

Observation. Interpretation. Clarification Conflict Resolution

“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” Romans 12:18

If you have ever been in conflict with someone, you know that resolving conflict is sometimes simpler than other times, however it is never easy. Part of the difficulty is figuring out the pathway to resolution. Enter observation, interpretation, clarification or OIC. OIC is a simple and effective pathway to conflict resolution.

Consider this example:

You have emailed your boss several times about a project that you are working on. Your boss knows that you cannot move forward on the project until he gets back to you, yet he still has not gotten back to you. He seems to have gotten back to other co-workers on other things, just not to you. This project is important to you and you value getting things accomplished. Due to your boss' lack of response, you are frustrated with him.

Some version of the example above likely happens on a consistent basis in an employment scenario. How does one go about resolving this with OIC?

1. You go to your boss (This is key! Go to the person you are in conflict with)
2. Explain what you have **observed** - You have emailed him several times regarding the project and you can not move forward on the project until you hear back from him. It seems as though he has gotten back to other co-workers on theirs, just not to you.
3. Explain what you have **interpreted** - What you have observed has led to you interpreting that he values the work of others but does not value your work and he does not value the project you are working on. It has left you frustrated.
4. Ask for **clarification** - Ask your boss if he can clarify what is taking place. It may be that he has been overwhelmed with other projects or the pressures his boss is putting on him in certain areas or maybe there is something happening at home that has monopolized all of his time. Maybe he was working on getting back to you but did not have an answer as of yet. Maybe he explains that he has had a few people say something similar to him and he is trying to get back to everyone but each response has been very involved and he will get back to you in ___ days. Maybe there has been an issue with his email.

Regardless of what clarification brings out, this process gets the conflict out in the open in a professional, kind and gracious way and stops the interpreting of events through your own lense of limited information. It clarifies then how to move forward in relationship with the person you were in conflict with.

Maybe the above scenario doesn't apply to you. OIC is useful within any interpersonal conflict whether that is an employment scenario, between brothers or sisters in Christ, in marriage, in parenting, etc. As noted above, conflict resolution is sometimes simpler than other times. It may take several times of walking through OIC with the person you are in conflict with. The key is being intentional as resolving conflict is worth it.