

Conflict Staircase

1. **Disagreement about a resource.** We want the same thing. Mark and Judith both want the class-ball in the school break. Judith wants to play football while Mark wants to play basketball.
2. **Personalising the problem.** It is the other's fault, the other is stupid, and the other is the problem rather than the issue: "you always have the ball, it isn't fair!"
3. **The issue is inflated.** More problems occur and old ones are brought in: "You always decide what the ball is being used for, even though many of your class mates want something else." "You always have the best places when we watch a movie."
4. **Alliance building.** Each party seeks alliances with their own friends, talk about rather than with each other and communicate through action: Turn their backs to each other, provoke by pushing the others' bikes and destroying the ball.
5. **Making an enemy image.** The counter part is a terrible person. Now the parties only focus on the last thing that happened: the turned over-bike and the broken ball. The original picture is forgotten or distorted.
6. **Open hostility.** The aim is to hurt the counterpart. If somebody in the group tries to be more diplomatic and tone down the tension, or tries to see the others' point of view they are looked upon as traitors.
7. **Physical separation/physical fight.** There is not enough space for both of us: the teacher separates them, change class, violence, war....

