

## 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 as 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.