

Conflict Management

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Aims and outcomes

- To provide you with a model to assess and analyse your own and others' behaviour within organisations.
- The ability to reflect critically on the use of language by oneself and others in the course of organisational functioning.
- The ability to choose and use any of 5 different approaches in response to potential organisational conflict.
- To practice and reflect on the process of adopting these different approaches.

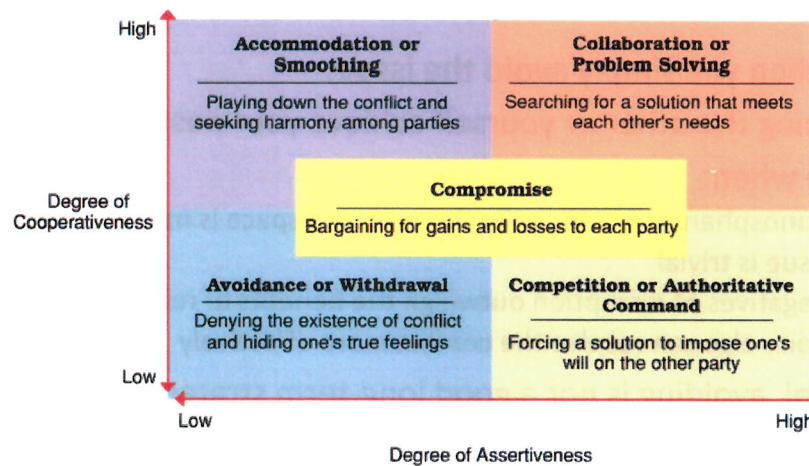
Outline

- Conflict, threat and communication within organisations
- Five conflict management styles (Thomas and Kilmann, 1977)
- Recognising your 'preferred' style
- Changing your style to fit the situation (role play)
- Conclusions and reflections

Threat, power, conflict and communication

- **Conflict is often inevitable** in large organisations and is often resolved through the exertion of power.
- Conflict can be healthy and necessary for some, but unhelpful for others if they are not satisfied by the outcome.
- It occurs in many situations (families, therapy, organisations etc.).
- Often a **response to threat** (from profession, status, communication style, expectations etc.). The best way to minimise conflict is to minimise threat.
- It can therefore be helpful to **choose** whether you want to engage in conflict and alter your communication style accordingly.

5 conflict management styles: Thomas and Killmann (1977)



1. Accommodating

- **High-level of co-operation**, sometimes at your expense
- May go against your desired goals and outcomes
- Forgo your concerns, act selflessly and obey orders
- Effective when:
 - The other is an expert, has a better solution
 - To preserve future relations and build stability
 - To allow learning from mistakes
 - To build social credits for later issues
 - You are wrong



2. Avoiding



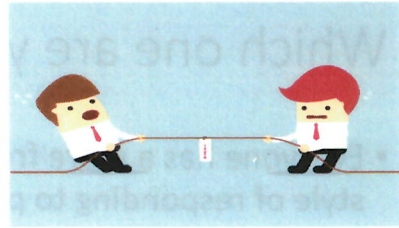
- This is when you simply **avoid the issue**.
- Not helping the other or yourself achieve your desired goals.
- Effective when:
 - The atmosphere is emotionally charged, and space is needed to cool down
 - The issue is trivial
 - The negatives of disruption outweigh the benefits of resolution
 - Someone else can resolve the conflict more effectively
- In general, avoiding is not a good long-term strategy

3. Collaborating



- Pair up with the other so you both achieve your goals.
- The **'win-win' situation**.
- Effective when:
 - A novel solution is needed
 - To create room for everyone's ideas
 - To gain consensus by incorporating everyone's ideas
 - Concerns are too important to be compromised
 - To work through feelings that have interfered with a relationship
- But, requires a high degree of trust and can often take a lot of time and effort to synthesise ideas.

4. Competing



- 'Win-lose' approach
- **Want to get your own way no matter what the consequences**
- Acting in an assertive way to achieve your goals
- Lack of co-operation with others, sometimes at their expense
- Effective when:
 - There is an emergency
 - A quick decision is needed
 - Unpopular actions need implementing (e.g. cost-cutting, discipline etc.)

5. Compromising



- 'Lose-lose' approach
- Split the difference to achieve a quick solution
- Neither party achieves their desired outcomes
- Requires a moderate level of assertiveness and co-operation.
- Effective when:
 - A temporary solution is needed
 - Both sides' goals are equally important
 - When goals are mutually exclusive and both parties are fully committed to them
 - When a solution is needed under time pressure
 - As a back-up if competing or collaboration have been unsuccessful
- Watch out for falling into compromising when collaborating would produce a better solution

Which one are you?

- Everyone has a more frequent, preferred or 'default' style of responding to potentially conflicting situations
- These may depend on the circumstances and previous relationships with others
- Use the questionnaire to rank the style you most frequently use when faced with a potentially conflictual situation with someone who might be seen as more powerful than yourself.



Changing your style to fit the situation

Conflict Management Role Play

3 Roles:

- Clinical Psychologist- Dr Springsteen
- Consultant Psychiatrist- Dr Dolittle
- Observer/other members of MDT

➤ Each role rotated after 5 minutes.

➤ When playing Dr Springsteen, adopt the conflict management style which you have been assigned; **DO NOT TELL THE OTHER MEMBERS OF YOUR GROUP WHICH STYLE YOU HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED.**



Reflections

- **Dr Springsteen:** how did it feel to use a style different to your preferred style- what was the impact on the interaction?
- **Dr Dolittle:** how did it feel to use a competitive style? Did you use any other styles?
- **Observer:** Could you identify the conflict style used by Dr Springsteen? What was the outcome of the discussion?

Conclusions

- Conflict is sometimes **healthy** and **necessary** – at least from some perspectives. Conflict may, or may not, involve emotional arousal for individuals, depending on how it is introduced & addressed.
- Choose whether you want to engage in some challenge or conflict, & (if so) choose how you wish to engage – by avoidance, accommodation, compromise, collaboration or competition.
- Effective leadership depends on the particular aspects of the presenting situation (responding flexibly).
- Different strategies, behaviour and timescales are thus indicated in differing situations- there is rarely one 'correct' approach. So choose your style and vary it as circumstances change.