

# Conflict in the workplace

1. Match the adjectives listed below to the behaviours (a-k) opposite. There may be more than one possible answer.

*hypocritical, upfront, tactful,  
impetuous, forceful,  
non-confrontational, cooperative,  
tolerant, passive, pugnacious, tactless,  
timid, sympathetic*



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|---|--|
| a | I always try to be as frank as possible.         |
| b | I avoid conflict at all costs.                   |
| c | Sometimes I think one thing but say another.     |
| d | I'm quite diplomatic.                            |
| e | I don't like making waves.                       |
| f | I'm not at all competitive.                      |
| g | I'm not terribly assertive.                      |
| h | I make a lot of rash decisions.                  |
| i | I'm always sensitive to other people's feelings. |
| j | I can put up with just about anything!           |
| k | I tend to be quite antagonistic                  |

2. Complete the article from the Financial Times using the words in the box.

blame	clashes	confrontational	criticism	empathy	escalate
irrational	mediator	provocation	resolution	struggle	

## Clashes with colleagues: high-conflict people

Bill Eddy is a therapist,<sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ and lawyer who established the High Conflict Institute in San Diego, California. He employs the term 'high-conflict people' to describe those who are incapable of personal insight. Such <sup>5</sup> people can be identified by their extreme behaviour which often leads to conflict and <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ with co-workers.

'They do things that normal people would never do, even under pressure,' he says, such as spreading rumours, breaking objects or lying. When they lose control of their <sup>10</sup> emotions, they can be <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, so what starts as a personality clash may quickly <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ and will make any conciliation or <sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ unlikely. People with extreme personalities often pin the <sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ on someone or attack others to feel better about themselves <sup>15</sup> and disrupt office life.

Tips from the High Conflict Institute for resolving conflicts:

- Do not attempt to persuade the person to feel, think or act differently, it will only create a power <sup>7</sup> \_\_\_\_\_.
- Do not offer them insight about themselves – they are <sup>20</sup> unable to see how their behaviour affects others.
- Do not dwell on the past; they are often preoccupied with blame.
- Do not show anger and try not to be antagonistic or <sup>8</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. That is only a(n) <sup>9</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ for someone who has difficulty controlling their emotions.
- Avoid <sup>10</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ – this leaves them feeling devastated. They are also more likely to become defensive.
- Do give them attention, <sup>11</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ and praise.

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4. You will hear 5 speakers talk about problematic relationships they had with people at work. Choose from the list what each speaker said caused the problem.

Speaker 1	Speaker 2	Speaker 3	Speaker 4	Speaker 5

A a lack of ambition  
B a reluctance to pull together as a team  
C a highly competitive nature  
D a domineering attitude  
E an unreasonable increase in workload  
F a lack of sensitivity in a tricky situation  
G a series of disagreements  
H a clash of personalities