**Video Title:** How to Manage Cross-Cultural Conflict

**Video URL:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1UCLuuSX1U>

**Run Time:** 3:48

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**Close Caption Available:** Yes

The resolution of cross-cultural conflict is described on pages 151-152 of the textbook. In this video, senior consulting psychologist Linda Wagoner looks at the subject from a different perspective. She says that managing cross-cultural conflict is a difficult interpersonal competency to master because many people tend to make the mistake of avoiding conflict. To resolve conflict two key things must be kept in mind. First of all, know yourself and your conflict style; second, know the other person.

To know yourself, there are a couple of critical questions to ask. How committed are you to the task of the agenda, and how committed are you to the relationship aspects? Good conflict management involves paying attention to both the task and relationship aspects of conflict. The second dimension, knowing the other person, becomes really complicated in an unfamiliar culture. Wagoner likes to think about culture as an onion where you peel back the various layers in conflict management. It is not until you have been immersed in a culture for quite a long period of time that you can become comfortable in understanding how they manage conflict and disagreement.

There are four ways you can better manage cross-cultural conflict. First, carefully observe when you first enter the culture. Pay particular attention to how the members of the culture handle conflict, looking at both verbal and nonverbal aspects. How much attention do they pay to the task and the relationship aspects of conflict? Second, ask key informants—people who are cultural experts—how people in this culture handle disagreements. Ask, “How would you recommend I approach someone I disagree with?”

Third, consult all sorts of cultural sources. Read the literature, the stories, and the mythology. Listen to music and poetry. Search the Internet to see what research has been done in this culture about conflict. Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, observe other people’s reactions to you. Doing this brings together the two dimensions of knowing yourself and knowing the other person. When someone disagrees with you, observe how they respond to your interpersonal style.

If you do what she recommends, Wagoner says you will get better at managing conflict even in those very difficult moments where there are cross-cultural interpersonal differences. Following this advice will help you get your job done. You will also be helped in bridging unintended misunderstandings that might occur. Practice is necessary because like most aspects of behavior, the more you practice, the more comfortable and effective you will be in carrying out the activity.

*Questions for Thought and Discussion*

1. Why do many people tend to avoid conflict?

2. What is the difference between focusing on the task and the relationship aspects of conflict?

3. Where might you find “cultural experts” to help you deal with people from another culture?

4. Thinking back to Chapter 6 of the textbook, provide an example of a cultural value that could lead to workplace conflict between two people from different cultures.

5. How realistic would it be for you to consult all sorts of cultural sources when you were about to engage in cross-cultural conflict resolution?