

The Five Conflict Management Styles

We all adopt different types of conflict management styles, which vary with the conflict at hand and the person it involves. Knowing the 5 different types of conflict management styles can help people in becoming more aware of how they deal with conflict, and if this is a good strategy to address the noted issue. It's important to note that each style has its pros and cons.



The **Competing Style** of conflict management can be described as placing high emphasis on the goal, at the detriment of the relationship you have with the individual involved. "It's my way or the highway!" The goal is asserted aggressively, and the use of authority, position, as well as pressure tactics such as threats, force of persuasion is common. This style allows quick response to a situation and you are responsible for the decision taken. The cons include increased stress leading to health problems as well as decreased trust and morale. It also puts others in a flight or fight position. The real issue is often disguised. The power in this style of conflict management comes from a position of strength.



The **Avoiding Style** of conflict management occurs when someone places little emphasis on their goal as well as on the relationship with the individual involved. "No way! Let's not make a big deal out of this!" The individual may deny the problem, avoids decisions and confrontations. They may also deflect responsibilities and blame other people. Assertiveness is low. The power in this style of conflict management comes from silence and lack of cooperation. This style may work well when a situation is unimportant, or when there is a risk of harm. It is also good if you need to time to think things over. The cons may involve disputes can grow and explode, as well as issues may go underground and start involving other people. Very little is accomplished.



The **Accommodating Style** of conflict management can be described as placing low emphasis on the goal, but high emphasis on the relationship with the person involved. "OK, whatever you say. We'll do it your way!" Someone adopting this style can be described as protective and 'soft' on relationships. They set aside their needs for the other person and will yield to the other point

of view. They are highly cooperative and can be described as a 'yes' person. They want to build good faith and relationships for the future. The other person may learn from the experience and the risk is low. However, the risk includes a lack of healthy confrontations, and the person may feel taken advantage of. This may also frustrate others who want to collaborate. The power in this style of conflict management comes from relationships and approval of others.



The **Compromising Style** is characterized by moderate emphasis on both the goal and the relationship with the person involved. "OK, I'll meet you half way!" the individual may listen and understand both sides, and introduces many issues so everyone gets a share. They split the difference and everyone loses and wins. The power in this style of conflict management comes from moderation and reasonableness. This style is good for quick solution or when time is a factor. However, both parties may feel that they lost, and does not deal with the underlying issues.



The **Collaborating Style** occurs when someone places high emphasis on both the goal and the relationship involved. There is high assertiveness. "Let's do it our way! This is what I prefer... What do you want?" They listen and communicate with others to understand needs and values. They use information and resources most effectively, and ongoing problem solving is required. Trust and balance are also important. Satisfaction with the work and commitment to the solution is imperative to all. The risk with this style includes fatigue, and use of too much time, no solution in sight and distraction from other tasks. The power comes from openness, clarity and cooperation.

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