**Conflict Management Styles**

Every person has a preferred style to handle conflicts. In addition, every conflict situation needs to be handled differently, depending on circumstances, urgency and context.

There are 5 conflict management styles, each of which has its pros and its cons. These styles are:

**Dominate/Control**

Seeing conflicts and problems as contests to be won or lost – and it’s important to be the winner. This approach is often the result of an unconscious wish to protect oneself from the pain of being wrong. It is sometimes necessary if there is imminent danger, but often gives rise to more conflict later as the hurt of the loser is translated into aggression.

**Meaning**: win at all costs or expense of others  
**Pros:** Usually fast.  
**Cons**: Can offend and hurt others in the process.  
**Example**: We’ll do it my way. Let’s just get the job done.

**Avoid**

Withdrawing, either physically or emotionally, from a conflict gives you no say in what happens, but it may be wise to do so when the matter is not your business. A danger is that it can allow a problem to grow unchecked, and if used unscrupously, avoidance can punish others. People often use this approach to make others change their mind./ But, like other forms of coercion, this has its costs.

**Meaning:** disregard own needs or others needs  
**Pros:**  Stay out of trouble for the time being.  
**Cons**: Can lead to unresolved problems and resentment  
**Example**: Forget about it. Let’s not make a big deal.

**Accommodate**

Peace at any cost is the reason behind this approach. You emphasise areas of agreement and smooth over, or ignore, disagreements. If you don’t say what you are thinking others cannot know, and therefore they are powerless to deal with the conflict. This approach can be useful if conflict would put too much pressure on a relationship, and sometimes things do get better because you remain good friends.

**Meaning:** put others needs first  
**Pros**: Can keep the peace.  
**Cons**: Can lead to unresolved problems and resentment  
**Example**: Whatever you want is fine with me.

**Compromise**

Everyone gains something and loses something. It is a common way of dealing with conflict, but tends to lead to rather short-term “solutions”. It may leave everyone feeling they have lost something important, and it closes off the option that a better solution (for example, increasing the amount of resources available) may be possible.

**Meaning:** seeking little wins and little concessions  
**Pros**: Helpful if the issue is complex.  
**Cons**: Some needs on both sides are not met.  
**Example**: I’ll meet you half way.

**Collaborate/Problem Solving**

Otherwise known as the “win-win” approach, in which conflicts are viewed as “problems to solve between us”. In many situations all those involved in a conflict situation can win significant gains. It puts an equal priority on the relationship with the other parties and on a mutually satisfying outcome. While it is most effective way to get fair and lasting solutions in many situations “but not all, by all means) it is far from an easy option.

**Meaning:** discuss and problem solve and seek mutually beneficial outcomes  
**Pros**: Create mutual trust. Maintain positive relationships. Build commitments.  
**Cons**: Takes time and energy  
**Example**: I’d like to do it this way, what would you like? Let’s see how we can find a way for both of us to get what we want.

We all can use any of the conflict management styles given the situation. What you will notice though, is that you have a tendency to choose one style over another for certain types of situations. That’s ok. There are times when it is better to choose one style over another.