

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

As we grow up, we typically settle on one of these three strategies as a habitual strategy for dealing with conflict. Which one do you use most often?

DEMAND: Hold firm (fight) *(What I need/want is most important)*

“My way or the highway”

Frame conflict in terms of own interests; little concern for other party; highly assertive.

Push until you get your way.

[I satisfy my needs at the expense of others.]

ACCOMMODATE : Be nice (freeze) *(What others need/want is most important)*

“Go along to get along”, “Don’t make waves”

Give in, conform to reduce conflict, make peace

Yield or subordinate own interests to other party

[I satisfy others’ needs at the expense of my own.]

WITHDRAW / AVOID : Walk Away (flight) *(Avoiding conflict is most important)*

“I don’t care”, “I’m not going to play this game”

Withdraw, avoid, retreat, turn back, walk away

Ignore, deny, or suppress the problem

[Neither I nor others satisfy their needs.]

The most common strategy for resolving conflict is compromise:

COMPROMISE: Everyone gives a little

“I give some, you give some”

Moderately demanding/moderately accommodating; "splitting the difference"

Settle for "half a loaf"; cut both goals in half and glue together; zero-sum game

[We all give up some of our needs in order to satisfy others.]

But, there’s another way...

(above the line: **common, traditional, non-creative – essentially zero-sum, what others get, I lose and visa-versa**)

(below the line: **rare, more difficult, but *much* more powerful - root needs/goals of *everyone* honored**)

“BLEND” (Collaborate): Work toward everyone getting core needs met

Requires mindful awareness and exploration of:

Behavior (body language, tone) / **Feelings** / **Needs** (both yours and others)

This process is **more circular than linear** and necessarily creative:

The exact form of the outcome is often non-obvious and sometimes even counter-intuitive.

Three steps are involved:

1. Recognition and acceptance of everyone’s feelings and perceived needs
2. Discovery and inquiry into everyone’s intentions and root goals
3. Mutual exploration of potential solutions satisfying intention and root goals of everyone

[For more about resolving conflicts in this way, see *Non-Violent Communication* by Marshall Rosenberg.]