

 *The SIA staff wishes
you and your family a peaceful, relaxing,
and joy filled holiday season.* 



Why we fight

This second article in our five-part conflict resolution series discusses making sense of what we fight about, some key dynamics to be aware of and some ideas on how to respond constructively.

Deconstructing conflict and learning to deal with it

By Larry Dunn, Ph.D.

SIA Conflict Resolution Specialist

We experience and see all kinds of conflicts around us, from personal to international to everything in between. How are they different from one another? How are they alike?

Though each type of conflict is unique, many different kinds of conflicts have much in common, whether it's how our emotions play a part or the types of issues we disagree about (e.g., money, status, goals, etc.).

For example, a lot of conflict occurs over clashing values and the complex identities each of us has from our different backgrounds. These values and identities, in turn, influence such things as the groups we decide to belong to and the work we choose to do, to name just a couple of things. These days we seem to have trouble finding agreement on even the most basic facts, issues and ideas.

Many of these factors influence our conflicts, their intensity, who they're with, and how they're resolved (or not). But how does what we disagree about affect all of this? In this second article in our series on conflict, I'll offer one way to make sense of "what we fight about," highlight some key dynamics to be aware of, and provide some ideas about what we can do to respond in constructive ways. (Missed the first article? Find it here: [Wellness & Safety Sept-Oct 2023 – SIA \(sia-jpa.org\)](#)).

If you search the internet for "conflict pyramid" (go ahead!), you'll come across several models that explain some helpful things to know about conflict, including how power, rights and needs relate to each other, how conflict can escalate, and how interests, expectations and unresolved issues from the past play important roles.

I'll offer a simpler pyramid that describes the five things we fight about:



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- Wellness Challenge Series
- Holiday road safety

Stay safe on the roads during the holidays – and every day

Traveling by car during the holidays results in more fatalities than does any other form of transportation, according to the National Safety Council (NSC). Hundreds of people die every year in crashes on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day. About a third of these fatalities involve alcohol impairment. So, if your holiday plans involve road travel, here are some tips and resources from the NSC to help you arrive safely at your destination:



- Prepare your car for winter. [Winter Driving - National Safety Council \(nsc.org\)](http://www.nsc.org/winter-driving)
- Keep your car emergency preparedness kit fully stocked. [Emergency Car Kit - National Safety Council \(nsc.org\)](http://www.nsc.org/emergency-car-kit)
- Get a good night's sleep before departing and avoid drowsy driving.
- Plan for heavy traffic by leaving early.
- Properly buckle up everyone in the vehicle no matter how long or short the distance to be traveled.
- **Put the cell phone away.** Many distractions occur while driving, but cell phones are the main problem. [Distracted Driving Dangers and Statistics | NHTSA](http://www.nhtsa.gov/distracted-driving)
- Practice defensive driving.
- When attending a holiday party, designate a sober driver to ensure guests make it home safely. Alcohol, as well as over-the-counter prescription and illegal drugs, can cause impairment.

From late November to mid-January, the time of year when families gather and festivities and travel increase, make safety behind the wheel paramount. Following these tried-and-true tips during the holidays, and every day, can help ensure that time on the roads remains safe and injury-free.

Source: National Safety Council



Six Dimensions of the Wellness Challenge Series:

Help yourself and others avoid the burnout bug

By Lyn Poll, M.S., Prevention Services

The countdown to the holidays is officially on! For some, 'tis the season of festivities and cheer, but for others, the holiday season can be a time of stress and burnout.

Looming year-end deadlines, plus additional social functions at work and numerous personal obligations, can add to the weight of the holiday season. It's a load that can drain motivation, commitment and inspiration both on the job and at home. Which is why a proactive approach to maintaining personal well-being can promote resilience during the hectic holidays and beyond. A good place to begin is with the Six Dimensions of Wellness.



Consciously focusing on our well-being empowers us to thrive during life's demands. "Addressing all six dimensions of wellness helps individuals understand what it means to live holistically W.E.L.L. by focusing on their **W**hole Person, **E**nvironment, **L**ifestyle and **L**earning," according to the National Wellness Institute (NWI).

Over the next four issues of *Wellness & Safety*, one or two wellness challenges will be proposed to encourage you to work on your **W.E.L.L.-being**. Each task will be centered around one of the six dimensions of wellness: **emotional, financial, occupational, social, physical and purpose**. Each of these challenges can be done anywhere and will take five minutes a day or less to complete. The goal at the end of each task is to assist you in living your best life. The first challenge will focus on **emotional** well-being.

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Dealing with conflict

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facts, methods, goals, values and beliefs, and what some have called basic human needs. Let's have a look.

At the top of our pyramid is "facts." These involve disagreements over specific data, information, or behavior about what is or what's happened in the past. We resolve many of our disagreements these days with a simple internet search, finding a quick answer and moving on to the next topic. But we sometimes contest even the most basic of facts, perhaps because someone is knowingly not telling the truth or is misinformed or unaware.

For example, I might question a co-worker about submitting a late report. The co-worker's reply might be that it will be finished up quickly. But, if I'm then asked by the department manager where the report is, I might discover that it hasn't yet been sent, leading to a potential conflict. This scenario, and others that involve conflicting or contested facts, is fairly straightforward to "resolve" by determining what actually was done or not done. But a conflict may have emerged before all the facts were sorted out.

The next thing we might experience conflict over involves "methods." Two people might share the same goal but disagree over how to accomplish it. For example, someone might think it better to email information to a client, while someone else might believe hand-delivery is preferable. Both may have valid reasons for their points of view, but without knowing or stating them ahead of time, conflict can result. This could be especially true if a client made a preference or requirement clear to one but not the other.

Listen to any conflict or news report and

the disputants often can be heard saying something like, "It's not what they did that bothers me but how they did it." When it comes to conflict, the process is almost as important to people as the substance of the disagreement. We often think that someone who does something differently from the way we would do it doesn't share our purpose or goals. So, being clear up front about expectations and why we prefer a particular approach can make these disagreements relatively easy to avoid or resolve.

In the middle of our pyramid are "goals and objectives." It's important to feel as if those we live with and work alongside share our sense of the larger purpose of our involvements. If one person is deeply committed to the mission of an organization and another is simply there to earn a paycheck, conflict over loyalties and priorities might develop, along with resentment about things like workload and work quality. Given how important goals are for both our personal and work lives, and how differences over each can shape our behavior in ways that can lead to conflict, we often try to find people who share, or will adopt, our goals as a way to help avoid potential conflicts that can sidetrack the larger purpose.

At the core of so much of what we do lies our values and beliefs. Many of the most difficult conflicts of our day revolve around issues that reflect, engage and threaten these things. As they are among our conflicts, it's important to keep in mind that values and beliefs develop slowly over a long period of time, from our earliest moments of learning, and are ever-evolving, even if in small, nuanced ways.

Because of this, people don't readily

change their most deeply held values or beliefs, especially not quickly. And yet we often engage each other in conflicts over these issues, setting out to do just that. We'd be far better off if we first sought to listen to and understand those who seemingly disagree with the things that are most important to us.

Finally, at the bottom of our pyramid are "basic human needs." These include things like freedom, identity, belonging, and safety and security. Some of the most protracted and intractable global conflicts center around these issues. And they can be a part of our most personal conflicts as well.

So how does understanding some of what we fight about help us? First, it's useful to know that as conflicts escalate, people "frame" (the way we think and talk about) them lower and lower down the pyramid. "No, this isn't just a difference over how to do it," someone might say, "it's a matter of principle." Or, "What's the problem? I'll tell you what the problem is ... they're just evil!"

Perhaps you've already guessed that conflicts higher on the pyramid are typically easier to resolve than those at the lower levels. Therefore, whenever possible, find the highest level at which disagreement lies. For example, don't argue over values or beliefs when, in fact, methods is the only point of conflict. Try to allow a common goal to inform a solution, even where different values are in play.

With some perspective and a willingness to do the hard work, "reframing" our conflicts in this way can make them more manageable, can help us find more creative solutions, and can prevent recurring issues of conflict from being a destructive force in our personal and professional lives.

- Great American Smokeout
- Wellness Challenge

Wellness Challenge

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Be Grateful Challenge

With the seemingly relentless demands of the holiday season, it's important to remember and recognize the good things in our lives. So for this holiday season, try the **Be Grateful Challenge**. Write down three specific things that you're grateful for each day for the next 30 days. By the end of the month you'll have 90 different things to be thankful for and reflect on during tough moments. Tracking gratitude takes only a few minutes each day and can be done at any time, including first thing in the morning, right before bed or, as my family does, at the dinner table, where each person expresses gratitude for something before eating. Not only does having gratitude build self-esteem, it fosters more happiness and better health.

Take gratitude to the next level by challenging family, friends, co-workers and others to set up a social channel where they can freely share things they're grateful for. This type of communication can be inspiring and help everyone stay committed to the challenge. There's even a gratitude app available for downloading.

To learn more about the health benefits of gratitude, click on the following link: [Gratitude: The Benefits and How to Practice It - HelpGuide.org](#).

Smoking gets in the way of reaching goals, realizing dreams

November 16 is the Great American Smokeout

It's hard to kick a smoking habit, but in today's world there's no better time to think about how much money you can save, and what else you might be able to buy with that cigarette money, to make quitting smoking easier. For example, if you gave up smoking, how much more could you put toward a home purchase (or toward paying off a mortgage)? How much quicker could you take your dream vacation? How much larger would your retirement account grow? How many more tanks of gasoline could you buy?

# of packs per day	Cost per year*	Gas it could buy*
1	\$3,515.00	703 gallons
1 1/2	\$5,272.00	1,054 gallons
2	\$7,030.00	1,406 gallons

*Based on \$ 9.63 per pack of cigarettes and \$5.00 per gallon of gas in California



Although the cost of an actual pack of cigarettes can add up over time, this is only a small portion of the overall monetary cost of smoking. The reality is that smoking is associated with higher life and health insurance costs, and more costly home/car insurance premiums. Smoking also can result in decreased car resale values and home appraisals, and even lower valuations of personal possessions. And not to be overlooked are the well-known health risks associated with smoking, such as increased medical and dental problems and more medication usage.

While your health should be the main reason to quit smoking, imagine how great it would feel to put a few thousand dollars a year into a new home, a vacation fund or an investment account. Consider joining the movement on November 16 and taking the first step toward quitting cigarettes forever. This would be far better than letting it all go up in smoke. [Great American Smokeout](#) | [American Cancer Society](#).



Upcoming free virtual trainings

SIA provides the staff of our member districts with virtual training on a variety of topics that apply to both personal and professional life. To learn more about any of the training courses listed below, contact tfranco@sia-jpa.org. You can also join our email list to learn of future events at [Schools Insurance Authority](https://www.sia-jpa.org/schools-insurance-authority).

11/1/2023	Relaxation Techniques	5:30-6:30 p.m.
11/3/2023	Bias & What We Can Do About It	noon-1 p.m.
11/6/2023	Bias & What We Can Do About It	5:30-6:30 p.m.
11/8/2023	Eating Healthy for Less	5:30-6:30 p.m.
11/9/2023	How to Support LGBTQIA+ in the Workplace	5:30-6:30 p.m.
11/15/2023	Prevention of Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination (employees)	5:30-6:30 p.m.
11/17/2023	Parenting in an Ever-changing World	5:30-6:30 p.m.
11/28/2023	Making the Most of Your Workday	5:30-6:30 p.m.
11/29/2023	Making the Most of Your Workday	noon-1 p.m.
11/30/2023	Substance Use Disorder in the Workplace (employees)	5:30-6:30 p.m.
12/1/2023	Making the Holidays Happier	noon-1 p.m.
12/4/2023	Making the Holidays Happier	5:30-6:30 p.m.
12/5/2023	Mental Health First Aid	5:30-6:30 p.m.
12/7/2023	How to Simplify Your Life	5:30-6:30 p.m.
12/13/2023	How to Use Conflict as Opportunity (employees)	5:30-6:30 p.m.
12/14/2023	How to Understand and Develop Emotional Intelligence	5:30-6:30 p.m.
12/18/2023	How to Make Better Decisions with Critical Thinking	5:30-6:30 p.m.
12/19/2023	How To Be an Effective Workplace Leader	5:30-6:30 p.m.
12/20/2023	How to Beat Fatigue and Sleep Better	noon-1 p.m.
12/21/2023	How to Beat Fatigue and Sleep Better	5:30-6:30 p.m.

December is National Impaired Driving Prevention Month

Weekends and holidays can be dangerous times on the roadways. Two of the most celebrated days of the year, Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, are among the deadliest. That's why December has been recognized as National Impaired Driving Month. Taking personal responsibility for safe driving saves lives. Learn more about alcohol- and drug-impaired driving at [Risky Driving | NHTSA](https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving). Let's work together to have a safe joyous holiday season and beyond.

QUOTE TO NOTE

"Happiness is like jam, you can't even spread a little without getting some on you"

- Anonymous



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