

*Beyond Blame*

Identifying  
What Sets  
You Off

Jeffrey A. Kottler

# **Identifying What Sets You Off**

**Jeffrey A. Kottler**

e-Book 2017 International Psychotherapy Institute

From *Beyond Blame* by Jeffrey A. Kottler

All Rights Reserved

Created in the United States of America

Copyright © 1994 by Jeffrey A. Kottler

## Table of Contents

[Identifying What Sets You Off](#)

[Understanding People Who Appear Obstructive](#)

[Who Bugs You and Why?](#)

[A Typology of Triggers](#)

[Boy, Is This Familiar!](#)

[Understanding Why Some People Act Differently from the Way You Might Expect or Prefer](#)

[Seeing Yourself in Others](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Recommended Reading](#)

## Identifying What Sets You Off

You are reading this book for a very good reason: there is at least one relationship in your life right now, whether with a boss, co-worker, friend, neighbor, sibling, child, parent, or spouse, that is not going the way you would like. You feel at a loss as to how to change long-standing patterns in your relationships. Furthermore, it feels to you as though the conflicts that have developed are not really your fault; it is the other person who is being (choose one)  
unreasonable/unfair/unrealistic/stubborn/manipulative/cantankerous/uncoop

It is certainly true that a number of the people with whom you have had struggles either have chips on their shoulders or have particular personality traits or interpersonal styles that make them difficult for most anyone to get along with. There are certain kinds of people and particular situations that have consistently pushed your buttons. In order to move beyond blame you will have to discover the patterns of your conflicts: Who gets to you? In which situations? Under what circumstances?

The main point of this book is that it does very little good to blame even very difficult people for creating misery or dissatisfaction in your life. Crying “It’s you, not me!” may provide temporary relief in that you can sidestep responsibility for the conflict taking place, but it has the distinct side effect of implying that since others are at fault, your only recourse is to wait for them to get their acts together.

### **Understanding People Who Appear Obstructive**

Think about the one relationship in your life right now that is most difficult. Instead of attending to the ways this other person is being manipulative or obstructive or controlling, the ways he or she is unfair or unreasonable, ask yourself who your antagonist reminds you of. It is highly likely that you have encountered someone like him or her before. And just as in the past, with very little effort you can easily recapture feelings of being overwhelmed.

If you conjure an image of the person who is currently your greatest nemesis, you probably can access immediately rage, frustration, resentment, or indignation. “What an unreasonable jerk!” or “What a heartless bitch!” may be your automatic response to even thinking about this person who pushes your buttons. Try to picture the person’s face. Hear that voice that grates on your nerves. Feel the intensity of the reactions that immediately bubble to the

surface.

Now, for just a minute or two, put these feelings on a shelf. Recall some specific instances in which you have seen this person interact in quite a different manner with other people. So what is it about *you* that invites such dysfunctional interactions with this person, and with this type of person? Why are you especially vulnerable while others remain relatively immune?

While you are reflecting on these queries, consider that there are indeed some people who not only get on your nerves but irritate many others as well. Getting beyond blame means much more than just looking at your own contributions to problems and the circular dynamics of interactive struggles. It also involves educating yourself about people who seem uncooperative or who in some cases are difficult for anyone to deal with because of a consistently dysfunctional interpersonal style.

While some of these people are difficult for anyone to interact with, others are ornery only with you, or only in certain circumstances in which you are involved. This is a crucial distinction: before you can hope to break through obstructive cycles you must be able to distinguish your role in the struggle. In fact, in most instances in which people act uncooperatively, their behavior is inadvertently triggered by the behavior of others—pushing their buttons, playing games with them, trying to control them, withdrawing, being punitive,

or aggravating them by being rigid and uncompromising. Nevertheless, difficult people do exist, and otherwise very nice individuals become uncooperative under certain circumstances.

### **Who Bugs You and Why ?**

Who gets under your skin with the greatest of ease? Who can provoke you with the least effort? With what kinds of people have you most often struggled and found yourself in conflict? What are some of the ways in which people have treated you that have aggravated you the most?

Don't just *read* these questions, *answer* them! If you have trouble figuring out who most consistently bugs you and who has gotten to you in the past, ask someone who is close to you. If you cannot clarify your thoughts, write them down until a prevalent theme emerges. Don't just skip to the next paragraph without completing this task: the words that follow will only speak directly to you, to your predicament, when you have made the effort to personalize the material.

You have no doubt noticed that there is indeed a pattern to the people who bug you the most. They get to you where you are most vulnerable, if not in your search for universal approval, then in other ways, such as those in the disclosures listed below:



- “I hate to feel unappreciated. I put myself out for people, really extend myself, and then they act like it is their entitlement. I may not say anything at the time, but later I will explode.”
- “When people are condescending toward me I work extra hard to try and put them in their place. I’m sure they have no idea what game I am playing. Actually, it isn’t a game at all; it is serious business. I will do anything to show them that they can’t keep up with me.”
- “Whiners. When somebody starts to whine, or even sounds like they are complaining about something, it reminds me of scratching my fingernails along a chalkboard: it makes me grit my teeth. There is no way that I will give in to or negotiate with someone who whines.”
- “I don’t think very clearly when people try to mother me. I know they are only trying to be helpful, but I become unreasonable and ungrateful. I guess I am trying to discourage them from mothering me, but because I am not very direct in expressing what is going on for me, I only end up hurting their feelings.”
- “When people try to take a one-down position I want to slap them. I just hate the idea of anyone being dependent on or beholden to me. I will start a fight just to get them to stop clinging or demanding anything from me.”
- “I have some problems with control issues. I cannot stomach the idea of *anyone* having power over me. I become very stubborn, very reluctant to compromise my freedom in any way.”

- “I have a hard time when someone of the opposite sex tries to get close to me. I feel very threatened by that. I am unwilling to risk getting hurt, so I try to chase her away.”
- “When somebody appears the slightest bit manipulative, I immediately write him off. I make a decision never to trust him no matter how he might try to redeem himself. I never forget and I never forgive.”
- “I have put up with enough abuse in my life. I will not tolerate people raising their voices or even getting in my face. I admit that I tend to overreact a bit, but hey, nobody will *ever* intimidate me again.”
- “I set myself up with the same kinds of people over and over again. First, I idealize someone as a mentor. I put him or her on a pedestal, expecting things that no one could possibly deliver, and then feel betrayed because I get disappointed.”

This, of course, is but a sampling of the possibilities. Perhaps you recognized yourself in one of these testimonials. If not, you can specify what your own area of personal vulnerability is, where you tend to react in anger disproportionate to the situation. Generally, these patterns tend to fall into several broad groups.

### **A Typology of Triggers**

Whether a conflict involves manipulative/abusive participants or people

who are reasonably highly functioning, it almost always is triggered by experiences from the past. We respond to people based not only on what they are doing now but on who they remind us of, how the situations resemble others we have lived through previously, and how we perceive their behavior as filtered through our subjective impressions.

Our perceptions and attitudes are shaped, to a great extent, by our biases, distortions of reality, and sometimes inaccurate interpretations of what others are doing and what their behavior means. That is why it is important to monitor not only what you find disturbing in others but also how you are choosing to interpret their behavior.

From the examples presented in the preceding section of who some people find most provocative, several broad categories emerge. These are the types of situations or people that elicit extreme reactions, such that you feel yourself losing control, your power draining away. These “triggers” fall into several broad groups:

### **1. Those from Whom You Repeatedly but Unsuccessfully Attempt to Win Approval**

There are a few people in your life whose opinions are especially important to you. They may include parents, an older sibling, a supervisor, a mentor or a friend. When these individuals withhold their affirmations, you

work even harder to earn their accolades, all the while resenting the extent to which you care what they think.

As one man explains, when such an individual doesn't respond to you in the way that you would have preferred, conflict is easily triggered:

"My older brother has no idea why I get so mad at him. I call him on the phone and tell him about the new car I bought, the new deal I put together, the great idea I have, and he usually says that it sounds just fine. Then he changes the subject. I realize that I am hanging on every word he says. I wait, holding my breath, for him to tell me I am doing great. When he doesn't give me what I want, I get frustrated and try to impress him even more. He doesn't know what is going on when I yell at him for being so selfish.

"It has been pointed out to me that I am not so much angry at him as I am angry at myself for being so addicted to his approval. That may be so, but the fact remains that he is the one person with whom I find myself most in conflict."

## **2. Those Who Challenge Your Competence**

No matter how much self-assurance we broadcast to the world, deep down inside all of us are insecure. We wonder about what people think of us, and we care deeply that they view us as competent. Yet there are a few people who, either by virtue of their assigned positions in supervisory roles or because

they feel it is their duty, let you know that you do not quite measure up to their standards. This could be because what they expect is unreasonable, or it might reflect an accurate assessment of some weakness in need of upgrading. The problem is not so much the fact that someone is pointing out something that you could improve as it is feeling as though your very competence as a human being is being called into question.

“Okay, so I sometimes make mistakes. I don’t claim to be perfect. There is this one lady at work who is constantly looking over my shoulder. If I sensed that she was doing so to help me, perhaps I would not feel so defensive. But she reminds me of this teacher I had in elementary school who used to delight in humiliating me every time I made a mistake pronouncing certain words. My speech problem continued to get worse until I escaped from her clutches.

“Now here is this woman standing over me all of the time, just waiting for me to screw up so she can point it out to everyone else. I can’t abide this type of meddling!”

What is interesting about this particular case is that there was considerable distorting taking place in this woman’s perceptions. After hearing the “meddler’s” version of the same events, it became clear that she *was* attempting to be helpful but that her actions were constantly being misinterpreted. Conflicts were continually being ignited, not only by what was

taking place in the present but by traumatic events of the past.

### **3. Those with Whom You Fear Intimacy**

There are two drives operating simultaneously inside most of us. One is the intense desire to be close to others, to find and sustain love, to feel understood and connected. Unfortunately, this involves considerable vulnerability and risk taking. Hence, the second drive is self-protection.

The people with whom you would like to feel most intimate are also those who have the most leverage with which to hurt you. Because you have more invested in intimate relationships than you do in acquaintanceships, there is a much greater likelihood of intense conflict. By keeping people at a distance, by restraining your feelings toward them, you reduce the possibility of being rejected. Conflict is thus one method two or more people use to keep from getting too close.

I have seen this process operate time and again with some single people who claim they are looking for life partners but repeatedly sabotage prospects by manufacturing conflicts in the relationships. As one couple explains, the same scenario is not uncommon between spouses who are half in and half out of their marriages. During separate interviews, I heard the following stories:

wife: Look, he hurt me before. I just can't trust him; he'll do the same thing again. I don't really want to get a divorce. I have heard from friends that being single is no

picnic either. But I don't really want to be that close to him. He sometimes brings me flowers, or makes dinner, or tries to be nice, but then I just pick a fight with him. It's a lot safer.

husband: I don't know what she told you, but it is certainly not all my fault. She pushes me away. I know there was a time when she wanted to be close to me and I didn't respond, but that is all in the past. Now that I am ready, she claims she no longer cares.

What would happen if the wife broke down her defensiveness and started to respond to her husband's efforts to reach out? They have worked out their little dance so that they take turns being the pursuer and the pursued. That way they never have to risk real intimacy, with its accompanying vulnerability.

#### **4. Those Whom You Experience as Withholding**

You may be most consistently stymied by someone who *appears* to prevent you from getting what you want. This person may be *perceived* as controlling or manipulative or even abusive. The choice of the words *appears* and *perceived* is deliberate: they imply that somebody may be difficult to deal with not just because of what he does but because of how you interpret his actions. Every person you fight with has many other people in his life with whom he gets along quite well. *You cannot look at a person who seems difficult to you without also looking at yourself.*

This phenomenon is illustrated in the case of one department in an organization in which the supervisor is perceived as the most difficult person

imaginable: “He is totally unfair and arbitrary in his decisions. He is argumentative, even abusive in the ways in which he relates to others. I can’t stand being around the guy. All we ever do is disagree.”

The plight of this man is substantiated by several of his colleagues, who share his perception of the predicament. He receives support and encouragement from these folks that his assessment of who is at fault for their conflicts is indeed accurate. Yet there is another constituency within this department that finds the supervisor to be quite even handed and reasonable in the decisions that he makes and in the ways in which he relates to others. So what makes their experiences so different? Why do some people encounter such tremendous difficulty in their interactions with this supervisor while others have few problems?

The answer, of course, is that conflict is an *interactive* process. It takes at least two people with different perspectives to have a disagreement. And it usually involves relating to an adversary not only as he objectively appears to you but also as a representative of people from your past. You cannot fight back against the villains who abused you, but, by gosh, you will take no grief from anyone again! Of course, if you are hypervigilant, always looking for people who are trying to hurt you, you will find evidence everywhere. Your trigger point may be set off by the smallest imagined provocation—unless you begin to understand the basis for these reactions.



## Boy, Is This Familiar!

Dale has begun to notice that the relationships in which he has had the most trouble, from childhood to the present, have been those in which a particular kind of person refuses to engage with him in an honest exchange. He perceives such individuals as evasive, dishonest, and therefore untrustworthy.

One such person currently in his life, reminiscent of so many others he has struggled with in the past, is Fred, a good-natured guy who for some reason drives Dale crazy with his tendency to avoid confrontation. Fred will do anything in his power to distract them from dealing with what Dale considers to be the problem at hand.

Dale's attempts to keep Fred on track, dealing with the issues, have been met with increasingly inventive ways of staying in safe areas, as demonstrated in this dialogue between the two friends.

Dale: There is something that I would like to straighten out between us.

Fred: Sure. No problem. Could I ask you something first? I need some help with my car.

Dale: I would be happy to help you. But as I mentioned, I want to resolve something that happened before that is still bothering me.

Fred: Fine by me. What's on your mind? Oh yeah, before I forget, since my car isn't working too well, could you give me a ride later?

Dale: Sure. But I really want to talk about this thing that's bothering me.

Fred: Hey, me too. It's just that until I take care of this problem with my car, I can't really concentrate on anything else. Maybe we could talk about this some other time. Did you see that game last night?

Let's give Fred the benefit of the doubt and assume that he is not always so determined to keep the focus of discussions on superficial levels, ignoring important issues in relationships. He is nervous about this matter that Dale brought up. He is afraid that he will be blamed because he senses that he did something wrong. Rather than resolving this issue, his fear of blame drives him to become obstructive in their communication, which drives Dale crazy.

### **Understanding Why Some People Act Differently from the Way You Might Expect or Prefer**

The question remains as to why people act in certain ways, why they attempt to short circuit progress even when it is to their own detriment. Both Dale and Fred are utterly perplexed as to the motives and behavior of the other. They both feel misunderstood. They feel disappointed that the other person is not complying with their expectations.

A crucial factor in figuring out who sets you off and how to neutralize their effects is understanding why some people act the way they do. In order to move beyond blaming others for your plight you will first have to understand that they may be operating under rules that are different from but just as valid as your own. There are thus several reasons why some people will dig their heels

in or appear obstructive, even when it is to their own detriment.

### **They Don't Understand What You Expect**

All of us have certain expectations regarding how others should act and how they should treat us. If you are not explicit about these preferences, and do not communicate them clearly enough so that others know what you want, you are likely to feel disappointed or let down.

This predicament is illustrated in the disclosure of one person whose unstated expectations were the source of conflict with someone:

“I was feeling increasingly angry at a friend I meet for lunch. More often than not, it seemed like I was getting stuck paying more than my fair share of the bill. I held on to that resentment for some time—I know it affected our relationship. Finally I said something to my friend about this, and to my surprise, she stated that she thought I preferred to pay more because I order more to eat.”

### **They Lack the Ability to Do What You Want**

It is certainly reasonable to expect people to behave in certain ways. Be sure, however, that they have the knowledge and skills to comply with your requests. A conflict between two roommates started because of unrealistic

demands:

“I got really mad at my roommate because when he used my computer, he never cleaned up the mess he made during his computations. I asked him if he knew what he was doing, and he said he did. Then I learned he really didn’t know how to do what I was asking, but he was afraid to tell me. He thought I’d be even more critical of him.”

### **They Have Some Emotional Problem**

Some people have emotional or other disturbances that make it difficult for them to function appropriately in certain aspects of life, especially interpersonal dimensions. These people are sufficiently impaired that they are unable to respond sensitively and cooperatively during times of conflict. A father shamefully admits how the pressures in his life get the best of him:

“I really wanted to tell my son how much I loved him, that I was sorry for yelling at him the way I did. But I have been under so much stress that I can’t seem to keep my temper under control. I just lash out at people even though I don’t mean to. As soon as I open my mouth I know I am about to cross some line, but I feel powerless to stop.”

### **They Are Skilled at Using Manipulation to Get Their Way**

One reason to be obstructive is that you can make sure that others don't get what they want—even if you lose, too. Manipulation is also helpful in undermining an adversary, recruiting support for one's position, and operating without risk of direct attack. In short, people act this way because it works, as is evident in the following example:

“Look, it's not so much that I don't like the way you're handling things [read: *I don't like the way you are handling things*]; I simply disagree with the policy that has been established. I have been your greatest advocate [*to your face; behind your back, I undermine you every chance I get*]. I really want you to be successful [only to *the extent that it makes me look good*]. You have to trust me [*don't trust me*] if you expect me to help. [Help? *I will make sure you fail with every resource at my disposal*]. It pains me so to see you struggling [pains me *that I can not see more*] and I want to run interference for you [*'interfere' is just about right*]. So now, tell me what is going on with you.”

### **They Don't Perceive Any Incentives to Cooperate**

There is no reason to be helpful during negotiations if winning is not more attractive than the struggle itself. Some people thrive on conflict—they like the excitement, passion, and sparks flying. They revel in their power as agitators, and they don't much enjoy periods of tranquility.

“I do like the feeling of exhilaration during heated arguments. In some

ways, it's kind of fun: two people going at it with both fists flying. Frankly, I feel depressed when it's all over."

### **They Are Receiving Secondary Benefits as a Result of Their Behavior**

In medical parlance it has been observed that often patients will not recover from surgery or illness because they enjoy the attention and comfort they are receiving. People who are obstructive accrue other payoffs for being difficult: (1) they are able to procrastinate and prevent action; (2) they can inflict damage on others and thereby feel powerful; (3) they can avoid responsibility for their plight and blame others for their misery. Most such people are not aware of what they are doing, as the following example illustrates:

"Sometimes I will deliberately ruin a relationship with someone I care about just so I can stay in control. I end things when I am ready. That way I am rarely rejected by others and I protect myself from being hurt."

### **They Are Acting Out Unresolved Feelings Toward an Authority Figure**

Transference reactions do not occur only in psychotherapy. We are constantly responding to others not as who they are but as who they remind us of, particularly when someone is in an authority or power position.

“There is this guy at work who sets me off no matter what he does. I’m sure he has no idea what this is about. I’m not sure I even know, except that he reminds me of this teacher I had in high school—kind of pompous. I snap at him for no reason, then I notice what I’m doing, back off, and ignore him for the rest of the day.”

It is possible, of course, that it is not the other person who is being difficult. You may be the one who is being unreasonable, confusing, or unrealistically demanding. It therefore would be interesting to sort out the extent to which your/his/her obstructive behavior is situational or characterological. In other words, is the difficulty unique to this situation or part of a longstanding style of dealing with others?

Merton, for example, is normally an easygoing guy who prefers to avoid confrontation whenever possible. For some reason, however, he is engaged with Samuel in a series of vicious arguments. Merton refuses to back down, will not give in one iota during negotiations, and has resolutely decided to keep fighting no matter what the outcome. Samuel, by contrast, is used to this kind of emotionally charged situation. It is his nature (or perhaps his training) to make life as difficult as possible for as many people as possible. Samuel is acting in character for him: being obstructive is a way of life. Merton, on the other hand, has *chosen* to be obstructive in this one situation to assert his independence and express his autonomy.

The people who push your buttons come in both varieties: (1) those who are being difficult in response to behavior in you that they perceive as difficult, and (2) those who are characterologically difficult, perhaps even prone to being abusive at times. Since relationships with the latter group are likely to be the most emotionally charged, you will find it even more challenging to “unplug” yourself from chronically unsatisfying patterns with them. Just because it may be more frustrating for you to work through conflicts with the chronically difficult does not mean that you will not be able to do so; it will just involve more energy, commitment, and disciplined action on your part in order to not permit yourself to get out of control.

### **Seeing Yourself in Others**

It was Freud who first conceived of human beings as holding a vast reservoir of psychic energy—internal forces of tension, frustration, aggression, and sexuality that must be released or, more often, displaced through less direct channels. Scapegoating and blaming others, projecting unacceptable impulses onto outsiders, can be viewed as ways to deal with hostile feelings that have no comfortable home. That is why one of the first places to look when you are in the process of finding fault with others is at yourself: What aspects of them that you find so distasteful or despicable are also parts of you?

“None!” you might respond indignantly. How dare I suggest such a thing!



Well, look again. More often than not, when you become disproportionately upset with someone else's unacceptable behavior, there is something of yourself that you recognize in the exchange, a part of you that you dislike very much. It is, of course, much easier and safer to be critical of someone else than it is to direct blame inward.

In Chapter Two we continue the journey toward discovering the patterns of your conflicted relationships by moving away from a focus on other people to confronting the kinds of interactions that arouse your deepest fears.

## About the Author

Jeffrey A. Kottler is professor of counseling and educational psychology at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He has worked as a therapist in a variety of settings—including hospitals, mental health centers, schools, clinics, universities, corporations, and private practice. Jeffrey is an internationally recognized authority in the area of human relationships, having authored thirteen books on the subjects of teaching and therapy.

On Being a Therapist (1993, revised ed.)

Teacher as Counselor (1993, with Ellen Kottler)

Advanced Group Leadership (1993)

On Being a Teacher (1993, with Stan Zehm)

[Compassionate Therapy: Working with Difficult Clients](#) (1992)

Introduction to Therapeutic Counseling (1992, 2nd ed., with Robert Brown)

[The Compleat Therapist](#) (1991)

Private Moments, Secret Selves:

Enriching Our Time Alone (1990)

[The Imperfect Therapist: Learning from Failure in Therapeutic Practice](#) (1989, with Diane Blau)

Ethical and Legal Issues in Counseling and Psychotherapy (1985, 2nd ed., with William Van Hoose)

Pragmatic Group Leadership (1983)

Mouthing Off: A Study of Oral Behavior, Its Causes and Treatments (1981)

## Recommended Reading

- Ardrey, R. (1967). *The territorial imperative*. London: Collins.
- Argyle, M., & Furnham, A. (1983). Sources of satisfaction and conflict in long-term relationships. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, August, 481-493.
- Axelrod, R. (1984). *The evolution of cooperation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Blalock, H. M. (1989). *Power and conflict*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Bulman, R., & Wortman, C. B. (1977). Attributions of blame and coping in the "real world": Severe accident victims react to their lot. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 35, 351-363.
- Crosby, J. F. (1980). Responsibility for feelings: A multilateral approach to causation. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, October, 439-446.
- Deutsch, M. (1973). *The resolution of conflict*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Dudgeon, C. (1992). Thwart office terrorists with these tactics. *Chicago Tribune*, November 8.
- Duncan, B. L., & Rock, J. W. (1993). Saving relationships: The power of the unpredictable. *Psychology Today*, Jan./Feb.
- Elias, M. (1981). Serum cortisol, testosterone, and testosterone-binding globulin responses to competitive fighting in human males. *Aggressive Behavior*, 7, 215-224.
- Evans, P. (1992). *The verbally abusive relationship*. Holbrook, MA: Bob Adams.
- Folger, J. P., Poole, M. S., & Stutman, R. K. (1993). *Working through conflict*. New York: HarperCollins.

- Goffman, E. (1957). *Presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Doubleday.
- Harris, M. (1977). *Cannibals and kings: The origins of cultures*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Hart, B. H. L. (1967). *Strategy*. New York: New American Library.
- Heitler, S. (1990). *From conflict to resolution*. New York: Norton.
- Kottler, J. A. (1990). *Private moments, secret selves: Enriching your time alone*. New York: Ballantine.
- Kottler, J. A. (1992). *Compassionate therapy: Working with difficult clients*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kottler, J. A. (1993). *On being a therapist* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kottler, J. A., & Blau, D. S. (1989). *The imperfect therapist: Learning from failure in therapeutic practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- LoPate, P. (1989). *Against joie de vivre*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Lorenz, K. (1966). *On aggression*. New York: Bantam.
- Maynard, D. W. (1985). On the function of social conflict among children. *American Sociological Review*, 50, 207-223.
- Maynard-Smith, J. (1982). *Evolution and the theory of games*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Mills, J., & Chusmir, L. H. (1988). Managerial and conflict resolution styles: Work and home differences. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 3, 303-316.
- Moore, C. W. (1991). *The mediation process: Practical strategies for resolving conflicts*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ogley, R. (1991). *Conflict under the microscope*. Aldershot, England: Avebury.

- Patchen, M. (1988). *Resolving disputes between nations*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Pruitt, D. G., & Rubin, J. Z. (1986). *Social conflict: Escalation, stalemate, and settlement*. New York: Random House.
- Rapoport, A. (1960). *Fights, games, and debates*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Rice, P. L. (1992). *Stress and health*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Robarchek, C. A. (1979). Conflict, emotion, and abreaction: Resolution of conflict among the Semai Senoi. *Ethos*, 104-123.
- Rubin, J., & Rubin, C. (1989). *When families fight*. New York: William Morrow.
- Scott, G. G. (1990). *Resolving conflict*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger.
- Shantz, C. (1987). Conflicts between children. *Child Development*, 58, 283-305.
- Shaver, K. G. (1985). *The attribution of blame*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Sillars, A., & Parry, D. (1982). Stress, cognition, and communication in interpersonal conflicts. *Communication Research*, 9, 201-226.
- Snyder, C. R., Higgins, R. L., & Stucky, R. J. (1983). Excuses: Masquerades in search of grace. New York: Wiley.
- Soloman, M. (1990). *Working with difficult people*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Tennen, H., & Affleck, G. (1990). Blaming others for threatening events. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108, 209-232.
- Thomas, L. (1979). *The medusa and the snail*. New York: Viking Press.
- Valles, P. (1992). *I love you, I hate you*. Tarrytown, NY: Triumph Books.
- Weissberg, M. P. (1983). *Dangerous secrets: Maladaptive responses to stress*. New York: Norton.

Wetzler, S. (1992). Sugarcoated hostility. *Newsweek*, Oct. 12, 14.

Wile, D. B. (1988). *After the honeymoon: How conflict can improve your relationship*. New York: Wiley.

Wilmot, J. H., & Wilmot, W. W. (1978). *Interpersonal conflict*. Dubuque, IA: W. C. Brown.

Witt, D. D. (1987). A conflict theory of family violence. *Journal of Family Violence*, 2, 291-301.

Zuk, G. H. (1984). On the pathology of blaming. *International Journal of Family Therapy*, 6, 143-155.