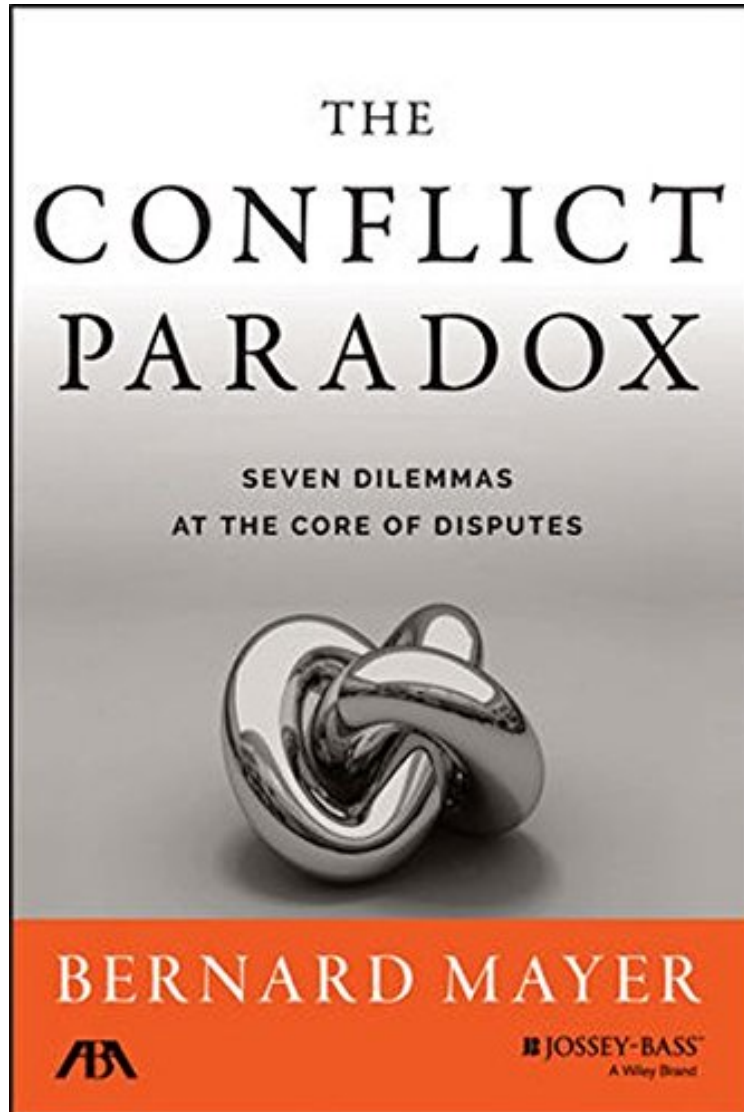


## The Conflict Paradox: Seven Dilemmas at the Core of Disputes

*Bernard Mayer*

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**Bernard Mayer : The Conflict Paradox: Seven Dilemmas at the Core of Disputes** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Conflict Paradox: Seven Dilemmas at the Core of Disputes:

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. succinct style is no where better displayed than in this bookBy Norval SettleBernie Mayer's clear, succinct style is no where better displayed than in this book. It is a "must-read" for any practicing mediator, as it goes to the heart of what we do and to the complexity of the challenges and choices we

(and our parties) face in every case. Beware, those who try to fit mediation into any easy boxes or stylistic models -- this book will make you very uncomfortable! The essential (and refreshing) humility of the author is not stated, per se, but is apparent throughout the book. Beyond the wisdom, lessons from experience and cogent discussion of the universe of mediation's nuances, I especially welcomed this sense of humility and wonder about the wealth of possibilities in every mediation. Mayer stands tall among all the writers on mediation who mainly (and merely) want to persuade us how "right" they are! 13 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Another Major Book by Bernie Mayer By Chip Hauss I almost didn't review this book. Bernie Mayer is a close colleague and friend. But we look at conflict differently, so my spin might prove helpful--taking my biases into account. My own work focuses on using conflict and its resolution as vehicles for social change. Mayer concentrates on how people deal with disputes themselves, especially people like himself who are called on to help out. What he does is show the reader how seven paradoxes run through any conflict and do so whatever our own role is in the conflict. As someone primarily interested in public policy and social change, I found the ones that dealt with engagement, advocacy, principle, and realism to be the most useful, but they all matter. And they all matter to you whether you deal with conflict as a professional the way Mayer does or as a party to conflict as Mayer and the rest of us do. Mayer also takes us beyond the world of the mediator which is where his professional roots lie. In particular, his use of insights from neuroscience reflect a growing trend in peacebuilding, which is my part of the conflict resolution world. This is the fourth of Bernie's books I've read. Frankly, I was worried that it would cover familiar ground and not teach me much. In fact, it has made me recast the way I do my own work in terms of the paradoxes he raises and more. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By SLA very good book.

Find the roadmap to the heart of the conflict The Conflict Paradox is a guide to taking conflict to a more productive place. Written by one of the founders of the professional conflict management field and co-published with the American Bar Association, this book outlines seven major dilemmas that conflict practitioners face every day. Readers will find expert guidance toward getting to the heart of the conflict and will be challenged to adopt a new way to think about the choices disputants face. They will also be offered practical tools and techniques for more successful intervention. Using stories, experiences, and reflective exercises to bring these concepts to life, the author provides actionable advice for overcoming roadblocks to effective conflict work. Disputants and interveners alike are often stymied by what appear to be unacceptable alternatives. The Conflict Paradox offers a new way of understanding and working with these so that they become not obstacles but opportunities for helping people move through conflict successfully. Examine the contradictions at the center of almost all conflicts Learn how to bring competition and cooperation, avoidance and engagement, optimism and realism together to make for more power conflict intervention Deal effectively with the tensions between emotions, and logic, principles and compromise, neutrality and advocacy, community and autonomy Discover the tools and techniques that make conflicts less of a hurdle to overcome and more of an opportunity to pursue Conflict is everywhere, and conflict intervention skills are valuable far beyond the professional and legal realms. With insight and creativity, solutions are almost always possible. For conflict interveners and disputants looking for an effective and creative approach to understanding and working with conflict, The Conflict Paradox provides a powerful and important roadmap for conflict intervention.

"In his new book, *The Conflict Paradox: Seven Dilemmas at the Core of Disputes* (2015, Jossey-Bass), Bernie Mayer explores the mystery of this complexity in the context of conflict engagement. It is an enjoyable and fascinating read for everyone involved in negotiation, mediation or any form of conflict engagement." Kari Boyle, *Slaw* From the Inside Flap When in conflict should we cooperate and when should we compete? When should we be realists and when should we be guided by optimism? Do we insist on sticking to our principles or do we prepare for compromise? The toughest challenges in conflict arise from the polarized ways in which we view our choices about how to approach a dispute, choices that seem to involve two mutually exclusive paths, neither of which will get us to where we want to go. In *The Conflict Paradox*, Bernie Mayer argues that the real challenge is to find a new path that incorporates both approaches. These apparently opposing conflict practices need not be mutually exclusive in fact, each is necessary to the other. The Conflict Paradox poses seven dilemmas that permeate our thinking about conflict, whether a family crisis, a corporate dispute, or a geopolitical negotiation. Disputants often understand their choices as mutually exclusive and ask themselves the following: Competition or cooperation? Optimism or realism? Avoidance or engagement? Principle or compromise? Emotion or logic? Neutrality or advocacy? Autonomy or community? The more fundamental challenge is to evolve beyond these polarities, which are not true choices but essential dynamics of human interaction. Without competition, there can be no cooperation. Without autonomy, there would be no community. When third-party mediators, legal professionals, and advocates can help their clients to understand and embrace these paradoxes, deeper understanding of their conflict and a clearer vision of a path forward becomes possible. This book, published in cooperation with the American Bar Association, provides a practical approach for dealing with the paradoxes that underlie almost all conflicts. Case studies, reflective exercises, and other tools enable readers to discover points of contact between seemingly incompatible paths through conflict. The Conflict Paradox is

an accessible text, ready for application in the dispute resolution field. Readers will learn to accommodate contradictions, welcome complexity, and become more fluent in the paradoxical language of change. This book will challenge how you think about both conflict and social change, and encourage you to look at the dynamics of disputing in a new way.

**From the Back Cover Praise for THE CONFLICT PARADOX**

"This is the best new book to come out on conflict engagement and transformation in the last five years. It will be an invaluable resource for people involved in conflicts and third parties who help to resolve serious differences and build more positive relationships." Christopher W. Moore, partner, CDR Associates; author of *The Mediation Process*

"I LOVE this book. Framing the dilemmas of conflict as paradoxes that must be managed makes exquisite sense. This wonderful road map to conflict will resonate with readers. A well-written, reflective, and thoughtful approach filled with personal and practical stories. A must-read for both advocates and neutrals!" Andrea Kupfer Schneider, professor and director of the dispute resolution program, Marquette University Law School

"Bernie Mayer is brilliant, and his book makes an enormous contribution to the field. It is deep and subtle and complex and profound, and at the same time it is immensely practical, tremendously useful, amazingly comprehensive, and beautifully written. It is a classic, and it will help you navigate the chaotic waters of conflict." Kenneth Cloke, author of *The Dance of Opposites*

"In this groundbreaking work, Bernie Mayer translates science, philosophy, and creative imagination into tools both practical and original. This book offers a much-needed road map for integrative thinking in even the most complex conflicts." Michelle LeBaron, Distinguished Scholar in Residence, Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies; professor, The University of British Columbia Faculty of Law at Allard Hall

"Drawing on decades of experience as a conflict specialist and an earlier and even more fundamental commitment as a social activist to a just society Bernie Mayer has written a book, rich in case studies and lessons from the field, that unpack seven essential paradoxes characteristic of intractable conflict. Mayer demonstrates how each pole of the paradox remains stubbornly present and consequential all the time, and how the conflict specialist must come to understand and learn to work with this, even as he or she helps the disputants to do much the same thing." Kevin Avruch, dean and professor, The School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University

"I strongly recommend this book to any professional who wants to stretch the boundaries of his or her thinking and skills in working with others." Arnold T. Shienvold, PhD, past president, Association for Conflict Resolution and Association of Family and Conciliation Courts