

Iris Gavric, Matthias Renger

You're the Problem I Want –

The Successful Method for Resolving Conflicts

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240 pages

- The new book by communication experts and bestselling authors Iris Gavric and Matthias Renger.
- Informative and entertaining, with numerous practical examples.
- Taiwanese rights of their bestseller [*Shitmoves*](#) sold to Business Weekly.



'I have a problem with you' – the successful method for resolving conflicts

Problems shape our lives – in relationships, at work, in the family. What if, instead of always suffering from our small and large disagreements, we could grow from them? And do so with enjoyment!

In their bestseller *Shitmoves*, Iris Gavric and Matthias Renger uncovered rhetorical tricks and offered appropriate responses. Always under the guiding principle of winning the other person over, rather than just winning the conflict. Their new book continues this approach and shows how we can rethink recurring problems from the ground up. Creative conflict hacks that defuse conflicts with new perspectives and lightness help turn opposition into collaboration. Instead of getting lost in the same discussions over and over, we can gain life-changing insights, break destructive rules, and dissolve entrenched patterns.

This book provides proven tools to not just endure problems, but actively shape them.

Iris Gavric and **Matthias Renger**, hosts of the successful podcast *Couple Of*, have written the bestseller *Shitmoves*, post viral content on social media, and perform sold-out live shows. Their analyses of typical communication problems strike a chord because they decipher status games and nuances with acumen, depth, and humor.



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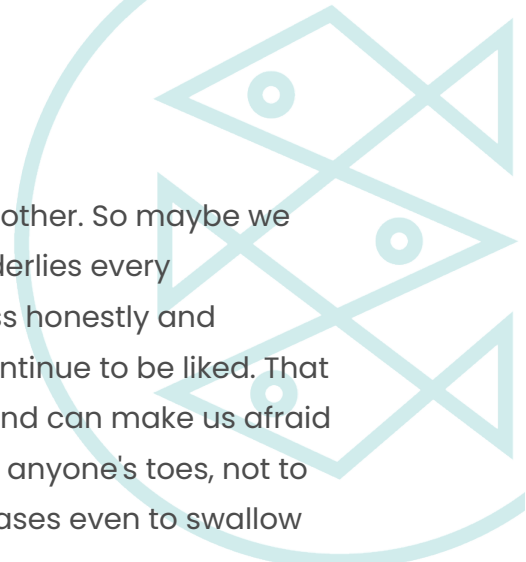
1. The Departure: A sentence that changes everything

The more important harmony is to you, the more likely you are to flinch when you hear the phrase “I have a problem with you.” Because you know exactly what that means: things are about to get uncomfortable. Just a moment ago, everything was fine, and suddenly you're supposed to take the lead role in a conflict. How unreasonable!

But is it even possible to imagine a life in which no one ever has a problem with you? Or you with others? Perhaps there really are people who would claim this about themselves. If you are one of them, two questions arise: How sure are you that this is not a case of repression? And how did you come to be holding this particular book in your hands? Anyone who actually wants to consistently ignore the inevitable imposition of interpersonal problems and radically silence every conflict can close this book after the next sentence, but we definitely want to share this with you: We have a problem with you. Ha!

If you continue reading, welcome to the border between the comfort zone and the problem zone. Together, we will now explore the opportunities that conflicts hold for us and our interpersonal relationships, starting with this sentence: “I have a problem with you.” At second glance, it is not such an immense imposition, but rather a beginning. It is open, direct, and an invitation to find a solution together. An honest variation of “We need to talk.” Yes? Do we? That's where the power imbalance begins: One person announces the obligation to talk, the other has to comply, and the tone has to be serious, thank you very much. The person who says “We need to talk” has usually already made all the decisions on their own and is now presenting their counterpart with a fait accompli. Separation. Termination. Disinheritance.





No, we don't need to talk, we just have a problem with each other. So maybe we do *want* to talk. Provided we can endure the dilemma that underlies every unpleasant conversation. On the one hand, we want to address honestly and change what bothers us, but on the other hand, we want to continue to be liked. That is the basic need that often stands in the way of our honesty and can make us afraid when we see it threatened. That's why we prefer not to step on anyone's toes, not to risk rejection, to deal with the problem ourselves, and in bad cases even to swallow it. Which is guaranteed to make it even worse.

If you prefer to swallow interpersonal problems to avoid confrontation, it's like eating raw yeast dough because you don't want to ask for the baking pan. The swallowed problems begin to ferment inside you and make you bloated until they eventually burst out of you uncontrollably. Often at completely inappropriate moments and in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable afterwards, at the very least. But you can't do anything about it because the pressure becomes too great in the long run.

No, we didn't experiment with eating raw yeast dough for this comparison, but the image fits on several levels. If you open up and address your problems with the person in question, the joint effort can work out like the metaphorical dough. It can unfold where it doesn't cause stomach aches, but gets the air it needs to transform into something that benefits everyone involved: then you bake fresh bread together with your counterpart. And when you're done, you can enjoy the results together. And if you prefer not to, the oven will eventually be off.

Part 4: Creative Conflict-Hacks

"WANT TO MAKE A DEAL?"

If you're stuck in the middle of a problem and can't see a way out, this question alone might be able to get you out of your predicament. Imagine you were driving too fast and got pulled over by the police. In this situation, it's better not to ask, "Do you want to make a deal?" But when you hear this question, you definitely want to know what kind of deal it is, and you feel a little hopeful. It could be something good for you. Even if you're threatened by a looming deadline at work, desperately searching for an apartment, realize at the door that you must have forgotten your

expensive concert tickets, or are in the middle of a heated argument with someone, the offer of a deal is a welcome relief.

And, of course, your counterpart feels exactly the same way. That's why a creative battle axe is powerful from the moment you propose it. You are reaching out to the other person, and before they strike, they will want to hear your conditions and ideas at least once. You are extending an invitation to play, to change perspectives, to create something new, and to break old patterns. And you are doing so on equal terms, because you are playing too. Agreeing on and adhering to the rules is a shared responsibility.

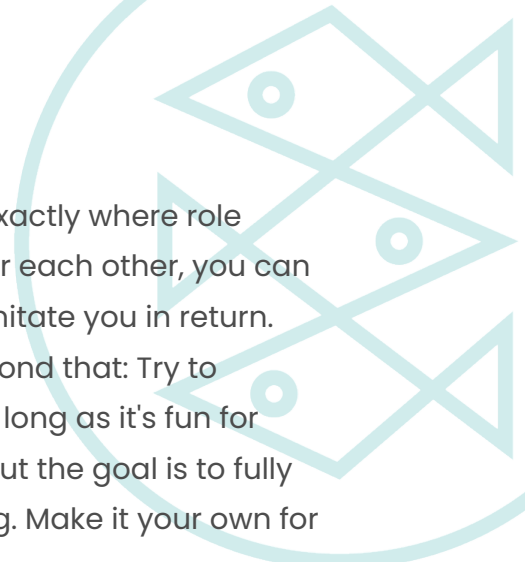
#1 ROLL REVERSAL



The Hack

"What did I just say?" – A question that often brings back unpleasant memories of school days, when that easily offended teacher wanted to check whether you were still listening to him at all. But when asked on equal terms, it gets to the heart of most conflicts. Not that we no longer listen to each other – that does happen, of course, and then it's questionable whether creative conflict resolution still has a chance. No, the point is that we often can't repeat what we've heard well in our own words.

It's a standard situation in couples therapy: Jürgen is asked to say in his own words what he has just heard from Petra. Perhaps he asks her to repeat it so that he can repeat it word for word. The therapist responds that this is not the task. He should show Petra that he has really understood her. To do this, he must formulate how he understands Petra's words from his point of view. This is an empathy exercise that does not come easily to him at first. Jürgen would prefer to be allowed to repeat Petra's words verbatim.



With this conflict hack, he can do just that, because this is exactly where role reversal comes in. If there is a lack of deeper understanding for each other, you can playfully search for it. Imitate your counterpart and let them imitate you in return. You can repeat what you hear word for word and even go beyond that: Try to capture the other person's gestures and facial expressions. As long as it's fun for both of you, it's okay to exaggerate one or two of their quirks. But the goal is to fully adopt the other perspective. Even if you think it's horribly wrong. Make it your own for the game.

Here's how it works:

1. **Take a break:** If you notice that the conflict is going round in circles or you feel fundamentally misunderstood, ask: "Role reversal?"
2. **Observation:** Perhaps you are already so familiar with your counterpart that you slip into the role without thinking. Otherwise, we recommend alternating observation rounds: one person talks about the problem from their own perspective, the other person mirrors everything, i.e., neutral imitation, not mimicry. Pay close attention to details: adopt the same body posture. How does the other person move? How do they express themselves? What is their tone of voice? What emotions come across?
3. **Take on the role:** Carefully test whether you can transform the imitation into improvisation. Fill the role with further sentences and actions. Stay as accurate and fair as possible. Allow them to correct you.
4. **Want to convince:** Once you feel comfortable in the role and can express yourself freely, present the arguments so accurately that the other person would say, "Yes, that's exactly what I mean!" Your counterpart should do the same in reverse. The argument now continues, but both sides represent the view that they previously considered wrong.
5. **Mirror check:** You can check in at any time: "Am I playing you okay?" If not, let them correct you and try again. You can also interrupt your portrayal at any time. But only for fine-tuning. Don't fall into your own role!

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- 6. Conclusion:** The game goes on as long as it's fun. Share your insights afterwards. Did you discover aspects you weren't aware of before? Do you understand the other person better now? Do you think differently about your problem?

Why it works

Role reversal can be a real eye-opener. The more effort you put into playfully representing the feelings and beliefs of your counterpart as your own, down to the smallest details, the better the hack works.

Especially since you get the same service back. Seeing and hearing yourself in the mirror of the other person can have an even stronger effect in some circumstances. You may even discover weaknesses in your own approach to the problem. Not because you are being portrayed unfairly—you can correct that at any time—but because you are listening to and observing yourself as if from the outside. This may also strengthen your position.

But there are two more emotional benefits to this method. You can probably remember a situation in which you didn't feel seen or understood. The frustration and tension that built up inside you as a result. And now imagine how pleasant it would be to at least temporarily do without such negative feelings, because you don't have to fight to be understood. You can relax and listen to your reenacted self and direct the action. And the second emotional benefit follows from this relaxation: *comic relief*. A dramaturgical term that was coined in the English theater tradition and means *relief through comedy*. In many cases, the game can end up being funny. Although it is not meant to be a parody, the imitation will reveal absurd peculiarities. You can laugh about them without laughing at each other. And once you have internalized a role, you can bring it out again next time — like a helpful costume from the closet. And in the long run, this strengthens the relationship in a playful way.