

Blame vs. Contribution

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

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?

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 position on an issue, rather than another.

Reading

Stone, D., Patton, B., & Heen, S. (2010). Abandon blame. In *Difficult conversations: How to discuss what matters most* (2nd ed., pp. 58–82). Penguin Books.

Questions

1. What is the “blame frame” (p. 11) and why does it cause problems for conflict resolution?
2. What are the differences between blame and contribution? Why is it better to focus on contribution for conflict resolution?
3. What three misconceptions about contribution do Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen 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?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

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.