

What Difficult Relationships Reveal

The conflict inside you and how it shows up in every relationship around you.

Most of us think of conflict as something that happens between people. An argument, a disagreement, a conversation we are dreading or avoiding. But the truth runs deeper than that. The conflicts we carry in our closest relationships, our workplaces, and our communities are almost always the outward expression of something unresolved within us.

DOES THIS SOUND FAMILIAR

Conflict is not the problem. It is a signal. What we call external conflict, tension with another person, a breakdown in communication, a relationship under strain, is almost always rooted in something internal: a belief that feels threatened, a value that feels violated, an identity that does not feel seen.

"I know I overreacted, but something in me just snapped."
 "Every time this happens, I feel like I am back in the same place."
 "I don't even know why this bothers me so much. It just does."
 "I stayed quiet because I didn't want to make it worse."

Internal Conflict

The battle happening inside you. A clash between your beliefs, your values, your sense of who you are, and what reality is asking of you.

It sounds like:

- I shouldn't feel this way.
- I know what I should do but I can't seem to do it.
- Part of me wants to say something. Part of me is afraid.

External Conflict

The tension that shows up between you and another person, a situation, or a system. The internal conflict has to go somewhere and this is usually where it goes.

It sounds like:

- You always do this.
- Nobody ever listens to me.
- I feel dismissed every time we talk about this.

WHERE INTERNAL CONFLICT LIVES

Internal conflict is almost always rooted in one of these four places:

Beliefs

The stories we carry about how things should be, what we deserve, what others are capable of, and what conflict means. Many of these were formed early and have never been examined.

Values

When two things you care about deeply come into tension with each other, honesty and kindness, loyalty and self-protection, belonging and authenticity, conflict is inevitable.

Identity

Conflict feels most threatening when it touches who we are, not just what we think. When our sense of self is questioned, the reaction is rarely logical, it is protective.

Unmet needs

Much of what we label conflict is actually unmet needs finding the only available exit. The need to be heard, respected, valued, or included – when those go unmet, conflict follows.

Most conflict is not really about the other person. It is about what the situation means to you and that meaning lives in your beliefs.

WHAT EXTERNAL CONFLICT IS REALLY ASKING

When conflict erupts externally, it is worth asking: what is this situation activating in me? Not because the other person is never wrong, they may be. But because the intensity of your reaction, the patterns you keep repeating, and the things that feel impossible to let go of are pointing somewhere important.

WORKING THROUGH IT - BOTH LEVELS

1 Name the internal conflict first Before addressing the external situation, get honest with yourself. What belief is activated? What value feel violated? You cannot bring clarity to a conversation you haven't had with yourself yet.

2 Separate the story from the fact The fact is what happened. The story is what you decided it means. Getting clear on which is which changes everything.

3 Feel what is actually there Underneath repeating conflict is usually an emotion that hasn't been acknowledged. Anger is often grief. Withdrawal is often fear. Find the real emotion beneath the reaction.

4 Choose the conversation intentionally Not every conflict needs a confrontation, but avoiding necessary ones creates its own damage. When you're ready, to in with curiosity rather than a conclusion.

5 Let the pattern teach you If the same conflict keeps showing up in different relationships, same essential dynamic, it is pointing at something inside that is ready to change.

BRING THIS TO OUR SESSION

Take a few quiet minutes before we meet. Honest answers are the only ones that matter.

- Where do I feel the most conflict in my life right now – internally or externally?
Your thoughts:
- What belief might be underneath the external conflict I keep experiencing?
Your thoughts:
- Is there a pattern in the kinds of conflict I find myself in? What might it be pointing to?
Your thoughts:
- What emotion am I actually feeling, underneath the reaction I usually lead with?
Your thoughts:
- What would it mean to approach this conflict with curiosity rather than a conclusion?
Your thoughts:

FREE. Open to everyone. Space is limited.

Thursdays · 5:30–7:00 pm · Starting June 25, 2026 · EAMG · 624 E. Street, Marysville
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