

The Five Conflict Management Styles

FAMILY MEMBERS READ THIS Your son or daughter is discovering their personal style when it comes to dealing with conflict. Take a few minutes to review the information and discuss the impact that each family member's conflict management style has on the family dynamic.



Collaborating The cooperative approach.

Value both their goals and relationships. They view conflict as a problem to be solved and seek a solution that achieves both their goals and the goals of the other person.

Pros: Creates mutual trust, maintains positive relationships, builds commitments.

Cons: Time consuming, energy consuming.



Avoiding The non-confrontational approach.

Value avoiding confrontation more than either their goals or relationships. They often find it easier to withdraw from a conflict than to face it. This might even include completely giving up relationships or goals associated with the conflict.

Pros: Does not escalate conflict; postpones difficulty.

Cons: Unaddressed problems; unresolved problems.



Competing Authoritarian approach.

Value their goals over relationships, if forced to choose they would seek to achieve their goals even at the cost of the relationship. Typically more concerned with accomplishing their goals than with being liked by others.

Pros: Goal oriented; quick.

Cons: May breed hostility.



Accommodating Peace at all costs approach.

Value relationships over their own goals. If forced to choose, will often sacrifice their goals in order to maintain relationships. Generally want to be liked by others, and try to smooth over conflict to prevent damage to the relationship.

Pros: Minimizes injury when we are outmatched; relationships are maintained.

Cons: Breeds resentment; exploits the weak.



Compromising The middle ground approach.

Moderately concerned with both their goals and their relationships with others. Typically seek a compromise; give up part of their goals and persuade the other person in a conflict to give up part of their goals.

Pros: Useful in complex issues without simple solutions; all parties are equal in power.

Cons: No one is ever really satisfied; less than optimal solutions get implemented.

Conflict is a normal part of life. We each have our own way of dealing with it which is influenced by our temperament, personality, environment, stage of life, etc. If we recognize our conflict management style we can understand the impact it has on the way we deal with conflict. Review the 5 Styles of Conflict Management with your family and discuss the following questions.

1. What style of conflict management does each member of the family use most often?
2. How does each members' style affect the family's ability to resolve conflicts? (positive and negative)
3. Are there ways in which family members can begin to use different styles in order to resolve family conflicts more positively?