



Escalation levels according to Glasl

Friedrich Glasl assumed that conflicts do not progress steadily but in stages, i.e. people are reluctant to escalate conflicts.

Glasl, based on his experiences, outlines an escalation in nine descending stages, at which the first three stages can still be described as "win-win situations.". The stages four to six can be titled "win-lose", i.e. only one party to the conflict can still win and finally the stages seven to nine, here we have a "lose-lose situation". In this phase, there are only losers and in the end it only remains important to destroy the opponent, even at the price of losing everything yourself.

When using mediation, the escalation levels by Glasl help to assess in which phase of the conflict the parties currently are. This helps to decide which conflict handling method should be used, or whether this conflict can still be resolved by means of mediation.

win-win phases 1 - 3

Stage 1 – Hardening

Conflicts begin with tension, e.g. the occasional clash of opinions. This is commonplace and is not perceived as the beginning of a conflict. When a conflict develops from this, the opinions become more fundamental. The conflict may have deeper causes.

Stage 2 – Debate

From this point on, the parties to the conflict think of strategies in order to convince the other of their arguments. Differences of opinion lead to a dispute. It is attempted to put the other party under pressure. Black and white thinking develops.

Stage 3 – Actions instead of words

The parties to the conflict increase the pressure on the respective other party in order to get their way or press home their own opinion. Conversations, e.g., are discontinued. No verbal communication takes place anymore and the conflict intensifies faster. Compassion for the "other" is lost.

win-lose phases 4 - 6

Stage 4 – Coalitions

The conflict hardens as a result of searching for sympathisers for one's cause. As you believe you are in the right, you can denounce the opponent. It is no longer about the issue, but about winning the conflict so that the opponent loses.

Stage 5 – Loss of face

The opponent is to be annihilated in his identity by means of all kinds of allegations or the like. Here the loss of trust is complete. Loss of face in this sense means loss of moral credibility.

Stage 6 – Threat strategies

The parties to the conflict attempt to fully control the situation by using threats. It is aimed at demonstrating their own power. One threatens, for example, with a demand (10 million euros) which is enforced by a sanction ("otherwise I'll blow up your main building") and underlined by the potential for sanction (showing the explosive). The proportions decide the credibility of the threat.

lose – lose phases 7 – 9

Stage 7 – Limited destruction

One tries to severely damage the opponent with all the tricks at one's disposal. The opponent is no longer regarded as human. From now on, limited personal loss is seen as a gain if the damage to the opponent is greater.

Stage 8 – Fragmentation

The opponent is to be destroyed with actions of annihilation.

Stage 9 – Together into the abyss

From this point personal annihilation is accepted in order to defeat the opponent.

In this state, the means of mediation is no longer sufficient, only a superordinate authority can still make a decision.

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