



THE HIGHER GROUND INITIATIVE

From Conflict to Collaboration, Adversaries to Allies, Partisanship to Peace
Holistic Conflict Solutions for a Changing World

What is The Higher Ground Initiative?

The Higher Ground Initiative seeks to engage community partners in collaborative relationships to identify challenging conflict in the community and work together to transform conflict into opportunities for creative solutions, community stability, and positive change

There is a deeply embedded cultural instinct for many of us to avoid and resist conflict. Often, we are taught that conflict is a sign of personal failure, or that we should be able to “just get along” without friction or contradiction.

There is, however, a holistic theory of conflict emerging from a growing body of research that supports another way of thinking. Based on the dialectic theory of German Enlightenment philosopher G.F. Hegel, who expressed it this way: *thesis + antithesis = synthesis*, this model suggests that, far from being the negative experience most of us think of, **conflict is a powerful and constructive force for positive change and growth!** It can provide us with the opportunity to resolve our differences, as it assists us to attain higher levels of understanding of each other and the organic part we all play in creating and nurturing our communities.

The other important insight coming out of conflict studies today is this: *the absence of conflict is not harmony, it is apathy!* When Hegel’s *thesis*, or initial perspective, encounters *antithesis*, or opposing perspective, one of two things can happen: those holding these perspectives can decide it’s not worth the time and effort to reconcile them, and go on apathetically in a static state of unproductive and sometimes destructive conflict; OR the perspectives can be examined for common connections and merged, or *synthesized*, into an entirely new perspective, a more constructive and collaborative perspective that moves everyone involved forward together in positive partnership.

Conflict is inevitable, and it can be approached, not as an obstacle to be avoided, but as a *tool*, an instrument with which we test our determination to move forward constructively. In so doing we can find the pathways into that space with the revelations, as yet undiscovered, that only a constructive, holistic approach to conflict can reveal to us.

THE HIGHER GROUND INITIATIVE Engaging communities in collaborative practices

Group Dialogue Facilitation

Support for families, employers, employees, neighborhood associations, problem-solving teams, and other groups in the wider community wanting to work together to resolve differences or create policy.

Public Deliberation Process Facilitation

Convening of large groups of community stakeholders, breaking out into small groups with broad representation of perspectives, and facilitating dialogue to find area of common ground that can be reported back to the larger group for consideration and adoption.

Creative Consensus Building

Engaging conflicting interests in the community in the process of **formal consensus**, but with the twist of entertaining “what if?” scenarios that invite participants to bring their imagination into play in unrestricted brainstorming and world-building exercises. It is through such facilitated and organic processes that the most creative and often the unlikeliest proposals for solutions can be brought to the surface.

The Higher Ground Initiative is a community “think-tank” project in holistic conflict management developed by **David Troxel**, social science researcher, restorative justice practitioner, community group facilitator, and professional mediator practicing in Humboldt since 2017. He received his **Master of Arts in Conflict resolution** from the **Conflict Resolution institute at the University of Denver** in 2011, following completion of his **B.A. in Sociology** at the **University of Colorado**, with a concentration in *Qualitative Social Research*.



Would you like to learn more or join the conversation?

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