

# 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*



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 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 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 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 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 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

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|---|---|
| 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                    |