

THE ANIMAL GAME

Conflict management styles

What kind of ANIMAL are YOU when it comes to dealing with conflict?

What do these styles mean and how can we use them?

Keep in mind that each of the five conflict management styles have their strengths and weaknesses. There is no one "right" way to handle conflict and no one style is better or stronger than the others.

People's management styles may also change based on who is involved and the situation around them. Being effective in managing conflict, or the differences between people, is knowing when and how to use each of the styles constructively to work towards resolution rather than fighting and remaining at odds.

The following is intended to give you tips and strategies for when to use each style.

Write down your top 2 or 3 Conflict Management Styles here:

Read on to learn more about when to use each style situationally!

The Competing Shark

Sharks use a forcing or competing conflict management style

Sharks are highly goal-oriented

Relationships take on a lower priority

Sharks do not hesitate to use aggressive behavior to resolve conflicts

Sharks can be autocratic, authoritative, and uncooperative; threatening and intimidating



Sharks have a need to win; therefore, others must lose, creating win-lose situations

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 conflict involves personal differences that are difficult to change
- 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 crisis
- When unpopular decisions need to be implemented

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 uncooperative and unassertive

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



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 over them

Appropriate times to use a Turtle Style:

- When the 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 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

The Accommodating Teddy Bear

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 into others; unassertive and cooperative creating a win-lose (bear is loser) situation



Advantage

Accommodating maintains relationships

Disadvantage

Giving in may not be productive, 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
- When minimizing losses in situations where outmatched or losing
- When time is limited or when harmony and stability are valued

The Compromising Fox

Foxes use a compromising conflict management style; concern is for goals and relationships

Foxes are willing to sacrifice some of their goals while persuading others to give up part of theirs

Compromise is assertive and cooperative-result is either win-lose or lose-lose



Advantage

Relationships are maintained and conflicts are removed

Disadvantage

Compromise may create less than ideal outcome and game playing can result

Appropriate times to use a Fox Style

- When important/complex issues leave no clear or simple solutions
- When all conflicting people are equal in power and have strong interests in different solutions
- When there are no time restraints

The Collaborating Owl

Owls use a collaborating or problem confronting conflict management style valuing their goals and relationships

Owls view conflicts as problems to be solved finding solutions agreeable to all sides (win-win)



Advantage

Both sides get what they want and negative feelings 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 differing perspectives

A TIME FOR REFLECTION

Which of these styles are you most challenged by?

How can you improve your outcomes with others knowing what you've just learned about the other styles?

What do you want to get better at when it comes to managing conflict?