

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 is your favorite?):

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 yours.]

ACCOMMODATE : Be nice (freeze) *(What you 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 your needs at the expense of my own.]

WITHDRAW: Walk Away (flight) *(It’s too difficult to deal with)*

“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 you nor I satisfy our needs.]

The most common strategy for resolving conflict is compromise:

COMPROMISE: We each give 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 each give up some of our needs in order to satisfy the other party.]

But, there’s another way...

(above the line: **common, traditional, non-creative - one or both parties get less than they want**)

(below the line: **rare, more difficult, but *much* more powerful - root goals of *both* parties satisfied**)

BLEND: We both get our needs met

Requires mindful awareness and exploration of:

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

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 both party's feelings and perceived needs
2. Discovery and inquiry into other party's intentions and root goals
3. Mutual exploration of potential solutions satisfying intention and root goals of both parties

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