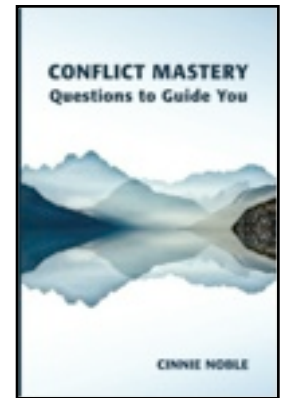

A REVIEW OF A PRN MEMBER'S NEW BOOK

QUESTIONS TO KEEP YOU CALM DURING CONFLICTS

REVIEW BY HARVEY SCHACHTER



Most of us are off balance during conflict. We become defensive and emotional. Head and heart can be at war.

Toronto executive coach Cinnie Noble, well aware of the nature of conflict from her training as a lawyer and mediator, believes the solution is to ask yourself some self-reflective questions before, during, and after the conflict.

“We need reflection amidst the storm. It helps to move our brains from the emotional part, the amygdala, to the thinking part, the prefrontal cortex. If there’s a way to distance ourselves from the conflict by self-reflective questions, we are less likely to react emotionally,” she said in an interview.

She highlights “the Platinum Moment of Choice,” when we are afraid to initiate a discussion about something that might lead to conflict because of the discord that will result. But we don’t have to hold back. “We have a choice. We can change. It takes time and intelligence,” she said.

Her recent book, *Conflict Mastery: Questions to Guide You*, has a bundle of questions that can help untangle you in almost any conceivable situation. She asks you to consider a tension-filled interaction and reflect on what made you stop saying something, and how in future you might react differently.

Often in conflict, we freeze. It’s a fight-or-flight instinct, the brain immobilized. She offers these questions:

- What felt frozen for you? (One client told her: “It happened in my legs. I felt in concrete and anything I said or did wouldn’t get me moving.”)
- What impact did your freezing have on the other person?
- With what would you want to replace freezing? What would be different about the interaction?

When people provoke us, we can give them a cold shoulder. We become dismissive and won’t engage. In conflict, we can also be a recipient of such behaviour. Her questions:

- How would you describe the cold shoulder you are experiencing from the other person?
- What messages are you inferring from the other person’s cold shoulder? What is it accomplishing? What is it not accomplishing?
- What would it take for you to engage the other person in conversation?
- If you are or were giving the cold shoulder to another person in a specific situation, how would you describe what you are or were doing?

- ☑ For what reasons did you choose this posture?
- ☑ What would it take for you to give a “warm shoulder?”

When we experience an irritation, it can grow in intensity as we turn the proverbial molehill into a mountain. She'll probe her coaching clients for clarity on both the mountain and molehill, and then ask:

- ☑ How might you in future stop the molehill from growing into a mountain?

She uses an iceberg metaphor for conflict. “It illuminates what’s on the surface and what is not being said or got lost—needs and wishes. Explaining that helps people to see what they are afraid to explore or have forgotten,” she said in the interview. Ask:

- ☑ What is above the surface and fully evident to you on the conflict? What do you think is evident to the other person?
- ☑ What lies beneath the iceberg that is evident to you but is not likely evident to

the other person, such as your hopes, needs, and expectations?

- ☑ What have you shared with the other person so far regarding the impact of the conflict on you? What do you not want to express about the impact of the conflict on you that lies below the surface? What else might you be keeping below the surface?
- ☑ From what you can observe and glean, what impact is the conflict having on the other person?

She asks you to zero in on the heightened emotions that can take hold in negotiations:

- ☑ What three words most accurately describe the emotions you are, or were, experiencing during the interaction?
- ☑ How does, or did, having those emotions affect you?
- ☑ What will help you in your future conflicts to regulate your emotions if they begin to heighten?

“Allan interrupted the two brothers by saying that he had been out and about in the world and if there was one thing he had learned it was that the very biggest and apparently most impossible conflicts on earth were based on the dialogue: ‘You are stupid, no, it’s you who are stupid, no, it’s you who are stupid.’ The solution, said Allan, was often to down a bottle of vodka together and then look ahead.”

~ Jonas Jonasson ~

Swedish journalist and author

Quote from *The Hundred-Year Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared*

[Biography](#)



After conflicts, we may be carrying regrets or grudges, experiencing “woulda, coulda, shoulda” moments, or considering receiving or giving an apology. “We may want to go back and make things better,” she notes, mending fences. Questions to consider:

- How does the expression “mending fences” apply to this conflict?
- What specifically about the relationship is not quite mended yet? Why do you think that is so?
- What makes this relationship important to you? How might the other person respond if he or she heard the answer to this question?

“People have a choice about conflict. If they want to change how they react it starts with the belief you have a choice and with self-reflection to look at conflicts differently,” she concludes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Harvey Schachter is a Battersea, Ontario-based writer specializing in management issues. He writes *Monday Morning Manager* and management book reviews for the print edition of *Report on Business* and an online work-life column, *Balance*.

ORDER THE BOOK

The author of the book, *Conflict Mastery: Questions to Guide You*, Cinnie Noble, is a member of the Peer Resources Network. The book is available in book format from Amazon.ca, Amazon.com, Amazon.fr, and Amazon.de; it is also available in Kindle digital format from Amazon.com; and in reproducible workbook format from Amazon online around the world.

OPTIONS FOR PRN MEMBERS



- Download this article as a [PDF](#).
- Discuss on [Facebook](#).
- Comment on [Twitter](#).
- [Email](#) the review author.

Ninety-five percent of female entrepreneurs who either launched their own startup company, or hold a leadership position in a startup company, believe that having an informal advisor or mentor was a key factor to their success, according to KPMG LLP's 2015 Women Entrepreneurs Survey. In addition, nearly 80 percent of female entrepreneurs feel that having another woman as their advisor or mentor made a significant impact on their career. The full report is available here <http://www.kpmg.com/us/impact50>