



**WORLDVIEW
INTELLIGENCE**

**PLANNING
GUIDE 1**

CONFLICT AVOIDANCE TO PRODUCTIVE OUTCOMES

**A Planning Guide for
Challenging Conversations**



KATHY JOURDAIN | JERRY NAGEL

authors of Building Trust and Relationship at the Speed of Change

Conflict Avoidance to Productive Outcomes

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A Worldview Intelligence Planning Guide 1



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Introduction and Overview

People and conflict. This is an age-old dynamic that has been around as long as there have been human beings on the planet. We know we have some deeply instilled reactions within us that linger from the early days of evolution, when immediate responses to potential danger literally meant life or death. This is why we have the fight-flight-freeze responses activated by what Resmaa Menakem calls the lizard brain* in his book *My Grandmother's Hands*, or the amygdala hijack and triggers that we refer to in our book *Building Trust and Relationship at the Speed of Change*.

Interpersonal conflict can get us into trouble. So, too, can avoidance of conflict. Does this mean it is a no-win situation? It is only no-win if we fail to address the conflict in constructive ways and it festers. Too much conflict with no clear ways to move forward can be exhausting and destructive. Too much conflict avoidance, not addressing the situation, means it can explode in the least opportune moment when we have finally had more than we can handle. Conflict not addressed usually does not just disappear.

Pause for a moment and reflect on some of the conflict situations you have encountered. What instances of conflict can you recall that go unresolved or are the same familiar arguments that never get to a solution? What instances of conflict can you recall where you or another person finally lashed out in exasperation? Or, those instances where you continually bite your tongue but nothing changes? These are the kinds of examples you can draw on as you work through this planning guide. You might even want to jot a few examples down on a post-it note to refer to as you go along.

Two Ways to Deal with Conflict

There are two ways, at least, that you can deal with conflict. One is to come to peace with the conflict, the source of the conflict and/or the person you are in conflict with. The other is to develop the skill to address the conflict. The first only works if you truly come to peace, not just pretend to yourself that you have. The second can seem intimidating, especially if you are experiencing stress related to the tension or conflict or if it has been a long-standing tension.

Working through this planning guide: *Conflict Avoidance to Productive Outcomes: A Planning Guide for Challenging Conversations* can help you decide which choice to make – find peace or develop a plan to take a course of action. People who have worked through this guide have found it to be thought-provoking, insightful and beneficial.

* Just to note, Menakem did not invent the term lizard brain, just as we did not invent the term amygdala hijack; they've been around for a long time.

What Outcome Do You Want?

One thing many people share with us is that they have never given much thought to what they want to achieve through a conversation intended to address the conflict. They know they want or need to have the conversation. However, as human beings, we generally want to have our own perspective heard. Beyond that, we have not usually given thoughtful consideration to a purpose for, or outcome of, a conversation of this nature. Outcomes can include listening to or learning about the other person's perspective. Really listening, not pretend listening. Real willingness to learn and understand, not just a check-the-box step. Doing so, becoming present to desired outcomes and the other person, can change everything. Other outcomes could include agreeing to talk again, bringing more people into the conversation or seeking mediation.

An Example

A colleague of ours, who was a reader of a draft of this guide, shared the idea of identifying a conversation outcome with her teenage son. His whole class was looking for a way to address a growing conflict with their Leadership Class teacher. The teacher had made inappropriate remarks about calorie counting, which every girl in the class felt awful about. When the class brought it up as a discussion, where the girls voiced that they had taken offense to this line of thinking, he said that it wasn't offensive and that was the end of the discussion.

Things proceeded to become even more difficult in the class once online learning began. Many of the students were not getting good grades in this Grade 12 class although, according to our colleague, they were amazing youth. They decided as a class they wanted to talk to the teacher again, but they didn't know how or what to even say.

Since they had already tried talking to the teacher once, our colleague suggested a letter from the whole class and they got right to work. As our colleague talked to her son about the desired outcome for approaching the teacher, she saw his look change. He wrestled with the idea for a minute, then realized the outcome he and the class wanted was illumination (from our CIDA-W Planning Model). They wanted to make the teacher aware of their concerns, provide feedback to him and offer input through a class discussion.

So, what happened? The teacher acknowledged the letter from the class and said they would have a class discussion the next day. Then school went back to in-person, and then they had two days off. There was no direct conversation about the letter after that. But the teacher acknowledged the difficult year and canceled the final assessments, which was a class discussion that might not have happened otherwise.

When our friend asked her son what he thought, he said he was disappointed by the lack of direct resolution and discussion but admitted that sometimes there are ways that illumination happens, even if it wasn't in all the ways hoped for.

In the end, there were no negative consequences or reactions from this difficult conversation, so it felt okay as a conflict resolution outcome. It was not exactly what they were looking for but progress was made.

What Might Be the Other Person's Worldview on this Topic

A second thing we often hear is that people have no idea how the other person (or group) has come to see the issue the way they have. They also may not have given much thought to their own experience, how they have come to see and experience the issue the way they have. This is where the Worldview Intelligence Six Dimensions Framework shared on page 23 is useful. It walks you through each of the Dimensions to think through both your own perspective in more detail and to begin to imagine the other person's worldview on the issue. Once this is done, people sometimes realize the conversation they now need to have is different than the one they thought they needed to have.

A third thing that happens is, after working through the Planning Guide, people sometimes realize there will be no benefit in having the conversation, usually because it will not change anyone's views and may just add to the conflict. This decision works if you come to your own understanding and sense of peace about the conflict through the planning process. This includes recognizing that the issue does not matter as much as you originally thought or that you can maintain the relationship without allowing this tension to be an ongoing disrupter. For this to work, as mentioned above, it has to be true. You have to be able to let it go and mean it.

An Example

A good example is Kathy's relationship with her father. Their relationship was close in the last 10-15 years of his life. He had some pretty strong opinions a few things including homosexuality and race and at times he was very pessimistic about life. Homosexuality because of his Catholic Faith and race more from lack of thought about it. Pessimistic because he'd had a hard life at times. While their worldviews were pretty aligned, there were times when her father would go off on a rant about something she held a very different view of. She determined he was not going to change his mind, it didn't come up that often, he was in his 80s, and she didn't need to turn it into an entrenched argument. So, usually she went quiet and usually he changed the topic. She was at peace with this.

Not Always the Ideal Result, But Good Enough

Sometimes we have the planned conversation and the outcome is not the ideal, as in the story above, but it is good enough. Working through this Planning Guide helps you identify possible consequences and you can decide which of them are worth the potential risk or benefit of addressing the conflict. Risks could include that a relationship is transformed in a way that is less than your ideal outcome or it comes to an end. A changed relationship in less ideal ways might include meeting differently or in new places, or some conversations, actions or behaviors are out of bounds. If your own boundaries can be maintained and the relationship is important enough, this might be enough, for a time at least.

What's in This Guide – What to Expect

This Planning Guide will help you think through a potential conversation to address a tension or conflict in a relationship or situation that matters to you. It offers the opportunity to potentially disrupt patterns that have not been helpful. It provides a starting point in understanding how worldviews work and how fast they work. It will provide insight that will help you decide whether to have a conversation you have been avoiding and, if so, how to plan for invitation and exploration.

Attachment to Worldviews

In addition to understanding what worldviews are and what Worldview Intelligence is, we draw on behavioral and brain science to help you understand your attachment to your own worldview and other people's attachment to theirs. You will gain insight into why it can be so challenging to open up exploratory conversations or an opportunity to be in learning together, especially if you just want to be right, to be acknowledged or validated for your own point of view.

The starting place is you. The most powerful instrument you have is yourself. The more you understand your own worldview, what you react to and why, the greater the potential to hold space for any conversation and to open exploratory ground. It doesn't necessarily mean it will be easy, but hopefully it will be worthwhile.

A Step-By-Step Guide

We have created a step-by-step guide with reflection questions and planning charts throughout. You can work through parts of it or all of it. Once you have used this, elements of it will become part of your thinking any time you recognize you have been avoiding a conflict or you need to engage an exploratory conversation to get to productive outcomes. It is a practice.

If you want a more in-depth understanding of worldviews, Worldview Intelligence, the Six Dimensions Framework or how to build trust and relationship, you might want to read our book: *Building Trust and Relationship at the Speed of Change*, take a look at our website and blog posts at WorldviewIntelligence.com or check out our education courses at WorldviewPrograms.com.

Have fun with the Planning Guide and good luck with your conversations.

Lesson 1: Worldviews and Worldview Intelligence

Worldviews are the lenses through which we each see and experience the world. Individuals have worldviews as do teams, businesses, organizations, governments, faiths, communities, cultures and families. Until illuminated, worldviews operate in our unawareness while influencing communication, relationship and tension or conflict. Simply illuminating worldviews can make a difference in our approach to relationship, trust and communication.

Worldview Intelligence

Worldview Intelligence is the ability to skillfully give voice and visibility to multiple worldviews in order to open explorations, make connections and bridge difference while maintaining compassion and humility.



Understanding how worldviews influence actions and how those actions in turn inform, shift or reinforce our worldviews and worldview choices is useful to planning how address a challenging conversation or issue and to opening an exploratory conversation in the face of relationship tensions or conflicts. More information is shared on the Six Dimensions Framework in Section 6 under Illuminate. Briefly, the Dimensions are Reality, History, Future, Values, Practices and Knowledge.

Worldview Intelligence Skills

There are many skills associated with developing competency in Worldview Intelligence. A few of them are:

- Personal presence: fully attending to the environment or circumstance you are in and to the people you are engaging.
- Deep listening: listening, from a deep, receptive, and caring place within yourself, to perceive deeper and often subtler levels of meaning and intention in the other person. It is listening that is generous, empathic, supportive, accurate, and trusting.
- Artful inquiry: asking skillful questions with curiosity to learn more about the worldviews of an individual, group or community, to make connections and understand motivations.
- Pattern recognition: recognizing the deeper patterns in a conversation, relationship issue, organization, or system to bring visibility to it, illuminate blind spots and enable better responses.
- Holding divergent views: recognizing that many worldviews exist on any given subject, acknowledging and inviting multiple worldviews and understanding better, more comprehensive decisions are made at the intersectionality of worldviews.

As mentioned in the introduction, the most powerful instrument you have is yourself. The more you know about your own worldview, what triggers you, and how to build your capacity to be present, ask good questions, to listen with curiosity, the more skillful you become in your ability to move beyond conflict avoidance to exploratory or learning conversations that lead you to productive outcomes.

Personal Reflection

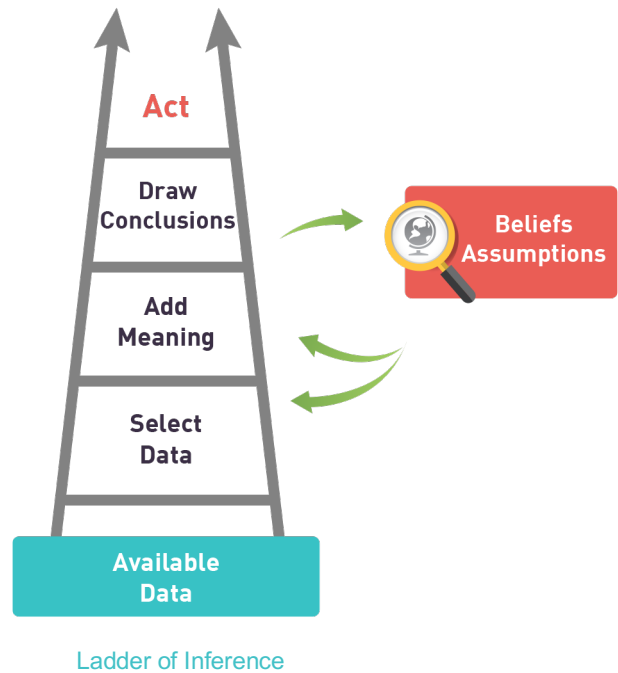
Given what you have learned about worldviews and Worldview Intelligence, take a moment and reflect on your worldview and what important elements of it might be for you. Jot down some notes below.

Lesson 2: Ladder of Inference

We often say, we think with our worldviews and through our worldviews, but not very often about our worldviews. Why is this important? Because our worldviews are active all the time, largely in our unawareness, and they influence every story we make up about ourselves, other people and situations, including when we don't realize we are making up a story. The Ladder of Inference helps us understand this dynamic pattern of interaction between worldviews, the stories we tell and how we act in the world.

Our worldviews let information in and filter information out. Beliefs and assumptions are part of our worldviews and they influence what we become aware of and what we don't.

Meaning-making is the story we tell about the data or information we encounter and then the conclusions we draw. When we act or react, we are not acting based on what we are seeing or experiencing, we are acting based on the stories we have told ourselves (or others), the meaning we have made of the information, situation, person or group that has our attention.



The information we pay attention to is never complete. Our worldviews fill in the gaps. Sometimes we say, we fill in the gaps with blinders on – the blinders being our worldviews.

Think about the last time you were sitting in a restaurant, waiting in an airport, using public transportation or even walking on the street. As you watched other people sitting near you or walking by, how often have you made up a story about them, fully formed, based on nothing but what you see or notice?

How often have you made up a story about a person you are in conflict with? Or made up a story about yourself that rationalizes why it is okay you have not yet had that conversation with them? Have you made the other person a villain in your story and yourself either a victim or a hero? Usually, you don't know how the story will play itself out until you are in it. You can spin or imagine endless scenarios in your mind about what might happen, or you can take that energy and work through the steps laid out in this Planning Guide.

When to Question Assumptions

Habits and patterns of thinking, action, and interaction are helpful to us and not inherently a bad thing. When you discover you have gotten into trouble based on assumptions or when you are trying to sort out the dynamics of a situation, expand a story or open an

exploration, the following reflection opportunities can be very helpful in understanding more about a situation or reaction.

What you can do when you notice you have climbed the Ladder of Inference:

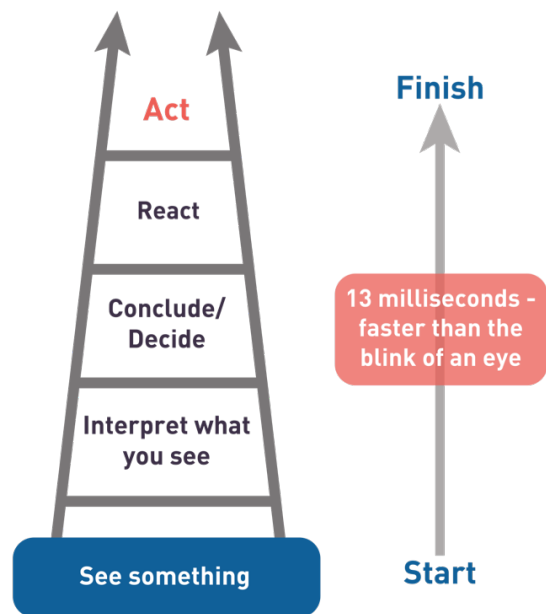
1. Practice naming the assumptions you are making and their possible influence on your actions.
2. Separate the data or evidence from the conclusions. Notice the types of conclusions, opinions or assumptions you might be mistaking for facts.
3. Become curious about how to expand the data pool or your awareness of the data you habitually select.
4. Notice the story you tell as you add meaning and draw conclusions. Does anything change as you do this?
5. Develop a practice of pausing and then acting mindfully.

Personal Reflection
Write down some of your own ideas:

Lesson 3: Human Behavior/Dynamics

Another interesting facet of the Ladder of Inference is that you are constantly making decisions at lightning-fast speeds, mostly without your conscious awareness. From the time you see something, interpret it, make conclusions about it, then react to it and begin to act upon the conclusions you have arrived at, less than 13 milliseconds - or .013 seconds – will have passed. That is faster than you can blink your eyes. Less time than it takes you to read these five sentences.

Your eyes are finding concepts and your brain is trying to understand them all day long. Even after an image has disappeared, the concepts may linger for processing in your brain, adding more interpretation, reinforcing your belief systems about people, ideas and situations.



This rapid processing helps keep you safe, enables you to recognize complex patterns so you know instantly who familiar people, places and/or situations are and develops habits for you to move through your days quicker. And, it gets you in trouble when your interpretation, conclusions and reactions are wrong. It is important to remember that it is not always easy to admit we may have misinterpreted something or we may be wrong, so this requires extra effort to be a conscious participant in your own experience.

Much of the research about how fast your brain processes information is funded by marketing companies and political organizations who want to ensure their messages influence you, your thoughts, beliefs and actions in a particular direction before you have a chance to think.

As noted above, the Ladder of Inference is particularly useful in understanding your thinking process when needing to address a conflict so you can start with a fresh perspective or a new page. This is especially helpful in cases where tension or conflict has been ongoing or simmering for a while. You may be climbing this Ladder of Inference in relation to the person or the conflict, without stopping to question your assumptions, interpretations or reactions. Reflecting on the Ladder of Inference can offer you new starting points for how you show up to the conversation and how you invite the other person to show up for the conversation.

An Example

A few years ago, Jerry was asked to facilitate a staff team retreat intended to address growing conflict amongst team members. The conflict centered mainly around a specific person's actions related to timecards. She was given the responsibility to complete

timecards for team members and took that responsibility seriously. If someone arrived late or left early it was reflected in their time cards. The team members arriving late or leaving early were doing so at the suggestion of the team leader since they had worked the night before or were leaving to go to an evening meeting.

After a few times of seeing what was happening to their timecards, several team members climbed the Ladder and assumed she was just a difficult person trying to take out her personal issues on them. They started treating her differently, their actions flowing from the interpretation they were making of her actions. This only escalated things.

During the retreat, Jerry suggested shifting the conversation away from the personal and instead talk about worldviews. Once that happened, it became clear her worldview was to do a task as described by the team leader and the other team members' worldviews were that they had been given flexibility by the team leader. While this helped address the immediate conflict, much relational damage had been done.

The Worldview Intelligence approach offers you the opportunity to short-circuit this unconscious messaging. It gives you the awareness, knowledge and skills to press the pause button, be curious about your interpretations so you can act more mindfully, intentionally or strategically.

Behavioral Science – How Behaviors/Actions are Influenced

Behavioral science research offers insight into how our worldviews work, why we are so attached to them and why it is hard to persuade people to change their minds, beliefs or perspectives, including ourselves. We offer a number of behavioral science concepts for your reflection along with brief explanations of them. In our book *Building Trust and Relationship at the Speed of Change*, Chapter 14 is dedicated to more in-depth descriptions and stories on these concepts. Reflecting on them can help you in understanding reactions to statements, behaviors or actions – yours and someone else's – and can help you strategize a conversation where you are hoping to find a way forward in a situation with another person where tension or conflict exists.

Cognitive Dissonance

When you hold a core belief that is very strong, when you are presented with evidence that works against that belief, the new evidence cannot be accepted. It creates a feeling that is extremely uncomfortable called cognitive dissonance. Because, as human beings, it is so important to protect our core beliefs, we will rationalize, ignore and deny that which does not fit with the core belief. Dissonance is especially painful when conflict arises between your view of self and information that disputes that view. In this way, cognitive dissonance enables us to stay committed to our beliefs.

Confirmation Bias

Confirmation bias is the tendency to look for information, data and facts that support our worldviews, perspectives, opinions and beliefs. Our worldview will deliberately and unconsciously filter out information that does not support our view and let in information that does. The more we see, experience and hear something, the more we believe it, even if it is not true. In a conflict, both you and the other person may well reference the data or information that supports your view. This can sometimes keep people in a battle of the “facts” when the conversation or the conflict is really about something else, like values.

Motivated Reasoning

Once we have made a decision about something, we have an unconscious tendency to process information in a way that supports and validates that decision. We are also more likely to deliberately seek out information that supports our decision or view. The more we do this, the more attached we become to our decision or our point of view and the more it fuels our sense of self or identity. It becomes a matter of self-preservation to resist information that threatens our very sense of identity.

Sunk Cost

When faced with choices, we analyze the options and make a decision. Once a decision is made, we are motivated to stick with it because we have a ‘sunk cost’ or investment in the decision even if another, perhaps better, option emerges. This is also true for projects we have dedicated time to or relationships we have had that may not be good for our own well-being. When you are considering opening an exploratory conversation to find a productive outcome, remember that both you and the other person have a sunk cost in your position and in the conflict itself. And maybe you both have a sunk cost in the relationship which could be helpful in wanting to resolve any conflicts that are present.

Loss Aversion

We are more fearful about losing something familiar to us than we are excited about gaining something that is better or greater but not clearly known to us. Ron Heifetz, author of *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, notes that leadership is about the management of loss and this is certainly true when dealing with change. It may also well be true in addressing a conflict. How you align with this conflict might feel worth hanging on to, it might be an aspect of your identity. Naming what you might lose and what you might gain could be very helpful here. Reflecting on this from another person’s point of view might be beneficial too.

The Law of Group Polarization

When we are around people like us, we can become more extreme in our common views. We become less empathetic or understanding of people who see things differently. Have your views on the issue you want to discuss become more intense or extreme lately? Has the other person’s views changed? Might this impact your ability to open an exploratory or learning conversation?

Lesson 4: Brain Science – Amygdala Hijacks

Cognitive and brain research tells us that reason is not rational without emotion or an overlay of values to make sense of facts. When working with or offering facts, framing them in terms of values can open an exploration not otherwise available.

There are neural pathways in the brain that determine how information flows. Neural pathways that are used more frequently are stronger and information travels through them faster. When you consistently argue a specific position, you change your brain. When a circuit is activated, the synapses get stronger. If that circuit inhibits another circuit, that circuit gets weaker. Repetition strengthens synapses. It doesn't matter if what is repeated is true or not, a real threat or not.

Brain Formation

The brain forms from the back to the front – from the most primitive part that supports automatic functions and whose primary purpose is to keep us alive to the most sophisticated part used for thinking, creativity or imagination.

Action Brain

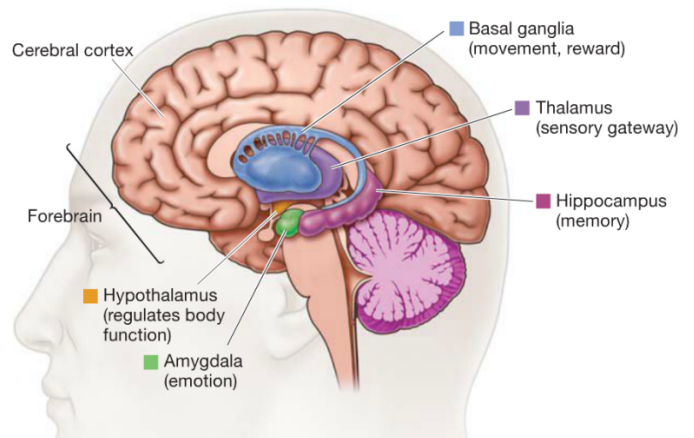
- Takes care of your automatic behaviors like breathing, circulating blood, digesting lunch, etc.
- Operates in the background but dominates whenever you sense your safety is threatened or your survival is at stake
- This is the part of the brain that forms first

Amygdala

- Located in the Action Brain (brainstem)
- Controls your automatic – fight, flight or freeze – response to situations
- Can be activated in $<1/1000^{\text{th}}$ of a second

Emotional Brain

- Part of the brain that allows you to feel connected to other people and the world around you
- Plays a significant role in transferring information from short term to long term memory



Thalamus

- Located near the center of the brain, it is above the mid-brain allowing for nerve fiber connections to the cerebral cortex in all directions
- The primary function of the thalamus is to relay motor and sensory signals to the cerebral cortex

Pre-Frontal Cortex – The Thinking/Logical Brain

- Responsible for abstract thought, it is involved in your ability to conceptualize, reflect on and learn from your experiences
- It is what allows you to create, to innovate and to imagine

Amygdala Hijack – The Fight, Flight, Freeze Response

1. Sensory data is sent to the Thalamus and also to the Amygdala and the Pre-Frontal Cortex
2. The amygdala does an instantaneous threat assessment and blocks slower thinking processes, including to the Thalamus where logic and rationality reside
3. This causes a rapid, automatic, kinesthetic or bodily response
4. This amygdala response can also be in play when you are triggered by an event, situation or other person
5. When you are in this response, chemical and hormonal responses are also activated including IgA (immune system hormone) and DHEA (anti-aging hormone) go down and Cortisol (nicknamed the stress hormone) go up
6. You can use a trigger response plan to become more intentional in your reactions

Personal Reflection Questions
What are some things that trigger your fight-flight-freeze response?
What strategies, if any, do you have to mitigate that response?

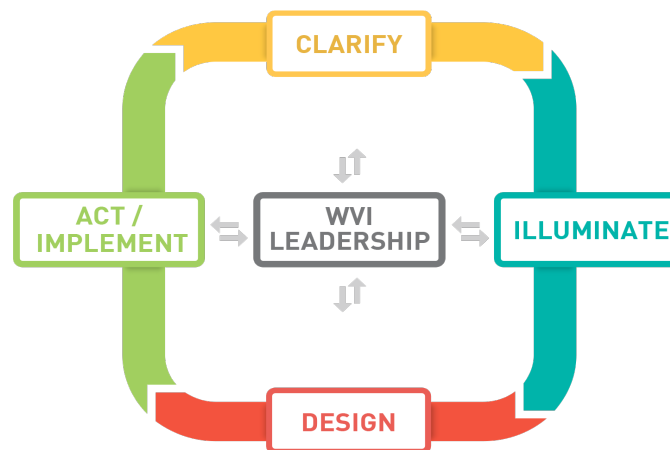
Lesson 5: SHEER Conversation Framework

The following steps outlined in the Worldview Intelligence SHEER Conversation Framework provide a guideline for initiating Worldview Explorations with people or groups that may have a different worldview or a different understanding of any given situation than you do. These steps also line up with our CIDA-W Planning Model where we provide detailed steps for you to consider in your planning process to move from conflict avoidance to exploratory or learning conversations.

S	<i>Starting point or stance:</i> know yourself and your own worldview (apply Worldview Intelligence Leadership and the Six Dimensions Framework [beginning on page 15] to your situation and analysis): • Be clear about your own starting point on this topic • Understand where and how you get triggered on issues or in conversations to be able to mitigate your own response
H	<i>Hopes, hoped for outcomes</i> of the conversation: • Identify your intention and motivation in engaging the conversation • Identify what you hope to achieve by the end of the conversation
E	<i>Empathy:</i> put yourself in the shoes of the other person by thoughtfully considering what their worldview might be: • Imagine how they have come to see and experience the issue, topic or situation the way they have – recognize you may have to check your assumptions once you engage the conversation. • When you consider what the other person's perspective might be, how might this change how you engage the person and the conversation?
E	<i>Engage</i> the person and the conversation: • Consider how you make the conversation space invitational and exploratory • Be aware of your own energy and presence in the conversation and how it makes the other person feel by observing their reactions and adjusting your stance
R	<i>Results, Resolution, Reflection</i> • Identify any openings or movement in the explorations • Acknowledge movement or resolution that arises • Later, reflect on the experience for learning

Personal Reflection Questions
Why or when do differences of opinion turn into conflict?
Are there “sticking points” in the conflict you are reflecting on?
What are some ways you could invite in the conflict or the other person with welcome and curiosity? Identify some questions you could explore together, without knowing the answers, but rather inviting a conversation into deep listening and sharing.

Lesson 6: CIDA-W - Worldview Intelligence Planning Model



Worldview Intelligence Model - Stage	What	How
Worldview Intelligence Leadership	• Prepare to engage, reflect on the stories you are creating on this situation • Self-awareness – personal Worldview Intelligence • Understand your role as a leader in the inquiry / initiative identified • Understand worldviews at work and how to assess them and their impact	• The Worldview Intelligence framework • Work with triggers or activation points – personally and with others • Understand and utilize the power of story • Break out of hardwired programming to develop adaptive responses (response mechanisms) • Worldview Intelligence leadership development plans
Clarify	• Understand the nature of the issue, question or system to be addressed • Identify and articulate need, purpose, outcomes/objectives	• Inquiry • Research • Check assumptions
Illuminate	• Worldviews at work • Hidden dynamics or patterns • The complexity of the system of interest	• Worldview Intelligence framework for explorations: personal, team, organizational, families, systems • Complexity theories • Systems thinking
Design	Create the conditions for: • Connections • Challenging conversations • Explorations • Culture shift	• Worldview Intelligence framework • Influence of behavioral and brain science • Apply systems thinking • Strategy development • Change management • Prototyping
Act / Implement	• Plan of action/implementation • Create the structures for the work to be done • Experiment with prototypes	Templates and practice for: • Strategic conversations • Change management • Stakeholder engagement • Addressing the influence of behavioral and brain science • Learning/feedback loops

Worldview Intelligence Leadership (CIDA-W)

Worldview Intelligence Leadership breaks out into qualities, skills and outcomes. If we draw on these qualities and skills, which comprise our stance or starting point as we endeavour to open exploratory spaces, it will bring us to some of the outcomes we might desire from an exploratory or learning conversation where we go from conflict avoidance to productive outcomes.

Worldview Intelligence Qualities	Worldview Intelligence Skills	Worldview Intelligence Outcomes
• Curiosity • Compassion • Empathy • Humility	• Presence • Deep listening • Inquiry • Illumination of hidden patterns and dynamics • The ability to change the nature of conversations • Build connections	• Increased productivity • Fewer conflicts • Better results on divisive or polarizing topics • More creativity and innovation • Stronger connections • More inclusive, diverse, welcoming work environments • Better relationships with customers, partners and stakeholders • Faster decisions by management • Greater alignment in mergers and acquisitions • Improved governance

"The longing for wholeness is at odds with the separation that most existing workplaces foster, albeit unconsciously – overemphasizing the ego and the rational while negating the spiritual and emotional; separating people based on departments they work in, their rank, background, or level of performance; separating the professional from the personal, separating the organization from its competitors and the eco-system it is embedded in." Reinventing Organizations, p. 48

Stance

Stance is the orientation or starting point you bring to a relationship or an inquiry. This exercise asks you to reflect on the stance you bring or could bring to the conversation you are planning to address a conflict you are dealing with.

Worldview Intelligence Quality	What it feels like to you to embody this quality?	What do you experience when someone is present with this quality?
Curiosity – a strong desire to know or learn something		
Compassion - the feeling that arises when you are confronted with another's suffering and feel motivated to relieve that suffering		
Empathy - the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner		
Humility - the quality of having a modest view of one's importance and an awareness of one's shortcomings		

The Importance of Forgiveness and Apologies

Sometimes the outcome we are looking for is an apology from the other person for whatever way it is that they have harmed or hurt us or that we believe they have. If this is the case, it becomes important to reflect on why the apology is important to you, to examine the emotional experience you are carrying around this issue, and to find ways to step out of the hurt you are experiencing and may have amplified by focusing on the story of this experience that you are living and reliving.

If You are Looking for an Apology

If you are looking for an apology, the first step might well be for you to step back for a moment and become curious about the actions, words or behaviors that have created this harm or hurt. Begin with your own reactions. Ask yourself, “Are there ways I may have contributed to what happened?” “What is real and what might I have misinterpreted or imagined?” “Do I understand all the circumstances around this situation – what the person said or did, what was happening for them in that moment?” “Are there factors I may not be aware of or know?” Does the other person realize that I have been hurt by their actions, words or behaviors?” “Am I willing to listen to their point of view?” If you are not open to listening, this might not be the time to request or demand an apology.

Am I willing or able to forgive this person for the hurt or harm they have done to me, whether or not I receive an apology? Why or why not? How is holding on to this grievance impacting me, the relationship or our communication? Is there anything that I can offer that might move this situation along? Are there ways I can move past this without resolution with the other person but by reaching resolution within myself? Is there trauma involved? If so, do I need support with this?

If It Is You Who Needs to Apologize

It might be you who needs to apologize. Are you willing to do this? For some reason this is very difficult for too many of us. And when we do apologize, we don't always do it well. The best non-apology Kathy ever received from someone was, “I'm sorry your actions made me mad.” Let that one sink in. She just walked away.

If someone says to you they have been harmed by something you have said or done, saying that you didn't intend to do harm does not make the harm go away. It is another way of trying to absolve yourself from responsibility. Acknowledging the harm done through your actions is important. “I'm sorry that I did that, said that, acted that way.” “I am sorry I have hurt you. If it is possible, I would like to make amends.”

You cannot make someone forgive you. You can ask. You can accept. But you cannot force. And maybe it is you who needs to forgive yourself. Do what you can, sincerely, kindly and honestly, then be kind to yourself.

Less is more. You can imagine the great story with all the words you want to say to someone you have hurt. Most of that likely contains rationalizations and justifications you want to use to let yourself off the hook. It's okay to imagine everything you want to say. And then distill it down to the simplest, sincerest thing you can say. If the conversation expands, you have other things you can draw from, the things you prepared but haven't said yet. A peace offering can go a long way. A card. Chocolate. A bottle of wine. An offer of a meal.

Forgiveness and apology are sometimes an essential part of maintaining relationship, expanding compassion and even humility, building trust and achieving productive outcomes.

Personal Reflection Questions	
Reflect on anything you have contributed to the conflict or misunderstanding	
Are you willing to forgive another person? Why or why not?	
Are there ways you can move past this without an apology?	
Do you need to be offering an apology? Why or why not?	
What can you genuinely do to make amends?	

Lesson 7: Clarify (CIDA-W)

Clarify Starting Points

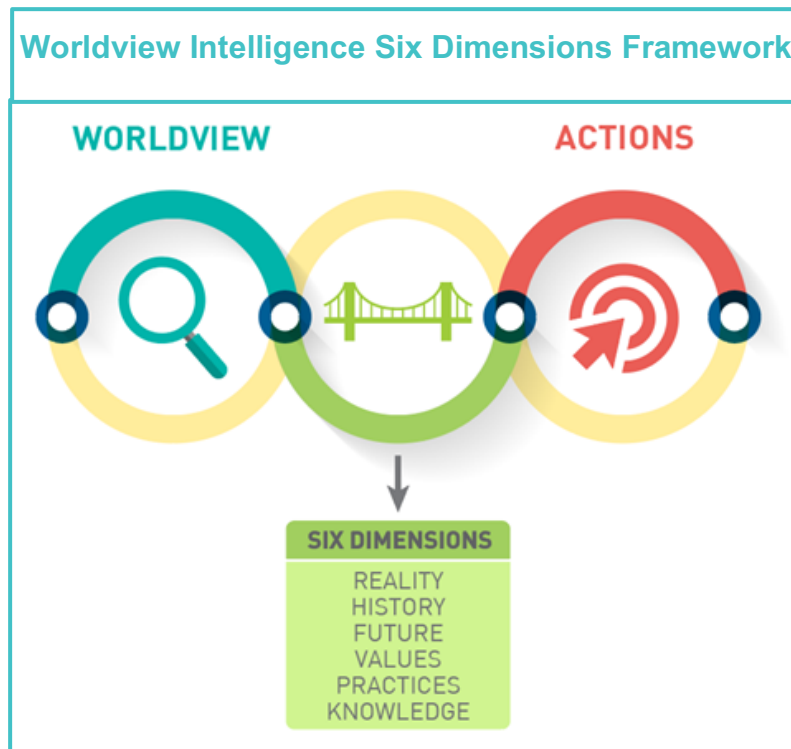
If you decide to have a conversation you have been avoiding or have simply been reluctant to have, it can be helpful in preparing for the conversation to reflect on what you want to achieve with the conversation or the relationship. It sometimes happens that when conversations are not contemplated, the issues end up being blurted out in a moment of frustration or at inopportune times. In addition to reflecting on your own starting point, this chart offers you the opportunity to step into the other person's shoes to imagine what their awareness and expectations might be.

The name of the person I want or need to have a conversation with:	Would this person also have an awareness of a need for a conversation?
What is the need for this conversation as I see it? Is the need personal? Is it related to my team or my organization (i.e. accountability)?	Would this person know or agree with this need? Might they see some other need?
How would I describe the purpose of the conversation?	How might they describe the purpose?
What outcomes am I hoping for? What outcomes, if applicable, would best serve the team or organization?	What outcomes might they like to see?
If I have been avoiding this conversation or person, why is that?	Do I imagine they might be avoiding me or this conversation and, if so, why?

What possible blind spots might I have or what things am I unwilling to acknowledge and how will this influence the conversational space?	What possible blind spots might the other person have or what things might they be unwilling to acknowledge and how will this influence the conversational space?
What judgments might I have about this situation/person that might influence my communication?	What judgments might they have about me and how might that influence their communication?
What genuine curiosities could I bring to the person or situation?	What genuine curiosities do I hope they might bring to the person or situation and is there a way I can invite that curiosity?
Any additional thoughts about starting points:	

Lesson 8: Illuminate (CIDA-W)

An Understanding of the Worldview Intelligence Six Dimensions Framework



The Worldview Intelligence Six Dimensions Framework is equally applicable and valuable in discerning your own worldview, that of other individuals or that of your profession, organization, team or department, family, community or social groups, simply by focusing the explorations through slightly different questions or inquiry. Each dimension can be understood individually or interdependently with any or all of the other dimensions.

Reality: day-to-day experiences, including the belief systems we hold.

History: key influences – people, experiences and more – local and global – that have shaped or influenced how we, individually and collectively, have come to see and experience our world generally and on specific issues.

Future: how we see, relate to and prepare for the future.

Values: the core commitments that influence and guide us.

Practices: how we live our lives and bring each aspect of our worldview to life; how we treat people.

Knowledge: our understanding of what we know, how we know what we know, what sources of knowledge we trust and how we know our answers to all six dimensions are true.

Personal Reflection Questions

The chart on the next page offers specific worldview descriptions as well as providing reflection questions to illuminate your worldview to you. On the page after that is a chart for you to work with each of the Dimensions specifically applied to the issue or challenge you are considering – both for you and for the person you want to have the conversation with.

“In short, differences are valued for the possibilities of dialogue they provide. These are enlightening possibilities for all parties to the dialogue. If I try to understand you by losing me, then we will both fail. Or if I try to understand you by denying our differences, then once again, we will fail. In both cases, our failure derives from our having lost the edge of awareness that differences provide.” -Edward Sampson

The Worldview Intelligence Six Dimensions Framework

Dimensions	Worldview Description	Personal Reflection Questions
Reality	Beliefs held about life, the world, spirituality, a profession, organization, community, family, social systems, culture. The experience of life, the world and spirituality. How day-to-day experiences are described.	What are my day-to-day experiences? What are my beliefs? How do they influence how I see and interact with the world around me?
History	How the world came to be the way it is. Influences and elements that have shaped life, work and other experiences. Why the world/profession/organization is the way it is and not different.	Who and what has influenced how I have come to see and experience the world? In what ways have they influenced me? Why am I the way I am and not different?
Future	The future that might be possible or available. The criteria used to choose and plan the future. Interaction and experience with the future.	What do I think about the future? What criteria do I use to choose my future? How do I engage with the future?
Values	The core commitments or moral guidelines that influence and guide a person, profession, organization, community, social system, culture or family.	What are my core commitments? Where did my values come from? How do my values influence my choices?
Practices	How each dimension of worldview is brought to life. How people are treated. How a person, profession, organization, community, social system, culture or family behaves and creates in the world.	What are the practices I live my life by? Which are habitual, which are intentional and which are both? How do I treat other people and do I treat some people differently than others? On what basis?
Knowledge	The understanding of what is known and how what is known is known. How the answers to all six dimensions are known to be true. What is considered reliable and trustworthy sources of knowledge.	How do I know what is true or false? What do I believe about how knowledge is created? What do I consider reliable knowledge or reliable sources of knowledge and why?

Illuminating Worldview Influences

Dimensions	Me	The other person	Insights
Reality What known aspect of my/their reality is relevant to this situation, recognizing there are things I might not know?			
History How did I/they come to see this issue the way I/they have?			
Future What future might I/they be facing and what impact might this conversation have for the future?			
Values What values/core commitments might be having the most influence here?			
Practices Are there practices I can bring to this or is there a lack of coherence between practices and stated worldviews?			
Knowledge What sources of knowledge might I/they be relying on with respect to this issue?			

Additional Considerations

1. Are there power dynamics that are impacting this conversation/relationship? If so, what is the nature of the power dynamics and who has power? What are the considerations? When we think about power, we often think about it in more obvious ways like the positional power of someone in authority over someone who may be a direct report or in relation to many of today's conversations about social power and privilege. These may well be one of the considerations. Yet there are many forms of power we don't always automatically consider. They include: age, gender, wealth, position in a family, able bodied, student-teacher, mentor-mentee and more. When using this chart, take care to name sources of power that may be present in the relationship and reflect on how that may influence the communication around the conflict.

I am the person with power	The other person is the person with power	We are relatively equal

2. Are there cultural, social or faith contexts to be taken into consideration? If so, what are the contexts and what needs to be considered?

For me	For the other person	In the larger context

3. Might the effects of trauma be a part of this situation for either me or the other person? Trauma is the response to a deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope, causes feelings of helplessness, diminishes their sense of self and their ability to feel a full range of emotions and experiences. If trauma exist in you or the other person, how does this inform how to approach this person or conversation?

For me	For the other person	In the larger context

Lesson 9: Design And Act (CIDA-W)

Design (CIDA-W)

Once you understand the stance you bring to the conversation, you have clarity about the need for the conversation and have gained insights by illuminating worldview influences, you can begin to design the circumstances of the conversation.

When is a good time to have this conversation?	What might be a good time for the other person?
How could I create an invitational and welcoming space? Where would be a good meeting place to achieve the outcomes I identified?	Where might they be most comfortable?
Where/how could I begin this conversation? What phrases I might consider using?	How might the other person respond?
What approaches could I take to achieve the outcomes identified?	What approaches might the other person contribute to the outcome or feel included in the outcome?
What are some good questions I could use to open exploratory ground? Could any of these questions be a trigger for the other person?	What questions might they ask me? What questions might trigger me?

Act (CIDA-W)

While Act will only happen when you are able to have the conversation, there are actions and practices you can do immediately prior to the conversation and considerations for during the conversation to help get to a productive outcome. Once the conversation is complete, there are questions that can spark your reflection and learning.

Preparation for the conversation

How will I prepare myself in advance of this conversation? My stance, any skills I will focus on, being present?	How do I imagine the other person will arrive to the conversation?
Ways in which I might prepare the space (furniture arrangement, situation of chairs)?	

During the conversation

What arriving gesture/greeting will I use? (i.e.: shake hands)	How might the other person be prepared to greet me? How might they respond to my greeting?
Will I take notes?	How will taking notes, or not, impact the other person?
If in a meeting room, will I offer a beverage?	
If we meet in a public space like coffee shop or restaurant, how will beverage or food be paid for? Do I offer? Do I accept an offer from the other person?	

Post Conversation Reflection

How did planning for this conversation impact me?	How did planning impact the other person and their experience?
What was different in the experience from the plan?	How did the interaction influence this difference?
What actions did I take?	How did they respond?
What am I relieved about? Excited about? Disappointed about?	What emotions did they seem to experience during or by the end of the conversation?
What would I do differently next time?	
What is a good next step in this conversation or process?	

Congratulations and Potential Next Steps

We hope congratulations are in order, that you have moved from Conflict Avoidance to Productive Outcomes, that you have been able to open an exploratory conversation – or many. We created this step-by-step Planning Guide to apply Worldview Intelligence and the Six Dimensions Framework in very specific circumstances. Participants in our programs have found it a useful resource. We hope it made a difference for you and we would love to hear from you. You can reach us through the website or at Authors@WorldviewIntelligence.com

Other Insights/Take-Aways



We have identified many reflection opportunities throughout this planning guide but there are always additional things identified throughout this kind of practice. There may be insights or take-aways for you that were not covered. Take a few moments to reflect on what they are for you.

Key Insights/Takeaways

Worldview Intelligence Resources

Our Book

Building Trust and Relationship at the Speed of Change

Inquire directly with us, particularly for bulk orders, or order it online from Amazon or other book ordering sites.

Website and E-Learning Course Resources

www.WorldviewIntelligence.com

www.WorldviewPrograms.com

Online Worldview Exploration Dialogue Groups

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/worldviewawareness/>

Linked In: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/Worldview-Awareness-8154323?home=&gid=8154323&trk=anet ug hm>

Video Resources

Worldviews – Changing Outcomes and Conversations: Interviews and Testimonials
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiotOi6U6QT_wMnV7rgNf6Q

Worldview Intelligence YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXqn8vTP-RzRSONtITeHIIA>

Video: Jerry Nagel, TEDx 1000 Lakes: A Way Forward When Worldviews Collide
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f27Od6lYxzQ>

What Our Clients Say About Working With Us

"Worldview Intelligence helped our University navigate through difficult conversations involving highly polarized views between alumni and student athletes. Worldview Intelligence helped to structure these conversations into something meaningful and productive. As a campus, we were at a loss on how to move forward with critical conversations due to our fear of the possible fallout. This fear is ever present, but Worldview provide a structure and mindset that was inclusive of all perspectives. Kathy and Jerry's openness and understanding of other worldviews was especially helpful with our polarized topics. They gave everyone speaking grace and opportunity to express themselves."

"One impactful story that comes to mind was during the Worldview Intelligence retreat that was held just a few weeks after the merger of our two organizations. Not only did the experience help build relationships across the newly combined organization, the conversations around worldviews and perspective were so helpful in us realizing that we brought both similarities and unique qualities to our partnership... and that was okay and a good thing. The safe culture created by you that helped many of us share our concerns and pains with the merger were an important step in us moving toward integration." Sr. Talent and Organizational Effectiveness Consultant in a US based Health Care Company growing rapidly through mergers and acquisitions

"Worldview Intelligence gave us the strategies and tools to change the direction of our work. We knew what to do when faced with a situation that likely had its roots in different worldviews. Worldview Intelligence gave us the knowledge and the tools to frame a difficult conversation with others." General Manager, Sport and Recreation Facility based in Nova Scotia

"The tone and manner with which Kathy and Jerry lead the meeting create an environment where you know this is no ordinary company retreat. They seem to access something deep inside you that allows you to open yourself up to both giving and receiving at a much more authentic level than you might normally in a business setting. The Worldview Intelligence framework is a very powerful tool to bring people together. I think the applications are endless and could be extremely valuable in the current times that have been very volatile." Chief Transformation Officer, Reinsurance Company based in Bermuda

The Authors

Jerry Nagel, MA, PhD



Jerry, along with Kathy Jourdain, is co-founder of Worldview Intelligence LLC. Jerry received his PhD from Tilburg University in the Netherlands in 2015. His research and dissertation on worldviews forms a strong foundation for the Worldview Intelligence work. Recognizing the profound impact of the worldview explorations on the quality of conversations on issues that matter, he and Kathy have developed Worldview Intelligence programs for specific clients and as general offerings in Canada, the US, Bermuda, Europe and Australia.

Jerry is also President of the [Meadowlark Institute](#), an organization committed to developing individual and collective capacity to be responsible during times of rapid change, to be comfortable with uncertainty, to hold multiple points of view simultaneously, and engage in meaningful conversations with those who hold different traditions, values and goals.

Jerry brings a unique background in economic development focused on rural areas combined with the ability to also work in and understand large urban centers. He works with a variety of organizations of all sizes in a variety of contexts. His BA and MA in Economics is complimented by his PhD in Social and Behavioral Science from Tilburg University in the Netherlands.

His work is grounded in the patterns and practices of the Art of Participatory Leadership and the Art of Hosting Meaningful Conversations, a self-organized global network where he is internationally recognized as a meaningful contributor and steward.

Over his career, Jerry has served in leadership positions in several organizations, including the Association for Human Development, North Dakota Rural Development Corporation, Crookston Enterprise Development Center, Northwest Regional Development Commission, Red River Trade Council, an international trade development organization, and the Northern Great Plains Rural Development Commission, a Congressionally established federal commission. He also served as an economic development advisor to former North Dakota Governor Art Link.

Kathy Jourdain, MBA

Kathy Jourdain is an internationally recognized consultant, trainer and coach with two decades of experience. She is a co-founder, with Jerry Nagel, of [Worldview Intelligence](#). She is a global steward and practitioner of the Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter, a body of knowledge that offers a suite of patterns and practices for working with complexity and to engage the minds, hearts and commitment of individuals, groups, organizations and systems on issues of collective interest or concern.



Kathy was a driving force behind Envision Halifax (now Engage Nova Scotia): a voluntary organization whose mission was to ignite a culture of civic engagement. She co-designed and co-facilitated the leadership development program and her leadership was recognized in 2009 with an Award.

She is certified in Strategic Planning and Strategic Change Management through the International Center for Strategic Management headquartered in San Diego, CA. She holds an MBA from Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia and is a graduate of the Banff Centre for Management's Executive Leadership Program.

As CEO of the Atlantic Division of a major health charity, she streamlined their internal systems. During her not-for-profit career, she was a member of the Canadian Society of Association Executives (C.S.A.E.), and was on both the local and national boards. She earned the designation of Certified Association Executive (C.A.E.). Her outstanding leadership and contribution in the not-for-profit sector were recognized with local and national awards.

Kathy's company, [Shape Shift Strategies Inc.](#), is based in Bedford, Nova Scotia, Canada. Her memoir, [Embracing the Stranger in Me: A Journey to Openheartedness](#), has been hailed as a deeply authentic sharing of the journey that has shaped who she is today. She is getting ready to publish her second book: *Your Healing Power Within* and is also a contributing author to *Gift of the Hit*.

CONFLICT AVOIDANCE ^{TO} PRODUCTIVE OUTCOMES

A PLANNING GUIDE FOR CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS

People and conflict: an age-old dynamic that has been around as long as there have been human beings on the planet. Interpersonal conflict can get us into trouble. So can conflict avoidance.

This guide to plan for difficult conversations provides a detailed approach to moving from conflict avoidance to productive outcomes. It has been created from the experience of the authors in working with clients and individuals in many countries, applying Worldview Intelligence to challenging situations.

Not only does this guide provide useful templates, it addresses two key areas people do not consider when provoked into a conflict: what outcome do I want and what is the other person's experience with this issue?

THE AUTHORS

KATHY JOURDAIN, MBA (Canada) and JERRY NAGEL, PHD (United States) are transnational business partners and the founders of Worldview Intelligence. Their first book, *Building Trust and Relationship at the Speed of Change*, describes their innovative approach to leadership development, community engagement, strategic planning, change management and

culture change. It has been hailed as a thought-provoking, practical and enjoyable read, brought alive through stories of application in their work with clients and groups from around the world.



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