

## HOW DO I RESPOND TO CONFLICT?

### Inventory of Personal Conflict Management Style

*(Based on Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument)*

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Consider your response in situations where your wishes differ from those of another person. Note that statements A-J deal with your *initial* response to disagreement; statements K-T deal with your response *after the disagreement has gotten stronger*. If you find it easier, you may choose one particular conflict setting and use it as background for all the questions. Note that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers; your first impression is usually best.

Circle one number on the line below each statement for questions A through T.

- A. WHEN I FIRST DISCOVER THAT DIFFERENCES EXIST,  
I make sure that all views are out in the open and treated with equal consideration, even if there seems to be substantial disagreement.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**
- B. WHEN I FIRST DISCOVER THAT DIFFERENCES EXIST,  
I devote more attention to making sure others understand the logic and benefits of my position than I do to pleasing them.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**
- C. WHEN I FIRST DISCOVER THAT DIFFERENCES EXIST,  
I make my needs known, but I tone them down a bit and look for solutions somewhere in the middle.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**
- D. WHEN I FIRST DISCOVER THAT DIFFERENCES EXIST,  
I pull back from discussion for a time to avoid tension.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**
- E. WHEN I FIRST DISCOVER THAT DIFFERENCES EXIST,  
I devote more attention to feelings of others than to my personal goals.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**
- F. WHEN I FIRST DISCOVER THAT DIFFERENCES EXIST,  
I make sure my agenda doesn't get in the way of our relationship.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**
- G. WHEN I FIRST DISCOVER THAT DIFFERENCES EXIST,  
I actively explain my ideas and just as actively take steps to understand others' ideas.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**
- H. WHEN I FIRST DISCOVER THAT DIFFERENCES EXIST,  
I am more concerned with goals I believe to be important than with how others feel about things.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**
- I. WHEN I FIRST DISCOVER THAT DIFFERENCES EXIST,  
I decide the differences aren't worth worrying about.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**
- J. WHEN I FIRST DISCOVER THAT DIFFERENCES EXIST,  
I give up some points in exchange for others.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**
- K. IF DIFFERENCES PERSIST AND FEELINGS OF CONFLICT ESCALATE,  
I enter more actively into discussion and hold out for ways to meet the needs of others as well as my own.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**

- L. IF DIFFERENCES PERSIST AND FEELINGS OF CONFLICT ESCALATE,  
I put forth greater effort to make sure that the truth as I see it is recognized and less on pleasing others.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**
- M. IF DIFFERENCES PERSIST AND FEELINGS OF CONFLICT ESCALATE,  
I try to be reasonable by not asking for my full preferences, but I make sure I get some of what I want.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**
- N. IF DIFFERENCES PERSIST AND FEELINGS OF CONFLICT ESCALATE,  
I don't push for things to be done my way, and I pull back somewhat from the demands of others.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**
- O. IF DIFFERENCES PERSIST AND FEELINGS OF CONFLICT ESCALATE,  
I set aside my own preferences and become more concerned with keeping the relationship comfortable.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**
- P. IF DIFFERENCES PERSIST AND FEELINGS OF CONFLICT ESCALATE,  
I interact less with others and look for ways to find a safe distance.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**
- Q. IF DIFFERENCES PERSIST AND FEELINGS OF CONFLICT ESCALATE,  
I do what needs to be done and hope we can mend feelings later.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**
- R. IF DIFFERENCES PERSIST AND FEELINGS OF CONFLICT ESCALATE,  
I do what is necessary to soothe the other's feelings.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**
- S. IF DIFFERENCES PERSIST AND FEELINGS OF CONFLICT ESCALATE,  
I pay close attention to the desires of others but remain firm that they need to pay equal attention to my desires  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**
- T. IF DIFFERENCES PERSIST AND FEELINGS OF CONFLICT ESCALATE,  
I press for moderation and compromise so we can make a decision and move on with things.  
**Not at all Characteristic** <---1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6---> **Very Characteristic**

### **SCORING THE INSTRUMENT:**

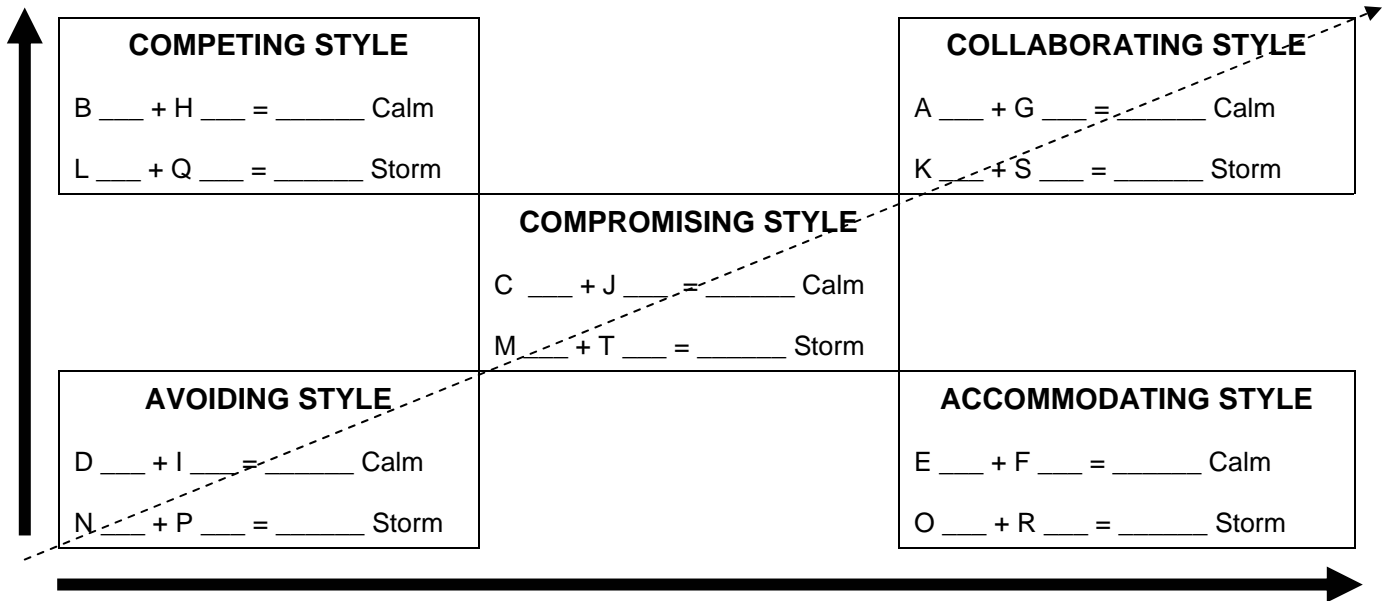
When you are finished, transfer the number from each item on the tally sheet. For example, on item A, if you selected number 6, write "6" on the line designated for item A on the tally sheet. Then add the numbers.

SAMPLE: B 1 + H 4 = 5.

### **INTERPRETATION OF THE INSTRUMENT:**

1. This instrument gives you two sets of scores. Calm scores apply to your response to conflict when disagreement first arises. Storm scores apply to your response if things are not easily resolved and emotions and feelings of conflict get stronger.
2. The scores indicate your preference, or inclination to use each style. The higher your score in a given style, the more likely you are to use this style in responding to conflict. You can develop skills in the appropriate use of each conflict management style, and as such are not limited to using the style(s) that you prefer.

## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE PREFERENCES - Tally Sheet



**LEGEND: Arrows read low to high:**

- Vertical Arrow:   **ASSERTIVENESS:**   The importance of getting *your own needs* met
- Horizontal Arrow: **AFFIRMATION:**       The importance of *maintaining the relationship* between yourself and the other party
- -----▶       The relative amount of effort needed to use conflict management style

NOTES:

## WHAT DO THE STYLES MEAN?

### COMPETING STYLE

#### High Assertiveness/Low Affirmation

- “We’re doing it my way ... “
- Strategies: Discourage disagreement, persuade, be firm, set limits and consequences, cite policy, insist, repeat, control, and be inaccessible.
- Source of Power: From position
- Benefits: Speed, decisiveness, protection of innocents, preservation of important values, stability.
- Costs When Overused: Destroyed or hierarchical relationships, loss of cooperation, atrophy of gifts in others, anger, depression, and diminished self-respect in others, stagnation.

### COLLABORATING STYLE

#### High Assertiveness/High Affirmation

- “My preference is ... I’m also interested in your views.”
- Strategies: Assert self while also inviting other views; welcome differences, jointly list strengths and weaknesses of all views; cooperate in seeking additional information.
- Source of Power: From trust, skill, ability, good will, creativity.
- Benefits: Trust and mutuality in relationships; high cooperation and growth; others blossom and develop new gifts; high energy
- Costs When Overused: fatigue and time loss; distraction from other more important tasks; analysis paralysis

### COMPROMISING STYLE

#### Medium Assertiveness/Medium Affirmation

- “Let’s make a deal ...”
- Strategies: Urge moderation, bargain, split the difference, find a little something for everyone, and meet them halfway.
- Source of Power: From moderation and reasonableness.
- Benefits: Relatively fast, enables the show to go on; provides a way out of stalemate; readily understood by most people; builds atmosphere of calmness and reasons.
- Costs When Overused: Mediocrity and blandness; possibly unprincipled agreements; likelihood of patching symptoms and ignoring causes.

### AVOIDING STYLE

#### Low Assertiveness/Low Affirmation

- “Let’s not make a big deal out of this ...”
- Strategies: Withdraw, delay or avoid response, divert attention, suppress personal emotions, be inaccessible, be inscrutable.
- Source of Power: From calmness, silence, non-cooperation, being “above it all”
- Benefits: Freedom from entanglement in trivial issues or insignificant relationships; stability; preservation of status quo; ability to influence others without doing anything.
- Costs When Overused: Periodic explosions of pent-up anger; freeze-out – slow death of relationships, residue of negative feelings; stagnation and dullness; loss of accountability; sapped energy.

### ACCOMMODATING STYLE

#### Low Assertiveness/High Affirmation

- “ OK, whatever you say ... “
- Strategies: Agree, support, acknowledge error, give in, convince self it’s no big deal, placate.
- Source of Power: From relationships or approval of others
- Benefits: approval/appreciation of others; freedom from hassle, on the short-run at least; self-discipline of ego.
- Costs When Overused: Frustration for others who wish to collaborate; resentment and depression; stunted growth of personal gifts; over-dependence on others; denies others benefit of healthy confrontation.