



## Dignity: It's Essential Role in Resolving Conflict

In her book *Dignity: It's Essential Role in Resolving Conflict*, Donna Hicks explains why we feel pain when our dignity is violated while providing us with the knowledge, awareness, and skills to avoid unknowingly harming the dignity of others. The "Dignity Model" is designed to help people understand the role that dignity plays in their own lives and relationships. Hicks' creation of the Dignity Model is a response, and an attempt, to understand a crucial missing link in our current understanding of conflict: a failure in recognizing how vulnerable humans are to being treated as if they don't matter.

The Dignity Model demonstrates how to rebuild a troubled relationship that has teetered under the weight of conflict while also offering suggestions on what to do to reconcile them. Hicks describes ten essential elements of dignity:

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|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Acceptance of Identity | 6. Fairness             |
| 2. Inclusion              | 7. Benefit of the Doubt |
| 3. Safety                 | 8. Understanding        |
| 4. Acknowledgment         | 9. Independence         |
| 5. Recognition            | 10. Accountability      |

Hicks also describes ten temptations to violate dignity:

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|----------------------------|---|
| 1. Taking the Bait         | 6. Avoiding Conflict                                |
| 2. Saving Face             | 7. Being the Victim                                 |
| 3. Shirking Responsibility | 8. Resisting Feedback                               |
| 4. Seeking False Dignity   | 9. Blaming & Shaming Others to Deflect              |
| 5. Seeking False Security  | 10. Engaging in False Intimacy and Demeaning Gossip |

Ultimately, the model teaches how to honor dignity, the dignity of others, how to maintain our dignity by fighting the internal forces that tempt us to act badly and how to resolve conflicts and reconcile with people by recognizing their inherent worth. As Hicks proposes, "a good relationship feels good, but one in which both parties recognize and acknowledge each other's value and worth feels even better. With safety comes the freedom to welcome intimacy and genuine connection." As part of the ten essential elements of dignity, Hicks notes that one of the important elements is that of inclusion. Ideally, we should strive to make others feel that they belong in all of our relationships. Whether the relationship we have with another person is defined through familial ties, community belonging, organization practices or national identities, creating a sense of inclusion can drive dignified interactions.

### Reference

Hicks, D. (2011). *Dignity: Its Essential Role in Resolving Conflict*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

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