



Conflict Transformation & Transformative Justice

Resource Guide

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RESOURCE KEY

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CONFLICT REFRAMES/ORIENTATIONS & TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE

ACCOUNTABILITY

Definition

“Community accountability (CA) strategies aim at preventing, intervening in, responding to, and healing from violence through strengthening relationships and communities, emphasizing mutual responsibility for addressing the conditions that allow violence to take place, and holding people accountable for violence and harm. This includes a wide range of creative strategies for addressing violence as a part of organizing efforts in communities when you can’t or don’t want to access state systems for safety”

- The Audre Lorde Project, National Gathering on Transformative and Community Accountability, 09/2010

Accountability is a mutually consented to process of genuinely taking responsibility for one’s actions and their consequences, and taking steps towards repair and reconciliation that centers the needs of the person(s) harmed. Accountability is NOT punishment, including banishment, shaming, and revenge. Accountability is a process, and is not a “fix” to harm. It is relational and transformative. It is possible that accountability could span years, or even never finish. (written by The STOKE Collective)

Building Accountable Communities Video Series

Released in October 2020, the **Building Accountable Communities Video Series** is part of an ongoing project created by Project Nia that promotes non punitive responses to harm through developing resources and frameworks around transformative justice, accountability, harm, and community practice.

CONFLICT: PREVENTION v. MANAGEMENT v. RESOLUTION v. TRANSFORMATION

CONFLICT...

PREVENTION	MANAGEMENT	RESOLUTION	TRANSFORMATION
Sees conflict as an avoidable occurrence and assumes that if conflict does arise, it is someone's wrong.	Sees conflict as something to be managed and tamped down. Puts the impetus on individuals.	Sees conflict as something with a clear endpoint that needs to be fixed. Relies on a need for many to move past conflict quickly.	Sees conflict as an opportunity for growth and learning. Here, conflict is a sign there is a misalignment somewhere that needs to be unpacked.

TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE AS A FRAMEWORK

Definition:

Transformative Justice (TJ) is a political framework and approach for responding to violence, harm and abuse. At its most basic, it seeks to respond to violence without creating more violence and/or engaging in harm reduction to lessen the violence. TJ can be thought of as a way of “making things right,” getting in “right relation,” or creating justice together. Transformative justice responses and interventions 1) do not rely on the state (e.g. police, prisons, the criminal legal system, I.C.E., foster care system (though some TJ responses do rely on or incorporate social services like counseling); 2) do not reinforce or perpetuate violence such as oppressive norms or vigilantism; and most importantly, 3) actively cultivate the things we know prevent violence such as healing, accountability, resilience, and safety for all involved.

- Mia Mingus, **“Transformative Justice: A Brief Description”**, transformharm.org

Three points on Transformative Justice/Conflict Transformation as a Framework:

1 Every conflict presents an opportunity to transform the conditions which led to the conflict.	2 Conflict is inevitable. How we respond to conflict is cultural. Violence and harm are therefore not inherent to conflict.	3 Healthy conflict strengthens our communities; Strengthening our communities supports healthy conflict.
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Quotes to support in understanding a transformative justice framework:

“Restorative justice is not just about conflict resolution, but is a proactive means of creating cultures of healing and connectivity, and strengthening communities and building trust.” - Fania Davis

“We live in a society based on disposability. If we want to build a different way of being together, we have to look closely at the feelings and behaviors that generate the desire to throw people away. Humility, compassion for ourselves, and compassion for others are antidotes to disposability culture. We all make mistakes and have a great deal to learn from each other.” - Dean Spade

“Being accountable to others and ourselves is something we must learn how to do well, just like anything else...This is especially true in a society steeped in punishment, privilege and criminalization; that actively avoids accountability and does not encourage the kind of culture, relationships or skills needed to support true accountability.” - Mia Mingus

“True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the hurt, the truth. It could even sometimes make things worse. It is a risky undertaking but in the end it is worthwhile, because in the end only an honest confrontation with reality can bring real healing.” - Desmond Tutu

PEOPLE’S KNOWLEDGE

Definition:

People’s Knowledge is the valuable knowledge, skills, orientations, and understandings that comes from people’s lived experiences, rather than academic or educational institutions or sources. (written by The STOKE Collective)

“It was necessary... to draw out of people their experience, and help them value group experiences and learn from them. It was essential that people learned to make decisions on the basis of analyzing and trusting their own experience, and learning from that.”

- Myles Horton, *The Long Haul*, of The Highlander Folk School

COGNITIVE SHIFTS

Important Shifts to Get into the Transformative Conflict Mindset

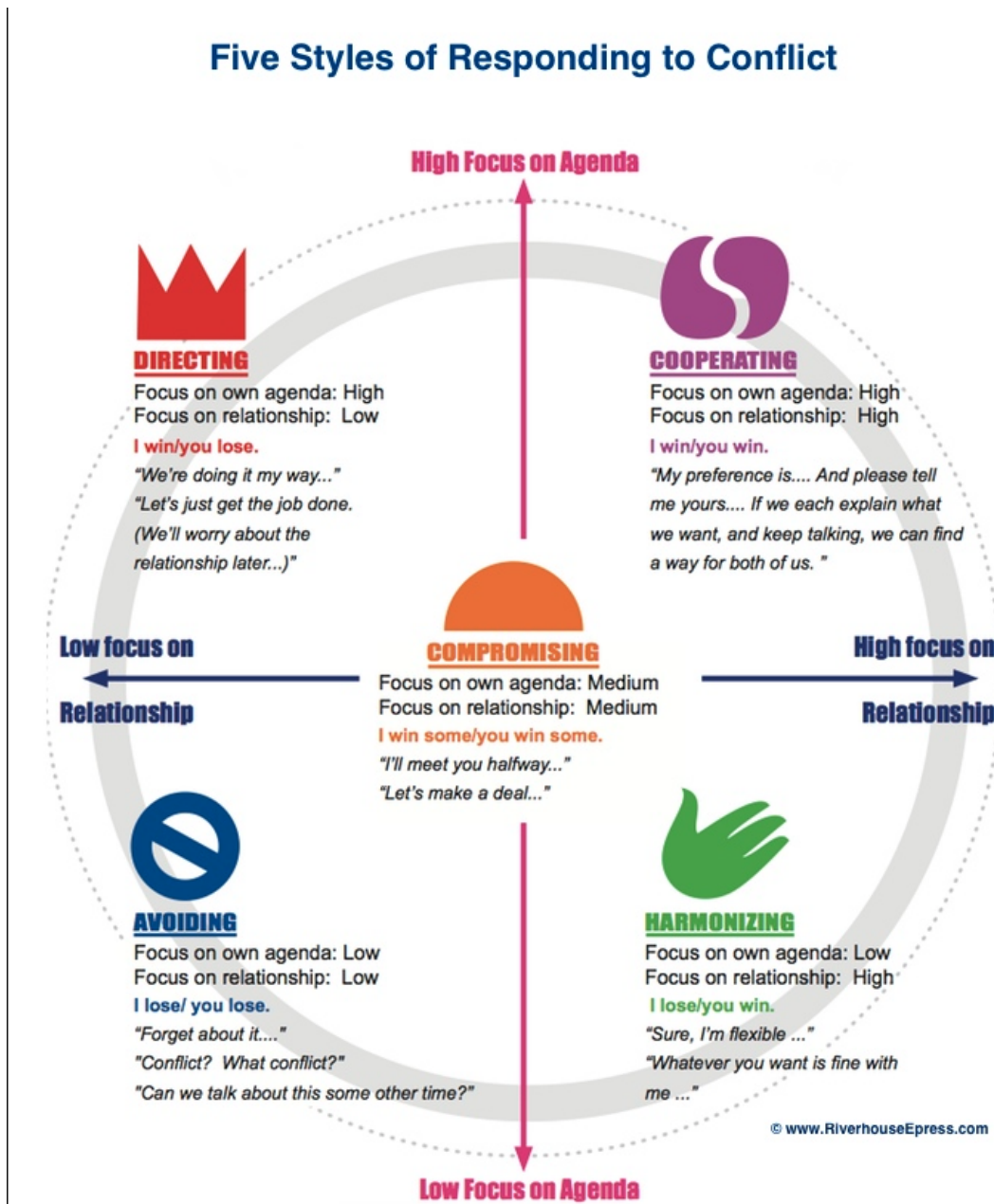
Conflict isn't inherently bad and can positively transform a situation or relationship.

BUT	⇒⇒⇒	AND
ONE STORY	⇒⇒⇒	MULTIPLE STORIES
CERTAINTY	⇒⇒⇒	CURIOSITY
FIXING THE PROBLEM	⇒⇒⇒	UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM
FIGHTING EACH OTHER	⇒⇒⇒	FIGHTING THE PROBLEM
BAD PEOPLE HARM	⇒⇒⇒	EVERYONE HARMS

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT AND REFLECTION ON CONFLICT

FIVE STYLES OF RESPONDING TO CONFLICT

This graphic depicts common ways people deal with conflict. This is best used as an evaluative tool to discover how you or people you know engage in conflict, and does not favor one style over another. There are many situations where varying responses to conflict are appropriate and healthy.



4 ARCHETYPES IN CONFLICT

The 4 Archetypes in Conflict come from **Turning Towards Each Other: A Conflict Workbook** by Jovida Ross and Weyam Ghadbian. These archetypes recognize that we express ourselves differently in different moments of conflict, and that while we may have an archetype we often fall into, each of these archetypes is present in us. The workbook lays out strengths and challenges of each archetype, as well as ways to support yourself in moving through it.

The Four Archetypes of Conflict are:

1. Victim
2. Warrior
3. Leader/Healer
4. Creator

You can find descriptions of the archetypes along with accompanying reflection questions on pages 12-15 of the workbook. The workbook goes into great detail on each archetype in an easily readable chart.

FOUR HORSEMEN OF COMMUNICATION

Based on the work of therapist and relationship expert **Dr. John Gottman**, the Four Horsemen of Communication, or Four Team Toxins, outline four common approaches to communication that prevent healthy conflict. Applying what Gottman describes as the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse in connection to relationships, this takes these four same detrimental communication styles and applies them to interpersonal interactions in group settings. Below is a modified and abbreviated excerpt. You can find more information [here](#), though it's applied to a more corporate/startup/business context. Take what works and leave what doesn't!

The Four Team Toxins are:

1. **Blame & Criticism** -- focusing on the person and their character, rather than their behavior or actions ("You are bad" vs "What you did was bad")
 - a. **INSTEAD:** Use I statements to show how you felt about their behavior. Make sure you complain about the behavior, not the person. Make a request.
2. **Defensiveness** -- When a person feels blamed or unheard, it is common for them to want to defend themselves against criticism. Often used to shift blame away or back at the other person (effectively saying "It's not me, it's you").
 - a. **Active Listening** – Use when people are not hearing each other accurately. "Steve what did you hear Joe say?"
 - b. **2% rule.** Treat any complaint as if 2% of it were true. "Steve if 2% of what Joe says is true, and the rest isn't, what would the 2% truth be?"

3. **Contempt** (sarcasm, belittling, cynicism, name-calling, hostile humor, and belligerence) -- this one is the most toxic because it conveys disgust and condescension towards the other person. Contempt is fueled by long-standing negative thoughts towards a person, and festers when conflicts are not regularly resolved. This is when people attack or goad others who they don't believe will change (nor will they give them the chance to)
 - a. Are you willing to resolve this without sarcasm or name calling
 - b. Ventilate – use a neutral third party to blow off steam and cool down prior to continuing the dialogue.
 - c. Check for emotional flooding/overwhelm and work on cooling the situation down before continuing.
 - d. Use “I feel... I want...” statements.
4. **Stonewalling**-- When a person is emotionally flooded, they are more likely to cut off communication, use the silent treatment, refuse to engage, withdraw, or in mild cases simply be reluctant to directly express what they are thinking.
 - a. Check for emotional flooding/overwhelm and work on cooling the situation down before continuing.
 - b. Address fears of what will happen if they speak.
 - c. Create safety and encourage them past their fears to speak.

IDENTIFYING BELIEFS & BIASES ABOUT CONFLICT

In order to be able to move through conflict effectively, whether as a participant in a conflict or someone holding a process, we need to know what biases and beliefs we may be holding ourselves. When we're in tune with this, we're better able to understand why we may have behaved or reacted in a certain way, what might be triggering for us in conflict, and so much more, allowing us to recognize these beliefs and biases without them interfering with a process. There are many resources in this guide to help you identify these, and you can also ask yourself these questions as a starting place to unpacking your own beliefs and biases:

- When you think of conflict, what words come up for you?
- What emotions come up when you think of conflict? How do those emotions feel in your body? (e.g. feeling tense in different areas, heart quickening, etc.)
- What do you believe about conflict to be true? Why do you believe this? What experiences have shaped your views on conflict, both positively and negatively?

POLYVAGAL THEORY

Polyvagal theory is essentially a fancy way of saying “mapping your nervous system”. This resource walks you through how to identify when you're in flight, fight, or freeze mode, as well as what triggers you to go into those modes, so that you can better move through them.

As noted many places in this guide, conflict can bring up intense reactions both in our minds and bodies, and oftentimes we are not as in tune with how our bodies are reacting and what's going on in our nervous systems. Being attuned to this is equally as important as having the right tools for handling conflict, and this resource is one support for that.

SELF ACCOUNTABILITY (TRIGGERS, BOUNDARIES, INTEGRITY)

Accountability is a word used all the time, particularly in community, shared living, and social justice spaces. **This video** from Kiyomi Gujikawa and Shannon Perex-Darby unpacks the concept of self-accountability, and explores how to be accountable without disposability. Self accountability is a tool to reflect on how and if your choices align with your values. Self accountability looks like doing your own work-- some additional concepts to bring into this reflective self work are triggers, boundaries, and integrity. Below are resource to dig deeper into each:

1. **Triggers-** **This piece** is called “Navigating Triggering Events: Critical Skills for Facilitating Difficult Dialogues,” by Kathy Obear. With helpful graphics and step by step instruction, this piece supports people in holding difficult conversations thoughtfully and intentionally.
2. **Boundaries-** **This article**, “Setting Emotional Boundaries in Relationships,” by Stephanie Camins, unpacks what it means to set healthy boundaries and helpful guides on how to do it.
3. **Integrity-** **“How to Live Life with Integrity,”** by Suzanne Kane, defines integrity as a concept and reflections on how to cultivate it.

PODMAPPING

This resource comes from **Mia Mingus** for the **Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective**. “Pods” and PodMapping have become mainstays in Transformative Justice practice. This interactive worksheet guides you through this foundational TJ method, through mapping your people and community to aid in more effective community accountability practices.

GROUP FACILITATION TOOLS THAT SUPPORT HEALTHY CONFLICT PRACTICES

COMMUNITY GUIDELINES & SHARED VALUES

Community guidelines are a set of collectively consented to agreements the group aims to uphold in a specified space (in meetings, in a house or another physical space, at an event, etc). Community guidelines are useful... when they are used! In order to make community guidelines a tool, they must feel clear and tangible to the group, as well as connected to a context of shared values. Beginning with shared values to guide you to group agreements is a wise flow, as guidelines are the actions you expect people to exhibit if they are upholding your shared values. Do you value respect? Respect might look like active and attentive listening-- a community guideline could be: “practice active listening and reduce distractions to a minimum (i.e. put your phone away and on silent during meetings)”. When a group understands what they care about together, creating guidelines feels more collective and compelling-- it gets to be a conversation on what it means to show that you care about upholding shared values, rather than abstract “rules”. Community guidelines are a tool to utilize and return to, an accountability mechanism for the group, especially when tension and difficulty arises.

Community guidelines are:

1. Actionable
2. Clear
3. Accountable

Some commonly used/helpful community guidelines for group spaces:

- Use I Statements
- Take space, make space
- Assume goodwill
- Approach conflict with curiosity
- Lean into discomfort
- Embrace silence, resist urgency
- No one knows everything, together we know a lot

A word on accountability...

Community guidelines are a tool for accountability-- primarily self accountability. Internalizing what it means to act in accordance to these agreements for you is a sign of care and respect for the group, and strengthens the group's orientation towards trust and collective building. Guidelines are not meant to operate as tools of enforcement or punishment, but as stewards and boundaries for your space for the group to return to.

WELL PLANNED MEETINGS - SKELETON AGENDA & MEETING CHECKLIST

Clear meetings agendas increase transparency, provide collective consent to what a space will be covering, and increase the participatory nature of a meeting. When an agenda is well thought out and includes spaces for collective process, personal interaction, and clear next steps, people feel more agency and accountability to the work. In The STOKE Collective we have created [this skeleton agenda and meeting checklist](#) to support in the process of what we call “meeting well”. It includes steps before the meeting, process in it, and what to do post meeting.

DEBRIEFING

In The STOKE Collective, we place just as much importance on debriefing as any other part of a facilitation or training. It’s a practice that’s baked into how we do our work because we strongly believe that debriefing is an essential way to assess how something went and what can be improved on for the future. We encourage you to use debriefing as a part of your conflict processes (e.g. for mediators to use after holding a conflict), and for bringing these frameworks and skills to others in your house (e.g. after a Mixtape discussion or another type of event centered around conflict). This [debrief guide by The STOKE Collective](#) offers structures and tips for facilitating debriefs with larger groups and amongst co-facilitators, and can be customized depending on what would be most beneficial for your context.

AORTA RESOURCE FOR CONFLICT IN ORGANIZATIONS

[This short and sweet resource guide](#) from training collective, [AORTA](#), provides helpful, practical, and direct guides for thinking about and responding to conflict in groups, particularly in social movement spaces.

EVERYDAY PRACTICES TO HELP MOVE THROUGH CONFLICT

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening is centered in being fully present with another person and what they share, without listening to respond. Mariame Kaba and Shira Hassan tell us that “The purpose of listening is to understand. This is different from agreeing with the speaker” (Fumbling Towards Repair: A Workbook for Community Accountability Facilitators).

When we practice active listening we are:

1. Paying attention
2. Withholding judgment
3. Practicing openness
4. Practicing care

Active listening is a foundational element of transforming conflict because it asks us to sit with others’ stories and perspectives without inserting our own opinions or emotions.

REFLECTIVE LISTENING

Reflective listening gives a person the opportunity to hear their own thoughts back, and clarify whether it is what they meant to say. This is a useful conflict practice because it enables us to pause and reflect on what we’ve said. In a case of conflict mediation, reflective listening is particularly helpful because it allows a person to hear what is being said from a different source (the mediator), which can sometimes be less activating than hearing it from the person they’re in conflict with. When practicing reflective listening, it is crucial that we repeat back what we hear using a person’s exact words, or something close to them, and not make meaning of what has been said.

Some examples of what to say when using reflective listening are:

- “What I’m hearing you say is...”
- “It sounds like you’re saying...”
- “A lot of themes such as ____ have been shared...”

RESONANCE

Resonance is a practice that comes from an organization called Relational Uprising. It prompts us to connect with others in a way that does not involve us sharing our own opinions or experiences, (which is a common and valid way of making connections in our society). Resonance is expressing a moment when we felt connected to, appreciated, or felt excited by

another person's story without naming why or inserting ourselves, using the person's exact words. This is different from agreeing with the speaker. Resonance asks us to simply name that we felt connected and leave it at that to show that we listened to and were moved in some way by what we heard. Resonance is all about recognition, making it a useful practice in moments of conflict and vulnerability.

Resonance is NOT:

- *Making meaning*
 - Instead of saying: "It sounds like you felt angry when your friend said that."
 - Say: "I felt really connected to you when you shared what your friend said to you."
- *Inserting your own experience*
 - Instead of saying: "I can relate to being conflict-averse because I'm the same way."
 - Say: "I was right there with you when you said you avoided that conflict."
- *Giving advice*
 - Instead of saying: "If I were you, I would just reach out and try to talk to them."
 - Say: "I appreciated when you shared that you feel stuck on how to move forwards."
- *Asking questions*
 - Instead of saying: "Can you tell me more about your response to getting that message?"
 - Say: "I was moved by you sharing your reaction to receiving that message."

Helpful phrases to use when practicing resonance:

- "I was right there with you when..."
- "I felt really connected to you when..."
- "I appreciated when you said..."
- "I was moved by you sharing..."

AFFECTIVE QUESTIONS

Affective questions prompt an individual to think about their behavior, how it impacted others, and what can be done to repair the harm and restore relationships.

Some helpful examples that can be used in conflict processes are:

- "What happened?"
- "What were you thinking about at that time?"
- "How do you feel in this moment?"
- "Who was hurt? How were they hurt?"
- "What can you take responsibility for?"
- "What does repair look like to you?"

- “What is your intention for coming into this process?”

DEFINITIVE QUESTIONS

Definitive questions are especially necessary when asking for consent. This practice is encouraged regardless of if you’re an individual working through conflict with another individual, or if you’re a mediator, though it is particularly important to use this when facilitating a conflict process to ensure both participants are moving forwards at the pace they are comfortable with. Definitive questions are yes or no questions.

Some helpful examples that can be used in conflict processes are:

- “Are you able to follow these community guidelines?”
- “Is it okay to move on?”
- “Do you agree with these next steps?”
- When using reflective listening: “Did I summarize that correctly?”

PAUSING

A simple practice, pausing is a small but mighty tool! Asking for or creating space to pause, either as a participant in a conflict or a mediator of one, allows for people to sit with their emotions, collect their thoughts, or take a necessary break. Often, pausing allows us to clarify or uncover our thoughts and feelings, allowing the conflict process to move forward in more productive ways. Remember, conflict transformation takes *time*. Don’t rush it.

WHAT ELSE IS TRUE?

In conflicts as we work to uncover the multiple stories and truths of a situation, we should always keep this question in our minds, along with “What else might I not know?” “What else is true?” is also a useful question for mediators or facilitators of conflict processes to ask of participants when building out a fuller picture of a conflict as a way to help bridge understanding.

DISENTANGLING INTENT FROM IMPACT

Disentangling intent from impact is a practice. Oftentimes when someone does something that frustrates or hurts us, it can be easy to tell ourselves that they did that because they

intended to hurt us. When we pause and break apart intent and impact, we are better able to approach a situation with curiosity and not have a story of the person's motives in our minds. It is also important to be able to articulate the impact of an action to a person who caused harm as a way of building out a fuller picture of what occurred.

HOW TO GIVE A GENUINE APOLOGY

Apology is one of Mia Mingus' 'Four Parts to Accountability' (the others being self reflection, repair, and changed behavior). **How to Give a Genuine Apology** is a two-part write up that first breaks down what accountability is before outlining a practical guide to apologizing.

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS BOOK

Written by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen, **Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most**, offers guidance for moving through conflict that is applicable to a range of contexts. The book uses the framework of "shifting to a learning stance" to be able to have a "learning conversation" about the conflict, which aligns with STOKE's orientation of approaching conflict with curiosity, and many of the other 'cognitive shifts' mentioned in the 'Conflict Reframes/Orientations & Transformative Justice' section.

CONFLICT PRACTICES

CIRCLE PRACTICE

Circle is an ancient technology practiced by indigenous groups across the globe to govern, make decisions, resolve conflict, and hold communal rituals. Circle practice has been adopted by many restorative justice programs in the United States specifically to create an alternative to carceral & punitive systems in the criminal (in)justice system and in schools. Circle practice follows a familiar flow, including creating an opening & closing, and using a talking piece to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to share their unique and sovereign knowledge. It is both true that Circle is something deeply human, and belongs to all of us, and also can take many years to truly understand how it works. To begin learning about Circles, we recommend visiting [Restore Circles](#) and watching the [Indigenous Circle Practice Video](#) from Pa'lante Restorative Justice.

MEDIATION

[A helpful resource](#) on social justice mediation practices from the University of Michigan and their office of student conflict resolution. Traditional mediation practices often do not take into account layers of power and privilege, which are imperative to moving mediation practices towards a more transformative approach to conflict. Though this outlines a process for an office at a university, it may be useful to use a model such as this if you have a set “mediation team” that people can go to when they need conflict support.

DEEPER SKILLS TOWARDS BECOMING A PRACTITIONER

FUMBLING TOWARDS REPAIR WORKBOOK

Written by Mariame Kaba and Shira Hassan, *Fumbling Towards Repair: A Workbook for Community Accountability Facilitators*, uses a transformative justice and abolitionist framework to guide those learning to hold community accountability processes. Community accountability processes are alternative interventions to hold individuals accountable when harm has been caused that do not involve the carceral state. The workbook is filled with personal reflection prompts, guides for different stages of a process, and practical tools.

CREATIVE INTERVENTIONS TOOLKIT

Creative Interventions was founded in 2004 to “place knowledge and power among those most impacted by violence” and seeks to “make support and safety more accessible, stop violence at early stages of abuse, and create possibilities for once abusive individuals and communities to evolve towards healthy change and transformation.” (Creative Interventions) Their toolkit, *The Creative Interventions Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Stop Interpersonal Violence*, provides those looking to do just what the title suggests with a range of resources and tools that range from supporting survivors and victims, taking accountability, and working together. Additionally, there is an accompanying workbook available along with pdfs of ‘mix & match toolkit sections’ from the book.

GENERATION FIVE HANDBOOK

One of the first organizations to do transformative justice work, **GenerationFIVE** provides a deeply **comprehensive handbook** on doing this work particularly in regards to ending child sexual abuse, and answers a lot of questions about how to address harm outside of the carceral system.

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION CASE STUDIES

BEAUTIFUL DIFFICULT POWERFUL

This essay/case study, **“Beautiful, Difficult Powerful: ending sexual assault through transformative justice,”** by The Chrysalis Collective, shares a community accountability process done in an instance of sexual assault. The piece goes in depth into how this process was done for this particular situation.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/RESOURCE DATABASES

RACIAL EQUITY TOOLS' RESOURCES

Racial Equity Tools' database of conflict transformation and restorative justice tools is broken down into three categories: (1) Addressing Conflict and Mediation Resources and Tools; (2) Concepts and General Resources; and (3) Restorative Justice Resources and Tools.

TRANSFORMHARM.ORG

Transformharm.org is a resource hub focusing around five pillars of transforming harm: Transformative Justice, Restorative Justice, Healing Justice, Abolition, and Community Accountability. It offers intros to commonly used phrases, curriculum, articles, and other resources to support in harm and conflict transformation.

CRITICAL RESISTANCE

Critical Resistance is “a national grassroots organization building a movement to abolish the prison industrial complex (PIC)”. Their website includes a robust resource page with a variety of different resources to support this work.

JUST PRACTICE

Just practice is “a training series for activists, movement builders, community members, and non-profit workers who want to deepen their harm reduction skills and transformative justice practices”. They have created a resource called “Steps to End Prisons & Policing: A Mixtape on Transformative Justice” that is a step by step video series of workshops to guide people through understanding their foundational practices.

PROJECT NIA

Project Nia is “a grassroots organization that works to end the arrest, detention, and incarceration of children and young adults by promoting restorative and transformative justice practices”. Their website includes helpful tools and resources to support in cultivating these practices, including the “Building Accountable Communities Toolkit”.

COMMUNITY RESOURCE HUB

Community Resource Hub for Safety & Accountability “works to ensure all people have access to resources and tools to advocate for systems change and accountability in law enforcement”. This is seriously a HUB with hundreds of resources and a search system to connect people to organizations doing community work connected to ending the Prison Industrial Complex.

TURNING TOWARDS EACH OTHER: A CONFLICT WORKBOOK

Written by Jovida Ross and Weyam Ghadbian, **Turning Towards Each Other: A Conflict Workbook**, provides a range of activities for supporting groups in transforming conflict together. The workbook is broken up into the following sections to help you identify what type of activity might be best for your needs: (1) Self Explorations; (2) Group Explorations; (3) Communicating What Matters; (4) Appendices with Additional Resources; (5) Broader Resources.

PRINCIPLES OF HARM REDUCTION

Principles of harm reduction here are specifically around drug use, though we encourage the use of these principles in application to many other contexts when thinking about transformative justice and the tools we have to seek it.