



www.yadayahholisticandcounseling.com

+27 79 507 1307

yadayahcounseling@gmail.com

Charmaine Snyman

Management of conflict

Introduction:

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Charmaine Snyman and Team

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1. Understand What a Misunderstanding Really Is

A misunderstanding is rarely about the words alone. It often involves:

- Different **perceptions**
- Unspoken **expectations**
- Emotional **triggers**
- Past experiences influencing present reactions

Key insight:

People respond not to reality itself, but to *their interpretation* of reality.

2. Regulate First: Calm the Nervous System

Before engaging:

- Slow your breathing (longer exhale than inhale)
- Take a 10 minute break in a quiet place to calm the nervous system
- Relax shoulders and jaw
- Listen to 44Hz music if possible
- Ground yourself physically (feet on the floor)

Why this matters:

A dysregulated nervous system shifts the brain into **defensive or survival mode**, where clarity and empathy decrease.

3. Suspend Assumptions and Internal Narratives

Notice and pause internal stories (these are thought patterns) such as:

- “They did that on purpose.”
- “They don’t respect me.”
- “I’m being attacked.”

Replace them with curiosity:

- “There may be something I don’t yet understand.”
- I don’t think they understood what I said.
- If I was in their shoes, I might have also thought this/that.

Counselor note:

Assumptions often come from **past wounds**, not present facts.

4. Clarify Meaning, Not Just Content

Ask questions that uncover intent, context, and emotion.

Helpful questions:

- “What was your intention in that moment?”
- “What did this mean to you?” What did you mean when you said....?
- “What were you feeling when this happened?”

Goal:

Understanding *why* something was said or done, not just *what* happened. Understand that others often also talk / respond from their past wounds.

5. Listen Reflectively and Actively

Listening involves:

- **Not interrupting**
- Reflecting back what you heard
- Checking accuracy

Example:

“So what I’m hearing is that you felt ignored, and that was painful. Did I get that right?”

Why this works:

Feeling understood calms defensiveness and opens the door to repair/forgive.

6. Separate Intent From Impact

Both can exist at the same time:

- Intent: what was meant
- Impact: how it was experienced

Example:

“I didn’t intend to hurt you, but I can see how it came across that way.”

Key insight:

Acknowledging impact does not mean admitting malicious intent. Someone might have understood you wrong, but now you may explain what you meant. How they further perceive the situation is up to them and you can not do more than explaining what you meant.

7. Take Responsibility Without Self-Condernation

Healthy responsibility sounds like:

- “I can see where I was unclear.”
- “I should have communicated better.”

This does not mean that you have to take the blame each and every time. You do not always have to take the blame but you may open the line of communications. Then it is up to both parties to resolve the conflict, it can not just come from one person.

Unhealthy responsibility sounds like:

- “Everything is my fault.”
- “I’m a bad person.”

Goal:

Repair, not self-punishment.

8. Express Yourself Clearly and Calmly

Use “I” statements:

- “I felt confused when...”
- “I felt hurt because I value clarity.”

Avoid:

- Absolutes (“You always...”, “You never...”)
- Character attacks: You always do this.... In the pas you always
- Bringing up unrelated past issues because the goal is to change past behaviours not reinforce past memories.

9. Repair the Relationship Intentionally

Repair may include:

- Apology
- Reassurance
- Clarification of expectations
- Agreement on how to communicate differently next time

Example:

“Next time, can we check in before assuming?”

10. Set Boundaries if the Conversation Becomes Unsafe

It is appropriate to pause when:

- Voices rise...
- Respect diminishes..... (blaming, shouting accusations)
- Emotions overwhelm clarity (be aware of what you feel, see the triggers, do not live in the past or operate from past wounds)

Boundary example:

“I want to continue this conversation, but I need a short break of 10 min first.”

Boundaries protect connection—they don’t destroy it.

11. Release the Need to Be Right

Ask yourself:

- Do I want to be right, or do I want to be connected?
- Is winning worth the relational cost?

Truth:

Connection often heals more than being correct does.

12. Integrate Spiritual Discernment

- Invite God Spirit into the situation. Scriptural declarations of filling your mind with Gods truth is very helpful.
- Understanding the other persons “Spiritual gifting is very important <http://free2celebrate.co.za>
- Seek wisdom/understanding rather than vindication
- Choose peace and unity where possible

Scriptural principles:

- *“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.”* (James 1:19)
- *“As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”* (Romans 12:18)

13. Reflect After Resolution

Ask: (you may journal these questions)

- What did this misunderstanding reveal about me?
- Was I reacting from past hurt or present reality?
- What can I adjust going forward?

Misunderstandings are often teachers, not failures.

Closing Insight

A misunderstanding handled poorly creates distance.

A misunderstanding handled well builds **maturity, trust, and depth**.

The goal is not perfect communication, but **humble, regulated, and truthful connection**.

Prayer for Conflict and Misunderstanding

YHWH,

I come before You with a heart that feels the weight of misunderstanding.

Where words were misheard, intentions were unclear, and emotions were stirred,

I invite You into this space with Your light and truth.

Search my heart and reveal anything in me that has reacted from pain, fear, or pride.

Where I spoke too quickly, assumed too much, or listened too little,

I bring it before You without excuse or self-condemnation.

Cleanse my heart from offense, defensiveness, and the need to be right.

YHWH, soften what has become hard within me.

Quiet my nervous system where it has gone into fight, flight, or withdrawal.

Restore peace to my thoughts where they have looped in accusation or confusion.

Let Your peace rule where tension has taken residence.

I release every false narrative I have formed about the other person.

I let go of assumptions, projections, and inner judgments.

Where misunderstanding has created distance,

I ask You to rebuild understanding with truth, patience, and compassion.

If there is hurt beneath this conflict—seen or unseen—
bring it gently to the surface so it can be healed, not hidden.

Teach me to listen with humility,

to speak with clarity and kindness,

and to respond from wisdom rather than reaction.

YHWH, where trust has been shaken, begin restoration.

Where communication has broken down, bring alignment.

Where emotions have escalated, bring calm and order.

Let reconciliation flow not from pressure, but from Your Spirit.

I surrender my need for control, validation, and vindication.

I choose peace over pride, understanding over assumption,

and relationship over being right.
Guide my words, my tone, and my timing.

Cover this situation with Your truth and mercy.
Let Your presence go before every conversation and remain after every word.
Teach me what it means to walk in peace, even when it is difficult,
and to reflect Your heart in moments of tension.

I trust You with what I cannot fix,
and I place this conflict fully in Your hands.
Bring clarity where there is confusion,
healing where there is hurt,
and unity where there has been division.

I receive Your peace now—
into my heart, my mind, and my body.

Amen.