

Does unity mean no conflict?

Navigating differences with others
and disrupted relationships


Lauren Errington | CWCC 2022

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Fix
Fret
Flight
Fight

2



Fix
Fret
Flight
Fight

3



Fix
Fret
Flight
Fight

4



Fix
Fret
Flight
Fight

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Automatic reactions to anxiety

Fight, Flight and Freeze

Automatic physiological reactions in the body to a real or perceived threat



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Automatic reactions to anxiety in relationships

Fight (conflict)

Flight (emotional or physical distance)

Fix (overfunctioning for others)

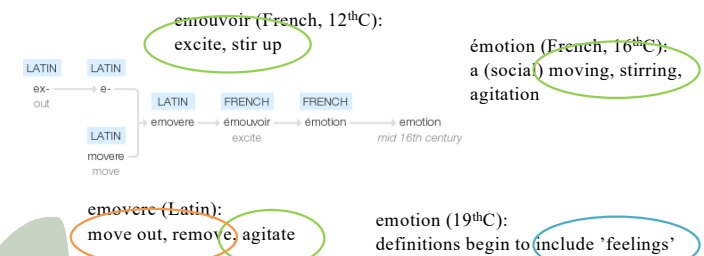
Fretting to others (triangling)

Automatic emotional reactions to manage relationship 'threat' – tension or discomfort in the relationship

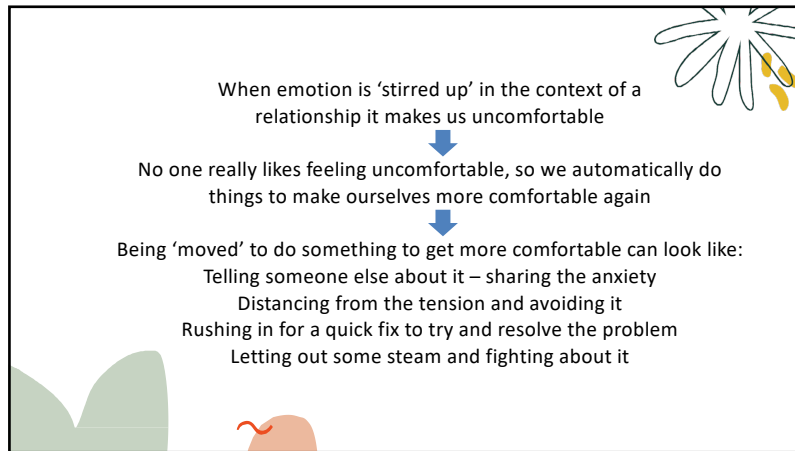


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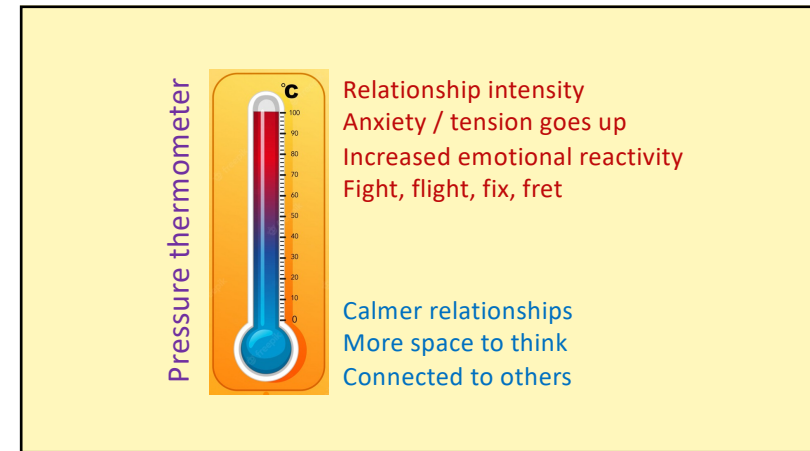
A short history of emotion



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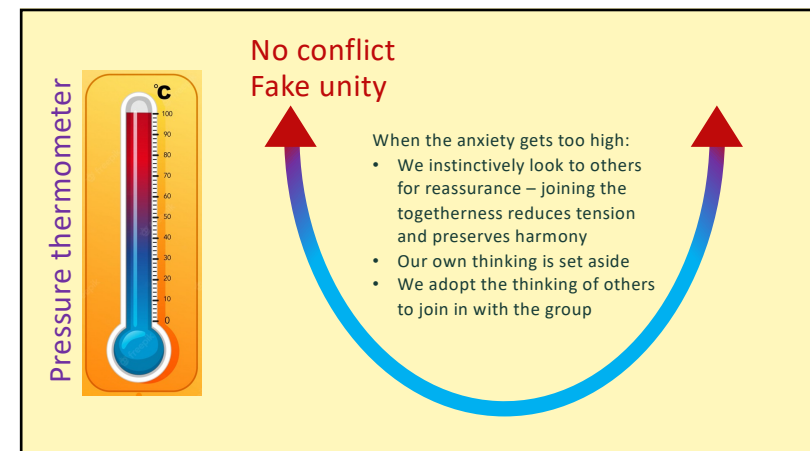
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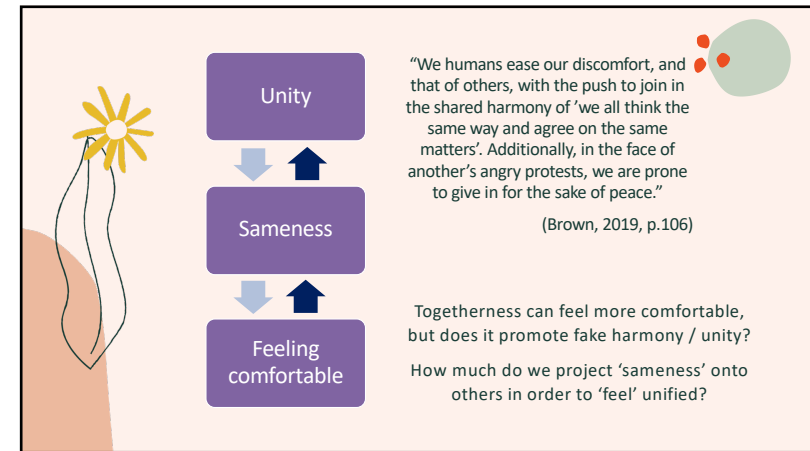
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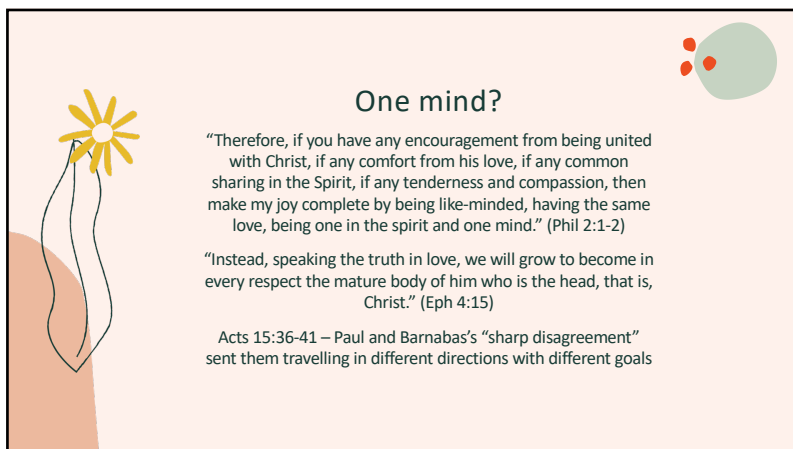
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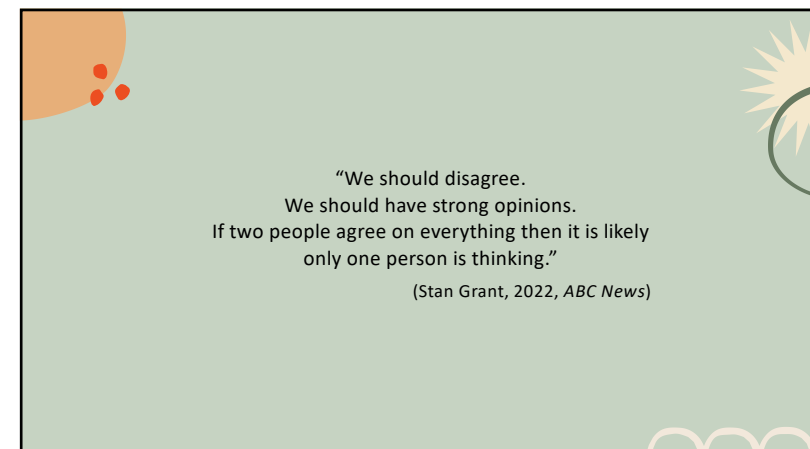
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Pressure thermometer

**No conflict
Fake unity**

**WAYS AVOIDING CONFLICT MEANS
WE GIVE UP A BIT OF OURSELVES**

- Keeping the peace at all costs, even when you don't agree with things
- Going along with an idea to avoid conflict
- Going along with an idea because you are worried about rejection
- Going along with the group because you're worried about what people will think of you
- Borrowing other people's thinking, hiding what you actually think because it might make others upset
- Allowing others to treat you poorly.

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Unity respects and requires diversity

Three cartoon illustrations showing diverse characters: a boy with brown skin and curly hair, a girl with dark skin and pigtails, and a boy with light skin and a headband.

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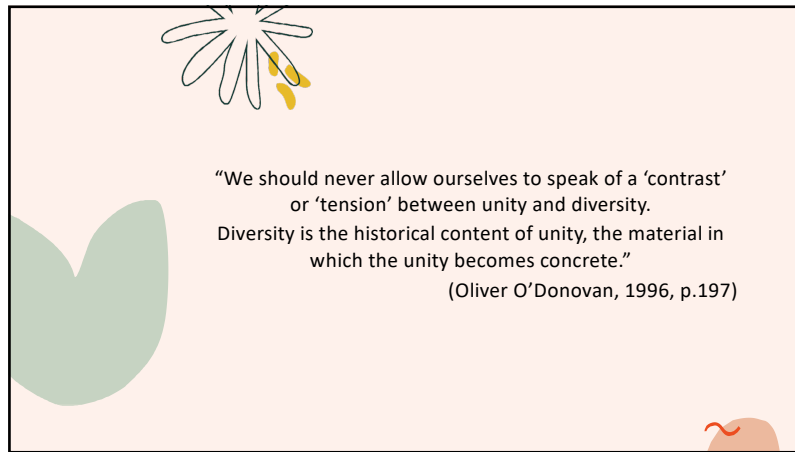
1 Corinthians 12:15-27

If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, **God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.** ...The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

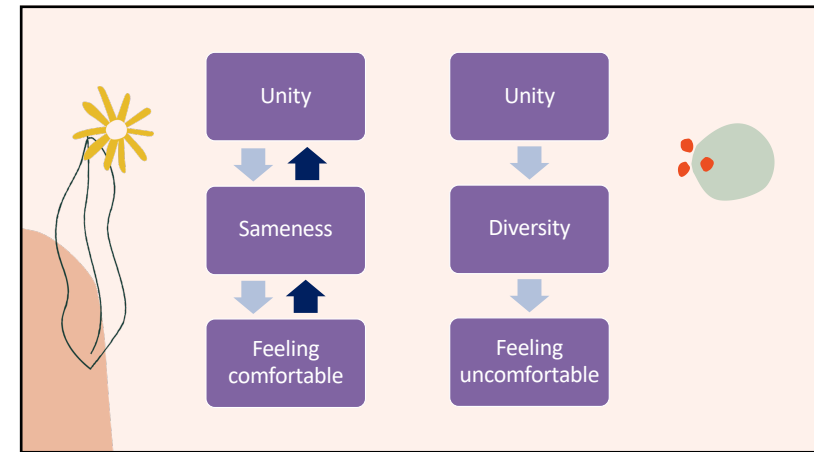
...But God has so composed the body, giving greater honour to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

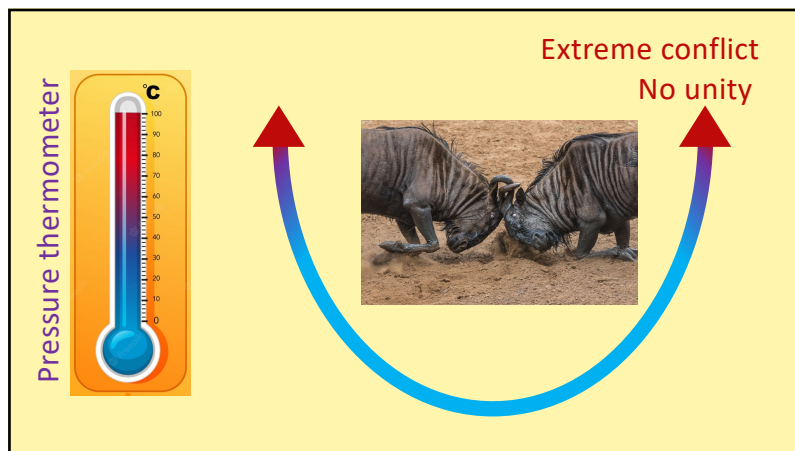
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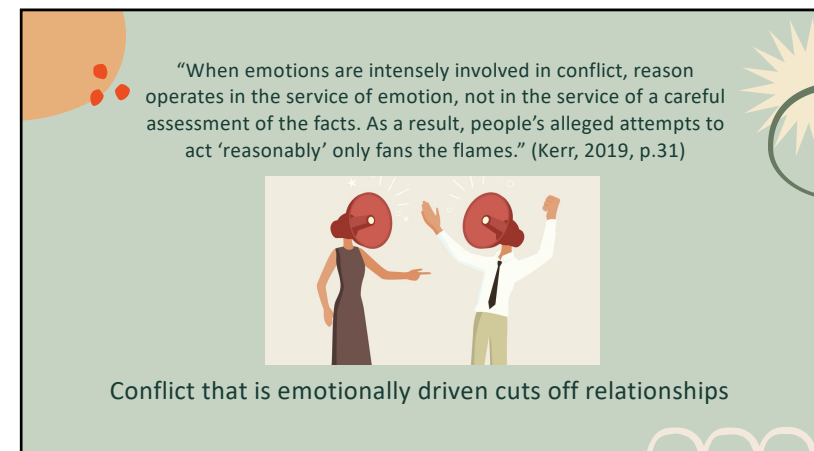
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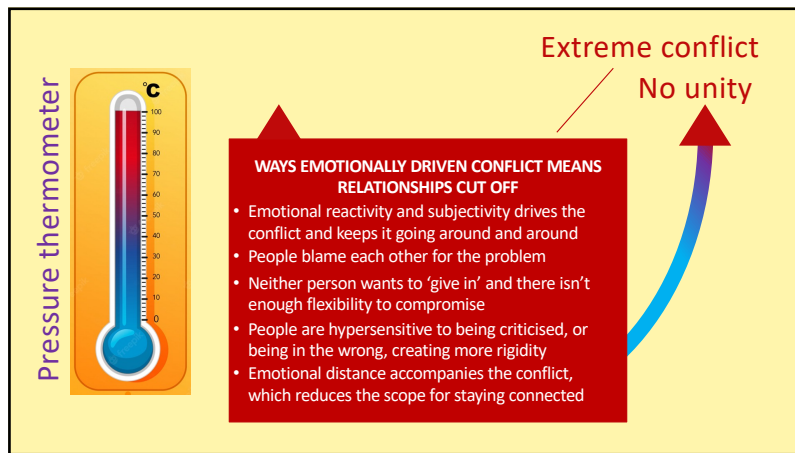
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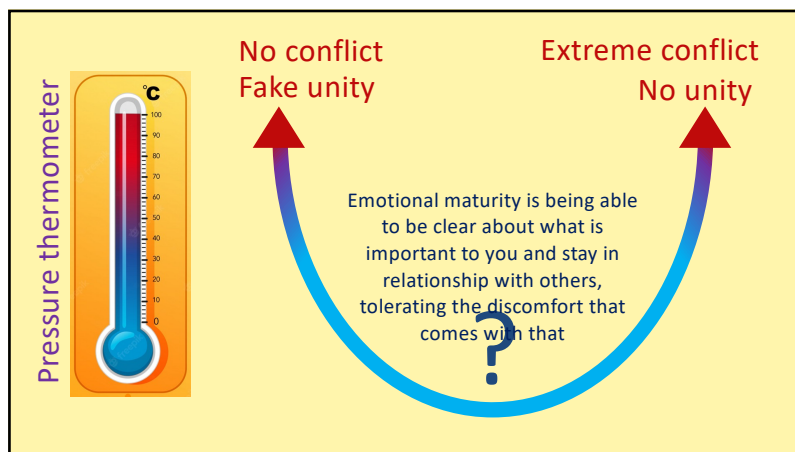
Conflict is not always about resolution, but regulation

In marriage therapy, 69% of the time couples were talking about a 'perpetual problem' they had had for along time, only 31% of the discussions involved situationally specific problem-solving.

"Most marital conflict is about 'perpetual' problems that never get resolved; what matters most is the affect around which the problems doesn't get resolved. Either the spouses establish a dialogue with the perpetual problem and communicate acceptance to one another, or the conflict becomes gridlocked."

(Gottman, *The Marriage Clinic*, 1999, p.110)

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Being clear in what's important to you, but using your freedom to choose not to argue about it

Romans 14:13-19

Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather **decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.** For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then **let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.**

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Conflict is an opportunity to show the world that Christians live in the world differently

Romans 14:1-8

Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarrelling over disputable matters. One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. **The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them...** One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. **Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord.** Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. **If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.**

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"Conflict between people is not inherently bad. Legitimate differences between people often merit vigorous exchanges that may help clarify the viewpoints of each person, in both parties."

(Michael Kerr, 2019, p.31)

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Managing self in conflict

Observing your own emotional reactivity and taking responsibility for your role in the relationship, rather than energy going into trying to change the other

Asking – Where is the focus?

- **On the other?** How much am I focused on the other person to change? How much energy am I putting in to trying to change their mind? How much am I wishing they would do things differently?
- **Or on my self?** What effect are others having on me, and am I having on others? What is my part in this? What is my responsibility? What is my best thinking about this?

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Managing self in conflict

How can I stay in **contact** with those I disagree with or whose opinions I find agitate or frustrate me?

How can I work to stay **calm** – slow it down, observing myself and being quick to listen and slow to speak?

How can I be **curious** about the other person and what they think about the issue? Am I curious about how they got to this opinion?

How can I be **clear** myself about what I think about this? Is it my own thinking or am I borrowing someone else's thinking about this issue?

How can I **care** for the other person in this relationship, but not caretake in a way that means I am trying to take responsibility for them or how they are feeling?

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