

Principle

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anti-principle

Abandon your curiosity

Adopt a rigid stance. Don't try to understand other viewpoints, but move away from the relationship.

principle

Strengthen your curiosity

Develop curiosity in difficult situations. Curiosity allows us to see possibilities from within the conflict

No curiosity:

1. I want him to shut up.
2. It is a waste of time to talk to him, he's impossible.
3. What is wrong with her?
4. She/he needs to...

Curiosity:

1. What is he actually trying to say?
2. What is the main obstacle in our conversation right now?
Why is it there?
3. What led her to take that action? What did she need?
4. What can I do differently?

Practice:

Think about a conflict that you are familiar with at home, school, in the world.

1. How does what this person thinks make sense to him or her?
2. What has led this person to take these actions?
3. At the heart of it, what does this person want or need?
4. Am I contributing to the difficulty of the situation?
5. What needs to change in order for a useful dialogue to take place

Principle

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anti-principle

Ignore the possibility of useful dialogue

Assume useful dialogue is impossible because:

- Unclear roles
- People won't budge
- Conflicting beliefs
- Group identity defines the conflict
- Threat of loss of face
- Lingering mistrust

principle

Pursue the possibility of useful dialogue

Remove obstacles to useful dialogue:

- Clarify decision-making roles
- Shift conversation from strategies to needs
- Shift conversation from beliefs to experiences
- Differentiate group identity from the conflict
- Avoid threats of embarrassment
- Build assurances into agreements

Principle

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anti-principle

Inhabit conflict destructively

Ignore your contribution to the problem.

principle

Inhabit conflict constructively

If you are making things worse, stop. Ask yourself:

- “Am I preventing constructive dialogue?”
- “Am I sabotaging a potentially valuable agreement?”
- “Am I avoiding important but difficult conversations?”
- “Are my actions in line with my goal?”

Principle

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anti-principle

Pin the blame

Finding blame focuses the conflict on the past

principle

Figure out what's happening

Orient the focus on the future and finding solutions. Focus on what happened and why in order to understand how people contributed to the conflict.

Blame

1. You make it impossible to run a meeting when you're constantly shouting at everyone!"
2. I can't get my ideas out because you never let me talk. It's always about you. You don't listen to anyone else."

Contribution

1. Look, I think I've been making this whole thing worse by trying to micro-manage everyone. I'm going to try to step back some."
2. "You shot down my ideas before I could explain them. I lost my nerve and didn't try again. I'd like you to hear me out."

Practice:

"Do you have any idea how hard I work to pay for that school? I have no life because of you, and you've wasted my time and money partying with your friends."

Restate

Change the Conversation

anti principle

principle

Abandon your curiosity

Positive statement: _____

Take away: _____

Ignore the possibility of useful dialogue

Positive statement: _____

Take away: _____

Inhabit conflict destructively

Positive statement: _____

Take away: _____

Pin the blame

Positive statement: _____

Take away: _____