

Conflict Style Self-Assessment

INSTRUCTIONS

Consider situations in which you find your wishes differing from those of another person or you feel you are in a conflict. How do you usually respond in such situations?

The following pages contain 30 pairs of statements describing possible behavioural responses. For each pair, please circle the letter (" A" or "B ") of the statement that best characterises your behaviour, please select the response you would be more likely to use.

Circle A or B for your most likely response (not what you should do - what is your first preference)

1. A. There are times when I let others take responsibility for solving the problem.

B. Rather than negotiate the things on which we disagree, I try to stress those things on which we both agree.

2. A. I try to find a compromise solution.

B. I attempt to deal with all of his/her and my concerns.

3. A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.

B. I might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve our relationship.

4. A. I try to find a compromise solution.

B. I sometimes sacrifice my own wishes for the wishes of the other person.

5. A. I consistently seek the other's help in working out a solution.

B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.

6. A. I try to avoid creating unpleasantness for myself.

B. I try to win my position.

7. A. I try to postpone the issue until I've had time to think it over.

B. I give up some points in exchange for others.

8. A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.
B. I attempt to get all concerns and issues out in the open.
-
9. A. I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.
B. I make some effort to get my way.
-
10. A. I am firm in pursuing my goals.
B. I try to find a compromise solution.
-
11. A. I attempt to get everything out in the open first.
B. I might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve our relationship first.
-
12. A. I sometimes avoid taking positions that would create controversy.
B. I will let the other person have some of his/her positions if he/she lets me have some of mine.
-
13. A. I propose a middle ground.
B. I press to get my points made.
-
14. A. I tell the other person my ideas and ask for his/hers.
B. I try to show the other person the logic and benefits of my position.
-
15. A. I might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve our relationship.
B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid tensions.
-
16. A. I try not to hurt the other's feelings.
B. I try to convince the other person of the merits of my position.
-
17. A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.
B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.
-
18. A. If it makes others happy, I might let them maintain their views.
B. I will let other people have some of their positions if they let me have some of mine.
-
19. A. I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.
B. I try to postpone the issue until have had some time to think it over.

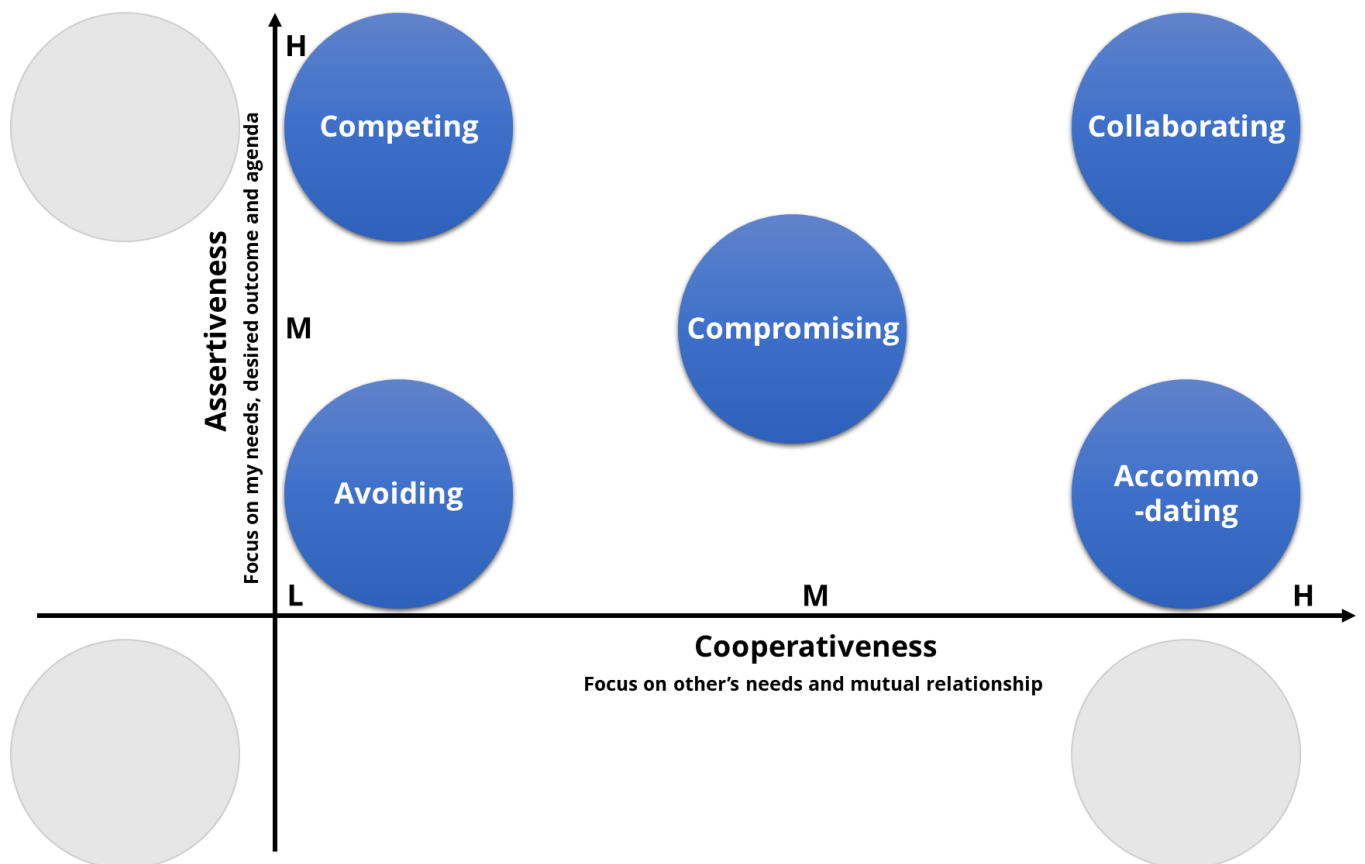
20. A. I attempt to immediately work through our differences.
B. I try to find a fair combination of gains and losses for both of us
-
21. A. In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person's wishes.
B. I always lean toward a direct discussion of the problem.
-
22. A. I try to find a position that is intermediate between his/hers and mine.
B. I assert my wishes.
-
23. A. I am very often concerned with satisfying all our wishes.
B. There are times when I let others take responsibility for solving the problem.
-
24. A. If the other's position seems very important to him/her, I would try to meet his/her wishes.
B. I try to get the other person to settle for a compromise.
-
25. A. I try to show the other person the logic and benefits of my position.
B. In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person's wishes.
-
26. A. I propose a middle ground.
B. I am nearly always concerned with satisfying all our wishes.
-
27. A. I sometimes avoid taking positions that would create controversy.
B. If it makes other people happy, I might let them maintain their views.
-
28. A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.
B. I usually seek the other's help in working out a solution.
-
29. A. I propose a middle ground.
B. I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.
-
30. A. I try not to hurt the other's feelings.
B. I always share the problem with the other person so that we can work it out.

Scoring and Interpretation

SCORING					
<i>Circle the letters below that correspond to your answers on the questionnaire.</i>					
	Competing	Collaborating	Compromising	Avoiding	Accommodating
	(forcing)	(problem solving)	(sharing)	(withdrawing)	(smoothing)
1.				A	B
2.		B	A		
3.	A				B
4.			A		B
5.		A		B	
6.	B			A	
7.			B	A	
8.	A	B			
9.	B			A	
10.	A		B		
11.		A			B
12.			B	A	
13.	B		A		
14.	B	A			
15.				B	A
16.	B				A
17.	A			B	
18.			B		A
19.		A		B	
20.		A	B		
21.		B			A
22.	B		A		
23.		A		B	
24.			B		A
25.	A				B
26.		B	A		
27.				A	B
28.	A	B			
29.			A	B	
30.		B			A
<i>Total number of items circled in each column:</i>					
	Competing	Collaborating	Compromising	Avoiding	Accommodating

The Five Conflict Handling Modes

This assessment is designed to evaluate an individual's behaviour in conflict situations—that is, situations in which the concerns of two people appear to be incompatible. In such situations, we can describe a person's behaviour along two basic dimensions: **(1) assertiveness**, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns, and **(2) cooperativeness**, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns. These two basic dimensions of behaviour can be used to define five specific methods of dealing with conflict. These five "conflict-handling modes" are shown below.



What do you think are the behaviours demonstrated in the three negative scenarios?

Competing

Competing is assertive and uncooperative—a power-oriented mode. When competing, an individual pursues his or her own concerns at the other person's expense, using whatever power seems appropriate to win his or her position—the ability to argue, rank, economic sanctions, and so on. Competing might mean standing up for your rights, defending a position you believe is correct, or simply trying to win.

Accommodating

Accommodating is unassertive and cooperative-the opposite of competing. When accommodating, an individual neglects his or her own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person; there is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode. Accommodating might take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person's order when you would prefer not to, or yielding to another's point of view.

Avoiding

Avoiding is unassertive and uncooperative. When avoiding, an individual does not immediately pursue his or her own concerns or those of the other person. He or she does not address the conflict. Avoiding might take the form of diplomatically side-stepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation.

Collaborating

Collaborating is both assertive and cooperative-the opposite of avoiding. When collaborating, an individual attempts to work with the other person to find a solution that fully satisfies the concerns of both. It involves digging into an issue to identify the underlying concerns of the two individuals and to find an alternative that meets both sets of concerns. Collaborating between two persons might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insights, resolving some condition that would otherwise have them competing for resources, or confronting and trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.

Compromising

Compromising is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. When compromising, the objective is to find an expedient, mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties. Compromising falls on a middle ground between competing and accommodating, giving up more than competing but less than accommodating. Likewise, it addresses an issue more directly than avoiding but doesn't explore it in as much depth as collaborating. Compromising might mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position.

Your Profile

Your profile of scores indicates the repertoire of conflict-handling skills you use in the kinds of conflict situations you face. Your score profile can be graphed on page 10 of this booklet.

In the graph on page 10, the five conflict-handling modes are represented by the five columns labelled "Competing," "Collaborating," and so on. In the column under each mode is the range of possible scores on that mode—from 0 (for very low use) to 12 (for very high use). Circle your score on each of the five modes.

Each possible score is graphed in relation to the scores of managers who have already taken the TKI. The horizontal lines represent percentiles—that is, the percentage of people who have scored at or below a given number. If your score falls above the "80%" line on competing, for example, that would mean that you scored higher in competing than 80 percent of the people who have taken the TKI—which you are in the top 20 percent on competition.

The heavy lines (at the 25th and 75th percentiles) separate the middle 50 percent of the scores on each mode from the top 25 percent and the bottom 25 percent. In general, if your score falls somewhere within the middle 50 percent on a given mode, your use of that mode is about average. If your score falls outside that range, your use of that mode is somewhat higher or lower than that of most of the people who have taken the instrument. Remember that extreme scores are not necessarily bad because your situation may require high or low use of a given conflict-handling mode.

Graphing Your Scores

	Competing	Collaborating	Compromising	Avoiding	Accommodating
100%	12		12	12	12
					11
	11	12	11	11	10
	10	11	10	10	9
90%					8
	9	10		9	7
80%	8	9	9	8	6
70%	7		8		
				7	
60%					
	6				
		8			5
50%			7	6	
		7			
40%	5				
			6		4
30%	4			5	
			5		
		6			
20%					3
	3			4	
		5	4		
10%	2			3	
		4			
		3	3		
		2	2	2	2
	1	1	1	1	1
0%	0	0	0	0	0

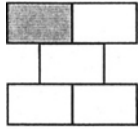
Scores are graphed in relation to the scores of the original norm group, composed of managers at middle and upper levels of business and government organisation.

Interpreting Your Scores

When you look at your results on the graph, you will probably want to know: "What are the correct answers?" In the case of conflict-handling behaviour, there are no right or wrong answers. All five modes are useful in some situations: each represents a set of useful social skills. Our conventional wisdom recognises, for example, that often "Two heads are better than one" (collaborating). But it also says, "Kill your enemies with kindness" (accommodating), "Split the difference" (compromising), "Leave well enough alone" (avoiding), and "Might makes right" (competing). The effectiveness of a given conflict-handling mode depends on the requirements of the specific conflict situation and the skill with which you use that mode.

You are capable of using all five conflict-handling modes: you cannot be characterised as having a single, rigid style of dealing with conflict. However, you may use some modes more readily than others and therefore tend to rely on those modes more heavily. The conflict behaviours you use are the result of both your personal predispositions and the requirements of the situations in which you find yourself. The TKI is designed to assess this mix of conflict-handling modes.

To help you judge how appropriate your use of the five modes is for your situation, we have listed a number of uses for each mode-based on lists generated by company presidents. In addition, because your social skills may lead you to rely on some conflict behaviours more or less than necessary, we have also listed some diagnostic questions concerning warning signals for the overuse or underuse of each mode.



Competing

Uses

- When quick, decisive action is vital-for example, in an emergency
- On important issues where unpopular courses of action need implementing-for example, cost cutting, enforcing unpopular rules, discipline
- On issues vital to company welfare when you know you're right
- To protect yourself against people who take advantage of non-competitive behaviour

Questions to Ask

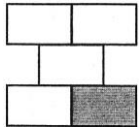
If your score is in the high range, you may wish to ask yourself:

- Are you surrounded by "yes" people?
If so, perhaps it's because they have learned that it's unwise to disagree with you or have given up trying to influence you. This closes you off from information.
- Are employees afraid to admit ignorance and uncertainties to you?
In competitive climates, one must fight for influence and respect, acting more certain and confident than one feels. This means that people are less able to ask for information and opinion-they are less likely to learn.

If your score is in the low range, you may wish to ask yourself:

- Do you often feel powerless in situations?
- You may be unaware of the power you do have, unskilled in its use, or uncomfortable with the idea of using it. This may hinder your effectiveness by restricting your influence.
- Do you sometimes have trouble taking a firm stand, even when you see the need?

Sometimes concerns for others' feelings or anxieties about the use of power cause us to vacillate, which may mean postponing the decision and adding to the suffering and/or resentment of others.



Accommodating

Uses

- When you realise that you are wrong-to allow a better position to be considered, to learn from others, and to show that you are reasonable
- When the issue is much more important to the other person than it is to you-to satisfy the needs of others, and as a goodwill gesture to help maintain a cooperative relationship
- To build up social credits for later issues that are important to you
- When continued competition would only damage your cause-when you are outmatched and losing
- When preserving harmony and avoiding disruption are especially important
- To aid in the managerial development of your employees by allowing them to experiment and learn from their own mistakes

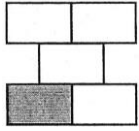
Questions to Ask

If your score is in the high range, you may wish to ask yourself

- Do you feel that your ideas and concerns sometimes do not get the attention they deserve?
Deferring too much to the concerns of others can deprive you of influence, respect, and recognition. It can also deprive the organisation of your potential contributions.
- Is discipline lax?
Although discipline for its own sake may be of little value, there are often rules, procedures, and assignments whose implementation is crucial for you or the organisation.

If your score is in the low range, you may wish to ask yourself:

- Do you sometimes have trouble building goodwill with others?
Accommodation on minor issues that are important to others is a gesture of goodwill.
- Do others sometimes seem to regard you as unreasonable?
- Do you occasionally have trouble admitting when you are wrong?
- Do you recognise legitimate exceptions to the rules?
- Do you know when to give up?



Avoiding

Uses

- When an issue is trivial or of only passing importance, or when other, more important issues are pressing
- When you perceive no chance of satisfying your concerns—for example, when you have low power or you are frustrated by something that would be very difficult to change (national policies, someone's personality structure, and so on)
- When the potential costs of confronting a conflict outweigh the benefits of its resolution
- To let people cool down—to reduce tensions to a productive level and to regain perspective and composure
- When gathering more information outweighs the advantages of an immediate decision
- When others can resolve the conflict more effectively
- When the issue seems tangential or symptomatic of another, more basic issue

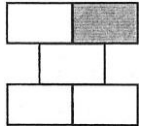
Questions to Ask

If your score is in the high range, you may wish to ask yourself:

- Does your coordination suffer because people sometimes have trouble getting your input on issues?
- Does it sometimes appear that people are "walking on eggshells?"
- Sometimes a dysfunctional amount of energy can be devoted to caution and avoiding issues, indicating that issues need to be faced and resolved.
- Are decisions on important issues sometimes made by default?

If your score is in the low range, you may wish to ask yourself:

- Do you sometimes find yourself hurting others' feelings or stirring up hostilities? You may need to exercise more discretion about which issues you raise and greater tact in framing issues in nonthreatening ways.
- Do you often feel harried or overwhelmed by a number of issues? You may need to devote more time to setting priorities—that is, deciding which issues are relatively unimportant, and perhaps delegating them to others.



Collaborating

Uses

- To find an integrative solution when the concerns of both parties are too important to be compromised
- When your objective is to learn-for example, testing your own assumptions, understanding the views of others
- To merge insights from people with different perspectives on a problem
- To gain commitment by incorporating others' concerns into a consensual decision. To work through hard feelings that have been interfering with an interpersonal relationship

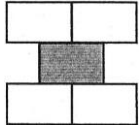
Questions to Ask

If your score is in the high range, you may wish to ask yourself:

- Do you sometimes spend time discussing issues in depth that do not seem to deserve it?
Collaboration takes time and energy-perhaps the scarcest organisational resources. Trivial problems don't require optimal solutions, and not all personal differences need to be hashed out. The overuse of collaboration and consensual decision making sometimes represents a desire to minimise risk-by diffusing responsibility for a decision or by postponing action.
- Does your collaborative behaviour fail to elicit collaborative responses from others?
The exploratory and tentative nature of some collaborative behaviour may make it easy for others to disregard collaborative overtures; or the trust and openness may be taken advantage of. You may be missing some cues that would indicate the presence of defensiveness, strong feelings, impatience, competitiveness, or conflicting interests.

If your score is in the low range, you may wish to ask yourself:

- Is it difficult for you to see differences as opportunities for joint gain-that is, as opportunities to learn or solve problems?
Although conflict situations often involve threatening or unproductive aspects, approaching all such situations with pessimism can prevent you from seeing collaborative possibilities and thus deprive you of the mutual gains and satisfactions that accompany successful collaboration.
- Are your employees uncommitted to your decisions or policies?
Perhaps their concerns are not being incorporated into those decisions or policies.



Compromising

Uses

- When goals are moderately important but not worth the effort or the potential disruption involved in using more assertive modes
- When two opponents with equal power are strongly committed to mutually exclusive goals-as in labour-management bargaining
- To achieve temporary settlements to complex issues
- To arrive at an expedient solution under time pressure
- As a backup mode when collaboration or competition fails

Questions to Ask

If your score is in the high range, you may wish to ask yourself:

- Do you concentrate so heavily on the practicalities and tactics of compromise that you sometimes lose sight of larger issues-for example, principles, values, long-term objectives, or company welfare?
- Does an emphasis on bargaining and trading create a cynical climate of gamesmanship?
Such a climate may undermine interpersonal trust and deflect attention away from the merits of the issues discussed.

If your score is in the low range, you may wish to ask yourself:

- Do you find yourself too sensitive or embarrassed to be effective in bargaining situations?
- Do you find it difficult to make concessions?
Without this safety valve, you may have trouble gracefully getting out of mutually destructive arguments, power struggles, and so on.