass—became the frame for a discussion that led to an exchange of concessions and seemed to lead to a significant improvement in the relationship.

What I did not know until several years later was that the simulation and the glass-olive branch metaphor were used very effectively and productively throughout the whole contract negotiations and for several years after. This was not an intervention that could have been planned or an impact that could

have been foretold. But the exercise serendipitously crystallized a lot of the issues this conflict system was struggling with, and the exchange of procedural concessions became a metaphor for a new way of relating as well.

When the system is primed for change, many things can stimulate a systems reorganization, but you can't plan it. The lens of complex adaptive systems is a powerful one to use in understanding conflict and helping people engage in it. We help people by offering our best advice, insights, and skills, but we do so knowing that we too are entering into this adaptive system, which will adapt to our intervention in unpredictable but potentially constructive ways.

### **From Avoidance to Engagement**

Avoiding conflict is a powerful instinct and one that should often be honored. Some of the best and worst decisions we make in life are around when to avoid and when to engage in conflict.

No matter how hard we try to handle a conflict effectively and productively, there are times when nothing we can do will lead to productive ends. Moreover, it is sometimes unsafe to take on a conflict. Although no one wants to face the dilemma of women in abusive relationships by suggesting that sometimes they had best stay put, there are also plenty of women who tried to leave and did not survive the effort. One of the more prevalent norms of our field suggests that virtually all conflicts can be handled productively and therefore ought to be faced. But conflict cannot always be engaged in effectively or safely. We have an obligation to face this very unpleasant fact and to know that we cannot necessarily predict what will happen if people move from avoidance to engagement.

But avoidance as a general pattern of handling conflict is also destructive and sometimes lethal. Women who are not willing to confront their abusers are often doomed to a downward and ultimately lethal spiral of interactions. One of the most important functions we can provide, therefore, is to assist people in assessing when

and how to avoid or engage in conflict and to try to help them find a path for successful engagement. We can do this by providing assistance with all elements of the engagement process: awareness, articulation, activation, mobilization, connection, need satisfaction, release, or process selection.

### Deciding to Engage

Exactly how we help people decide between avoidance and engagement depends on our specific role and how and when we are brought into a situation. Following are some of the specific ways in which we can help people decide to take the step from avoidance to engagement and to do so in an effective way:

- *Naming the conflict.* This is related to both awareness and articulation. When people label an interaction as a conflict and identify its nature in some way, they have taken a significant step past avoidance. A named conflict is much less likely to be avoided than an implied one. The moment we say, "We have a conflict . . ." some further step is almost always necessitated. How we help people name it is critical too—implying the who, what, and why of a conflict and also whether further action might be fruitful. For example, if one parent says to the other, "I don't like the way you discipline our children," the implication is that the dispute is between the two of them about how to set limits. If, however, the parent says, "I don't think you know the first thing about parenting and I don't trust you alone with the children," a much broader problem is implied, perhaps necessitating the involvement of other people. Working with the parent to name the existence of a conflict and identify its nature is an important first step to helping him or her decide to engage.

- *Considering the costs and benefits of engagement and avoidance.* Helping people consider the costs and benefits of engagement and avoidance with an open mind about which direction to go in can both help them decide about engaging and actually set the grounds

for an effective process of engagement. But it can also help them let go of a situation they decide that they had better avoid. One parent may be better off letting the other discipline a child differently given the relative costs and benefits (the child's interests are a different matter), but this may mean that they have to let this issue go.

Of course, this is not about an entirely rational calculus, and the emotional messages people are receiving as well as their instincts are important information for them as well. Nonetheless, surfacing people's concerns about this and helping them think it through is very important to people who are on the verge of taking what may be a perilous journey.

- *Discussing various approaches to engagement.* People often get locked into an unproductive pattern in conflict—or fear that they will and therefore avoid the conflict entirely—because they have only one model of how to engage. They may believe the only choice when facing a looming conflict is between a fight-or-flight response. But there are many approaches to engaging, and one of the ways we can help people is to consider a range of possibilities.

Conflict can be entered into in a gradual and nuanced way or with voices raised and fists clenched. If our goal is not necessarily to resolve, contain, deescalate, or in some other way manage a conflict, but to help people figure out whether and how to engage in it powerfully and effectively, then we face a very different task. Maybe the parent in the above example should sit down directly with his or her spouse, or maybe a report should be filed, a child therapist contacted, an intermediary used, and so forth. We are often unavailable to people at this critical point in the process when a decision about engagement or avoidance must be made, and we therefore miss one of the most powerful opportunities to have an impact on the course of the conflict.

- *Rehearsing engagement.* I think most of us have used someone at some point in our life to rehearse or at least talk through an upcoming charged interaction—whether positive or negative. This is a type of assistance that most of us could use more often. How often do managers have a chance to practice how they are going to

raise a difficult issue with an employee (say, suspicion of alcoholism), or a public official to respond to hostile questions from an audience, or a community organizer to confront a government representative for insensitivity to his or her concerns? Often, when practice is available, it comes from public relations consultants, legal advocates, or other managers. Conflict practitioners have a special angle on this that can be useful—and one that can be as much oriented to raising the level of conflict as resolving it.

- *Finding an appropriate forum or agent for raising issues.* Sometimes the lack of an appropriate forum or agent for raising an issue or engaging in a conflict stymies people who want to take the step into engagement. Forums can range from private meetings to facilitated dialogues to public confrontation, and the forum chosen is very important in determining the nature of the engagement. Helping people find or providing a forum for engagement can be critical.

Whatever critics of the United Nations may say, it is an important and often productive arena for raising a conflict. In designing dispute systems for organizations, the designation of a safe person or mechanism (such as an ombudsman) for airing a conflict is usually critical. Citizens often are limited (or think they are) to unproductive forums for taking their issues to government, such as the open comment portion of city council or planning board meetings. One of the functions we can serve is designing, creating, and improving such mechanisms or, alternatively, helping people locate and consider different forums or individuals to assist in raising an issue and engaging a conflict.

- *Raising the conflict directly.* Depending on our role, we can sometimes raise a conflict—that is, we can be the ones to assert that a conflict exists and work is needed on it. Sometimes we do this from a neutral position, but we can also do this as coaches, consultants, and advocates.

- *Discussing issues of timing.* To avoid or to engage is not a once and forever decision. We can help sequence engagement—that is, work with disputants on when to raise which issue and at what level.

- *Bringing the conflicting parties together.* Sometimes our role will be to bring parties together, not necessarily as mediators or facilitators—but also as conveners, process designers, providers of “good offices,” and negotiators as well. Whatever role we play, the act of bringing disputants together to talk—sometimes to fight, sometimes to seek resolution—can be a significant contribution to helping people engage. As a manager, I have sometimes heard separately from two employees that they had a problem with each other that they want me to resolve. Sometimes as a manager, my job has been to provide resolution, but at other times, the best thing I can do is to sit people down, with or without my presence, state the usually obvious fact that they are in conflict with each other, and ask them to work on it. Sometimes I have had a role to play as facilitator, at other times as arbiter, but most often the main contribution I have made is the simple act of bringing them together and stating the obvious.

- *Providing safeguards for engagement.* Because engagement is sometimes dangerous, one way we can assist people is to put safeguards in place that can mitigate some of the danger. Are there equivalents to peacekeepers or restraining orders that we can put in place as conflict specialists? I believe so, and I think this is an area ripe for the development of new services. For example, we can provide

- Interaction observers
- Ground rules for interaction
- Distance technologies
- “Good offices”
- Group settings
- Time-out mechanisms for conflictual interactions
- Cool-down activities and periods
- Debriefing mechanisms
- Agreed-on consequences for the violation of boundaries

There are two essentially inescapable dilemmas that conflict professionals face in assisting with the transition to engagement. One is that engagement often occurs in an entirely chaotic and unplanned way. People have avoided a conflict or decided to handle it in a very low-key manner, but then something is said or done that elicits a response (such as losing one's temper), and for better or worse engagement has occurred. The second has to do with the dynamics of avoidance. The more individuals or groups are in an avoidance mode, the less likely they are to reach out to anyone for assistance in deciding whether and how to engage. This is similar to the problems faced by any preventative program—whether it is in the arena of mental health, medicine, special education, or conflict.

As a field, we have not seriously addressed issues of prevention, and when we have, we have sometimes equated prevention with avoidance. Prevention is as much about helping people decide whether and how to engage in conflict before it has spun out of control as it is about preventing conflict from arising to begin with—especially since conflict is often a healthy response to social and interpersonal problems. We can be more available to disputants during this critical phase of the conflict process if we do not limit our thinking to the conflict resolution task. As system designers, we can build in consultation and early intervention programs. As consultants to groups or organizations, we can be available to help people consider whether to engage. As trainers, we can help people identify the potential conflicts in their organizations or their lives. As coaches, we can work with individuals on whether and how to move to engagement. We can offer our services in such a way that people can consult with us at a very early point in a conflict process. Of course, no matter how attentive we are to being available at the point where people decide whether or how to engage and no matter how hard we work at removing the barriers of structure and self-concept that make it less likely people will use our services at this time, people's avoidance tendencies will keep many away until a conflict has fully erupted.

### **Engagement as an Ongoing Activity**

These modes of assistance are not necessarily new to us. If we are going to work in conflict, we will have to help people decide whether, when, with whom, and how to engage. But if we do this from the new standpoint of a conflict specialist and not necessarily as conflict resolvers, we do this in a different manner and spirit. We do not assume that engagement is necessarily connected to resolution. We recognize that engagement is potentially dangerous. We are willing to help people consider how to engage with different values or goals than win-win. We are clear that conflict is a complex system of interaction and that powerful engagement approaches can sometimes lead to good resolutions, but that conflict is unpredictable.

Working from an engagement perspective involves more than simply taking people from avoidance to engagement. We need to find ways of helping them through an interaction process that can be quick or lengthy. While we may be asked to assist with a very particular part of this process, we may also need to play a role over time. If we are going to work on very serious and difficult problems, we are not going to be able to come in with a single wonderful intervention and fix things. The more serious the conflict is and the more intractable it is, the less we should think of ourselves involved in time-limited ways. People who have made a difference in major conflict situations have normally been involved in one way or another for many years.

The ways in which we help people move from avoidance to engagement are also appropriate for assisting with the ongoing demands of engagement. We can help with awareness, articulation, activation, mobilization, connection, need satisfaction, release, or process selection throughout an engagement effort. We can help people work on all the elements of constructive conflict: achieving value congruence, authentic voice, dealing with the right issue, at a productive level of depth, with the right people, using appropriate time frames, allowing for change, working along both the integrative and distributive

dimension, attending to fundamental safety, grounded optimism, and creative uncertainty. We can also help people fight productively. We have a powerful role to play throughout the engagement process, and I believe we have a great deal of value to add because of our understanding of conflict and conflict interactions.

We sometimes will have access to a conflict, for financial, structural, or other reasons, at only one or two key points. In that case, we should attend to the particular developmental requirements of the conflict at that point. But our overall understanding of what is needed should be framed by an understanding of the ongoing nature and demands of engagement. When we enter into a conflict will be determined to some extent by how we market our services and what response we receive from our client base. I discuss the business of conflict engagement in the final chapter.

## From Engagement to Resolution

In this chapter, I have emphasized our role as engagement specialist with particular emphasis on how to understand conflict from this perspective and the ways in which we can help people engage successfully in conflict. Because I am trying to provide an alternative way of looking at what we do that takes us beyond focusing on the resolution of conflict, I have not examined that part of what we do. After all, that is what our field has focused on for over thirty years.

I end this chapter with a clear acknowledgment that helping people move to the resolution aspect of conflict is also a critical role for conflict specialists, and one that we will continue to play. I don't believe we will reach our potential as a field by ignoring or underselling the importance of this. Instead, I believe we will build out from this important element of our work; in particular, we will expand from our original roles as mediators, facilitators, dispute system designers, and trainers.

Our dilemma will be how to continue offering the valuable contributions that we have historically made, how to retain the market base that has allowed our field to develop to the extent that

it has, but how at the same time to expand the boundaries of our work in some fairly fundamental ways. The challenge of helping people engage in conflict is not so much that we have to develop a whole new set of skills or even conceptual frameworks but instead that we have to open up our thinking about our purpose, function, and role.

No matter how we proceed, however, we will always have a critical role in helping disputants resolve conflict. We will do this by using all the tools we have always used: communication, problem solving, negotiation, rapport building, forum creation, facilitation, mediation, system design, convening, interest-based bargaining, and so forth. We have worked very hard to develop these skills, and it is on that foundation that we will build a larger, more vital field.

One of the crucial ways we can help is by identifying when a resolution focus is appropriate and how to take the first steps in that direction. We can also help people identify the potential forums and the resolution strategies disputants might use and consider the range of resolution options that might be available. We have not given adequate thought to how to identify when a conflict is really ripe for resolution, that is, when it has matured to that point.

I have sometimes thought of conflict resolution as a dramatic process, with the mediator as stage manager or director. Our job is to help the drama develop so that plot unfolds in an effective and powerful way, the players emerge as rich and understandable characters, and the scene or context unfolds as the climax approaches. At this crucial moment, the conflict has reached its richest point and we are ready for the dénouement of resolution. At that point, the energy can change, and a critical exchange can occur. The role of the conflict specialist is to provide the best opportunity for this to happen in an effective way.

Where this metaphor breaks down for me is that the drama does not end after resolution; in most important conflicts, it continues to unfold in different ways. In general, our work is not over with a resolution, although depending on our role in a specific conflict, our particular involvement may or may not continue. In fact,

resolution can come at almost any stage of a conflict engagement process, including the preengagement phase.

Sometimes our role will be to help people resist a premature resolution. At other times, it will be to help them use resolution as an opportunity to continue to engage in conflict more effectively (many of the most important international conflict resolution efforts have been about helping to find alternative routes for engagement, such as the Northern Ireland peace accords). And sometimes resolution will be the signal and the means for disengaging from conflict, for release. As conflict specialists, we will have a varied and multifaceted role to play in resolution, as well as in all aspects of conflict.

There is a looming question that I have touched on throughout the book but have not directly explored. If we are not only third-party neutral conflict resolution professionals, who are we? What role can we play? How will this role be different from that of traditional advocates such as lawyers and union organizers? Is there a market for us in this way? How do we really do this? I address these issues in the next two chapters.

## 7

### The Conflict Specialist

If we are not just mediators, facilitators, arbitrators, or dispute system designers, then who are we? I believe we can move forward as a field only by adopting a new way of thinking about our fundamental identity as a field and as practitioners within that field. I don't think that this new identity is going to emerge because of this or any other book; rather, circumstances will demand and opportunities will promote it. The specific ways in which we characterize ourselves will develop as the roles we play develop. Whatever label we select now could well evolve into an entirely different term as we become increasingly clear about exactly what we do and understand the implications of these different names for how the public views us.

I have suggested that we think of ourselves as conflict specialists (or conflict engagement specialists) for two reasons. One is that I believe our focus will need to be on the entire conflict process, not simply on how to resolve conflict. The other is that we need to think of ourselves as a profession in terms that imply role flexibility. In Chapter Six, I discussed how we might assist disputants in engaging in conflict throughout its entire course rather than focusing primarily on how to help them move toward resolution. In this chapter, I focus on the broad variety of roles that we might play under the rubric of being conflict specialists.

I am not implying that any one of us will fulfill all the potential roles I discuss in this chapter. As in many other fields, we will have