



EMBODIED CONFLICT

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THE
EMBODIMENT*
INSTITUTE

Embodiment helps us to unlock our power; our individual power, but also the power that can be built together.

Conflict is one of the places where power and trust can be dissipated, broken, or lost.

Learning strategies to recenter inside of conflict helps us restore and maintain our power and rebuild trust.

DEFINITION

Conflict is the meeting place of two or more seemingly oppositional beliefs, needs, positions or goals.

What does conflict offer us?

We don't often hold reverence for what conflict is, and what it is trying to offer us. Conflict gives us the opportunity to clarify boundaries, deepen relationships, and open potential for repair. Conflict is one of the primary ways that we change and change things.

UNDERSTANDING OUR REACTIVITY

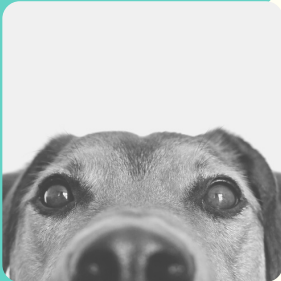
Our bodies hold biological lessons to help us survive through helping us to assess threat and achieve safety. We become reactive not just because we lack control but because we have these brilliant animal ancestral gifts that help keep us alive.

Oftentimes though, we bring these survival strategies to conflict even when we are not actually under an imminent threat.

We want to build awareness around our reactive tendencies so that we can cultivate practices that bring us back to center and ground around us, more aware of the options and opportunities inside of conflict.



OUR BODY'S AUTOMATIC RESPONSES TO CONFLICT



Towards / Appease / Fawn in Conflict

This tendency can look like moving towards pressure in conflict. People with this response can feel safer if they appease or give themselves over to the pressure.



Away / Avoidant in Conflict

A person with an away/avoidant response has a tendency to move away, avoid or flee when conflict or pressure arises.



Against / Aggressive in Conflict

An against/aggressive response will look like a pushback on conflict or pressure. This can look like amplifying the conflict, defensiveness or automatic defiance.

PRACTICE

Close your eyes and take three deep breaths. Think about what your body knows about conflict. What did you learn in your community, relationships, or home about conflict? How did that shape your reactive stance in conflict?

Use this page to journal, write words, collage or draw a picture that answers these questions.

How does your body respond in conflict?

Check the boxes below to mark the behaviors or feelings that resonate most for you when you are in conflict.

Towards / Appease / Fawn in Conflict

- Do you find yourself moving towards conflict wanting to make nice?
- Do you find yourself sympathizing with the person who is most upset?
- Is it challenging to express or even identify your own frustrations?
- Do you sometimes find it easier to take on blame and later hold resentment?
- Do you sometimes feel shame in making impact?

Away / Avoidant in Conflict

- Do you find yourself shutting down when witnessing or engaging in conflict?
- Are you aware of places of conflict in a group but unwilling to initiate hard conversations?
- Are you more comfortable inside conversations about the person who you feel in conflict with?
- Do you find it easier to get over your own frustrations rather than address them directly?

Against / Aggressive in Conflict

- Do you tend to want to talk about issues in the moment they happen, regardless of timing?
- Do you find yourself very often in the role of initiating conflict?
- Do you find it too vulnerable to show when you are afraid or hurt?
- Do you at times deal with shame backwash for things you said or did after a conflict?
- Do you have a tendency to assign blame?

HOW DID THESE RESPONSES KEEP YOU SAFE AND PROTECTED?



**WHERE DO THESE RESPONSES COMPROMISE PIECES
OF YOURSELF?**



How do we change our relationship to conflict?

Our rightness, goodness, and innocence are concepts that we carry around like identities. These ideas extend from the values of our dominant and dominating cultures. These belief systems lead us to believe that “good” is a static way of being. When we get caught in the idea that we are fundamentally right, good or innocent those identities can inhibit or block us from the vulnerability needed to change in conflict.

These self-concepts of rightness, goodness and innocence are not bad. They're not things that we shouldn't be engaging with as human beings, but ultimately they disallow us to understand where we are wrong or ignorant and where we need to develop and grow. They block us from being vulnerable and accountable to one another and don't let us engage in conflict in a meaningful way.



Build Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the key to knowing if we are in reactivity or a reenactment.

- What reactions do you tend to have when upset?
- What stories do you tend to tell about other people's motives?
- What sounds, ideas, or touch brings you back down when you get activated?

Believe in Repair or Transformation

We sometimes enter conflict not believing in repair or change. Though believing in repair doesn't guarantee it, it greatly increases its likelihood.

- How are your past experiences shaping what you believe is possible now?

Center Each Other

We can support ourselves and each other to regulate our nervous systems even in conflict by showing curiosity or care.

“

**VULNERABILITY IS
NECESSARY TO
TRANSFORM
CONFLICT.**

-

Prentis Hemphill

THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF WHEN YOU ARE IN CONFLICT



Do I know how to experience satisfaction?

Do I believe in the possibility of repair?

Am I willing to change?

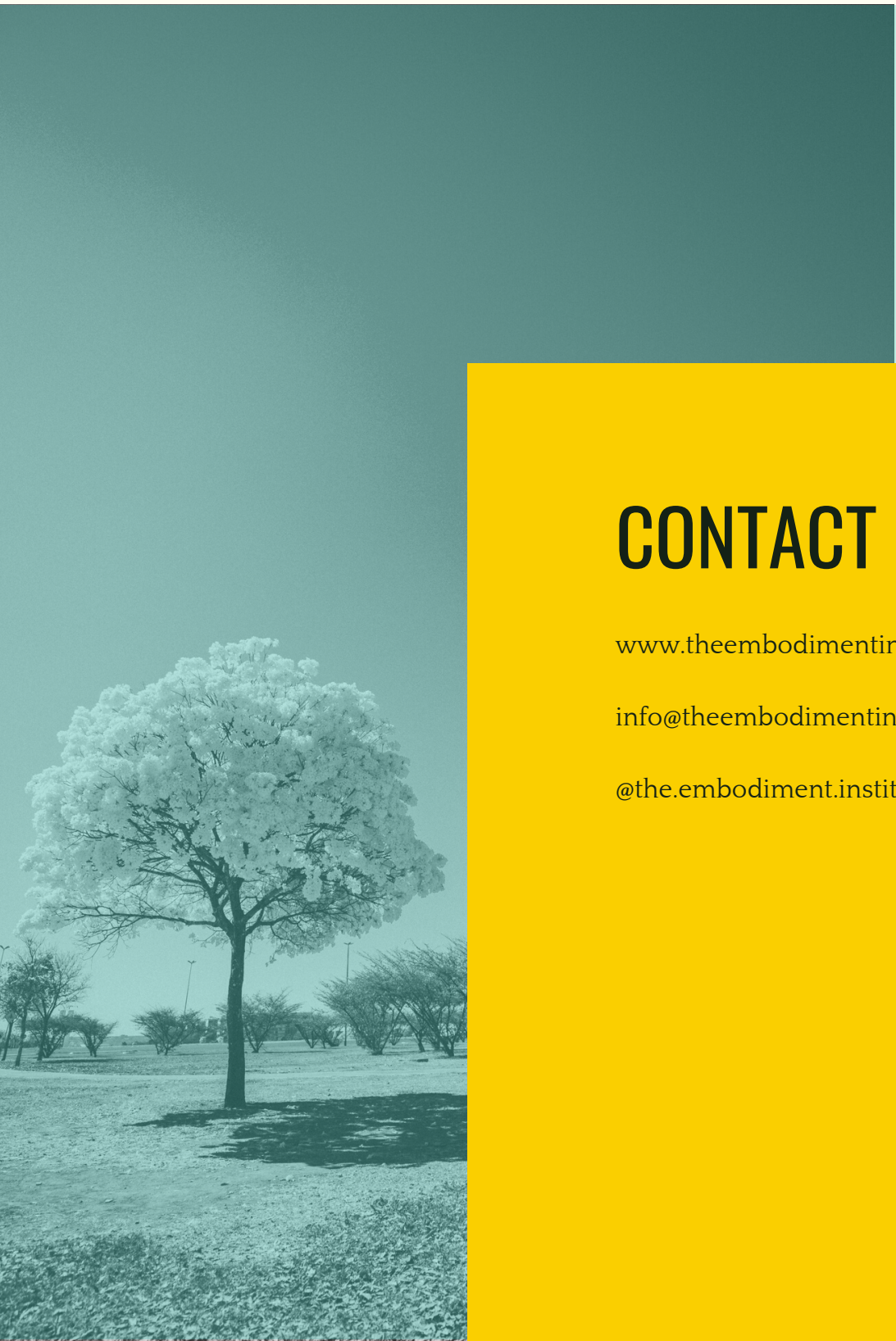
REFLECTION

What is a time you did conflict well?

What did you learn from that?

What did the conflict reveal about the relationship or connection?





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Acknowledgments

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