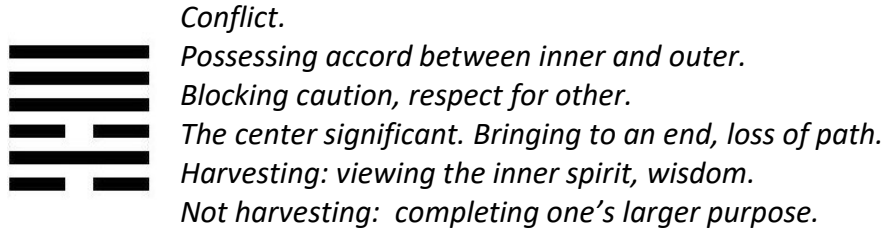


## Hexagram 6 Conflict



### Structure

- Strength ☰ over danger ☵. The Creative over turbulent water.
- The Creative above moves upward. Water below moves downward. The two trigrams move apart.

This hexagram describes the dangers we cause for ourselves when we use conflict to impose our will upon another. When opposing forces frame their difference within the realm of right and wrong, people move away from each other and into conflict. Conflict differs from resisting those who knowingly harm others and the Earth for self-benefit.

Conflict violates harmony and marks the limits of our capacities to connect affectionately and beneficially with others. The strong yield to their dangerous willingness to harm others to have their way, while the weak wish that harm might befall their contender. Acting out of anger leads to greater danger as we tend to ignore the consequences of our behavior in the heat of the moment. To conflict means not to love.

Conflict provokes strong feelings of self-righteous anger and the urgency to prove the other wrong. We have the desire to condemn the other and force our will upon them or the situation. Yet we have learned from experience that acting on these feelings severely complicates the situation and endangers the greater purpose of freeing ourselves from harmful conditioning and caring for the Earth Interbeing.

The wise avoid the opposing tendencies of conflict by taking everything into careful consideration at the very beginning, especially in situations in which they anticipate opposition might arise. Within a relationship or a group, if people have made the effort and taken the time to define rights, duties, and processes on how to come to a decision, they will have a way to work with differences without moving into conflict. Those on a spiritual path have ways to avoid conflict and transcend opposition by reframing the situation to realize commonality.

The grave mistake of conflict comes from letting a difference go too far. When they cannot have their way, most people allow their poisonous negative side to act. They get excited and contend for victory, plotting and scheming to deprive the other and to benefit themselves. To pursue a conflict to its bitter end creates enmity and turns out badly for both sides.

A clear and deep understanding of the dangers of conflict motivates us to free ourselves of our conditioned exceptionalism and arrogance. If we seek to punish someone because we deem them wrong, we lose the spiritual path because of a little anger. In conflict, we hold the differences

between us more important than the path. We become like the one whom we believe intentionally harmed us.

When we first recognize that we have fallen into the realm of right and wrong, at that moment we have a choice: to conflict to impose our will or to approach the opposition as opportunity to transcend divisiveness. We can avoid conflict if we have the capacities to stay present with the experience and see difficult situations as knots that need undoing. By staying in touch with our spiritual path and love for all, we can transcend individual differences through fellowship and subdue others through our virtues. The wise remain firmly in control of themselves.

Once entangled in a conflict, we can still respond well if we recognize that we must exert ourselves to regain presence through wisdom and to strengthen our willingness to come to terms by meeting the opponent halfway. As long as the conflict has not gone so far as to have poisoned the relationship, we can smooth out the opposition and move through the danger by focusing on what underlies the differences that escalated into conflict. Those wanting to extricate themselves from a conflict have the willingness to compromise or withdraw.

Rather than seek victory over another, sages contend with themselves inwardly to undo their conditioning to what harms and return to the path. First, we need to know that conflict emerges from a stressful and difficult situation that marks the limits of our capacity to respond well. If the conflict focused on something unimportant, we can simply drop the issue. If we find ourselves struggling with reactive feelings, then we need to withdraw from the situation immediately to avoid impetuously acting out of anger. If we mirror the behavior of our contender, they have won as we have lost ourselves.

We do not see the others as they are but as we are. Pondering and blaming others who do not let us have our way poisons our relationship with them. We deny the sacred path when we speculate about the wrongness of the other and plot to punish them.

The wise practice seeing through their disturbing emotions within a loving presence to find how they have projected what they do not like about themselves upon the other. In presence, we acknowledge our point of view but then try to understand how the other understands the situation from their perspective. If we can find love struggling to express itself through our imperfect beings, then the way forward reveals itself as we have found the commonality of love.

When a forming group clearly defines its rights and duties, it has already removed many causes for conflict. To avoid a possible conflict within an upcoming situation, the wise take everything into consideration, guiding others to a common understanding of underlying values and guiding principles before discussing difficult problem. If we can agree on what we have to do to resolve our differences and the best way forward, then the problem becomes an opportunity for cooperation. Often, in the light of the greater purpose, the group decides to drop a conflict that now seems irrelevant and finds inclusive ways to address the situation.

A group in conflict need to avoid advancing a challenging effort until it resolves and heals the conflict. A conflicted group has divided energies, which weakens its power to overcome external dangers.

The spiritual path avoids conflict at every turn. Through awareness and doing nothing to harm others, we remove the conditions that lead to conflict and victory seeking. By aligning our efforts with the ways that benefit all, disputes will not interfere with our purpose. If we openly clash, we fail. The wise do not let anger and self-righteousness cause them to lose the path. Difficult situations do not endanger the hearts of sages as they have moved beyond the realm of right or wrong and victory seeking.

**Line 1:** The weak line in a low position does not persist in a conflict but drops it. It receives some criticism but avoids much trouble. The line does not risk pushing a disagreement to a decision, especially with a stronger opponent. It may come to a slight dispute, but it ends well.

**Line 2:** The wise line retreats from contesting with someone of greater or equal strength to avoid an unequal conflict, which only would draw down disaster upon it and its community. The weak hardly ever win when they contend against the strong.

**Line 3:** The line has the satisfaction of completing the work and lets the credit for it go to those it serves, not contesting with others for recognition. The line feels rewarded from nurturing its spiritual being and practicing virtue, its inner treasures. To obey the inner spirit brings benefit to all.

**Line 4:** When opposed by an equally strong contender, the line does not conflict as it does not serve the spirit. The wise do not press contentions. Rather, they contend with themselves to reduce their victory-seeking.

**Line 5:** The line contends and subdues others with its virtues, transforming those eager to conflict to gain power so that they do not contend. Here the sage contends with itself to transcend the conflict.

**Line 6:** The line has carried a conflict to the bitter end and gains victory, but it loses the spiritual path and the respect of others. Others attack it again and again, and the conflict never ends. What using force gains, others take back by force. The line has gained little and lost much, the fate of those willing to harm others for self-benefit.