



Playing Well with Others: Civil Discourse and Conflict Resolution

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Dave Kelly | *America's Student Leadership Trainersm*

Sources of Conflict

Civil Discourse

American Social Psychologist and Professor at Swarthmore College (PA) Kenneth J. Gergen describes it as the “language of dispassionate objectivity”. Key components include:

- 1) Requires _____ of the other participants.
- 2) Does not diminish the other's _____ worth nor questions their good _____.
- 3) Avoids _____, direct _____, or excessive _____.
- 4) Requires _____ and an appreciation of the other participant's _____.

Modes of Managing Conflict

- 1) _____ = _____
This style is characterized by low assertiveness of one's own interests and low cooperation with the other party. This is the “hiding the head in the sand” response. Although avoidance can provide some short-term stress reduction from the rigors of conflict, it does not really change the situation. Thus, its effectiveness is often limited. Avoidance does, however, have its place if the issue is trivial, people need to cool down, or the opponent is very powerful and hostile.
- 2) _____ = _____
Cooperating with the other party's wishes while not asserting one's own interests. If people see accommodation as a sign of weakness, it does not bode well for future interactions. However, it can be an effective reaction when you are wrong, the issue is more important to the other party, or you want to build goodwill.

- 3) _____ = _____
This style tends to maximize assertiveness for your own position and minimize cooperative responses. In doing so, you tend to frame the conflict in strict win-lose terms. Full priority is given to your own goals, facts, or procedures. The competing style holds promise when you have a lot of power, you are sure of your facts, the situation is truly win-lose, or you will not have to interact with the other party in the future.
- 4) _____ = _____
This style combines intermediate levels of assertiveness and cooperation. Thus, it is itself a compromise between pure competition and pure accommodation. Compromise places a premium on determining rules of exchange between the two parties. Also, compromise does not always result in the most creative response to conflict. Compromise is not so useful for resolving conflicts that stem from power to asymmetry, because the weaker party may have little to offer the stronger party. However, it is a sensible reaction to conflict stemming from scarce resources.
- 5) _____ = _____
Both assertiveness and cooperation are maximized with the hope that integrative agreement will occur that fully satisfies the interests of both parties. Emphasis is put on a win-win resolution in which there is no assumption that someone must lose something. Rather it is assumed that the solution to the conflict can leave both parties in a better condition. Ideally, collaboration occurs as a kind of problem solving exercise. It probably works best when the conflict is not intense and when each party has information that is useful to the other.

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What Do I Value?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____

Dave's Five Concepts

1. If you have a conflict with someone and you do not take it _____ that _____, then it can't be _____.
2. Deal with conflict _____-on-_____: _____ in public, _____ in private.
3. Use the three _____ system: _____, _____, _____.
4. Learn to _____ the _____ from the _____.
5. Confront the _____ with a _____.