

Exercise: Five Conflict Styles Worksheet

This is a quick reference guide to the five conflict styles and when to use them. You can use this worksheet in any situation where you have a conflict to help you assess what style would be most appropriate.

Here is a step-by-step approach:

1. Fully explore the conflict using “The Conflict Iceberg” exercise. This will help you better explore your own position as well as that of the team member you’re in conflict with.
2. Answer the following questions for yourself:
 - a) How important is this conflict situation for me? How much of my time and energy does this warrant? What’s at stake for me and my team?
 - b) How important is this conflict situation to the other people involved in the conflict? What’s at stake for them?
 - c) What unique information, experience, and expertise do I bring that will be valuable to share?
 - d) How emotionally charged is this current situation?
 - e) How important is it to maintain the relationship in this current situation? Will my chosen response have an impact on the relationship?
 - f) How much time do we have to resolve this conflict?
 - g) What is my default response in this type of conflict? Your default response may be appropriate, but consider other responses by looking at the table below before you choose your default.

Five Conflict Styles	When to Use
Avoiding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The conflict situation is emotionally charged. You decide that continuing to stay engaged in the conflict will not result in a good outcome • You don't have the information, resources, or influence to get what you need. You may decide to get more information before engaging in the conflict. • The conflict situation is low stakes for you and you decide to not to waste your time and energy on it.
Accommodating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When preserving a relationship is more important than winning the issue at hand • When it's low cost to you to support the other person and high benefit to them • When they have greater expertise or knowledge in a given situation and you are less certain of your position • When competing will cost you more than accommodating (for example, if the other person has greater authority) • When the situation may be emotionally charged for the other person and you decide to accommodate them in this instance to diffuse the situation
Competing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you have greater expertise or better information than others • When the outcome is critical and the right decision may be unpopular • When time is of the essence. A decision needs to be made quickly and you don't have the time to align different points of view. This may be an emergency or safety issue • When the situation may be more important to you than it is to others involved in the conflict • When your authority or rights are being challenged

Compromising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you want a quick solution and competing or collaborating styles have not worked • When each team member is willing to give up something because getting all needs met is unrealistic • When maintaining the relationship with a middle-ground solution is valuable • When the issue is of lower importance to team members and it doesn't warrant the time and energy required to collaborate
Collaborating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the conflict situation is important for you and the other person • When your relationship with the person you are in conflict with is valuable to you, so you're willing to work to make sure their needs are met • When you have important needs that you're not willing to compromise on • When there's sufficient time to really engage and look at possible solutions from different perspectives • When strong trust and engagement can be present for team members

3. Once you choose the conflict management style you want to experiment with, you may want to review the learning video associated with the style. This will help you get into the right mindset and create an action plan.
4. Once you implement the style you experimented with, jot down what new information you got. Did it change your "Conflict Iceberg" or clarify assumptions? What worked? What didn't work? What did you learn?
5. As conflicts evolve, you may choose to decide whether a different conflict management style will be more appropriate to experiment with.

I wish you tremendous luck in this process. Please connect with me on LinkedIn and share your success stories or challenges!