GLASL’S NINE-STAGE MODEL OF CONFLICT ESCALATION

There are numerous models of conflict escalation and de-escalation. Glasl’s nine stage model is an excellent tool for tracking the development of complex conflicts and deciding suitable strategies for conflict resolution or management.

Notice that Glasl, makes no reference to onset and early warning signs stages, but begins his model when the conflict is well and truly developed.

☐ **Stage 1: Hardening**
  - Earlier attempts at resolving the issue are unsuccessful, the problem remains, and leads to irritation.
  - Interests and opinions crystallize into fixed positions that tend to become mutually incompatible.
  - Groups start to form around certain positions
  - Habitual behaviour patterns emerge in strained situations

☐ **Stage 2: Debates And Polemics**
  - One or both parties lose(-s) faith in the possibility of solving the problems
  - Verbal interactions shift from rational arguments towards emotions and relative power issues - tactical manipulation emerges
  - Debates focusses on who is most successful in promoting the standpoints, and how the outcomes of the debate affects one’s reputation.
  - Stereotyping of behaviour patterns

☐ **Stage 3: Actions, Not Words**
  - Parties believe further talk will not resolve anything, and shift attention to actions.
  - Parties see each other as competitors.
  - Fantasies about possible motives and hidden strategies develop unchecked.
  - Responsibility for the course of events is denied - actions regarded as necessary responses to other’s behaviour.

☐ **Stage 4: Images And Coalitions**
  - Conflict no longer about concrete issues, but victory or defeat.
  - Defending one’s reputation is a major concern.
  - Stereotyping very resistant to change through new information.
  - Negative other-image comprises prejudices and attributions of motives and intentions
  - Veiled attacks or “deniable punishment behaviour” – subtle & deniable provocation, insult, criticism, ambiguous comments, irony and body language
  - Parties actively enlist support from bystanders.
Beyond Stage 4 internal management of conflict is regarded is largely impossible, using a third party to facilitate resolution may be advised.

Stage 5: Loss Of Face
- Images and positions parties hold are regarded not in terms of superiority and inferiority, but in terms of angels and devils.
- Loss of face, and ensuing retaliatory acts often isolate the conflict parties from bystanders.

Stage 6: Strategies And Threats
- Conflict parties resort to threats of damaging actions
- Parties increasingly lose control over the course of events. By their own actions they create a pressure to act rapidly and radically.
- Serious risk that stress, increasing turbulence and complexity lead to disintegration of parties into smaller units acting autonomously.

Stage 7: Limited Destructive Blows
- Threats translated into action
- Attacks lead to retaliations, often even more destructive.
- Lose-lose struggle. Survival and less damage than counterpart suffers are main goals.

Stage 8: Fragmentation Of The Enemy
- Attacks on the counterpart target all signs of vitality.
- Only restraining factor is the concern for one's own survival.

Stage 9: Together Into The Abyss Stage
- Self-preservation instinct is neglected
- Only remaining concern in the race towards the abyss is to make sure enemy falls too.