LEADING TRANSFORMATION #31:  
CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

Conflicts are part of community-life. How they are resolved ultimately impacts the health and effectiveness of communities.

COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION is an approach that seeks to resolve conflicts as well as increase capacity on the part of the parties for resisting future recurrence. It is much like the way the human body deals with bacterial infections. One approach is to aid the human body by using antibiotic treatments to quickly cure the infection. A better approach is to allow the human body with as little intervention as possible to build antibodies for fighting against the infections. This at the same time boosts the immunity of the body. As a result, there is in-built capacity for fighting against such infections when they threaten to recur in the future. Interventions that do not build resilience are much like the usage of antibiotic treatments to quickly treat microbiological infections. This overtime decreases the capacity of the parties to resist such conflicts in the future. On the other hand, Conflict Transformation is more like aiding the human body to build up antibodies against infections. Over time, the capacity of the parties to resist the recurrence of the particular conflict increases, and they are better able to cooperate toward promoting common interests.

The following are steps for Conflict Transformation.

1. IDENTIFY THE MAIN PARTIES  
Who are the primary parties involved in the conflict?

2. CLARIFY THE ISSUES  
What is the conflict about? What are the issues surrounding the conflict?

3. ESTABLISH THE FACTS  
What are the real facts?

It is important to separate the facts from emotions and personalities.

4. CLARIFY MOTIVATIONS AND INTERESTS  
What are the motivations and interests; hidden and disclosed?

5. CLARIFY ROOT CAUSES OF CONFLICT  
What are the root causes of the conflict?

6. INVESTIGATE MAJOR PRINCIPLES BEING VIOLATED  
What major principles are being violated?

Most conflicts persist when parties are intentionally or unintentionally violating relational, leadership or professional principles.

7. INVESTIGATE POWERFUL PRINCIPLES THAT NEED TO BE EMBRACED TO

A. BUILD RESILIENCE AGAINST RECURRENCE

B. PROMOTE RECONCILIATION

What learning opportunities do the conflicts present?

What powerful principles need to be embraced to enhance reconciliation?

What powerful principles need to be embraced to enrich relationships and increase the capacity for collaboration?

8. ENGAGE THE MAIN PARTIES IN EXPLORING POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

What are the possible paths to resolving the conflict? What are their advantages and disadvantages?

What is the solution path that best satisfies the interests of the parties?

9. PROMOTE AGREEMENT THAT BEST MATCHES THE INTERESTS OF ALL PARTIES  
What actions are necessary for the parties to agree on the best solution?

10. PROMOTE THE EMBRACING OF POWERFUL PRINCIPLES THAT ENHANCE KNOWLEDGE, RESPECT, RECONCILIATION AND COLLABORATION  
What education, new policies, or practices are needed to apply the identified powerful principles to enhance knowledge, promote respect, ensure reconciliation, and increase capacity for collaboration?

REFLECTION  
1. What conflict are you involved in now that threatens the health or effectiveness of your personal life or community?

2. How can you apply the above steps in Conflict Transformation to promote resolution of the conflict and at the same time increase resilience against future recurrence?

3. What opportunities do the conflict situations present for enhancing knowledge, promoting respect, and increasing the willingness and ability of the parties to collaborate for their common interests within the broader context of the community?