



## **Conflict Resolution Guidelines**

## **About Our Community**

Heartberry Playschool creates a community where children and families can thrive through a cooperative model that relies on a spirit of mutual helpfulness.

We seek to create a “Culture of Support” and “Culture of Life-Long Learning” by decreasing the emotional discomfort that comes from human interactions through fostering compassionate understanding of ourselves and each other. This is the essential work needed to foster the core values of Heartberry Playschool: curiosity, friendship, kindness, and openness.

Effective, compassionate communication is a skill that we all must continue to learn and practice. Tension is natural, and will arise. We offer these guidelines, and trained individuals, to support you in the various stages of interpersonal conflict.

**We ask you to use the guidelines below when experiencing interpersonal tension:**

## Step 1 - Notice The Charge

When you feel tension/charge within yourself or another person(s), it is most important that you ground yourself, which happens in your body (breathing, physical sensations, or an activity). Find and practice ways to lessen the discomfort in the moment, which will allow you to respond intelligently rather than react from an emotional state. Be aware of your conflict style and, if possible, the other person's conflict style will assist you in addressing the discomfort most effectively.

According to couples' relationship researcher, John Gottman, PhD., there are three functional styles of responding to conflict - Validating, Avoidant, Volatile - and two dysfunctional styles - Hostile, Hostile-detached (<https://www.gottman.com/blog/the-5-couple-types/>). Even if your predominant conflict style is functional, you and the other person may have different styles, creating discomfort as a frequent visitor to interactions between you. The following protocol is what the Heartberry community offers as support. It is the responsibility of each of us to develop these abilities and practices to create a healthy community for our family.

1. Notice any blame or judgment of yourself or the other person. Take time to attend to any immediate needs, physical and emotional. It is difficult for a hungry or tired adult, just like a hungry or tired toddler, to be rational and reasonable. Get support from another person, a spiritual practice or other nurturing activity.
2. Ways to respond effectively: ignore; let go; write to them; ask for another person to support you in addressing the conflict.
  - a. Ignore: this is how we deal with most discomfort in life- stubbing a toe, forgetting to pay a bill on time, a child's temper tantrum when they are hungry or tired. Yet, a chronic pain in our gut, several bills costing us late fees month after month, or a child's tantrums every evening at bedtime, need our attention. Likewise, conflicts that repeat, cause us sleepless nights, or irritability on a regular basis also need our attention.
  - b. Let go: to let go of a hurt or irritation in the moment can allow it time to dissolve or be better understood by having some objectivity on the situation. Like in "a." above, pretending that you can "let go" when it is resurfacing in other situations, is "avoidance" and not "letting go." Notice if you can and are truly able to "let go" with understanding and compassion or are wishing that you could move on and feel truly resolved.
  - c. Write to them: often when we write something down, it helps us to say it more eloquently, with less judgment or blame - "just the facts, please!". A letter, an email, a journal, all work very well. Caution: *do not send the letter or email quickly. Sleep on it. Share it with a support person. Written words can be used more easily as fuel for a conflict, than spoken words. Yet written words, when carefully chosen, can be savored and healing for all individuals involved. Written words can be read when the reader is open to listening and understanding the other person. Written words can be read repeatedly as a reminder or for a deeper understanding.*

## Step 2 - Seek Support

Heartberry/Elderberry programs offer formal support with individuals available and trained to support you when you are experiencing tension in your relationship with another member of our community.

Support is essential for humans in distress. What feels supportive to you? Some of us have a practice from spirituality to walking on the beach, doing art or sharing our feelings with another person.

*Caution: some of us love to find support by joining with another in our pain which can reinforce judgment and blame. This is not productive.*

The [Drama Triangle](#) is a frequent visitor into our conflicted relationships: when we are hurt we often feel like a “victim”, we seek out support and find a “rescuer” and together we focus on the “persecutor” instead of empowering ourselves in the situation by seeking together for a solution. Be wary of this dynamic in yourself and in others. The Drama Triangle only reinforces the false belief that another person needs to change for us to feel better, when it is our own pain that needs to be the focus if a solution is to be found.

It is a fantasy to believe that we can change another person. We can only change ourselves (feelings, actions, and beliefs) on a good day. Heartberry/Elderberry programs support you in expanding your skills to become the parent, partner, and community member that you aspire to be.

## Step 3 - Meet Together

Set a specific day, time, and place that will be comfortable for both of you. Set it up for success by bringing comfort with you; this could be food, water, tea, a flower, or another person.

Requesting that others be present can be advantageous, if their role is very clear. Informal support can be a friend who would not take an active role but whose presence calms you. Formal support would be an identified person in the Heartberry/Elderberry community who would actively mediate the conflict.

It is important that there is agreement between all attending the meeting as to roles and process during the meeting. Possible mediation processes can be found in the Resource Appendix below.

Allow enough time for adequate discussion of the situation through a resolution. Please commit to a meeting of one hour minimum, two hours is recommended.

Celebrate your willingness, courage, and commitment to yourself, your family and the Heartberry/Elderberry community. Provide evaluative feedback to the Board regarding the effectiveness of the Conflict System process.

## **Step 4 - Follow Up**

Review what you learned from meeting with the other person. It may be something about them that you need to accept. It may be something about yourself that you want to change. Or it could be differences between the two of you that create friction that can be mitigated in the future.

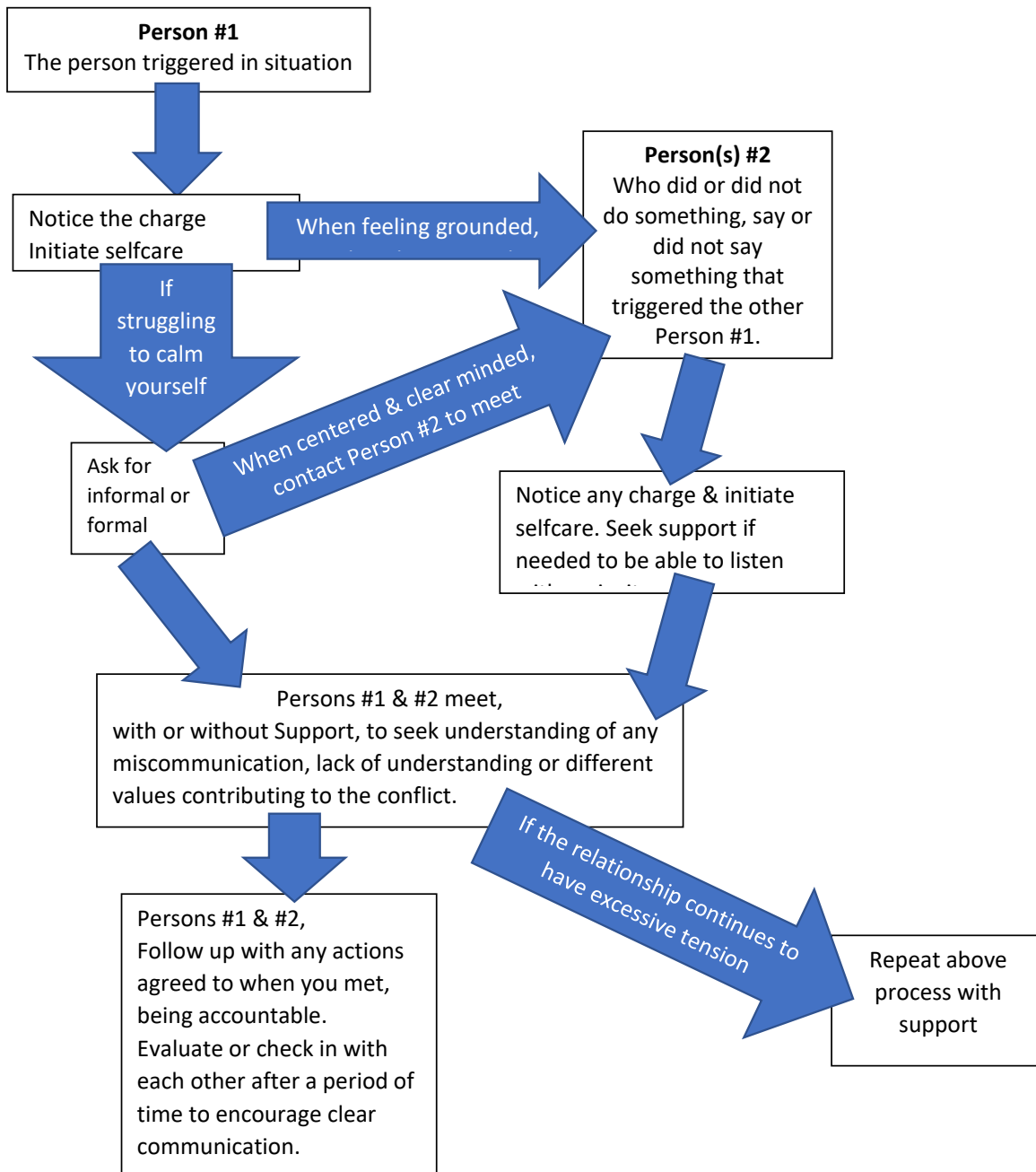
In the meeting, did you agree to take some specific action? If so, be accountable. Consider checking in with the other person after a period of time, regarding the level of tension in the relationship?

## **Step 5 - Repeat** ( as needed )

Relationships take work. Revisiting a conflict that does not feel resolved is encouraged. If the meeting was not at all productive or made the discomfort worse, please seek immediate action. Repeat the Conflict Resolution process with a different support person or seek professional help outside the Heartberry/Elderberry program.

# Heartberry Conflict Resolution System

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## The Clearing Structure

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When you \_\_\_\_\_.  
(specific behavior)

I feel \_\_\_\_\_.  
(mad, sad, afraid, anxious, etc.)

What I make up about this

\_\_\_\_\_.  
(your interpretation of the other persons behavior that causes your feelings)

What this means about me

\_\_\_\_\_.  
(why you interpreted the behavior in this way)

What I want from you is

\_\_\_\_\_.  
(specific behavior)

What I want from myself is

\_\_\_\_\_.  
(what can you do differently to not have upsetting emotions next time).

# **Resource Appendix:**

Below are resources to support the successful implementation of the Heartberry/Elderberry Conflict System.

## **Mediation Structures:**

**Non-violent Communication**, by Marshal Rosenberg

<https://www.cnvc.org/>

**Managing conflict**, by John Gottman, PhD

<https://www.gottman.com/blog/managing-conflict-skill-1-2-weekend-homework-assignment/>

**Beginning Anew**, by Thich Nhat Hanh

<https://www.eiab.eu/index.php?index=97>

**The Work**, by Byron Katie

<https://thework.com/instruction-the-work-byron-katie/>

## **Parenting Information:**

**“The Pedagogy of Listening: The Listening Perspective of Reggio Emilia”**, Chapter 13 by Carlina Renaldi, in *The Hundred Languages of Children*

[www.shinebright.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/PedagogyofListening-Rinaldi-Fall2001.pdf](http://www.shinebright.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/PedagogyofListening-Rinaldi-Fall2001.pdf)

**Emotional regulation**, by Daniel Siegel, PhD

<https://drdansiegel.com/hand-model-of-the-brain/>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouTE\\_aJeBws](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouTE_aJeBws)

**Emotional Coaching**, by John Gottman, PhD

<https://www.gottman.com/blog/an-introduction-to-emotion-coaching/>

**Parenting Styles**, by Diana Baumrind

<https://www.parentingforbrain.com/4-baumrind-parenting-styles/>

## **APPS for Parents:**



*“Headspace”; “Insight Timer”; “Calm”*

**APPS for Children:**

[www.parents.com/health/healthy-happy-kids/5-mindfulness-and-meditation-apps-for-kids/](http://www.parents.com/health/healthy-happy-kids/5-mindfulness-and-meditation-apps-for-kids/)

**Meditations for Parents:**

<https://drronsiegel.com/recorded-meditations/>

<https://mindfulfamilies.net/mindful-parenting/mindfulness-meditation-exercises-children-parents/>