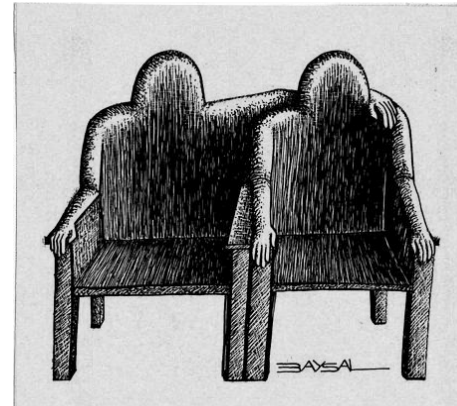


Three Tools for Strengthening Conflict De-Escalation Skills

Adapted from *How to De-Escalate Conflict & Build Stronger Movements* by Kai Cheng Thom



"Friendship" by Ercan Baysal

Becoming skilled at conflict de-escalation will help us better organize and survive these crisis-ridden times. Use the following concepts to develop and practice your skills.

1: The Window of Transformation

A diagram of common conflict survival strategies, useful for developing more awareness of our somatic shaping (the unconscious tendencies driven by our bodies' survival reflexes and the influence of society) and its impact on others.

In order to de-escalate in a sustainable way, we might be required to intentionally shift our body's nervous system state into the Window of Transformation, a place where we are capable of making choices that balance meeting our own needs and affirming our own perspectives with meeting the needs and affirming the perspectives of others with whom we do not agree or by whom we feel offended. This is an advanced emotional skill.

Source

This mini-zine passes on the lessons shared in an article by Kai Cheng Thom. Scan the QR code to read the full text.

Remember! De-escalation will not always be desirable in all conflict situations, although in most interpersonal conflicts within activist movements, it will be.

Becoming more skillful in conflict de-escalation is a lifelong journey that requires us to do both private inner work and collective cultural work. In live conflicts, do your best to remember whatever felt helpful from this zine and experiment with practicing the tools a little bit at a time.

Deescalate all conflict that isn't with the enemy!

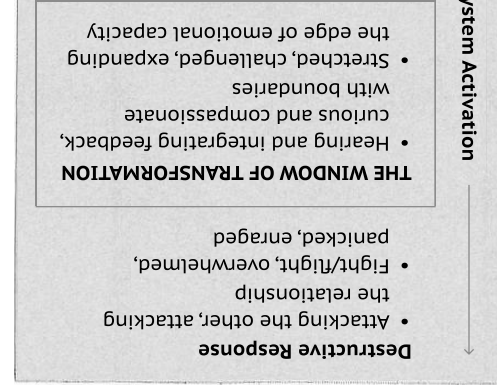
Firm Boundaries: Being clear about what belongs to us and what belongs to others when it comes to beliefs, emotions, and responsibilities. Firm boundaries mean we decline pressure to give up our own reality or people-please, as well as decline offers from others to people-please us.

Curious Questions: Inviting the other person to tell us more – stretching ourselves to practice wondering and noticing what we don't know. These are about trying to open up more possibilities within a relationship dynamic, which requires us to be humble.

Compassionate Statements: Reflecting back to others what we have heard them say. These show that we are not only hearing the other person, but also that we are trying to feel and understand their inner world.

3.2: Conflict Microskills

Basic conversational tools for navigating conflicts. The "what to do" in conflict.



2: Conflict Triangulation

Who we triangulate when we are in a conflict and how we choose to respond when we are being triangulated can either be greatly helpful or harmful, especially within movement spaces. A triangulated individual has an outsized, yet often hidden or downplayed, amount of influence over whether the conflict is de-escalated or not. Be wary that when finding ourselves at the point of a conflict triangle, we often start to experience our own memories of hurtful, frightening, or traumatic conflict and then play out those memories through our actions: projecting our own emotional needs onto the people who are engaged in the present conflict, rather than responding to the needs they are actually expressing.

Triangulation is the instinctive tendency of beings in conflict to enlist third parties to intervene and help.

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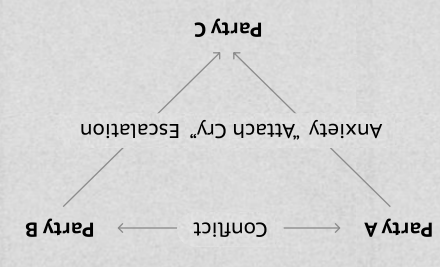
Integrity: A practice of staying true to your values, even as you explore the perspectives of others and make space for multiple truths. It's about differentiation – knowing who you are and what you stand for; where you are or are not willing to compromise.

Holding Multiple Truths: An orientation that allows us to hold paradoxes, contradictions, and polarities within conflict. The ability to stay with tension and explore nuance with discernment is key here.

Compassionate Curiosity: A stance towards the world that involves a genuine desire to know more about perspectives and ways of being that we do not yet understand, intertwined with a deep belief in the sacredness of all human beings.

3.1: Conflict Metaskills

The feeling qualities, or attitudes, that bring learned skills to life and make them useful. The "how to be" in conflict.



- Questions for Party A & B**
- What kind of support am I looking for?
 - Is this the right person to go to for the support I need?
 - Am I being honest if I try to convince Party C to align with me?
 - Am I respecting Party C's boundaries?
- Questions for Party C**
- What kind of support is the person triangulating me actually asking for?
 - Do I want to be an agent of escalation or de-escalation?
 - How is my own "stuff" coming up here?