

Office of the Ombudsperson

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles

COMPETING STYLE

Individual needs are prioritized over those of others; often characterized by aggressive or combative communication; tends to result in conflict escalation.

Can be useful when:

- you are certain that you are correct *and* being in the right is more important than preservation of the relationship
- the issue itself is very low/no stakes

Can be problematic when:

- collaboration has not been attempted
- other party's cooperation is or will be needed
- utilized as a fallback style for most issues
- other party is likely to feel injured or diminished by the process

COLLABORATING STYLE

Parties work toward common objectives inclusive of all needs and goals; often produces better outcomes than individuals independently envision; integrative.

Can be useful when:

- the issue and relationship are of significance
- cooperation and creativity are values
- all concerns and issues appear ripe for mutual address

Can be problematic when:

- the matter is time-sensitive
- the issues are unimportant
- parties are over-extended
- other party's goals/needs are objectionable, indefensible, etc.

COMPROMISING STYLE

Involves trade-offs, resulting in limited sense of satisfaction, but often there is no real exploration of the underlying needs and interests of the disputing parties.

Can be useful when:

- cooperation is important but time or resources are limited