Mapping the Conflict

What are the needs? What are the concerns?

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Introduction to Mapping

• We can use a map for the purposes of conflict to help us see the ‘complete’ picture and to find our way towards solutions that will meet many of the needs of all the parties.

• Mapping a conflict gives us a kind of ‘bird's eye view’ of the problem. It is a way of graphically representing the issue, showing everyone's perspectives on it, and getting sufficient distance to see issues and ideas which may otherwise go unnoticed.

• We can map a conflict by ourselves, with another, or with a group, on any occasion when we want greater clarity. Usually, we do a map on paper. Writing down all the aspects can help us to see a situation more clearly. We can also do a mental map.

• Whenever conflict occurs, this skill is invaluable in helping us to focus on everyone's needs and can guide our response to the situation.
The Steps of Mapping

STEP 1. DEFINING THE ISSUE

• Using a large piece of paper, draw a circle in the middle of the page in which to write the issue.
• In defining the issue, take care not to identify a person as the problem.
• Rather label the issue in broad, objective terms, in a way that all parties to the conflict would agree.

For example:

• not "employee's laziness" but "workload division"
• not "teenagers leaving their rooms in a mess" but "household chores".

e.g.,

OFFICE WORKLOAD DIVISION
Decide who the major parties in the conflict are. Include individuals (e.g., each member of a family or a team) or whole groups (e.g., sales team, clients, students). Include people who may affect or be involved in the conflict both directly and indirectly. As long as the people involved share needs and concerns on the issue, they can be grouped together. It's possible to include both individuals and groups on the same map.

- Write a list of all these people. Then decide who to focus on in the map.
- Draw segments out from the circle in which to identify each of these people or groups.
STEP 3. LIST THE MAJOR NEEDS AND CONCERNS OF EACH PARTY

Needs

• Going back to needs is the basis of the win / win approach. Really appropriate solutions can be generated once everyone's needs have been identified and understood.

• The word "needs" does not have to be used too precisely. It may include wants, interests or the things you care about. Needs are those things which we are motivated to move towards.

• We can elicit these by asking: "Relating to this issue, what are your major needs?"

• Look for both tangible needs (such as more space, a tidy place to work) and intangible needs (such as a feeling of security, acknowledgement).
Needs

• Be on the lookout for solutions masquerading as needs. These solutions can be called "satisfiers", and can direct us to the underlying needs. "I need a new filing cabinet" may actually be the satisfier to "I need space to store my files" or "I need a tidy desk". Some satisfiers may be hiding a need which is difficult for people to acknowledge.

• A satisfier such as "I need my name on the report" could be explored with a question such as "What is it about having your name on the report that is important?" This may uncover an underlying need for acknowledgement. However, if exposing this need would cause too much discomfort, it may be appropriate to leave the satisfier on the map, and explore alternatives in the designing options stage.

• Sometimes the same need applies to several or all people. Listing it for each person shows that there are common needs – a great empathy builder!
Concerns

• Concerns include fears, anxieties, worries – those things from which we are motivated to move away. Again, they may be both tangible (such as not having enough money, not getting the work done) or intangible (such as lack of respect, being rejected).

• There are some concerns that are the reciprocal of some needs. Concerns that correspond in this way do not have to be listed if they already appear in the needs column. (e.g. having listed "clear guidelines" as a need, it is not necessary to list "not having clear guidelines" as a concern).

• Sometimes under the heading of concerns, it's easier to draw out motivations that don't surface so well when considering needs. For example it's more palatable to say "I fear being out of control and powerless" than "I need to have power and control". And it is also true that some concerns are more comfortably articulated as needs.
**Needs**
- Clear guidelines
- Priorities
- Harmony
- Realistic workload

**Concerns**
- Dissatisfaction from other staff
- Ignorance of current projects

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**Needs**
- Flexibility
- To reach sales targets
- Streamlined office workload

**Concerns**
- Too much administration
- Sloppy work

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**Needs**
- Realistic workload
- Information
- Timetables of other staff

**Concerns**
- Ignorance
- Abuse by callers
- Being overloaded

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**Needs**
- Efficiency
- Harmony
- Work done on time
- Reasonable workload

**Concerns**
- Low productivity
- Absenteeism
- Sloppy work

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- Sloppy work
Reading a Map

• The process of reading a map is one of drawing together common threads and highlighting points of special concern or importance.

• It's an essential step for organising the information that has emerged in the map, in preparation for designing options.
Common Ground:

- Look for needs and concerns held by all or several parties.
- Identify common threads that may be described in different ways.
- Explore similarities that may not already be identified on the map, but can be agreed upon in principle.
- Build a sense of partnership from which to consider areas of difference.
New Perspectives and Insights:

• Consider the way in which the mapping process has changed the perspective on the issue and the people involved. Sometimes there are very significant insights and other times there are small shifts in perspectives.
Hidden Needs, Concerns and Pay-offs:

• Look for unexpressed needs and concerns, as appropriate and with sensitivity. Ask gentle, probing questions to explore the needs and concerns hidden under satisfiers.

• Be aware that frequently needs, concerns and pay-offs are not intentionally being hidden. They just may have not been considered.

• Be aware also that, on some occasions, people may not want to state their needs, concerns or pay-offs because of embarrassment or fear; or because they have intentions they don’t want known by others (e.g. an intention to sack an employee; an intention to find somewhere else to live.)
Special Concerns:

• Note any areas that need priority consideration (e.g., access by a physically disabled person; secure fencing for young children; close proximity to photocopier by secretary etc.)

Leads:

• Identify and explore areas for which you need more information that may be helpful in designing options.
When to Use Mapping

• Mapping can be used on any occasion when we need greater clarity about a problem.

• It can be used for a simple situation or for a very complex one.

• It can be used individually, with a partner, or with a small or large group. Be careful in representing the needs and fears of parties not present. What would they consider to be their needs? How would they represent them? Be sure that we're not assigning our needs to them. For example, "they need to be on time" would be more accurately listed as our need not to be kept waiting.

• Use mapping to help in planning. Consider needs and concerns before new plans or changes are implemented to avoid many tensions and conflicts. It builds better relationships when people know they are being considered.

• Mapping an issue provides a structured process for dealing with an issue co-operatively. This can be particularly valuable if the issue is contentious and one about which people feel strongly. The mapping process often assists people to manage their feelings appropriately and prevents tempers flaring.

• When an issue seems very complex, or when those involved feel impotent to resolve it, mapping can be an excellent starting point. Seeing the overall picture and organising everyone's viewpoints often enables people to identify the part they can work on now.