

## The Compromising Fox

Foxes use a compromising conflict management style; their concern is for goals and relationships with others.

Foxes are willing to sacrifice some of their goals while persuading others to give up part of theirs. For foxes, compromise is assertive and cooperative — the result is either win-lose or lose-lose.



Foxes seek a compromise — they give up part of their goals and persuade the other person in a conflict to give up part of his/her goals.

*Foxes will give up part of their goals and persuade the other person to give up part of theirs.*

Foxes seek a conflict situation in which both sides gain something — the middle ground between two extreme positions.

**ADVANTAGE:** Relationships are maintained and conflicts are resolved.

**DISADVANTAGE:** Compromise may create less than an ideal outcome and game playing can result.

### **Appropriate times to use a Fox Style:**

- ◆ When important/complex issues leave no clear or simple solution(s)
- ◆ When all conflicting people are equal in power and have strong interests in different solutions
- ◆ When there are no time constraints

## The Collaborating Owl

Owls use a collaborating or problem confronting conflict management style because they value both their goals and relationships.

Owls view conflicts as problems to be solved and seek a solution that achieves both their own goals and the goals of the other person — win/win. Owls are not satisfied until a solution is found that achieves their own goals and the goals of the other person.



Owls see conflicts as means of improving relationships by reducing tension between two persons.

Owls try to begin a discussion that identifies the conflict as a problem.

*Owls seek to achieve a win-win collaborative resolution to conflict.*

Owls maintain the relationship by seeking solutions that satisfy both themselves and the other person.

Owls are not satisfied until the tensions and negative feelings have been fully resolved.

**ADVANTAGE:** Both sides get what they want and negative feelings have been eliminated.

**DISADVANTAGE:** Takes a great deal of time and effort.

### **Appropriate times to use an Owl Style:**

- ◆ When maintaining relationships is important
- ◆ When time is not a concern
- ◆ When peer conflict is involved
- ◆ When trying to gain commitment through consensus building
- ◆ When learning and trying to merge different perspectives

**Adapted from the Community & Leadership Development**

**University of Kentucky**

## WORKING TOGETHER WORKS!

### **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

Different people use different strategies for managing conflict. These strategies are learned usually in childhood, and they seem to function automatically. Usually we are not aware of how we act in conflict situations. We just do whatever seems to come naturally. But we do have a personal strategy; and because it is learned, we can always change it by learning new and more effective ways of managing conflicts.

When you become engaged in a conflict, there are two major concerns you have to take into account:

- ◆ **Achieving your personal goals** — you are in conflict because you have a goal that conflicts with another person's goal. Your goal may be of high importance to you, or it may be of little importance to you.
- ◆ **Keeping a good relationship with the other person** — you may need to be able to interact effectively with the other person in the future. The relationship may be very important to you or may be of little importance to you.

How important your personal goals are to you and how important the relationship is to you affects how you act in a conflict. Given these two concerns, it is possible to identify five styles of managing conflict.

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# How important your personal goals are to you and how important the relationship is to you affects how you act in a conflict.

## The Accommodating Teddy Bear



*Teddy Bears think that conflict should be avoided in favor of harmony.*

Teddy Bears use a smoothing or accommodating conflict management style with emphasis on human relationships.

Teddy bears ignore their own goals and resolve conflict by giving in to others because Teddy Bears see the relationships as of the greatest importance while their own goals are of the least importance.

Teddy bears smooth over the conflict out of fear of harming the relationship—their unassertive and cooperative behavior creates a win/lose (Teddy is the loser) situation. Teddy Bears want to be accepted and liked by others.

Teddy Bears think that conflict should be avoided in favor of harmony and that people cannot discuss conflicts without damaging relationships. Teddy Bears are afraid that if the conflict continues, someone will get hurt and that would ruin the relationship.

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**ADVANTAGE:** Accommodating maintains relationships.

**DISADVANTAGE:** Giving in may not be productive, Teddy Bear may be taken advantage of.

### **Appropriate times to use a Teddy Bear Style:**

- ◆ When maintaining the relationship outweighs other considerations
- ◆ When suggestions/changes are not important to the accommodator (Teddy)
- ◆ When time is limited or when harmony and stability are valued

## The Avoiding Turtle

Turtles adopt an avoiding or withdrawing conflict management style.

Turtles would rather hide and ignore conflict than resolve it; this leads them to be uncooperative and unassertive.

Turtles tend to give up personal goals and display passive behavior creating lose-lose situations.



*Turtles would rather hide and ignore conflict.*

Turtles believe it is easier to withdraw (physically and psychologically) from a conflict rather than to face it.

**ADVANTAGE:** May help to maintain relationships that would be hurt by conflict resolution.

**DISADVANTAGE:** Conflicts remain unresolved, overuse of the style leads to others walking all over them.

### **Appropriate times to use a Turtle Style:**

- ◆ When stakes are not high or issue is trivial
- ◆ When confrontation will hurt a working relationship
- ◆ When there is little chance of satisfying your wants
- ◆ When disruption outweighs the benefit of conflict resolution
- ◆ When gathering information is more important than an immediate decision
- ◆ When others can more effectively resolve the conflict
- ◆ When time constraints demand a delay

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## The Competing Shark

Sharks use a force or competing conflict management style; sharks do not hesitate to use aggressive behavior to resolve conflicts.

Sharks assume that conflicts are settled by one person winning and one person losing — and they want to be the winner. Sharks have a need to win; therefore others must lose, creating a win-lose.

The goals of sharks are highly important to them, and relationships are of minor importance. Therefore, sharks seek to achieve their goals at all costs and sharks are not concerned with the needs of others. They do not care if others like or accept them.



Winning gives sharks a sense of pride and achievement. Losing gives sharks a sense of weakness, inadequacy or failure.

*Sharks want to be the winner.*

Sharks try to overpower opponents by forcing them to accept their solution to the conflict. Sharks try to win by attacking, overpowering, overwhelming, and intimidating others. Sharks can be autocratic, authoritative, and uncooperative.

**ADVANTAGE:** If the shark's decision is correct, a better decision without compromise can result.

**DISADVANTAGE:** May breed hostility and resentment toward the person using it.

### **Appropriate times to use a Shark style:**

- ◆ When unpopular decisions need to be implemented
- ◆ When fostering intimate or supportive relationships is not critical
- ◆ When others are likely to take advantage of noncompetitive behavior
- ◆ When conflict resolution is urgent; when decision is vital in a crisis