



Thoughts from Linda:

*The Anatomy of Peace
Resolving the Heart of Conflict*

The Arbinger Institute
2015

What if we could “resolve the heart of conflict” in our lives with friends, family, neighbors, work colleagues, and others, as this title suggests? This “how to” book is an invaluable resource for anyone wanting to do just that!

The word ‘anatomy’ has both a classic and colloquial meaning. Its classical meaning is “the branch of morphology that deals with the structure of animals.” Colloquially, it refers to a “detailed analysis.”

This 2015 edition of The Anatomy of Peace, from The Arbinger Institute, offers a very detailed analysis and important message and approach to peacebuilding that is quite timely today, no matter where you live on the planet.

As I write this report in December of 2023, there are 13 active conflicts in the world with a stunning number of military and civilian deaths. Over 20,000 Israelis and Palestinians have recently lost their lives in the latest conflict in the Middle East, which is only three months old. Almost unbelievably, the current Russian and Ukrainian War has produced over 300,000 deaths, with projections of more to come.

The idea of ‘peace’ seems like an unachievable concept in the world today. Hate speech is on the rise. The FBI recently released its annual statistics on hate crimes in America. Antisemitic hate crimes rose 25 percent from 2021 to 2022, and Antisemitism accounted for over half of all reported religion-based hate crimes. Anti-LGBTQI+ hate crimes rose 16 percent, and Muslim Americans and African Americans continue to be overrepresented among victims.

The data paints a bleak picture. And yet, for those of us in the conflict resolution space, we know that there are paths forward other than those we currently see. [The Anatomy of Peace](#) provides paradigms for understanding the root causes of conflict as well as insights into the heart of peace. The book offers clear and easy-to-understand frameworks and toolkits for the implementation of a different way of being and behaving.

It is a remarkable 'how to' book, packed neatly as a fictional story that takes the reader through very familiar territory while teaching all along the way. This book is a prequel to the bestselling book [Leadership and Self-Deception](#). I especially like the universal type of story used in [The Anatomy of Peace](#), as it appeals to readers of all types--business leaders, marital partners, parents, and friends alike will find aspects of each character in themselves. The use of the story-telling framework really works in this book and adds to its reach.

The book uses a fictional story of an Arab and a Jew—both of whom lost their fathers at the hands of the other's cousins—to powerfully show readers the way to transform conflict. We learn how they come together, how they help parents and children come together, and how we, too, can find our way out of the personal, professional, and social conflicts that make life difficult.

There are four chapters: *The Heart of Peace*, *From Peace to War*, *From War to Peace*, and *Spreading Peace*. The *Appendix* is quite good with the following sections: *Exploring the Arbinger Diagram*; *Going Deeper: The Four Styles of Justification*; and *Going Deeper: Getting Out of the Box*.

As the *Preface* notes, in an enticing overview, "Why does there remain so much confusion (as to conflict) when there is so much need? The reason is that in conflict, as in magic, the real action occurs when people are not looking. For example, we assume that people in conflict want solutions. However, this is only partially true. Parents of belligerent children do want the belligerence to end, those who work for tyrannical managers want an end to tyranny, and citizens of weakened nations certainly want to be treated with respect. Notice, however, that parties in conflict all wait for the same solution: they wait for the other party to change. Should we be surprised, then, when conflicts linger, and problems remain?"

It turns out that people in conflict value something else more highly than they value solutions."

The book exposes just what that is, diving deeply into the psychology of self-deception and justification.

Along the way to understanding, you will learn about the "Way of Being Diagram" built on the same theoretical approach as that of the famed Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, whose theory of human existence and encounter focused on what he termed "Ich-Du" referring to the "I-Thou" state of being as contrasted to "Ich-Es" --the "I-It" mode of being. In [The Anatomy of Peace](#), you will understand that at all times, we are always seeing others either as objects--obstacles, for example, or as vehicles or irrelevancies, or we are fully seeing them as people.

In an early conversation between the leading characters of the story, Avi, one of the leaders of the weekend workshop, notes that "seeing an equal person as an inferior object is an act of violence...and bruises heal more quickly than emotional scars do."

I especially liked the story in the chapter, *Peace in Wartime*, which illustrates how someone can even wage war with a heart at peace. The story focuses on Saladin, the Muslim Sultan of Egypt and Syria, who famously defeated a large army of Crusaders in 1187 and recaptured Jerusalem. Ridley Scott's 2005 movie *Kingdom of Heaven*, starring Orlando Bloom, tells the story in detail. The key point made in the book is that Saladin, celebrated by members of all religions, was known for his generosity and chivalry. He modeled these traits by ordering his conquering soldiers under strict order, after scaling the walls of the city of Jerusalem, not to harm a single Christian person or to plunder any of their belongings. He provided additional security to Christian churches and proclaimed that the city of Jerusalem would welcome pilgrims of all faiths with open arms. He showed incredible concern for the poor, with special charity to women and children. History has recognized him as the most successful military leader of the era.

As our authors point out, "The secret of Saladin's success in war was that his heart was at peace."

The ensuing rest of the story and its message take the reader into the chapter "Beneath Behavior," where they offer three main reasons why our 'way of being' is so important. "First...when our hearts are at war, we can't see clearly. We give ourselves the best opportunity to make clear-minded decisions only to the extent that our hearts are at peace." Secondly, "people whose hearts are at war toward others can't consider others' objections and challenges enough to be able to find a way through them."

Finally, making the big point to the parents gathered in the story, they note that "generally speaking, we respond to others' way of being toward us rather than to their

behavior. This is to say that our children respond more to how we regard them than they do to our particular words or actions. We can treat our children fairly, for example, but if our hearts are warring toward them while we're doing it, they won't think they're being treated fairly at all. In fact, they'll respond to us as if they weren't being treated fairly."

"As important as behavior is, most problems at home, at work, and in the world are not failures of strategy, but failures of 'way of being.' If we have deep problems, it's because we are failing at the deepest part of the solution. And when we fail at this deepest level, we invite our own failure...and invest in it!"

The useful additional diagrams and corresponding story walk us through a thorough unpacking of the psychology involved and illustrate ways to find our own hearts at peace.

The book offers a sophisticated but simple enough set of models to make reading this book a most practical experience.

The book has received rave reviews from captains of global industries to academics and peacemakers from around the world. I completely agree with Steven C. Wheelwright, Professor Emeritus of Harvard Business School, who said this
"phenomenal...compelling...vivid...poignant book (is one) that every manager, teacher, advisor, and parent should read and apply."