

Free Yourself from Conflict
at Work, at Home, and in Life



optimal
outcomes

Workbook

Jennifer Goldman-Wetzler, Ph.D.

Introduction

Welcome to the *Optimal Outcomes* Workbook!

This workbook is designed to accompany your journey reading the book *Optimal Outcomes: Free Yourself from Conflict at Work, at Home, and in Life*.

Even if you haven't read the book, you can still do the practices by following the instructions in this workbook to free yourself from conflict.

If you have questions about how to use the prompts in this workbook, the best resource is the book itself—*Optimal Outcomes*—which has more detailed instructions and is filled with examples of real people, just like you, who have used the practices successfully.

Before you begin, please take a moment to choose a recurring conflict that impacts your life so you can apply the practices to it throughout the workbook.

To get the most out of this workbook, choose a situation to which the following three statements apply:

1. I am directly impacted by the situation. I am not simply an observer in someone else's dispute.
2. I or someone else has tried to resolve the conflict in the past and failed.
3. I can do something to help. The situation is still happening; it is not a closed case.

Take a moment now to consider:

- * Who is involved in the situation?
- * What is the conflict about? In other words, what are the people concerned about?
- * Why do you want freedom from this conflict?

I wish you the freedom that comes with doing the practices. I hope you will engage with the practices as if they are an adventure full of opportunity.

In freedom,

Jennifer Goldman-Wetzler, Ph.D.

Author, *Optimal Outcomes*

Notice Your Conflict Habits & Patterns

You can take an online assessment to identify your primary conflict habit at:

<https://optimaloutcomesbook.com/assessment>

You can also forward this link to others involved in your situation to help them identify their primary conflict habit. This will help you notice how your conflict habits have been interacting to form a conflict pattern.

Identify Your Habit

Of the four conflict habits, which is your primary one?

- * Blame Others
- * Shut Down
- * Shame Yourself
- * Relentlessly Collaborate

Identify the Pattern

Of the five most common conflict patterns, which, if any, are you involved in with others?

- * The Blame/Shame pattern
- * The Blame/Shut Down pattern
- * The Relentlessly Collaborate/Shut Down pattern
- * The Shut Down/Shut Down pattern
- * The Blame/Blame pattern

Notice

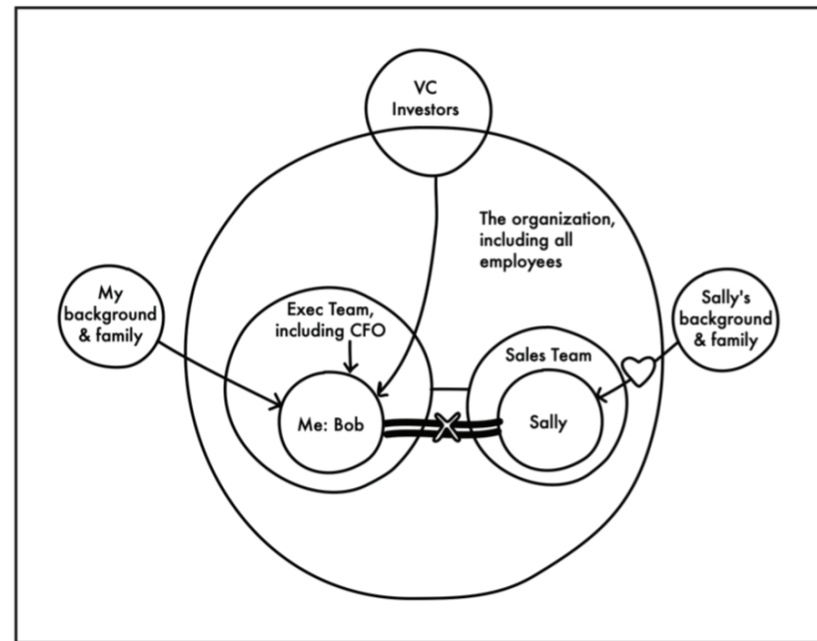
Simply notice the habit and pattern you've identified. There is no need to change or do anything about them yet.

How to Create Your Conflict Map

Sketch. On a blank page, write down the names of the people or groups from your situation. Draw circles around the names and lines to show how the people are connected.

Add. Add as many people, places, events, ideas, and other factors to the map as you can. These can be factors from the past, present, and possible future that you think may influence or be influenced by the situation. Be sure to put at least one new person or aspect of the situation on your map that you hadn't before considered relevant.

Enhance. Draw or write anything on your map that will help you understand the situation better. For example, thick arrows can denote exertion of pressure or influence or simply strong relationships. You can use different colors to represent the feelings you get from different people or groups of people. Or you can add shapes, colors, pictures, or words inside each circle to represent the meaning a person, place, event, idea, or factor holds for you. An icon or image on a line between circles might show the quality of the relationships between people.



Bob's Conflict Map

Be creative. Draw or write anything on your map that will help you understand the situation better. Your map should tell the story of the situation in a different way than you have told it in the past.

Observe. Look at your map. What story does it tell? Is this story different from your initial description of your situation? What do you notice about the conflict now, that you didn't notice before you drew your map?

Your Conflict Map

In the space below, create your conflict map using the instructions on the previous page.

To find out about building an interactive conflict map online, go to <https://optimaloutcomesbook.com/onlinemap>

Identify Your Values

Ideal Values: Things we care about that we're proud to say we care about.

Shadow Values: Things we care about, but are hard for us to admit that we care about. Because we're in denial about them, we're often unaware that they are leading us to speak and act in ways that exacerbate conflicts.

Keeping in mind your conflict situation, and using the Values Inventory on pages 14-16 of this workbook:

Identify your ideal values: Using the Values Inventory, identify your own ideal values—the ones that you are proud to hold openly.

Identify your shadow values: Using the Values Inventory, identify your own shadow values—the ones that you are not proud of.

Identify Their Values

Using the Values Inventory on pages 14-16 of this workbook, see if you can identify some of the ideal and shadow values of one other person or group in your situation. You can't know what they are for sure, but take your best guess. Doing so will help increase your empathy for them.

Take your best guess about their ideal values:

Take your best guess about their shadow values:

Create a Values Map

Write down your own ideal and shadow values in two columns below and, underneath that, those of one other person (or one other group) in your situation. In further pages, you will see examples of how you might customize your values map. Use your **Conflict Map** as a guide.

	IDEAL	SHADOW
ME		
OTHER PERSON		

Values Map for Multiple Individuals

In conflicts with more than two people, use the template below as a starting point.

	IDEAL	SHADOW
ME		
PERSON 1		
PERSON 2		
PERSON 3		

Values Map for Groups

In conflicts with groups, use the template below as a starting point.

	IDEAL	SHADOW
ME		
GROUP 1		
GROUP 2		
GROUP 3		

Explore Your Values Map

Identify Hidden Overlaps

Do any values overlap? Use circles and lines to join values that overlap on your map.

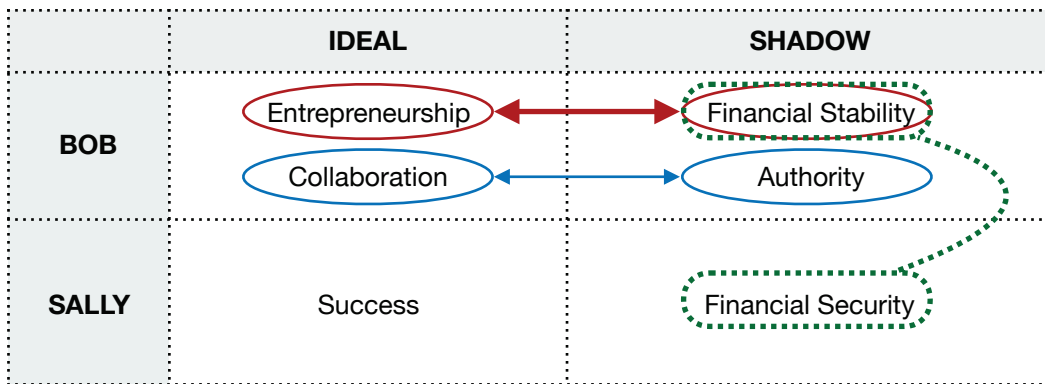
Acknowledge Tensions

Are any values in tension with one another? Use arrows pointing away from each other to denote tension between values. Draw large, thick arrows to represent major tension between values, and smaller, thinner arrows to note areas of lesser tension.

Consider the “Both/And” Principle

Of the values in tension with one another, note how they co-exist alongside one another. How do they both already show up simultaneously?

Example Values Map



Honor Your Shadow Values

Once you've noticed the tensions between your own ideal and shadow values, choose to honor one shadow value of yours that seems most relevant to your situation. Thinking too much might lead you down the wrong path. Simply settle yourself into a quiet space, consider the following questions, and write down whatever first comes to mind.

How or when did I first develop this value?

How or when did I first learn this value was not okay?

Which of my ideal values might this shadow value be in tension with? Considering the both/and principle, how does my shadow value coexist with that ideal value? Write down at least three ways you currently express each value in thoughts, words, or actions.

Can I acknowledge that one value does not negate the other? That I already express both simultaneously in my life?

How will I honor my shadow value by thinking about, talking about, or acting on it constructively? What words or actions, if any, will I say or do?

Honor Others' Shadow Values

It's time to honor a shadow value of someone else in your situation. Which of their shadow values will you honor?

Consider why this value might be in the shadow for that person. You may have no way of knowing exactly how or when they first developed it, but even just thinking about it can raise your empathy for that person, so it's still a useful exercise. And when you do know the other person well, you may be surprised at how easy it is for you to answer the following questions:

What circumstances or messages might have led the person to originally develop this value?

What circumstances or messages might they have received suggesting that it was not okay to hold?

How can you acknowledge their shadow value through constructive thoughts, words, or actions (even if you do so only privately)?

If You're Having Trouble Identifying Their Shadow Values...

If it is hard for you to identify their shadow values, you can note your experience of their behavior and write a shadow value that might be behind it.

The table below shows examples of how you might interpret someone's behavior and some examples of possible shadow values.

YOUR INTERPRETATION OF THEIR BEHAVIOR	THEIR POSSIBLE SHADOW VALUES
Greedy or overly generous	Financial security
Passive-aggressive or aloof	Competition
Excessively authoritative or weak	Authority
Overly controlling or distant	Love
Power-hungry or aloof	Leadership
Status-seeking or detached	Recognition
Overly driven or lazy	Achievement

YOUR INTERPRETATION OF THEIR BEHAVIOR	THEIR POSSIBLE SHADOW VALUES

Close the Gap Between Your Ideal Values and Your Behavior

Think about how well your behavior in your situation has reflected each of your ideal values. Is there a gap between any of your ideal values and your behavior in the situation you've been facing? For any gaps between an ideal value and your behavior, write what actions you will take to close the gap.

My ideal values	Size of the gap between my values and my behavior (None, S, M, L)	Actions I can take to close the gap

Values Inventory

This Values Inventory is adapted from Stewart D. Friedman's *Total Leadership: Be a Better Leader, Have a Richer Life* and Robert J. Lee and Sara N. King's *Discovering the Leader in You: A Guide to Realizing Your Personal Leadership Potential*. I have edited and added to it over the years, based on student and client feedback, to help it speak to as diverse an audience as possible. It is by no means exhaustive; please add your own values as you see fit.

Achievement: a sense of accomplishment or mastery

Advancement: growth, seniority, and promotion resulting from work well done

Adventure: new and challenging opportunities, excitement, risk

Aesthetics: appreciation of beauty in things, ideas, and surroundings

Affiliation: interaction with other people, recognition as a member of a group, belonging

Affluence: high income, financial success, prosperity

Authority: position and power to control events and other people's activities

Autonomy: ability to act independently with few constraints, self-reliance

Challenge: continually facing complex and demanding tasks and problems

Change and variation: absence of routine, unpredictability

Collaboration: close, cooperative working relationships with groups

Community: serving and supporting a purpose that supersedes personal desires

Competency: demonstrating high proficiency and knowledge

Competition: rivalry with winning as the goal

Courage: taking action in the face of fear

Creativity: discovering, developing, or designing new ideas or things; demonstrating imagination

Curiosity: desire to learn or know things

Diverse perspectives: unusual ideas and opinions that may not seem right or be popular at first

Duty: respect for authority, rules, and regulations

Economic security: steady and secure employment, adequate reward, low risk

Enjoyment: fun, joy, and laughter

Family: spending time with partner, children, parents, extended family

Friendship: close personal relationships with others

Health: physical and mental well-being, vitality

Helping others: helping people attain their goals, providing care and support

Humor: the ability to laugh at myself and at life

Influence: having an impact on the attitudes or opinions of others

Inner harmony: happiness, contentment, being at peace with yourself

Justice: fairness, doing the right thing

Knowledge: the pursuit of understanding, skill, and expertise, continual learning

Location: choice of a place to live that is conducive to a desired lifestyle

Love: involvement in close, affectionate relationships; intimacy

Loyalty: faithfulness; dedication to individuals, traditions, or organizations

Order: stability, routine, predictability, clear lines of authority, standardization

Personal development: dedication to maximizing potential

Physical fitness: staying in shape through physical activity and healthy nutrition

Recognition: positive feedback and public credit for work well done; respect and admiration

Responsibility: dependability, accountability for results

Safety: physical, mental, or emotional freedom from harm or danger

Self-respect: pride, self-esteem, sense of knowing oneself

Spirituality: strong spiritual or religious beliefs, moral fulfillment

Status: being respected for a job or an association with a prestigious group or organization

Trustworthiness: being known as reliable and sincere

Wisdom: sound judgment based on knowledge, experience, and understanding

Imagine Your Ideal Future

Martin Luther King, Jr., was able to inspire the masses with his dream of the future because he took the time not only to imagine it but also to put it into words.

Once you've imagined your Ideal Future in detail, your job is to write, draw, paint, collage, or audio-, video-, or otherwise record the pictures, sounds, feelings, tastes, and smells that you imagine will exist in your Ideal Future.

Use the space below to sketch out your Ideal Future in as much detail as possible. You can then use your sketch to more formally write, draw and/or record your Ideal Future and communicate it effectively with others.

Design a Pattern-Breaking Path (PBP)

To design a set of action steps that will help you exit the conflict loop while keeping your actions simple and surprisingly different from what has been done in the past, ask yourself the following questions.

Step One:

What solo or pause practice can I begin with?

Step Two:

Who is the first person, if any, whom I will involve? What action can I take that will be simple and surprisingly different?

Step Three:

Who else, if anyone, will I involve?

Step Four:

Are there groups of people I can engage? If so, which groups? How can I engage with them?

Steps Five and beyond:

How will I build a path of linked action steps from here?

To see how President Barack Obama created a pattern breaking path for a high-conflict situation, read more at: <https://optimaloutcomesbook.com/beersummit>

Test Your Path

Complete as many boxes below as you can. When you take your Pattern-Breaking Path, what possible unintended consequences may arise for each of the people or groups below, now and over the mid-term and long-term? How can you prevent and prepare for those?

	NOW	MIDTERM	LONG-TERM
ME	Unintended consequence: What can I do to prevent this from happening? How I can prepare for it, if it does occur?	Unintended consequence: What can I do to prevent this from happening? How I can prepare for it, if it does occur?	Unintended consequence: What can I do to prevent this from happening? How I can prepare for it, if it does occur?
THEM (one person or group from my conflict map)	Unintended consequence: What can I do to prevent this from happening? How I can prepare for it, if it does occur?	Unintended consequence: What can I do to prevent this from happening? How I can prepare for it, if it does occur?	Unintended consequence: What can I do to prevent this from happening? How I can prepare for it, if it does occur?
OTHERS (additional people or groups from my conflict map)	Unintended consequence: What can I do to prevent this from happening? How I can prepare for it, if it does occur?	Unintended consequence: What can I do to prevent this from happening? How I can prepare for it, if it does occur?	Unintended consequence: What can I do to prevent this from happening? How I can prepare for it, if it does occur?

Conduct Mini-experiments

Experiment

What mini-experiments will you conduct? Who will be part of your laboratory?

Review

Note the results of your mini-experiments. Did they go the way you intended? What did you learn? How will the results of your experiments influence the actions you take when the stakes are higher?

How to Use This Reckoning Template

Step 1: Label the three grey boxes at the top of the table with your options (for example, Ideal Future: Rebuild my Relationship with Sally; Stay in Conflict: Do Nothing; Walk-Away Alternative: Fire Sally). Complete the boxes in the two rows below, and compare them to one another.

	IDEAL FUTURE	STAY IN CONFLICT	WALK-AWAY ALTERNATIVE
ANTICIPATED COSTS			
ANTICIPATED BENEFITS			

Revise your options

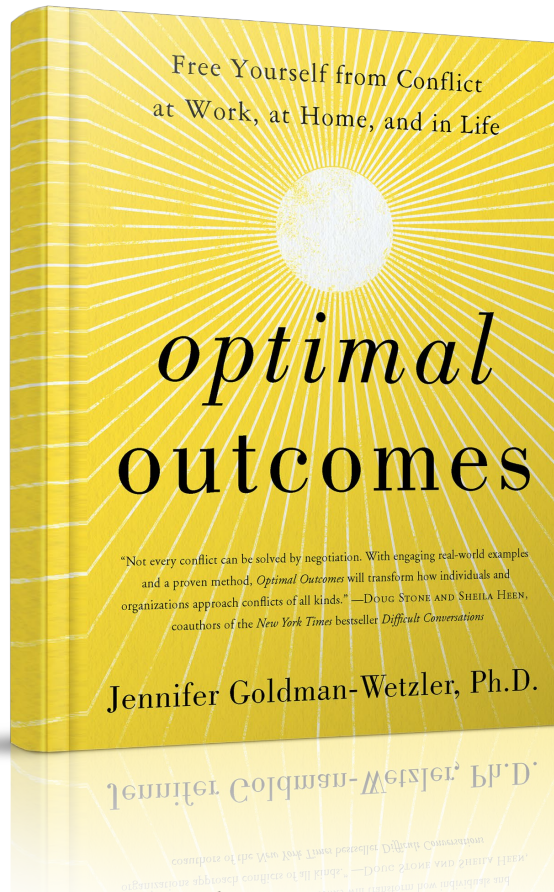
Step 2: Revise your options to lower your costs if possible.

	IDEAL FUTURE	STAY IN CONFLICT	WALK-AWAY ALTERNATIVE
ANTICIPATED COSTS			
ANTICIPATED BENEFITS			

My Optimal Outcome

Step 3. Choose the option with the greatest benefits, lowest costs, and that will require you to take pattern-breaking action to achieve it.

The option I anticipate to have the greatest benefits, lowest costs, and that will require me to take pattern-breaking action is:



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