

# **POLITE DISCUSSION**

*a play about rational discourse*

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## **Abstract**

The virtually limitless access to information suggests informed and reasoned dialogue on important issues. Do we see this in reality? Are techniques calling for clarity, “seeking first to understand”, etc., helping? Are these methods sufficient *in themselves* for reasoned debate and the exchange of ideas? Does their application depend on the context of the situation, and if so, what is this context?

This play will demonstrate simple yet powerful thinking processes of the Theory of Constraints, including the evaporating cloud and effect-cause-effect logic, and an e-prime injection to often perceived “either/or” dilemmas, leading to rational discourse.

## **General Nature of Presentation**

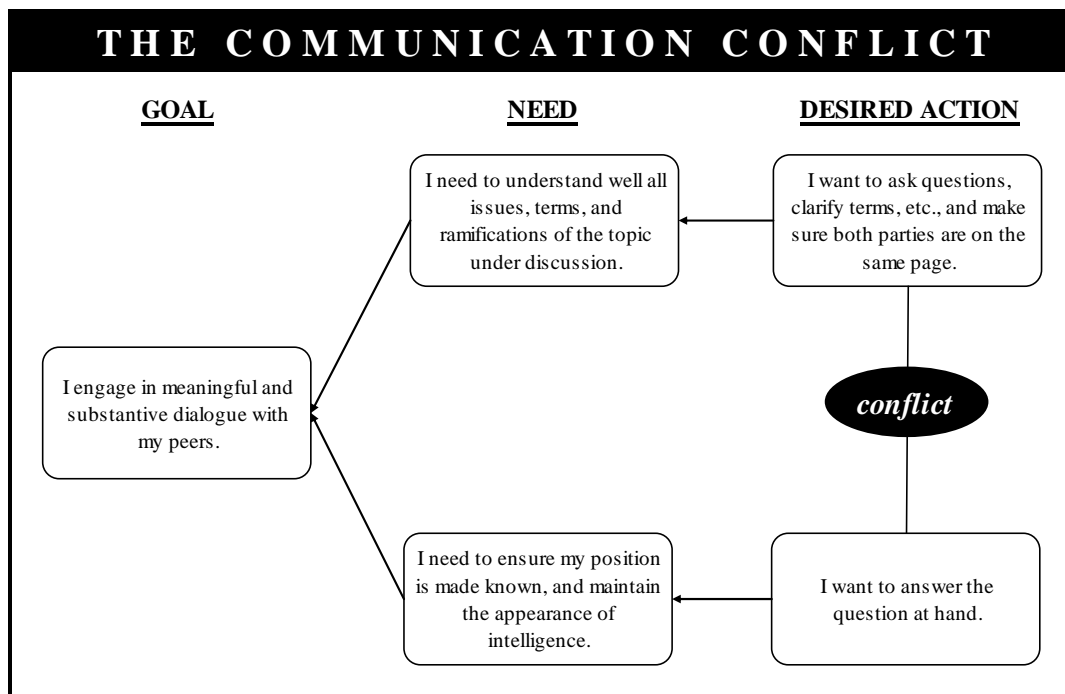
“What do you think about the War in Iraq?” It’s an often asked question. How often do we see reasoned dialogue about the subject? This, and many issues as democracy, immigration, social security, Medicare prescription drugs, and stem-cell research, rapidly disintegrate into a “conversational entropy”, with a rapid half-life!

What response is evoked if one seeks clarification on the issue? Let’s be honest: how often do clarifying questions work – *in reality*? Instead of clarifying the issue, the conversational tone elevates as the other party often resents such questions.

Rather than responding with clarifying questions, the alternative seems to simply provide a straight-forward answer. Again, let’s be honest: what happens when the conversation starts with a disagreement – *in reality*? Does anyone ever change their mind?

We need only observe any form of media to see this in action – and the consequences.

What a conflict – a “*communication conflict!*” Should I ask a question OR should I simply answer the question? Either way seems to evoke negative results! It seems I’m stuck in a “no-win” situation. Am I?



It's no wonder we see little "polite discussion" about serious issues. If I ask a question, bad things happen (dialogue disintegrates rapidly), and if I answer the question, bad things also happen (nothing is resolved). What to do?

A premise of the Theory of Constraints is the rationality of the world; consequently, such "either-or" dilemmas as above are artificial constructs. As such, the search for an *injection* satisfying both legitimate needs in the system takes place.

This play will demonstrate the application of e-prime as a powerful injection leading to polite discussion.

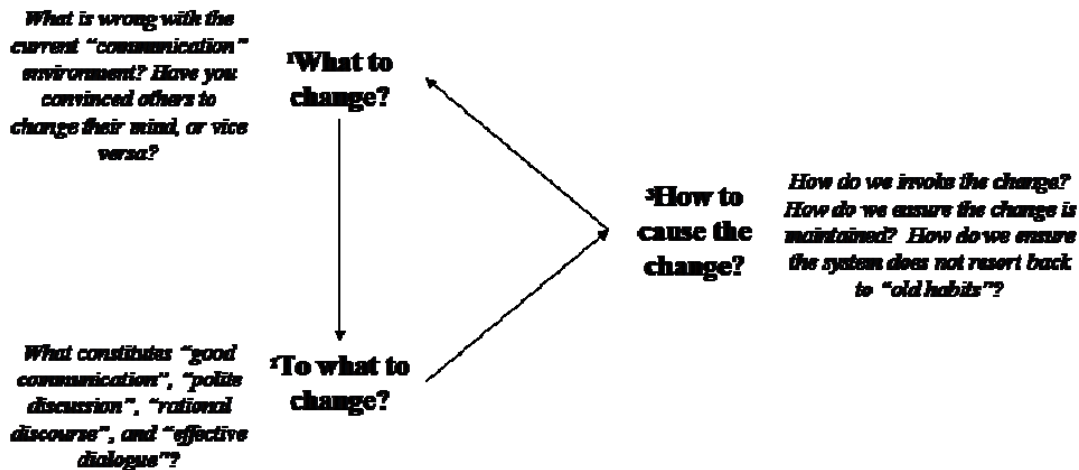
### The Play Layout

1. The play begins, with 3-5 examples of "dialogue" and how such discussions take place in reality;
2. A general introduction of the nature of the conflict from a systems-perspective;
3. A look at a particular application of e-prime as an injection to the Aristotelian either/or conflict and the logical implications of such an application;
4. The play concludes with 3-5 examples of e-prime in the context of (3) above, and how polite discussion becomes the rule and not the exception in conversation.

## The Nature of a Good Response

How can reasoned discourse become the norm and not the exception? What has e-prime to do with a “good response”? How can I ensure even if we do agree, it’s via the same reasons? How can I know when it is appropriate to ask a clarifying question, and when such a question becomes an irritant rather than an aid to understanding? How can I prolong the conversation?

# The Improvement of a System



And is “prolonging the conversation politely” a good in itself? What is the goal of such discourse? Is it enough to reason politely about the policies in Iraq, and then move on to North Korea, Sudan, Iran, etc.? Are these all ad hoc issues to be discussed independently, or is the goal of rational discourse the articulation of a coherent system of knowledge? Can this e-prime injection move towards such an ambitious target?

# Polite Discussion

## A Process of On-Going Improvement

