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# Conflict Busters Handbook

Developed by the IPT

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## What is Conflict?

Conflict occurs when there is a disagreement between one or more people with different ideas. Although conflict most often occurs between people, we can also experience an internal conflict when we have to make decisions and we don't know which is the best choice to make. There are four main types of conflict:

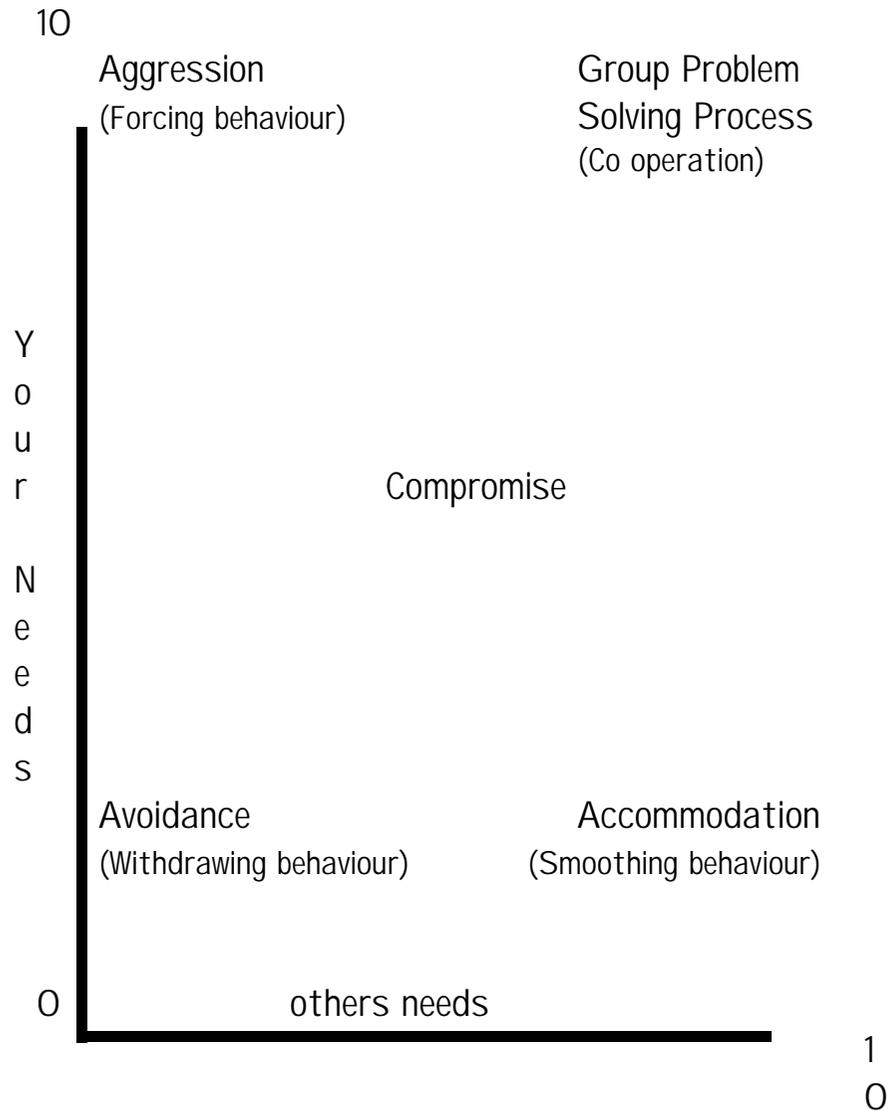
Intra personal	Interpersonal
Intragroup	Intergroup

## Causes of Conflict

The causes of conflict are infinite but they can broadly be categorised into three levels, and many disputes involve a combination of two or even three of these levels:

1. **Conflicts over resources** are normally the easiest to identify and resolve. They occur when two people want the same thing and there is not enough to go around. The resource is usually the first point of contention to be identified in a conflict situation, and the heat of the dispute will most often be focussed there. "I need the car today, you had it most of last week!" Although use of the car may represent the entire problem, that is seldom the case.
2. **Conflicts over psychological needs** refer to the fact that individuals have many needs such as power, friendship, belonging and accomplishment. Clashes over these needs are commonly played out over material things. The person above who appears upset about the use of the car may also be upset about not having the authority or power to decide on who gets to use the car. Since these motivations are less obvious, disputes of this type are harder to resolve. If a person is unable to express his/her need the conflict is unlikely to be resolved. Even if a mechanical solution about the car is reached, the conflict will often reappear, expressed over something else.
3. **Conflicts involving values** are the most difficult to resolve since values are the basis of our belief system. Challenges to our values are challenges to our very selves. We respond to them with the most deep-seated defensiveness and tenacity. In the midst of conflicts that involve value differences, it is most difficult to abandon old patterns and choose to make new responses. Again if conflict based on value differences is resolved only at the resources or needs level, it may surface in some other setting.

## Conflict Management Styles

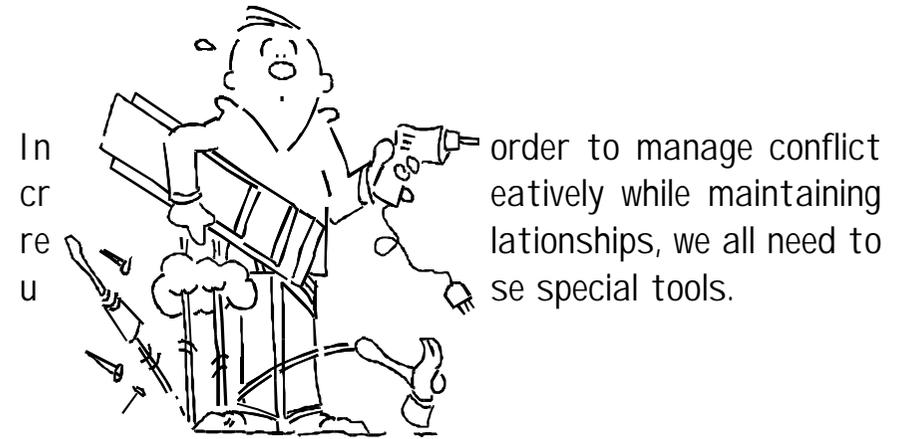


## Conflict Handling Styles

Different people use different strategies for managing conflicts and we all have a personal conflict handling style. However we are all able to change our conflict handling styles by learning new and more effective ways of managing conflicts. How you act in a conflict depends on how important your goals are and how important the relationship is. Listed below are five basic strategies you could choose to use in a conflict and some possible outcomes:

	Useful when:	consequences:	characteristics:
Competition (forcing or aggressive)	there is physical threat, the goal is more important than the relationship	power play; loss of relationship; resentment	dominating, abusive, arrogant, bossy, yelling
Avoidance (withdrawal)	there is a danger to your safety	feeling hurt; misunderstood	indecisive, apologetic, submissive and timid
Accommodation (smoothing )	the relationship is more imp. than your goal	no solution; possible later resentment	submissive, agreeable, quite
Compromising (going half/ half)	if there is limited time and things you don't mind giving up	possible anger later, can maintain relationship	direct, good listening, everyone gives a little
Joint Problem Solving (co operation)	there is time, a long term solution is required & the relationship is important	satisfactory long term solution, improved relationship	good listening, creative, accepting, honest and open

## The Tools of Conflict Management



These tools include good communication skills, behaving assertively, using group problem solving processes and working cooperatively together. On the next few pages we will share some of these tools with you. Keep this handbook with you and when you are angry and don't know what to do - or when someone is angry with you - you can check which tools you might be able to use to fix the problem.

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is not easily achieved. It is hard work which requires patience and care. Here is a list of things to think about before you talk to someone when there is a conflict:

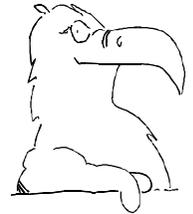
- ☺ Decide on how you are going to communicate.
- ☺ Be clear on what you wish to communicate.
- ☺ Explain completely and concisely.
- ☺ Ask the person if he or she understands you.
- ☺ Work at understanding them and try to consider his/her point of view.
- ☺ Listen carefully to the other person and pay attention to the responses to your messages. Try not to get emotional.
- ☺ Ensure that the receiver has heard your message as you had intended and check that you really heard what the other person's trying to say
- ☺ Watch your communication style and try to get a sense of the other persons style so that you can be sure to understand him/her.



## Some Listening Do's and Don'ts

In active listening, do

- show interest
- be understanding of the other person
- express empathy
- single out the problem if there is one
- listen for causes of the problem
- help the speaker associate the problem with the cause
- motivate the speaker to solve his or her own problems
- practice listening without talking - be silent



In active listening, don't

- argue
- interrupt
- pass judgement too quickly in advance
- give advice unless you are asked
- jump to conclusions
- overreact in response to the speaker's emotions

## APPROPRIATE ASSERTIVENESS

### NON - ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Not expressing your own feelings, needs, ideas, ignoring your own rights, allowing others to infringe on them.

# Inhibited and self-denying

# Results in anxiety, disappointment, anger and resentment.

**Payoff:** Avoids unpleasant situations, but

**Problem:** Needs are not met, anger builds up, feelings arise of low self-worth.

Could result in the "last straw" outburst



### AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

Expressing your feelings, needs and ideas at the expense of others; standing up for your rights but ignoring the rights of others, trying to dominate, even humiliate others, bullying others in order to stay ahead.

# Hostile and self-defeating

# Results in anger, self-righteousness, possible guilt later.

**Payoff:** Way of venting anger and achieving goals in the short run.

**Problem:** Distancing of self from others; feelings of frustration, bitterness and isolation.



## ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Expressing your feelings, needs and ideas and standing up for your legitimate rights in ways that do not violate the rights of others; using your personal power to achieve a new goal.

# Expressive and self-enhancing.

# Results in confidence, self-esteem.

**Payoff:** Achievement of goals and even if this does not occur, there are feelings of self-worth which stem from being straight forward. Improvement in self-confidence leading to freer, more honest relationships with others.



### BEING ASSERTIVE MEANS I HAVE THE RIGHT TO TRY TO MEET MY OWN NEEDS

I deserve:

- to be treated with respect
- to have and express my own feelings and opinions
- to be listened to and taken seriously
- to set my own priorities
- to say NO without feeling guilty
- to ask for what I want
- to get what I pay for
- the right to ask for information from professionals eg.

Teachers, doctors,

- enough self-assurance to make mistakes
- to choose not to assert myself, when I want to.

## REMEMBER TO USE YOUR "I" STATEMENT

"I" Statements are special ways of stating how you personally respond to a situation

"I" Statements helps you to communicate assertively

"I" Statements enable you to express your wants, needs and feelings in a non-threatening way

"I" Statements sound like this:-

When ..... (the action)  
I feel ..... (the response)  
Because ..... (the reason)  
And what I would like is ..... (the preferred outcome)



## Solving Group Problems

Group Problem solving is a method of resolving problems when they involve more than one person. Remember to use this seven step process when you and your friends have a problem you need to solve together:

1. Get all group members together - decide who else should or should not be present. Try to include as many people as possible.
2. Gather together and share all relevant information. (Try and separate facts from opinions)
3. Define the real problems in an orderly fashion and set a goal/objective for your group.
4. Think of as many different solutions to your problem as you can (brainstorm) and write them on paper.
6. Agree on a solution/s to the problem identified in (3), and decide who should do what
7. Agree to meet again to see if the solution you choose is working - if it isn't you can try another solution.



## Requirements for Successful Co operative Problem Solving

Willingness to deal with the problem

Willingness to get past the idea of win / lose

Trust

Ability to be rational

Ability to listen to each other

Able to work together



## Conflict Handling Check List

## Your Notes

Conflict Characteristic	Suggested process
Incomplete communication (I/he/she did not hear the full story)	Ask more questions Explain fully Use active listening
Inaccurate information (at least one of us has the wrong information)	Check your facts Share information Ask more questions
Stress overload (at least one of us was overloaded, stressed, busy)	Wait for a better time Say sorry Calm down
Different viewpoints (we see things differently, they have different beliefs or values)	Try to understand Be open to other views Focus on problem not people
Limited resources (there is not enough to go around)	Be creative Use brainstorming Identify real needs