

CONFLICT & DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Blame vs. Contribution

As you read the material for our next class, keep the questions below in mind. To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages. Keep in mind that there are two basic kinds of information that you need to look for in the reading:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible conclusion about an issue, rather than another.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.

Reading

- Stone, D., Patton, B., & Heen, S. (2010). Abandon Blame. In *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* (2nd ed., pp. 58–82). New York: Viking Penguin.

Questions

1. Why does focusing on who is to blame during a difficult conversation cause problems?
2. What are the differences between blame and contribution? Why is it better to focus on contribution during conflict resolution?
3. What three misconceptions about contribution do Stone *et al* discuss? How do they attempt to correct these misconceptions?
4. What four overlooked contributors to conflict do Stone *et al* pinpoint? What two tools do they give for discovering our own contributions to a conflict?