

Seeing Through Lenses: Understanding Perspective, Connection, and Conflict

Part 4 – Practical Conflict Resolution Tools

Tool 1 – The Lens Swap

Ask each person: “What experiences shape how you see this situation?” Let each person speak without interruption. The goal is not agreement. The goal is understanding.

Tool 2 – The Shared Goal Question

Ask: “What outcome do we both want?”

Often, the conflict disappears when the shared goal becomes visible.

Example:

Both people want:

- Safety
- Success
- Healing
- A better future

But they had different lenses through which to get there.

Tool 3 – The 3 Curiosity Questions

(From Conversational Intelligence)

Ask:

1. What is most important to you about this?
2. What concerns do you have?
3. What would success look like from your perspective?

These questions create psychological safety. The goal of maturity is not removing our lenses. It is learning to:

- Recognize our lenses
- Respect the lenses of others
- Seek truth together

The strongest leaders and healthiest relationships are built on this mindset: “I may not see everything yet.” Curiosity opens the door to wisdom.

Write down one relationship where you want a greater understanding. Ask yourself:

- What lenses might I be missing?
- What questions could I ask to better understand?
- How could curiosity transform this conversation?

Conversational Intelligence®: Transforming Conflict into Connection

Conversational Intelligence® (C-IQ), developed by **Judith E. Glaser**, is the science and art of how conversations shape our brain, our relationships, and our results. At its core, it teaches that every conversation either builds trust (and connection) or triggers fear (and protection).

This is not just psychology—it is neuroscience in action.

Every interaction activates one of two brain systems:

1. **The Protective State (Amygdala / Cortisol)**

- Triggered by fear, judgment, or uncertainty
- Leads to defensiveness, control, and mistrust
- Language becomes:
 - “I’m right”
 - “You’re wrong”
 - “Let me tell you...”

this is often called an “amygdala hijack.”

2. **The Partnership State (Prefrontal Cortex / Oxytocin)**

- Triggered by curiosity, empathy, and openness
- Leads to collaboration, creativity, and trust
- Language becomes:
 - “Help me understand...”
 - “What do you think?”
 - “Let’s explore this together”

This state enables connection, problem-solving, and healing

The Conversational Shift: From “I” to “WE” Glaser identified a progression of conversational levels:

LEVEL	STATE	LANGUAGE STYLE	OUTCOME
Level I	Protect Tell	Ask	Defensiveness, low trust
Level II	Bridge Advocate	Inquire	Conditional trust
Level III	Partner Share	Discover	High trust, co-creation

The Continuum of Mindsets:

Resistor → Skeptic → Wait & See → Experimenter → Co-Creator

The goal is to move from protection to partnership.

Why Conflict Escalates

Conflict becomes destructive when people stay in:

- Resistor → "I'm not open to this"
- Skeptic → "I doubt your intent"
- Tell mode → "Here's why you're wrong"

This activates cortisol, narrowing thinking and creating emotional distance.

The Flow of Healthy Conversation

Step 1: NOTICE the State

Ask yourself:

- Am I trying to protect or connect?

Step 2: SHIFT the Language

DOWN-REGULATING (Threat) UP-REGULATING (Trust)

Exclude	Include
Judge	Appreciate
Limit	Expand
Withhold	Share
Dictate	Develop
Criticize	Celebrate

Small language shifts create massive neurological changes

Step 3: MOVE UP THE LEVELS

Instead of:

- "You never listen to me."

Try:

- Level II: "Can I share how this felt for me?"
- Level III: "How can we create a better way forward together?"

Practical Conflict Resolution Framework

1. Pause & Regulate

- Take a breath (physiological sigh works well)
- Ground yourself (feet on floor, slow exhale)

This calms the amygdala.

2. Name Your Intention

"My goal is not to win—it's to understand and connect."

3. Use the "3 Keys" of C-IQ

Tell → Ask → Discover

SHIFT EXAMPLE

Tell → Ask "What was your experience?"

Ask → Listen "Help me understand more..."

Listen → Discover "What are we seeing together?"

4. Build Shared Meaning

- "What matters most to you in this?"
- "What would success look like for both of us?"

What does it look like in normal life scenarios?

Example 1: Marriage Conflict

✗ Protect Mode (Level I):

"You always come home late. You don't care about me."

✓ Partner Mode (Level III):

"I miss time with you. How can we create more connections in our evenings?"

Example 2: Leadership Conflict

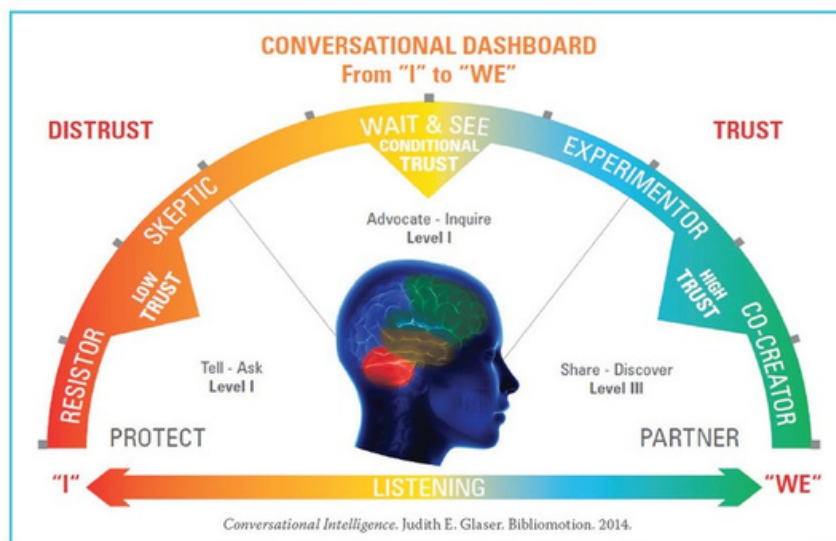
✗ "This plan won't work."

✓ "Help me understand your thinking—can we explore a few options together?"

Example 3: Parent / Child

✗ "Because I said so."

✓ "Let's talk about what you're feeling and what a good solution might look like."



The Goal is Co-Creation

At the highest level, conversations become:

- Generative
- Trust-filled
- Future-focused

This is where:

- Innovation happens
- Healing happens
- Relationships deepen

Key Takeaways

1. Every conversation changes the brain

2. You are either triggering fear (cortisol) or trust (oxytocin)

3. Conflict is not the problem—how we communicate is

4. The shift is simple but powerful:

- **From “I” → “WE”**
- **From telling → discovering**

5. Trust is built through:

- **Curiosity**
- **Transparency**
- **Shared meaning**

In our work at Pure Hope Foundation of restoration and healing, this framework is incredibly powerful:

- Trauma and long-term conflict often wires people for protection
- Conversations rooted in safety and curiosity help rewire the brain
- Trust-filled dialogue becomes a pathway to identity restoration and freedom

Conversational Intelligence is a tool to help people:

- Move from fear to faith
- From isolation to connection
- From survival to flourishing

BREAKOUT EXERCISE 1: THE LENS SWAP

"Understanding Before Agreement"

**In this exercise, you are not trying to fix, respond, or agree.
You are simply practicing seeing through someone else's lens.**

Round 1:

Person A shares:

"One situation in my life where I feel misunderstood or stuck..."

Then answer:

"What experiences have shaped how I see this situation?"

Person B:

- **Listens only**
- **No interrupting**
- **No fixing**
- **No relating it back to themselves**

Round 2: Switch roles

Closing-Each person says:

"What I understand about you now that I didn't before is..."

🧠 **Why this works:**

- **Builds psychological safety**
- **Reduces defensiveness**
- **Activates empathy + mirror neurons**

BREAKOUT EXERCISE 2: THE SHARED GOAL

"From Opposition to Alignment"

Most conflict isn't about opposing goals—it's about different paths to the same goal.

Step 1

Each person shares:

"A current tension, conflict, or frustration I'm experiencing..."

Step 2

Together, answer:

"What outcome do we both want in this situation?"

Encourage them to go deeper than surface answers:

Not just:

- **"We want it to work"**

But:

- **"We want to feel respected"**
- **"We want peace"**
- **"We want to feel safe"**
- **"We want to succeed"**

Step 3

Each person completes:

"If we both want _____, one small shift I could make is..."

Notice:

We're not actually against each other—we just had different strategies.

 **Why this works:**

- **Moves brain from threat → collaboration**
- **Activates problem-solving instead of defense**
- **Creates immediate emotional softening**



BREAKOUT EXERCISE 3: THE CURIOSITY SHIFT

Replacing Assumption with Curiosity (Based on Conversational Intelligence)

Curiosity is one of the fastest ways to reduce fear and build connection.

Person A shares a situation where they feel:

- frustrated
- misunderstood
- uncertain, etc

Person B asks ONLY these 3 questions:

1. **"What is most important to you about this?"**
2. **"What concerns do you have?"**
3. **"What would success look like from your perspective?"**

👉 **No advice**

👉 **No interruption**

👉 **Just curiosity**

Round 2 – Switch roles

🔑 **Closing**

Each person shares:

"What shifted for me when I was asked those questions..."

🧠 **Why this works:**

- Moves the brain from judgment → discovery
- Builds trust quickly
- Helps people feel seen and heard

Most conflict isn't a communication problem—it's a perception problem.

When we slow down, get curious, and look for shared goals, connection becomes possible again.