

# Working Effectively with Conflict

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# What do we know about CONFLICT?

- It's a part of life, a part of work.

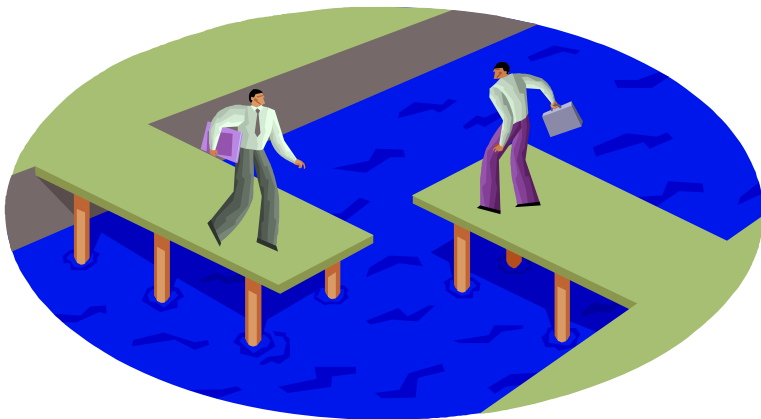
- It occurs when...

*interdependent* parties perceive *interference* from each other in achieving their *respective* goals.

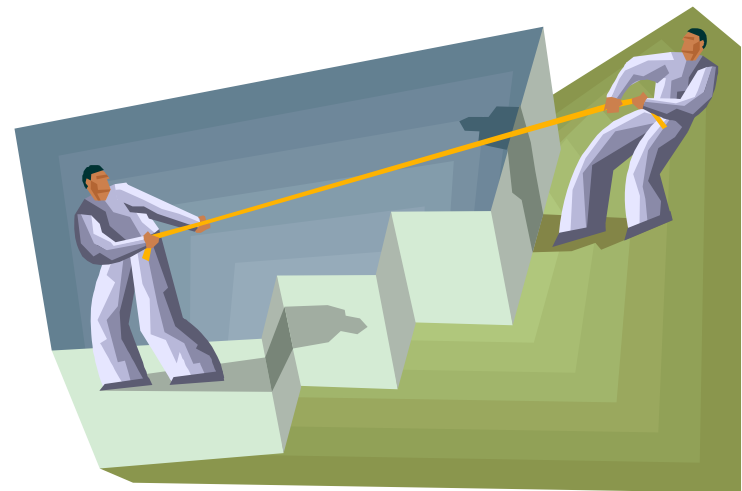


## Two Types of Conflict:

- People want the same thing, but have to settle for different things.



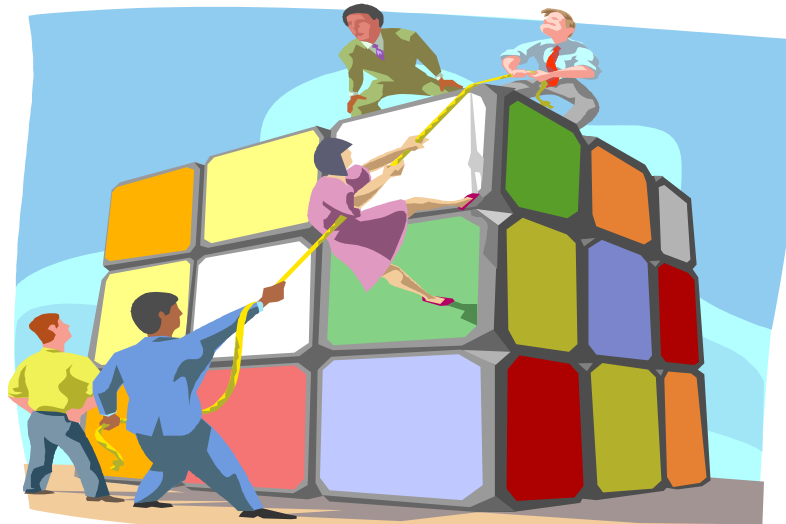
or



- People want different things, but have to settle for the same things.

## Four Possible Outcomes:

- Problem resolved; relationship maintained or improved
- Problem resolved; relationship deteriorates
- Problem not resolved; relationship deteriorates
- Problem not resolved; relationship maintained or improved



# Conflict in Universities is Complicated by:

- Organizational Dynamics
- Culture and Traditions
- Policies and Procedures
- Institutional Structure and History
- Individual Responses to Conflict



## Remember that:

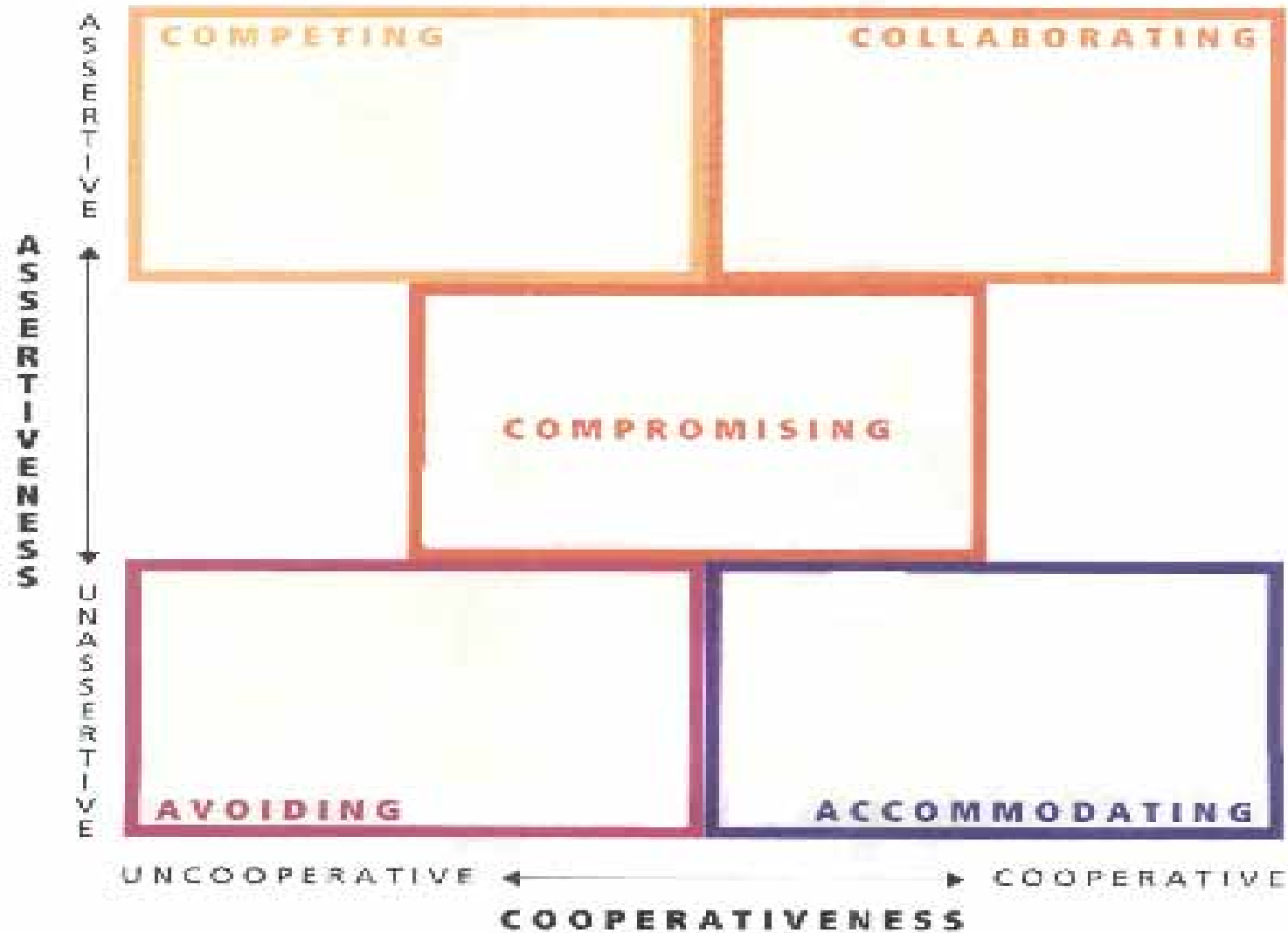
- Conflict is natural and to be expected.
- Conflict is about people and personality, as well as situations, facts, ideas, and tasks.
- People tend to respond to conflict in different – but individually consistent – ways.

# Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument

- Assesses individual preferences or inclinations in handling conflict
- Compares individual styles to those of other managers who have taken the assessment
- Suggests ways to most effectively use and expand your repertoire of conflict management skills

Thomas-Kilmann  
**CONFLICT MODE**  
Instrument

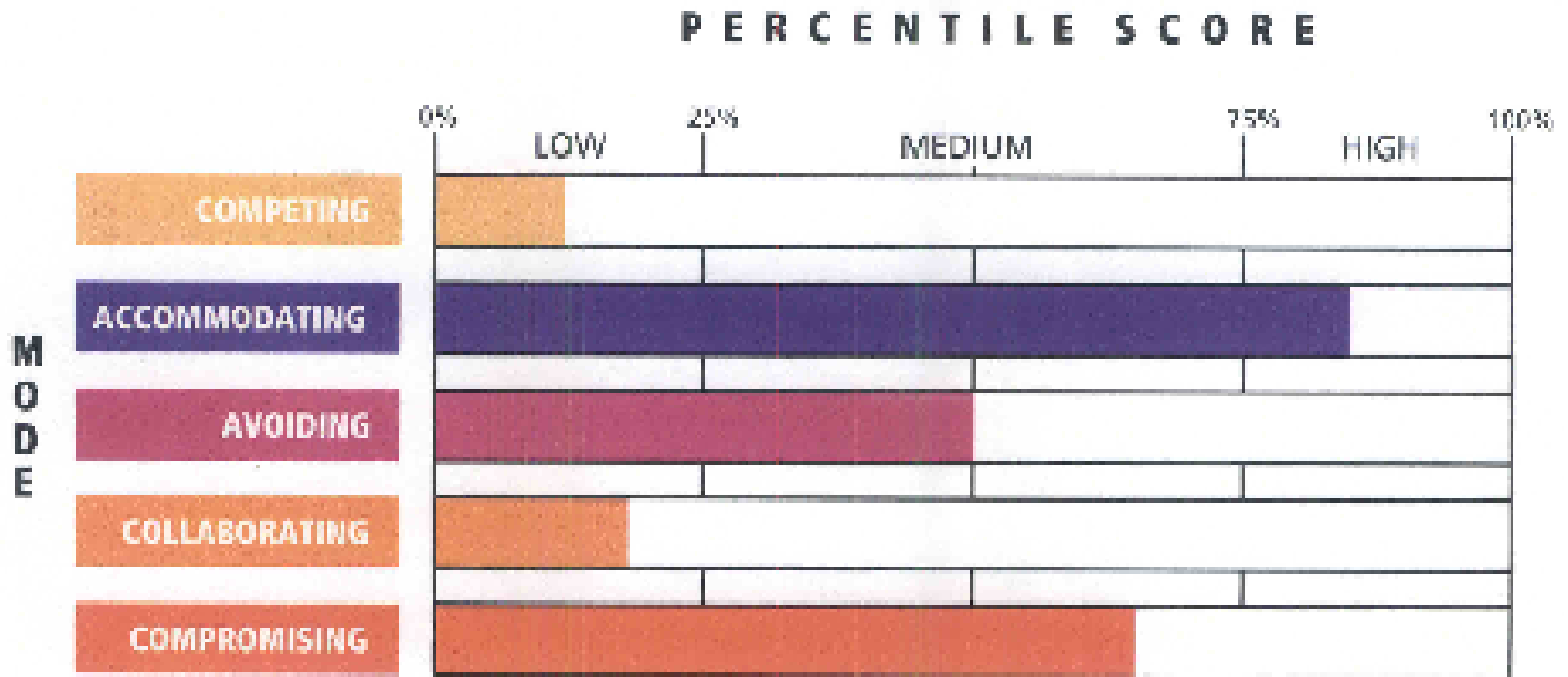
# Conflict Styles: Assertiveness and Cooperativeness



## Five Conflict Styles (TKI)

1. Competing – “Might makes right.” (Hi A, Lo C)
2. Accommodating – “Kill your enemies w/kindness” (Lo A, Hi C)
3. Avoiding – “Leave well enough alone.” (Lo A, Lo C)
4. Collaborating – “Two heads are better than one.” (Hi A, Hi Co)
5. Compromising – “Split the difference.” (Mod A, Mod C)

# Example: Chronic Committee Chairperson



# Which Style is Best?



- Most people use all at various times.
- Most people naturally prefer one style.
- Situation, culture, personality can influence the best style at a given time.
- All styles can be useful!



# Different Styles have Different Goals

- Competing: the goal is to *win*.
- Accommodating: the goal is to *yield*.
- Avoiding: the goal is to *delay*.
- Collaborating: the goal is multiple *participation*.
- Compromising: the goal is to find a *middle ground*.



# Competing is Effective:

- When quick decisive action is needed
- On important issues when unpopular action must be taken
- When the issue is vital, and the right course is clear
- To protect against people who take advantage of noncompetitive behavior

# Accommodating is Effective:

- When you are wrong, when learning is important, or when demonstrating reasonableness is critical
- When creating goodwill is paramount
- To build social credits for later use
- To stop unproductive or damaging competition
- When harmony is important
- When it's important for others to learn from experience

# Avoiding Is Effective:

- When the issue is relatively trivial
- When you know you can't be satisfied
- When the costs of conflict outweigh the benefits of resolution
- To allow “cooling off”
- When it's important to have more information
- When others can resolve the issue more effectively
- When the conflict is tangential to something more important

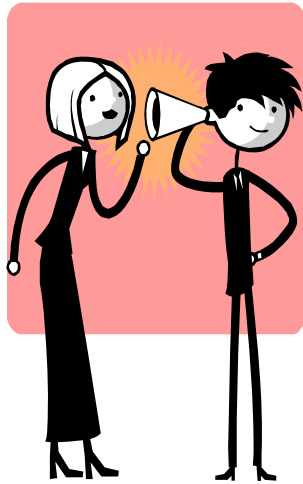
# Collaborating Is Effective:

- When it is important that both sides be integrated
- When you want to learn and fully understand others' views
- To merge different perspectives and insights
- To gain commitment through consensual decisions
- To work through hard feelings that have interfered with interpersonal relationships

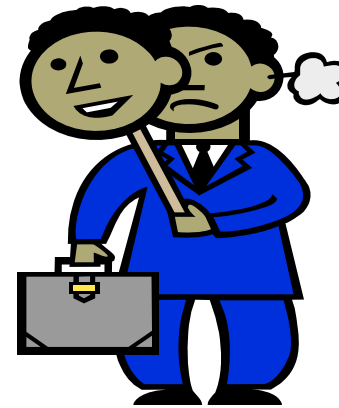
# Compromising Is Effective:

- When goals are less important than avoiding the disruption caused by more assertive conflict resolution styles
- When opponents have equal power and commitment to mutually exclusive goals
- To temporarily settle complex issues
- To quickly achieve an expedient solution
- As a backup style when collaboration or competition fails

# Whatever style you use, there are some Basic Skills for Conflict Resolution:



1. Manage anger
2. Listen actively
3. Avoid assumptions
4. Find *something* on which to agree
5. Be cautious with criticism
6. Negotiate
7. Get help



# Analyzing Conflict Situations

- Two Cases
- Work Individually and in Groups
- Report Back



## Conflict Case 1: Consulting Colleague

You are an assistant professor sitting in your office, pouring over some clinical information about one of your patients, Mr. Cup O. Joe. Mr. Joe has just seen a consultant in another division, who recommends Test A and Drug B. You think that the test is a waste of time and money. Mr. Joe has been your patient for 5 years and you know that he doesn't like extra tests. You want to treat his symptoms with Drug D based on your knowledge of the patient and some reading you've done. You know the consultant's reputation – she will be mad if you don't follow her advice and let both you and the patient know that your decision is a “terrible idea”.

## Conflict Case 2: Promotion and Service

You are an assistant professor of internal medicine and were hired with the expectation that your primary focus would be as a clinician-educator. Moreover, the University's new promotion and tenure policy reflects even greater emphasis on teaching than in the past. You have been doing your share of clinical teaching and service since you are on the curriculum committee, which is especially time-consuming this year, since re-accreditation is only a year away. Yesterday, your department chairman, Dr. Mort, called to say he wants you to represent the department on the School Admissions Committee. He explained that it is an unusual role for a junior faculty member, but he thinks your work on the curriculum committee demonstrates your talent for this sort of demanding assignment. You know that this will involve many hours pouring over applications and interviewing. It would be interesting, but you see no way to leverage scholarly efforts from this effort, and you are feeling a great deal of pressure to maintain your clinical productivity. When you explain, Dr. Mort assures you that committee work also is valued. "Don't let me down. I need your support on this," he says in concluding the call.

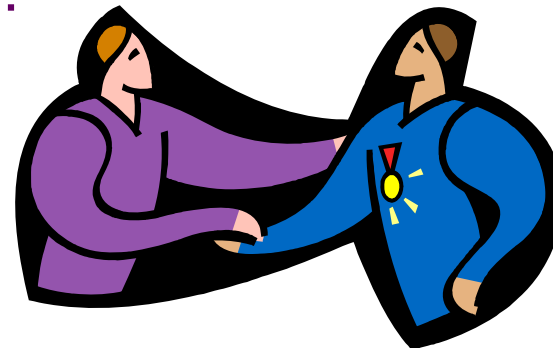
# Summary:

## What is a Successful Conflict?

- Parties willingly work together to resolve an issue by:
  - Understanding respective interests
  - Identifying objective criteria
  - Generating options

The result is satisfactory to both parties.

Win-Win!!



# What's Your Style?

