

Case Study Handout: Understanding Conflict Through *The Three Conditions For A Conflict Revolution*

A Board Conversation That Stalled

It is a Tuesday evening board meeting. The agenda is running long, and there is a sense of time pressure in the room.

The board is discussing a proposed budget adjustment that would reduce funding to a long-standing community program. The program is well known and deeply valued in the community.

As the conversation begins, one board member speaks firmly:

“We don’t really have a choice. If we don’t make cuts somewhere, we’re putting the entire organization at risk.”

Another responds immediately:

“But this is exactly what we exist for. If we cut this, what are we even doing anymore?”

The tone shifts. A few people become quiet. Others lean forward. The conversation begins to divide into two clear positions—financial responsibility versus mission integrity.

As it continues:

- A few voices begin to dominate
- Others stop speaking and observe
- The conversation becomes more urgent and less curious
- Some members appear tense or withdrawn
- Small comments about “not being on the same page” are not explored

Eventually, the group realizes it is not moving forward and agrees to revisit the discussion later. The meeting ends with a sense of frustration and unresolved tension.

Step 1: BUILDING PLACE (Individual Experience)

What might people be experiencing internally?

Consider:

- *What emotions might people be carrying into this conversation?*
- *What pressures or responsibilities might they feel personally?*
- *What might be happening in their body or stress response?*
- *What could be influencing how they are speaking or not speaking?*

Notes:

Step 2: HOLDING SPACE (Relational Experience)

What is happening between people in the conversation?

Consider:

- *How is listening or speaking happening in the group?*
- *Who is being heard, and who is not?*
- *What happens when disagreement shows up?*
- *Is there space for reflection, silence, or different perspectives?*

Notes:

Step 3: SEEING SYSTEMS (Contextual Experience)

What larger forces are shaping this conversation?

Consider:

- *What financial, structural, or organizational pressures are present?*
- *How might history or past decisions be influencing this moment?*
- *What external expectations (community, funding, governance) are present?*
- *What patterns might this situation be part of over time?*

Notes:

Reflection Questions

- *What changes when you see this situation through all three lenses?*
- *Where could we shift something that would improve how we're working together right now?*
- *Is anything becoming more clear or possible now?*