

## Information Sheet: Conflict Styles

As we grow up, we tend to learn to handle conflict in one particular way. At some point in our lives; however, we might find that this one way is not working as well for us any more.

The five most common ways in which people approach conflict are:

**Competing: like a SHARK**  
'I win / you lose'

Likely to do: compete, coerce, force

Likely to say: 'Do it my way or not at all'

Useful: in a crisis and when the issue is more important than the relationship

Not so useful: when it is important to make sure everybody is included

**Accommodating: like a TEDDY BEAR**

'I lose / you win'

Likely to do: appease, flatter, give in, put the other person first

Likely to say: 'Whatever you want'

Useful: when the relationship is more important than the issue

Not so useful: when you do so all the time, when you might become resentful, or when the issue is important to you

**Collaborating: like a MEERKAT**  
'I win / you win'

Likely to do: Listen, put all the cards on the table

Likely to say: 'This is my preference: what's yours?'

Useful: when there is plenty of time, and when the relationship and the issue are both important

Not so useful: when you are short of time, or when the issue is not worth spending a lot of time on

**Avoiding: like a TURTLE**  
'I lose / you lose'

Likely to do: flee, hide or ignore

Likely to say: 'Conflict? What conflict?'

Useful: when the danger is really very great, or when the issue is not at all important

Not so useful: When the issue needs sorting out

**Compromising: like a FOX**  
'I win some/I lose some (and so do you)'

Likely to do: compromise – give a bit, take a bit

Likely to say: 'I'll give a bit if you do the same'

Useful: when the issue and the relationship are both important

Not so useful: when the issue is more important than the relationship

It is important to remember that none of these styles are right or wrong in themselves. Each of them is useful in certain circumstances, but difficulties can arise if people use one style all the time, even when it is not appropriate. By understanding there is a range of possible options, you can choose to use a different style at times when it might be more suitable.

For more information, download our Information Sheet 'Conflict Resolution Skills' from our website:

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