

Thoughts on conflict from "Five Dysfunctions Of A Team" and the
"Five Dysfunctions Field Guide" by Patrick Lencioni

Great teams do not hold back with one another. They are unafraid to air their dirty laundry. They admit their mistakes, their weaknesses, and their concerns without fear of reprisal (Book 44) If we don't trust one another, then we aren't going to engage in open, constructive, ideological conflict but instead settle for "artificial harmony." (Book 91) When people don't unload their opinions and feel like they've been listened to, they won't really get on board (Book 94).

The bottom line is having a team which can demonstrate trust, engage in conflict, commit to group decisions, hold their peers accountable, and focus on the results of the team, not their own egos (Book 169) I don't think anyone ever gets completely used to conflict. If it's not a little uncomfortable, then it's not real (Book 175)

Teams that lack trust are incapable of engaging in unfiltered and passionate debate of ideas. Instead they resort to veiled discussions and guarded comments (Book 188). Unfortunately, conflict is considered taboo in many situations, especially at work. It is important to distinguish productive ideological conflict from destructive fighting and interpersonal politics. Ideological conflict is limited to concepts and ideas, and avoids personality-focused, mean-spirited attacks. Teams that engage in productive conflict know that the only purpose is to produce the best possible solution in the shortest period of time (Book 202).

When team members do not openly debate and disagree about important ideas, they often turn to back-channel personal attacks, which are far nastier and more harmful than any heated argument over issues (Book 203) One of the most difficult challenges that a leader faces in promoting healthy conflict is the desire to protect members from harm.

This leads to premature interruption of disagreements, and prevents team members from developing coping skills for dealing with conflict themselves. A leader's ability to personally model appropriate conflict behavior is essential. By avoiding conflict when it is necessary and productive-something many executives do-a team leader will encourage this dysfunction to thrive (Book 206)

When vulnerability-based trust exists, team members say everything that needs to be said, and there is nothing left to talk about behind closed doors. If team members are not making one another uncomfortable at times, if they're never pushing one another outside of their emotional comfort zone during discussions, then it is extremely likely that they're not making the best decisions for the organization (Field Guide 38)

Someone's conflict profile is determined by their temperament, personality, cultural background and family norms. Regardless, the only thing that really matters is this: are they holding back their opinions? Members of great teams do not. (Field Guide 41) Good conflict should probably entail rules of engagement. Establishing norms and then holding everyone accountable to what they agreed to. We are after commitment to decisions being made. Good leaders drive commitment along the team by first extracting every possible idea, opinion, and perspective from the team. Then comfortable that nothing has been left off the table, they must have the courage and wisdom to step up and make a decision.