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The Comprehensive Conflict Coaching Model

Every path serves a purpose.

—Gene Oliver

Jim is the chair of the Department of Communication Studies and has just received word that the College of Liberal Arts (CLA), in which the department is housed, will be undergoing a major reorganization process beginning in the upcoming semester. The college has suffered a serious loss of enrollment in the past three years and has been consistently denied replacement positions and new hires as a result. The dean of CLA is a historian and does not accept the legitimacy of the "newer social sciences" like communication studies. He has remarked that he only understands and values the rhetoricians in the communication studies faculty because of their humanistic and historical approach to the study of communication.

The dean wants to make CLA an elite college with strong, but small, departments with graduate programs and undergraduate honors programs. Many in the college blame the dean for low enrollment; they suspect he has planned the streamlining to allow for his more "elite" college to emerge. The communication studies department has large credit-hour generation from two general education courses, Interpersonal Communication and Public Speaking. The dean values neither and would like to remove them from the general education course list. He sees them as "simple skills courses" unworthy of an elite liberal arts college. Until recently, only the provost's demand for a certain amount of credit-hour generation per college has protected these courses and their home department, Communication Studies.

Jim learned the news of the impending reorganization from the dean this afternoon. Jim and the dean have been at odds since Jim became chair—actually since Jim was elected chair by his faculty over the objection of the dean. While they have remained civil, it is an open secret in the college that the dean dislikes Jim and would prefer to have Jim and his department, especially the social scientists, leave the college and find a new home in the business school or some other professional or preprofessional college. When Jim got the dean's call, the dean made a point of telling Jim he was the last chair to hear about the reorganization.

Jim needs to tell the faculty of the Department of Communication Studies about the reorganization, but Jim is aware that they will not see this as an opportunity to create a united front. The humanistic/scientific split in the department reflects the split in the field of communication, and the department has been operating as two factions for the last several years, with the leaders of the two factions at serious odds. Walter is a nationally respected scholar of speech pathology and audiology, a branch of the discipline related to physical sciences and one that rigorously embraces the scientific method and orientation. Richard is a nationally respected scholar of rhetoric with an emphasis on critical, interpretive, and deconstructionist analysis of texts. Walter and Richard dislike each other personally and professionally; faculty meetings often degenerate to shouting matches and ad hominem attacks. Jim jokes with colleagues in other colleges that he spends most of his time as chair refereeing fights between Walter and Richard. Jim knows he was elected chair because of his perceived ability to mediate the tensions in the department. He knows that the upcoming reorganization will manifest in several very contentious and potentially destructive conflicts.

Richard has been arguing for the past year that the department should split and send the "applied folks" (as he calls the communication scientists) elsewhere. He has garnered strong support for this idea from rhetoricians and faculty in other CLA departments. Jim knows about Richard's behind-the-scenes maneuvering, but has not confronted him for fear that confrontation would lead to tension that would further complicate his job as chair. Jim is aware that Richard has been campaigning to be chair of a newly and exclusively "humanistic" department of rhetoric and that the reorganization may give Richard the opportunity to push for that reality. As Jim contemplates the recent news from the dean, he realizes that his first conflict will be with Richard and that he must consider the best strategy for managing that conflict or he will not be able to lead the department during the reorganization.

Never having been good at handling his own conflicts, Jim wants some help. A good friend who teaches in the conflict studies program in a neighboring university has suggested that Jim talk to a conflict coach to get a better handle on the dynamics of this situation and to plan a strategy for handling it. Jim takes the advice and hires you as his conflict coach.

J im, like most clients who work with a conflict coach, enters this process largely ignorant of what it is or how it will unfold. As a client, he wants to understand the basic logic of conflict coaching, the actions and activities that will improve his abilities, and the underlying principles that guide the work. What he wants and needs to hear is an explanation of the process of conflict coaching.

A model or a framework is important as a way of making sense of something. For conflict practitioners, models are a common and useful tool. We have models of mediation, arbitration, facilitation, etc. Here we present a model of conflict coaching that we believe is important for three reasons. First, the model helps us see the critical assumptions about conflict coaching—the theory bases for our work and the internal logic that guides process and content decisions. Second, the model acts as an action map or stage approach to how to proceed in conflict coaching. It choreographs the conflict coaching as a series of related steps that build upon each other. Third, because all models are necessarily incomplete, a coaching model provides conflict coaches a place from which to start and expand. Our intention in articulating this model is to give coaches a framework they can modify and adapt to suit their style, preference, and clients.

However, models have risks. As noted, they are necessarily incomplete, which means that a component of conflict that some believe is important may not be included. No model will be able to address all factors that influence conflict, but the test of a good model is whether it includes elements that most practitioners see as essential. A more significant danger is the tendency to treat a model as inviolate, as something that must be followed without alteration. We encourage you to think of the model as flexible rather than unyielding.

Before we present our model, we will ground this work in what has come before; we introduce the process models that dominate coaching approaches. Executive coaching, the area producing most coaching models, has given little attention to developing processes that are conflict specific. Although dispute resolution practitioners have begun to use conflict coaching, there are few substantive models of conflict coaching from alternative dispute resolution (ADR) practitioners. After reviewing the existing coaching models, we will present our model, its theoretical foundations, and some important areas of adaptability.

An Overview of Coaching Models

Most coaching models come from the executive coaching literature, a young but increasingly popular area of work, as we discussed in Chapter 1.

EXECUTIVE COACHING MODELS

In executive coaching, the nature of the coaching model depends on the philosophy of coaching, whether "coach-as-expert," "person-centered," or "blended" (Campbell, 2001). *Coach-as-expert* approaches assume that the coach is the diagnostician and directs prescriptive change. In this coaching process, the coach assesses the client, diagnoses deficiencies, and develops strategic interventions that the client is expected to follow. The *person-centered* coaching approach places the client in the driver's seat, with the coach facilitating reflection and discussion of potential strategies. But, as Sperry (2005) argues, most coaching probably follows the *blended* model in which both coach and client see themselves as partners in the discovery of desired change and the best ways to accomplish that.

The generic executive coaching model is exemplified by Valerio and Lee (2005) who identify five common steps that most coaching models contain: contracting, initial goal setting, assessment, implementation and action planning, and evaluation. A similar but more behavioral coaching template is provided by Goldsmith (2004) who suggests eight steps: (1) Include the client in determining the desired behaviors in his or her role, (2) involve the client in determining key stakeholders in the change process, (3) collect feedback, (4) determine key behavior for change, (5) encourage client response to key stakeholders, (6) review what has been learned and help the client develop an action plan, (7) develop an ongoing follow-up process, and (8) review results and start again. Different models place more or less emphasis on these common components, but the similarities are much greater than the differences.

In many executive coaching models, there is more attention given to the contracting and assessment stages than to the analysis, intervention, and evaluation stages. For example, Winum (2005) suggests key questions for the contracting stage to determine what kind of coaching and reporting relationship should be expected and enforced. Those questions include

- Whose budget will pay for this?
- Who will notice if the coaching work is successful?
- What specifically will be noticed?
- How will the environment/culture be improved?
- How will the results of the business unit be impacted?
- If coaching is successful, might there be an impact on retention or morale of the employees who work with the coached individual, productivity of anyone involved, customer experience and retention, extent of any litigation exposure, or time expended by you and others in dealing with the coached individual?
- What would be the impact if there were no change in this situation?
- Can you arrange access to the client's supervisor?

%% What information do you want about progress—when and how?
%% By when do you expect tangible results?

Natale and Diamante (2005) have a similar focus on contracting, insisting that there should always be a written contract that defines the terms of the performance, has a clear confidentiality provision, and specifies length of service, a minimum amount of coaching per day, method of communication between coach and executive, fees, expenses, and a method of billing.

Assessment is a critical stage, usually given great weight in coaching models (Keil, 2000; Kilburg, 2004; Weller & Weller, 2004). Winum (2005) argues that coaches should assess the context of the conflict by interviewing the sponsor (the person who hired the coach) and developing a success profile for the position of the person being coached. Assessment of the client involves interviews, self-assessment instruments, and 360-degree feedback as standard tools.

Some coaching models, like that of Natale and Diamante (2005), emphasize establishing a good coach-client relationship. Their model includes assessment of the coach and the coaching relationship as well as assessment of the client. They start with an "alliance check" in which clients are helped to understand why coaching has been requested. Next is a credibility assessment in which clients test the knowledge and ability of the coach. And then there is a "likability link" in which clients determine whether they are comfortable with the style of the coach and like the coach enough to continue the coaching process.

Implementation and action planning—basically the discussion of what needs to be done, what can be done, and how the client accomplishes this—usually receives the least explication in the coaching literature. Many executive coaching models talk about this aspect of coaching in vague ways that do little more than reify the notion of change as a goal (Cope, 2004). Some models, usually those that are therapeutic in orientation, more explicitly detail the nature of the change process. For example, Chapman, Best, and Casteren (2003), who specialize in career development executive coaching, base their coaching on a transition curve model that begins with a client's initial shock (the client is faced with a realization that there is a gap between performance and expectation), which is followed by denial (the client denies that any change is necessary, withdraws from facts, and tries to block alternate perceptions and information), which is ultimately shattered by awareness (the client comes to understand that change is necessary and begins to focus on his own competence issues), which leads to an acceptance of reality (the client accepts the need for change), which opens the door to experimentation/praxis (the client tries new approaches) that culminates in integration (when the client applies the new skills and behaviors in

everyday functioning). Anderson and Anderson (2005) use an insight model that helps clients work through four levels of insight: reflective, emotional, intuitive, and inspirational. Reflective insight is the ability to step back from the experience and note what went well and what did not. Emotional insight is the ability to detect and decipher the information received through emotions. Intuitive insight is the ability to detect dynamics and information that lie just below the surface. And inspirational insight occurs when all the pieces come together, and something is seen in a new light.

Some models of executive coaching vary depending on the coaching task. For example, Stephenson's book (2000) presents a series of coaching models that can be used depending on whether the coaching task is enhancing leadership, career consultation and development, assimilation for new appointees, career transitioning, professional selling, or professional presentation and speaking. Some authors, like Sperry (2005) distinguish between skill-focused, performance-focused, and development-focused coaching—each of which uses variations on his basic model of engagement and contact, initial assessment, coaching plan and implementation, and evaluation of progress and outcome.

PREVIOUS CONFLICT COACHING MODELS

In Chapter 1 we reviewed the coaching field and argued for its value and expansion. It is valuable to revisit the models of conflict coaching that have been presented in the conflict literature, specifically the ones at Macquarie University and Temple University. Both models were developed and initially applied within the context of campus mediation programs in response to a low interest in mediation but a high incidence of single party demand for help.

The Macquarie University Problem Solving for One Model. Tidwell (1997) documented the Problem Solving for One (PS1) model that originated at Macquarie University in Australia as a tool for the mediation agency created for university faculty, students, and staff. This model was the first published model of conflict coaching. Tidwell contrasts PS1 with mediation: "Unlike mediation, PS1 is person focused, and starts (as we put it) 'where the person is not where they should be.'" (Tidwell, 1997, p. 311). The PS1 model is influenced by brief therapy and assumes that coaching is an efficient, short-term process.

The PS1 model rests on three basic activities: problem analysis, option costing, and communication skills development. Problem analysis focuses on helping the client analyze the conflict through various mapping procedures. Option costing involves both the generation of

possible options for solution and the analysis of the costs and benefits of each, so the client can be guided in selecting the most beneficial and least costly alternative. Once a decision for action has been made, the coach concentrates on skill development to ensure that the client has the necessary communication skills to enact the option for solution. The PS1 process has six stages:

- *Preamble and introduction.* The facilitator describes the PS1 process and clarifies expectations, much like the opening statements in most mediation sessions.
- *Storytelling.* The facilitator asks the disputant to tell the story of the conflict, presenting the essential facts and details.
- *Conflict analysis.* The facilitator helps the client dissect the conflict using tools like conflict mapping, which attempt to articulate the origins, nature, dynamics, and possibilities for resolution.
- *Alternative generation and costing.* The facilitator and client work together to generate a variety of options for resolution and to forecast the possible costs and benefits of each.
- *Communication strategy development.* The facilitator provides the client with effective communication strategies and skill enhancement necessary to make the selected intervention work.
- *Restatement of the conflict handling plan.* The facilitator and client develop a plan for future action.

The PS1 model has several elements that we believe are critical. Philosophically, the model embraces a blended approach to coaching that empowers the disputant. Beginning with clarifying expectations about the process, PS1 builds alignment and gives the client a choice about whether to participate in the process. Encouraging the client to "tell the story" is critical, and the emphasis on communication strategy development is a strength of the model.

Temple University CERT Model of Conflict Coaching. Conflict coaching also moved forward in the late 1990s with the institution of the Conflict Education Resource Team (CERT) at Temple University in Philadelphia. Combined efforts, principally involving Ross Brinkert and Denise Walton, resulted in the development and use of a basic conflict coaching model (Brinkert, 1999, 2000). The model shared much in common with the basic framework of PS1, but it placed a greater emphasis on conflict styles. Temple's conflict styles coaching model involved the following basic stages:

- *Explanation of the coaching process.* The coach introduces the coaching process, and the coach and client discuss expectations for participation.
- *Introduction to conflict styles.* The client completes a standard conflict styles self-assessment instrument. The coach and client score the instrument.

The coach explains each style and invites the client to share an example of using the particular style.

※ *Developing choices in a particular conflict.* Here the client is invited to describe a past, present, or anticipated future conflict and apply each of the conflict styles. The client is then encouraged to evaluate the various choices represented by the respective styles in order to determine optimal choices and next steps.

※ *Closing.* Again, much as in mediation, the coach explains additional opportunities for dispute resolution, including coming back for mediation, coming back for additional coaching, or being referred to other resources for skill development, etc.

The Temple model of coaching was intended as a brief, one-session intervention with individual client-disputants who were experiencing roommate conflicts, conflicts with student team members in class, or other such student-student campus conflicts. The goal was to develop a process that would be helpful in the specific conflict but also educational, a process that would help students see possible patterns in their handling of conflict and consider developing additional styles and response options. Since its inception, the Temple model has been expanded to include additional conflict coaching modules and more emphasis on emotional awareness in conflict.

The Comprehensive Conflict Coaching (CCC) Model

In this section we present the CCC model of conflict coaching and explain its assumptions and processes in relation to the conflict case introduced at the beginning of the chapter. Initially, we provide a brief explanation of some underlying theoretical assumptions that guide the model. This reminds us that all models, whether for practice or theory building, involve assumptions that should be made explicit in order for readers and potential users to reflect on whether they share the assumptions. Then, we articulate the various stages of the model. These stages serve as the bases for the remaining chapters. We provide an overview and rationale but leave the detailed coverage of related literature, practice approaches, and principles for delineation for those chapters. And finally, we end this chapter with a consideration of ways that the CCC model can be adapted.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE CCC MODEL

Most conflict analysis is interdisciplinary. The phenomenon of conflict is simply too complex to be adequately understood by one discipline of study or by one theoretical perspective. Yet, to acknowledge this does not mean that our model is not more influenced by some intellectual

traditions than others. We believe that to be explicit about our adherence to a communication perspective is key to understanding conflict and the practice of conflict coaching. Similarly, within that communication perspective, we accept the assumptions of a constructionist orientation to conflict. And finally, we see any process of change, including that constituted in conflict coaching, as necessitating a systems orientation in analysis.

What does it mean to have a communication perspective on conflict? Communication scholars see conflict as a social construction that is influenced by context and that creates a foundation for current and continuing relationships. As noted by Folger and Jones (1994, p. ix), "Central to a communication perspective is the realization that conflict is a socially created and communicatively managed reality occurring within a sociohistorical context." In the case of Jim, the conflict is something that Jim and Richard have created through their social interaction. The meaning of their fields of study, their presumed differences as humanists or scientists, their identities as friends or enemies, are all meanings they have given to actions and elements in their situations. Similarly, they have the power, as a constructionist orientation indicates, to reconstruct or deconstruct any of these meanings and, by so doing, completely redefine the conflict, their relationship, or their roles in the conflict.

As Gergen's (1999) work suggests, seeing conflict as socially constructed through communication requires us to be attentive to the communication or social interaction to which meaning is attached. And from this perspective we see conflict coaching as a process of understanding interpretations that lead to conflict and possible reinterpretations (and accompanying actions) that can reduce or manage conflict. Jim and Richard are probably not keenly aware of the communication behaviors they are using that influence the way they and others understand this conflict. But, their level of awareness does not alter the fact that their conflict is only knowable through their communication.

A very powerful form of social construction is narrative, or the development of a coherent story that explains the experience of the conflict. Stories are created and recreated throughout a conflict episode. For example, many conflict scholars argue that conflict is the production and management of narrative (Cobb, 1994) even if they do not subscribe to a specific "narrative approach" to mediation or dispute resolution (for example, Winslade & Monk, 2000). Jim and Richard probably have different narratives of what has happened and what is happening with the department and the reorganization. Part of their conflict management is the ability to create a coherent narrative and the ability to share that narrative with others. If Jim can't tell his story in a way that can be comprehended by others, he will not be able to influence them to support his efforts to maintain the current department.

A communication perspective focuses on the enactment of conflict, the analysis of verbal and nonverbal communication to identify patterns of process over time. Operating from a communication perspective means the conflict coach will be concerned with patterns of interaction and how those patterns of interaction are linked to social context. Can the coach help Jim recognize his patterns of avoiding conflict that trigger more aggressive or territorial response from his colleagues? Is Jim's repeated tendency to mediate between Richard and Walter creating the impression that Jim does not have his own interests in this conflict or would rather be a mediator than a party to the process? Is Jim's interaction with the dean constrained by the decision-making processes of the university; would the interaction have different meaning and effect if it occurred in another workplace context?

A communication perspective privileges communication behavior, but it does not dismiss information that can be obtained from other perspectives, such as sociological or psychological approaches to understanding conflict. Insights from other perspectives are valued and are blended in an interaction frame to understand how psychological and sociological processes inform and influence the social construction of meaning through communication.

For a coach, a communication perspective places discursive structures and features (the who, what, and how of conversational interactions) front and center as primary skills for intervention and conflict management as well as analysis. A conflict coach is ultimately interested in helping Jim understand what to do and how to do it as well as understand why it is a good choice for conflict management. Thus, a conflict coaching model from a communication perspective assumes that the coach is competent in communication skill development. A coach will do Jim little good if he can only tell Jim to negotiate but not tell Jim how to negotiate.

An important way that clients and coaches orient toward the coaching process is in terms of clarifying and advancing client goals. A goal strategy combines the basic striving to be effective with the need to be situationally appropriate (Cody et al., 1986; Marwell & Schmidt, 1967). Dillard, Segrin, and Harden (1989) have shown that a primary influence objective is always accompanied by a number of related situational objectives. Notably, these related objectives may be below the level of awareness for the source or the target. The primary goal is the "what" of conflict, the basic aim regarding changed behavior or changed circumstances. The secondary goals represent general motivations that shape the communication in terms of the primary goal. There cannot be communication without them. We loosely incorporate the Dillard, Segrin, and Harden (1989) approach into a goal model that highlights the following goal types: content goals, identity goals, emotion goals, and power goals. Most notably, we elevate the importance of identity,

emotion, and power for making sense of how clients can best understand and accomplish their primary objectives.

Finally, adopting a systems orientation as part of a communication perspective means three practical things for the conflict coach. Two of these have already been mentioned—the importance of patterns and the importance of context. The systems perspective reinforces attention to patterns of communication rather than random acts (Fisher, 1976). While a single behavior may be very important, the client's strengths and weaknesses as a conflict manager are usually found in recurring patterns of behavior that need to be surfaced and broken. A systems perspective continually reminds the coach of the importance of context in determining meaning of communication (Jones, Remland, & Sanford, 2007). The layers of context—relational, social, organizational, cultural, institutional, etc.—all color the meaning and appropriateness of any communication. Thus, a coach must help the client to recognize and analyze the impact and interplay of relevant contexts. The third practical aspect of a systems orientation is that it reminds us that all parts of the system are interrelated and that change in one part of a system will ultimately affect other parts of the system. This is an extremely valuable insight when considering and planning change interventions. The strategy that Jim adopts for dealing with Richard will not simply affect Jim and Richard. As members of a system, their actions will directly and indirectly affect others in the system—other communication faculty, other CLA faculty, communication students, etc.

STAGES OF THE CCC MODEL

Jim has just called you to inquire about the nature of conflict coaching and to gather information about your process and orientation. To gain his confidence and demonstrate that you have a solid analytic approach and effective strategy for intervention, you need to articulate your model of practice.

In conflict coaching there is preparatory interaction and then the coaching process, just as in mediation there is an intake process followed by the mediation. In this chapter we discuss considerations for the preparation, but we concentrate on the stages of the coaching process. For readers interested in a more thorough treatment of preparation for coaching, we have included a variety of check sheets and explanatory aids on the accompanying CD-ROM.

Preparation for Coaching: Ensuring That Conflict Coaching Is Appropriate. In our earlier review of the executive coaching models, preparation is what executive coaching scholars discuss as "contracting" (Valerio & Lee, 2005) or the "alliance check" (Natale & Diamante, 2005). Preparation involves determining whether the client understands and desires

coaching, whether the client is able to profitably engage in coaching, and whether the coach is an appropriate choice for the client. We see this preparation as involving three conversations (although they may take place in one interaction or be separate). We also acknowledge that content in the preparation discussions may need to be restated and revisited later in the coaching process. In this manner, "preparation" covers the broader function of managing the coach-client relationship on an ongoing basis.

Initial Conversation. The initial conversation or contact is about managing expectations. This initial interaction allows the coach to provide a basic overview of coaching, a brief discussion of process and principles, and a sense of time and resource commitment. For example, in your initial conversation with Jim, you would want to provide a basic definition of coaching, explain how coaching can be advantageous and what needs to be included to make it effective, present your model of coaching and what will be expected of Jim and of you, and give a sense of how long it will take and what it will cost. Basically, Jim should leave this initial conversation having received answers to the following questions (even if Jim didn't ask these questions):

- What is conflict coaching?
- How can conflict coaching help me?
- What will I get out of conflict coaching?
- What do I need to do to participate effectively in coaching?
- What are some limitations of coaching?
- When is coaching appropriate and when is it inappropriate or maybe even counterproductive?
- What is the coaching process?
  - What will happen?
  - How long will it take?
  - How much time will it take?
- How much control do I have over the process?
- How will we know if coaching is helping?
- What happens when coaching is over?
- Who will know about the coaching?
  - Who can know?
  - Who must know?
  - How much is confidential?
- Who pays for the coaching? And how much?

Assessing the Client's "Coachability." There is always a possibility that a client is not mentally competent or otherwise able to participate in coaching. A coach needs an interaction with the client or with others that enables the coach to decide whether the client can effectively participate. Through initial conversation, questionnaires, or data collection, the coach

may determine that this client is not ready for or able to participate in coaching. For example, in executive coaching, Frisch (2005) assesses client characteristics to determine whether someone is a good candidate for coaching. He argues that a client with very significant personal or familial problems (for example, substance abuse or psychological impairment) should be automatically rejected as a candidate for coaching. Beyond that, additional factors such as the client's tolerance for risk, the client's willingness to try new approaches, the client's emotional resilience, and the client's motivation to change should all be considered by the coach before committing to a coaching relationship. Usually, if a client like Jim is referring himself to coaching, the coach can determine whether Jim is a good candidate for coaching by interviewing him on his history, concerns, and motivations for the process. If Jim was referred to coaching by the dean or the provost of the university, the coach may ask about basic employment information and the sponsor's perceptions of Jim's suitability for coaching. If there is serious concern about Jim's competence, the coach could ask Jim to complete psychological assessment instruments or talk first with a counselor before beginning the coaching process. Finally, it is important to point out that from the coach's standpoint, Jim retains the choice about whether or not to proceed and, once he has started, to continue with coaching, even if he is mandated to participate by his workplace.

Assessing the Coach's Ability. There are also questions about the coach's fit with the situation. In most cases, these are not questions of competence as much as questions of potential bias or conflict of interest. If a coach were good friends with Richard or sought to gain prominence for his department or university if Jim's department were disbanded, there are obvious conflicts of interest, and that coach should not enter into this coaching relationship. We know all too well that conflict practitioners are only human and have biases that can interfere with their work. Perhaps a coach has a very strong humanistic orientation and is biased against social science. The bias may be strong enough to dissuade the coach from working with Jim.

Stages of the CCC *Model—The Coaching Process.* Let us assume that the preparation conversations with Jim went well, and Jim has decided to start conflict coaching. The conflict coaching process consists of four stages, with some stages involving a variety of options (see Figure 2.1). Prior to conflict coaching, the coach has preparatory conversations with the client. During conflict coaching, the four stages are Discovering the Story; Exploring Three Perspectives—Identity, Emotion, and Power; Crafting the Best Story; and Enacting the Best Story. In addition, there is a parallel process of Learning Assessment
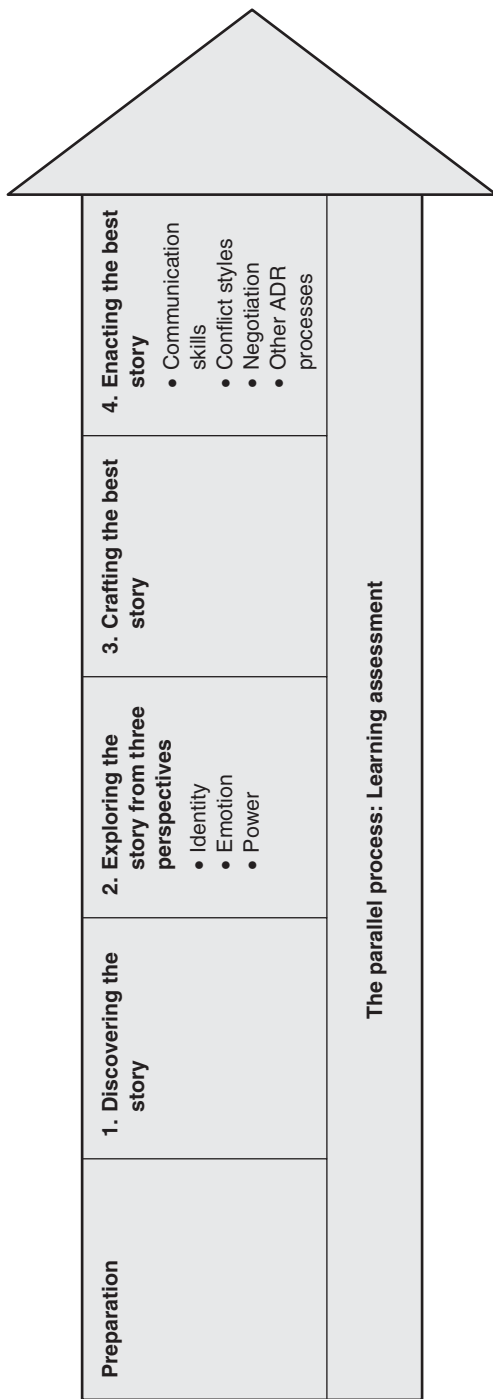
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Preparation	1. Discovering the story	2. Exploring the story from three perspectives • Identity • Emotion • Power	3. Crafting the best story	4. Enacting the best story • Communication skills • Conflict styles • Negotiation • Other ADR processes

The parallel process: Learning assessment

Figure 2.1 The Comprehensive Conflict Coaching Model

NOTE: While stage-to-stage movement can be nonlinear and even simultaneous, this figure represents the overall flow of a typical coach and client conflict coaching relationship. It is also a good way to initially learn the model.

that extends throughout the conflict coaching experience. Each of these stages is discussed in more detail.

Stage One: Discovering the Story. The first stage helps clients construct a coherent narrative of their experience of the conflict and engage in perspective taking about the possible narratives of other parties in the conflict. In this stage, the coach concentrates on discovering as much of the story as possible in order to have an adequate understanding of the conflict, the parties, and the context. Clients usually express content goals during this stage for both themselves and others, although, notably, these content goals may be changed, refined, or understood more fully later in the coaching process. This stage is discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 3. The discovery process is intended to increase coherence. Most coaching will involve at least the following three levels of clarification:

Initial Story. This is the client's story that comes with little urging from the coach. The conversation begins with the coach asking very general questions about the conflict and listening as the client tells the story for the first time to the coach. The initial story provides information about how the client sees important issues, persons, and opportunities in the conflict. The initial story often presents characterizations of other parties and assumptions about information and actions. When the coach asks Jim, "What's going on?" in his conflict, Jim may tell an initial story that sounds very similar to the one presented at the beginning of this chapter. The initial story paints a particular picture that represents Jim's current view of the conflict but that may change considerably with more discussion and refinement.

Refine Story. After the client presents the initial story, the coach helps the client refine that story. The story is expanded through some basic questions that ask the client to add information or detail. Part of the refinement process is encouraging the client to provide more information pertinent to how other parties in the conflict may be communicating and experiencing the conflict and talking more about how the conflict is affecting others in the system. Whereas the initial story is the outline, the refined story is the essay. A key aspect of refinement is that the coach is not challenging the narrative of the client, but is encouraging the client to provide the most comprehensive and coherent version of that narrative. Working with Jim, the refinement may go more deeply into the dynamics of the department and the dynamics of the field that have resulted in the bifurcation of humanistic and scientific communication scholars. The refinement could also go to explaining how the dean's vision for the college is reinforced or sanctioned by other organizational academic changes at the university. The story refining comes to closure when there does not seem to be more important information for the client to add.

Testing the Story. At this point the coach becomes more assertive by "testing" the refined narrative. The coach can ask questions to challenge the client's understanding of facts or information. Or, the coach can test assumptions that the client is making about the situation or the people involved. In this way, testing can lead to challenges of hostile attributions the client is making about the other party and can increase the client's ability to consider alternative explanations for a person's actions. A common consequence of testing is increasing the client's ability to take the perspective of the other party. Through the testing process, the coach can help identify information that the client does not have and needs to have to make strategic decisions. The process of testing allows the coach to raise questions about what doesn't make sense, or about what a person hearing this story may question. In Jim's case, the testing of the story may lead to a variety of important insights. For example, the coach may test whether the reorganization is really imminent or whether the process of the reorganization will take two or three years to complete. This insight could help Jim strategize about longer-term actions, because the demise of the department is not likely to happen as soon as he had thought. Similarly, the coach may help Jim test his assumptions about how resistant Walter might be to accommodating Richard in order to keep the department together. Perhaps Jim has been assuming Walter's noncooperation without considering the alternative, or perhaps Jim has assumed that his best role in this conflict is as mediator/chair. Perhaps the coach can help Jim think about how this conflict would unfold for him if he stepped out of the chair's position. The testing could raise questions about whether the provost supports the dean's reorganization and the dean's evaluation of the Department of Communication Studies. Jim may be encouraged to identify information that would convince his department they are seen much more favorably in the university than the dean would want them to think. All of these tests do not lead to a "true" story, but they help create a more complex and coherent story that serves as a better foundation for analysis and action.

Stage Two: Exploring Three Perspectives—Identity, Emotion, and Power. Once the client's story has been told, refined, and tested, the client has a description of the current situation. How does the coach help the client move from the understanding of the present to the orchestration of the desired future? The coach has to help the client understand the forces or drivers in the conflict in order to understand what to change and how to change it. We believe that there are three essential analytic elements in any conflict: issues of identity, issues of emotion, and issues of power. In Chapter 4 we begin by explaining the role of identity in conflict and how the identity perspective can inform the client's preferred actions and outcomes in the conflict. In Chapter 5 we discuss

emotion and emotional communication in conflict, again focusing on how the coach helps the client see his or her emotions as a diagnostic and analytic tool. And in Chapter 6 we consider power dynamics in conflict. The power perspective helps clients see how they are able to influence the development of the preferred conflict outcome.

It is very important to emphasize that we see identity, emotion, and power as the perspectives through which we define all of our relationships with others. It is the merging of these three perspectives that clarifies the nature of a relationship, the experience of conflict in the relationship, and the means of recognizing necessary change and redefinition in the relationship. Thus, these three perspectives are all essential in order to have a relational orientation to conflict (Jones, 1994; Wilmot & Hocker, 2007).

The topics of identity, emotion, and power can take volumes to fully explain. Our goal in these chapters is to help the conflict coach understand how each of these elements functions as a strategic perspective that a client should engage before making decisions about "what to do" in the conflict. Think of these three perspectives as three lenses through which the coach will ask the client to view the conflict. Each lens highlights certain critical insights. Together, the lenses help the client see clearly what future situation is best for him or her. As you will see in the chapters, identity, emotion, and power are intricately linked. Understanding one helps you understand the others. Impacting one will impact others. Thus, effective strategic action is most likely when the client understands the congruence of the perspectives and how specific action will affect each component.

The Identity Perspective. Desired and damaged identity lies at the heart of the experience of conflict. Most people are in conflict because they believe someone or something is preventing them from "being who they are" or "who they want to be." Likewise, people in conflict are often ignorant of how their actions are negatively impacting the identity of the other. The conflict coach helps the client clarify current identity and desired identity. The coach helps the client see how the client can protect his or her identity and affect the other's identity. And the coach can help the client appreciate the consequences of these influences on identity. In working with Jim, the coach can help Jim clarify how the current conflict is damaging his identity as a leader, a scholar, and an influential member of the field. The coach can help Jim reflect on whether he has conflict between his own identities—perhaps maintaining the chair role is making it difficult for him to be the scholar he'd like to be. If Jim's identity has been damaged or is not what he would like, the coach can help Jim think about what his preferred identity is and how best he can create and protect that identity. The coach should also encourage Jim to think about the identities of other parties in the conflict and the things that might damage their identities and escalate the conflict.

The Emotion Perspective. Emotions are central to conflict. Our emotions help us understand when we are in conflict, they serve as a metric of how important the conflict is to us, and they provide a way of understanding what needs to change in order for us to feel better about the situation. As we discuss in Chapter 5, many clients and coaches are not well versed in the nature of emotion and the role of emotion in conflict. Many are uncomfortable with emotion and are unwilling to use it as an analytic tool. But coaches should help clients be more emotionally aware and appreciate the strategic value of emotions in conflict. Emotions are strongly linked to identity and power. Emotions are motivation and, as such, help us understand why people act in certain ways. One of the roles of the emotion perspective in conflict coaching is to help clients understand why they are motivated to do something but also to understand why another party may be motivated to behave in a certain way. What is Jim's emotional experience of this conflict? Is he angry, sad, depressed, afraid, or amused? How are these emotions affecting what he sees as possible options for action? How are these emotions preventing him from being comfortable with the status quo? What needs to happen for him to have a more positive emotional experience of this department and the reorganization?

The Power Perspective. What is the client's ability to influence the current situation in a way that is favorable to him? That's the bottom line of power. Assuming that Jim knows what he wants (e.g., he knows his identity needs, and he understands his emotional needs), can he make changes to the current situation that will increase his ability to create the desired identity and the more positive emotion? What factors are in his way? What resources are needed to increase his influence? What are the consequences of changing the power in his relationship with Richard, with the dean, etc.? The conflict coach can help Jim appreciate all of these aspects of power and can help Jim understand how the larger system restricts power or provides power that can affect Jim's conflict.

Stage Three: Crafting the Best Story (discussed in Chapter 7). At this stage in the conflict coaching, the client has constructed a coherent story of the conflict and has looked at that conflict through the three perspectives of identity, emotion, and power. The coach has facilitated the client's analysis of the conflict and now encourages the client to envision what the situation would be like if the conflict were managed most effectively. Granted, the coach and client understand that attaining an ideal outcome may be unlikely. But, the coach knows that attaining the ideal outcome is impossible if the client can't even articulate what that is. Using insights from the three perspectives, the coach assists the client in crafting a story of success, a journey with clear milestones that would meet the identity, emotion, and power interests of the client.

Stage Four: Enacting the Best Story. Knowing what you want is the first step to getting it. But, you must also know what needs to happen to move you toward that end. In this stage, the coach helps the client consider the best approach for dealing with the conflict to ensure the optimum outcome. Part of this will be to identify basic strategies for conflict management. Should Jim avoid the situation with Richard altogether, or collaboratively negotiate with Richard, or seek mediation? Part will be assessing whether Jim has the skills to enact the preferred strategy or tactic. If Jim needs to have effective communication skills to interact with the dean more effectively, can the coach provide skills training for Jim? And part of the challenge is helping Jim to understand how to leverage the larger system of conflict management opportunities available in the university and the community. Because Stage Four includes a variety of strategic and tactical opportunities, we have devoted four chapters to it. Chapter 8 presents advice on improving the three critical communication skills in conflict—confronting, confirming, and comprehending. Chapter 9 explains how coaches can instruct clients in conflict styles and the appropriate style for the conflict. Chapter 10 concentrates on negotiation skill, looking at the client's ability to negotiate effectively in a collaborative, competitive, or mixed-motive situation. Chapter 11 focuses on developing clients' awareness of other dispute resolution systems and processes to enhance their success.

The Parallel Process of Learning Assessment. Assessment and evaluation are essential components of conflict coaching and tend to occur throughout the process. We describe assessment of the client's learning and successful implementation of the conflict strategy as a parallel process to the first four stages. Once clients have a vision and an action plan for managing the conflict, they should develop benchmarks of success to determine progress along the way. In this stage, covered in Chapter 12, we discuss learning assessment in an adult learning context. The coach can help Jim define what he will see if his conflict management strategy is successful. In a more general sense, the coach can help Jim to reflect on and assess what he has learned through the conflict coaching process.

Some Areas of Adaptability for the CCC Model

In Chapter 1, we proposed principles that apply to the variety of forms of conflict coaching that have emerged. The Comprehensive Conflict Coaching model is consonant with these principles. However, given that the CCC model is a particular kind of conflict coaching, it is useful to detail some considerations specific to this model.

Again, as noted in Chapter 1, any conflict coaching process needs to be flexible in terms of the stages or touchstones that it proposes. While these may have a general logic and a degree of practical regularity, they also need to show capacity for repetition, reordering, and simultaneous activity. The CCC model is premised on the basic flow of preparing for coaching, discovering the client's initial conflict story, taking some important perspectives on the story, determining a best story, working on ways of actively creating the best story, and, throughout this process, considering overall goals of the coaching relationship. The CCC has been designed with the understanding that the coaching conversation may be extremely fluid and find itself appropriately and effectively shifting from this basic pattern. Nonetheless, the basic pattern remains useful for purposes such as describing the model to potential clients and others, for teaching the model to potential coaches, as a tentative map at the beginning of a conflict coaching relationship, and as a way of generally making sense of most conflict coaching relationships.

Beyond some flexibility in the stages of the CCC model, it is meant to be broadly adaptable in various respects, including the following: (1) making conflict coaching fit with different coach-practitioner business/ organizational approaches, (2) using the model with different client audiences, (3) recognizing that different coaches and coaching programs may have different capacities and established limits for the length of coaching sessions and overall coaching relationship, and (4) allowing for some variability in the requirements for the breadth and depth of coach knowledge and skill. These areas of adaptability can interrelate in important ways, as will be noted below.

Different Coach-Practitioner Business/Organizational Approaches. Most individuals and organizations currently offering conflict coaching also offer other ADR, executive coaching, consulting, and/or training development services. There are a variety of ways that conflict coaching can be institutionalized (e.g., for-profit vs. nonprofit, corporate vs. community, fee-for-service vs. volunteer staffing, as a stand-alone service vs. as a part of a system of ADR alternatives). Given the endless varieties of current and hypothetical business/organizational configurations for the coach, we expect and welcome thoughtful and often unique approaches to blending conflict coaching with other service offerings and handling the practical constraints and possibilities of making the coach's larger organization successful.

Different Client Audiences. Although this book primarily addresses conflict coaching within the workplace, there are many other settings in which it can be applied. (Of course, there is plenty of audience diversity even when confining ourselves to the workplace.) Whether within the world of work or beyond, conflict coaching seems to offer real promise

but only if it is made relevant and accessible. The model can be shaped in these respects by determining the primary needs for coaching within a specific setting as well as systematically considering related basic issues such as prospective coaches, clients, and coaching sponsors as well as the most effective ways to engage these groups in making the program successful. Some major audiences beyond the workplace include schools (K-12 and institutions of higher education), communities, and faith-based organizations.

The Length of Coaching Sessions and the Overall Coaching Relationship. While a moderately extensive conflict coaching relationship may include 8 to 12 one-hour sessions and span over 2 to 3 months, other options exist, especially on the shorter end. Each of the stages, including the preparation step, may easily take an hour of coach and client meeting time and be best followed by some individual reflection or activity time by the client. Bear in mind that not all Stage Four modules (modules focused on developing specific areas of client conflict communication) may be relevant to each client. Also bear in mind that a given stage or stage module may require more than one session, especially when the coach and client are working under the assumptions that a moderately extensive coach-client relationship is in place and the conflict is quite challenging for the client. Also, a one-hour coaching session is certainly possible. Such a time-limited session could not be expected to offer the richness of a longer coach-client relationship but might be appropriate given various constraints and needs. For instance, a one-hour session incorporating an abbreviated version of the various stages might be routinely used as the favored model for a volunteer peer conflict coaching model, a mediation intake mechanism, or as triage for the ombudsperson process. Finally, a brief intervention based on the CCC is arguably also beneficial in constrained circumstances of less than one hour, although this would represent the fringe of what is commonly understood as conflict coaching.

Breadth and Depth of Coach Knowledge and Skill in Relation to Commitments to the Client. Different model adaptation combinations can result in quite different requirements as far as a coach's requisite knowledge and skills are concerned. A professional conflict coach advertising the capacity to work with clients across multiple sessions has a responsibility to have a considerably richer knowledge and skill base than a volunteer peer conflict coach who offers basic conflict coaching in a one-session short duration format and operates in a system in which referrals to others who are professionals are easily made. The key point is that coach knowledge and skill are in some way verified by a third party (e.g., conflict coach training development specialist), limits in knowledge and skill are represented in the boundaries of the kind of client cases that the coach seeks and accepts, and the extent of coach knowledge and skill

are reasonably stated to the client at the beginning of the coach-client relationship and again throughout the coaching session as needed.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce the CCC model that is detailed in the remainder of the book. We began with a consideration of the models that have been most common in executive coaching as well as the two early models of conflict coaching from ADR practitioners. We then presented the CCC model in terms of its theoretical underpinnings and specific stages. Finally, we pointed out some areas of adaptability for the model. We now go on to explore the various individual stages of the model in a chapter-by-chapter format.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduces the Comprehensive Conflict Coaching (CCC) model that is explained in extensive detail in the remainder of the book. The chapter begins by noting the promise and perils of models and then touching on the use of models in executive coaching and conflict coaching. The majority of this chapter explains the CCC model, which is theoretically grounded in a communication perspective, assumes a constructionist orientation to conflict, and also assumes a systems orientation for purposes of conflict analysis. The model begins with a preparation component to ensure that conflict coaching is appropriate. It then proposes four stages that can generally be seen as operating in sequence and learning assessment as a parallel process throughout. Stage One involves discovering the story. Stage Two involves exploring the three perspectives of identity, emotion, and power. Stage Three involves crafting the best story. Stage Four involves enacting the best story, especially by focusing on communication skills, conflict styles, negotiation, and awareness of other ADR processes.

The chapter ends with some important areas of adaptability for the model, including different coach-practitioner business/organizational approaches, different client audiences, the length of coaching sessions and the overall coaching relationship, and the breadth and depth of coach knowledge and skill in relation to commitments to the client.

SECTION 2

Conducting Conflict Coaching