

Lesson 2.2

Identifying Conflict Styles



Rationale

Knowing how you tend to deal with conflict can be helpful in figuring out what you might do differently to manage conflict better or to find a more positive outcome. This activity gives students the opportunity to reflect on how they tend to respond to conflict and to explore the value of using different conflict styles in different situations.

Objectives

1. To understand the value of knowing one's tendencies for dealing with conflict.
2. To understand the value of identifying conflict styles of those with whom you are in conflict.

Standards

- ◆ Individual Development and Identity
- ◆ Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- ◆ Power, Authority, and Governance
- ◆ Production, Distribution, and Consumption

Time: One class period (45 minutes)

Materials

- What Do You Do When...? Worksheet*
- Conflict Styles Handout*



45 minutes

Procedures

I. Essential Question

Why is it useful to know what conflict style you use most often?

II. Motivation/Introduction (1 minute)

Explain to students that people respond to conflicts in very different ways and there is no single correct way to respond. Tell students they are going to do an activity that will help them determine how they tend to respond to conflict.

III. Teacher Directed (12 minutes)

1. Distribute the *What Do You Do When...?* Worksheet and have students complete it.
2. Divide the class into five groups and assign each group a number from one to five, which they will use later.
3. In their groups, have students share what patterns they see on their individual worksheets. Do they have a lot of A's, a lot of C's, or a few of each letter?
4. Write the five styles by name on the board (Avoidance, Confrontation, Accommodation, Compromise, Problem Solving). Ask students to guess which style matches each letter on the *What Do You Do When...?* Worksheet (A. Confronting, B. Avoiding, C. Accommodating, D. Compromising, E. Problem Solving).
5. Have them identify their dominant style by looking at their pattern.
6. Distribute the *Conflict Styles Handout* and go over the highlights of each style.

Alternative Strategy: You may choose to introduce the styles by role-playing a scenario with a student five ways, using a different style each time and asking the class to describe what they saw.

IV. Guided Practice (22 minutes)

1. Tell students that now they are going to see what the styles look like by acting them out.
2. Have each student share in their group a conflict they have been involved with, how they handled it, and how they could have handled the conflict differently using another style. Then have the group select one of the conflicts that they shared to act out. (If you are concerned about the nature of the personal conflicts, you can assign each group one of the scenarios from the *What Do You Do When...?* Worksheet.)
3. Randomly assign each group a conflict style and have them act out the conflict using that style.
4. Give groups time (5–7 minutes) to practice acting out their assigned scenario.
5. Have each group present their scenario/conflict. While each group presents, have the audience identify on the *Conflict Styles Handout* which group (1, 2, 3 . . .) is acting out each style and how they know. At the end of each scenario, have the class share their responses.

VI. Discussion (10 minutes)

Lead a discussion using some of the following questions:

- ◆ Why might you use different styles with different people in different situations? Ask for examples.
- ◆ Is it possible to use more than one style in a situation, for example, to move from confrontation to compromise? What might make someone move in this way? (If you saw more than one style in one of the scenarios presented, point this out to the group).
- ◆ Is one style best for managing conflicts? (Each style has its place, but generally when managing conflict, the problem-solving approach leads to a solution that is agreeable to everyone).
- ◆ Why is it useful to know what conflict style you use most often?
- ◆ How can it be helpful to know someone else's style?
- ◆ What national and international examples (current or historical) can you think of in which you have seen people or groups in conflict use these styles? (Try to relate the styles to the social studies events you have studied with your students).

Assessment:

What Do You Do When? Worksheet, scenarios in groups, *Conflict Styles* Handout, discussion questions, participation

Extension Activity

Have students draw a symbol/cartoon caricature that represents their conflict style. Post them in the room and have students guess the styles based only on the visual representation.

Source for Conflict Styles Grid: K. Thomas, "Conflict and Negotiation Process in Organizations," in *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, ed. M. D. Dunnette and L. M. Hough (Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1992), 660.

Lesson 2.2 WORKSHEET: WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN...?

Read the scenarios below and write the letter of the response that most closely matches what you would do in the situation. You may find that none of the responses reflects exactly how you would respond, so pick the one closest to what you would do. You can use each letter as many times as you want.

- A. Try to convince someone of your point or stand up for what you believe. Address the problem directly.
- B. Walk away from the situation, ignore the situation, or deny that there is a problem.
- C. Do what others want even if you disagree or if it's not what you want.
- D. Make a quick compromise.
- E. Find a solution that makes everyone happy.

_____ 1. Your mother wants you to help her clean the house on Saturday night and you want to go out with your friends.

_____ 2. Your best friend always borrows your things and never gives them back.

_____ 3. Someone is saying bad things about your friend. You're angry because you know what they are saying isn't true.

_____ 4. You think your teacher has been unfair in grading your test. You think your grade should be higher.

_____ 5. Your friend always wants to copy your homework and it bothers you because it takes you a very long time to do your assignments.

_____ 6. Your friends want to skip school and you don't know what to do. You want to go to school but you don't want your friends to make fun of you.

Lesson 2.2 HANDOUT: CONFLICT STYLES

Directions: Watch each group act out the scenario with a different conflict style. Match the group to the conflict style in the first column. Then fill out how you know in the last column.

Group (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)	Conflict Style	Behavior	Uses	Limitations	How Do You Know?
	Avoiding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Denying a problem ◆ Pretending nothing is wrong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Leaving a situation ◆ Holding back feelings and opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ When confronting seems dangerous ◆ When you need more time to prepare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The problem may never be resolved. ◆ Emotions may explode later. 	
	Confronting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Getting what you want no matter what ◆ Some people win, some lose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Interrupting/taking over ◆ Ignoring others' feelings and ideas ◆ Loud tone of voice ◆ Sometimes physical violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ When immediate action is needed ◆ When you believe in the absolute rightness of your action and don't see any other choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ This style can make people defensive and can make a conflict worse. ◆ This style can make it hard for others to express how they feel. 	
	Accommodating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Giving in to another person's point of view ◆ Paying attention to others' concerns and not your own 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Apologizing/saying yes to end the conflict ◆ Letting others interrupt or ignore your feelings, ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ When you think you've made a mistake or that you don't really understand the situation ◆ When smoothing over is important for keeping a relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ You may work hard to please others but never be happy yourself. ◆ Being nice doesn't always solve the problem. 	
	Compromising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Each person wins some and loses some 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Interest is in finding a solution ◆ Show desire to talk about the problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ When you need a fast decision on a small issue ◆ When nothing else works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ You may fix the immediate conflict but not the bigger problem. ◆ Each person may not end up happy. 	
	Problem-Solving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Finding a solution that makes everyone happy ◆ Looking closely at the sources of the conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Addressing your feelings, needs, and wants ◆ Listening to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Can make someone who is stubborn move toward resolving a problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ This requires time and good communication skills. 	