

An Introduction to Conflict Resolution

Rick Olshak
Associate Dean of Students
Illinois State University

Our purposes today...

- Identify a definition for conflict
- Recognize the five conflict styles, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of each approach
- Identify our own personal conflict styles
- Discuss strategies for successfully managing conflict situations

Ground rules...

- Please pay attention and maintain an open mind
- Please share what you are comfortable sharing
- Please honor what is being shared by others and maintain privacy
- Others???

Thomas-Killman Inventory

- Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey beginning on page three
- Answer the questions within the context of how you respond in **professional situations**
- Score the test when you have completed it
- We will discuss the results a little later in the program

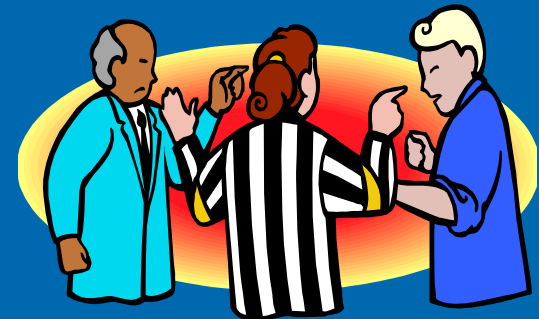
Guided Imagery Exercise

1. What setting did you find yourself in as a child?
2. What toys or games did you remember as your favorites as a child?
3. What lessons about conflict did you share with your imaginary friend?
4. Where did your style of handling conflict come from as a child?
5. How have your childhood lessons about conflict impacted you today?

Introduction to Conflict

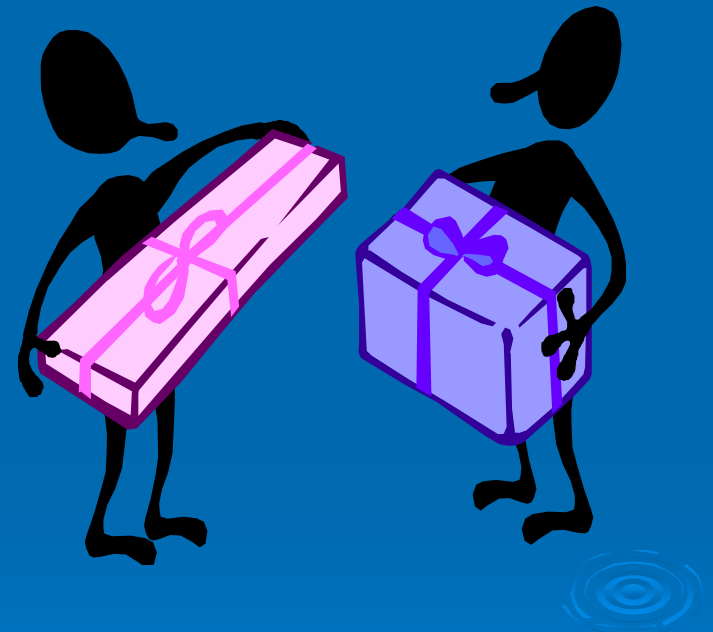
CONFLICT

- **What emotions do we experience in conflict?**



Introduction to Conflict

- **What relationships of value will we develop over the course of our lives?**
- **Who will they be with?**



Definition of Conflict

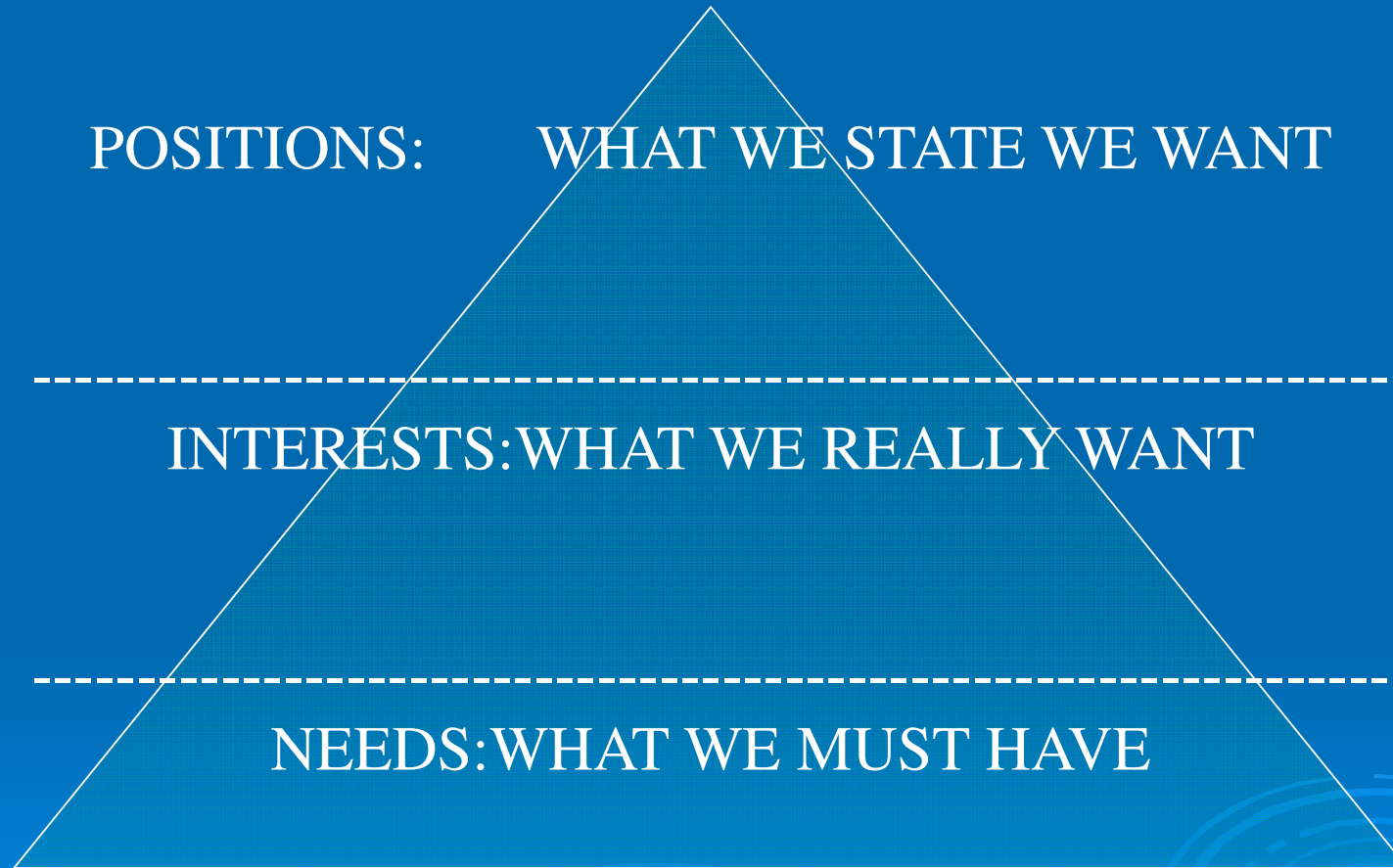
CONFLICT is:

- an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals.

(Wilmot & Hocker)



The PIN Model of Conflict



The PIN Model of Conflict

POSITIONS

- **“You and your friends have no respect for others.”**
- **“Quit using my stuff.”**
- **“Give me \$600 by the end of next week.”**

The PIN Model of Conflict

INTERESTS

- **“I want the cushions cleaned.”**
- **“I want you to be more careful when other people are over.”**
- **“Let me know when you are going to have other people over.”**
- **“Please show me some respect.”**

The PIN Model of Conflict

NEEDS

- **To be able to trust her roommate**
- **To feel respected**
- **Not to worry when going away for a weekend**

A New View of Conflict

Conflict:

- 1. Is an inevitable part of every relationship of value
- 2. Can be resolved so that both parties feel they have “won” and without the need for someone to “lose.”
- 3. signals a need for change/evolution in a relationship.
- 4. can be a healthy and enriching experience, strengthening relationships rather than weakening them.
- 5. can be positive and productive, providing opportunities for learning and mutual understanding.

Conflict Styles

Conflict Styles and Strategies

Avoidance

Conflict Styles and Strategies

Avoidance

Strategies:

- Ignoring the problem/conflict
- Denial of the problem/conflict
- Evasion of the problem/conflict
- Joking about the problem/conflict



Conflict Styles and Strategies

Avoidance

When to Practice:

- When the issue or relationship is unimportant
- When there is no chance of a positive outcome
- When risks of confrontation outweigh benefits of resolution
- When other party has significantly greater power
- When one or more parties needs time to “cool down”
- When it is appropriate to let others resolve conflict

Conflict Styles and Strategies

Avoidance

Disadvantages:

- Decisions made by default/without input
- Issues likely to remain unresolved
- Loss of influence in a situation or relationship
- Leads to self-doubt and loss of self-esteem
- May be unable to deal with conflicts in the future
- Demonstrates a lack of caring/investment

Conflict Styles and Strategies

Accommodation

Conflict Styles and Strategies

Accommodation



Strategies:

- Giving in or giving up
- Denying one's own needs
- Placing harmony in the relationship over the issues in conflict

Conflict Styles and Strategies

Accommodation

When to Practice:

- When one is wrong/other is right
- When there is a desire for harmony in the relationship
- When relationship is more important than the dispute
- When losses can be minimized
- When a party needs to “save face”
- When one wants leverage for future conflict

Conflict Styles and Strategies

Accommodation

Disadvantages:

- Requires party to give something up
- Issues likely to remain unresolved
- Does not generate creative solutions
- Can cause frustration and/or resentment
- Creates a loss of influence in situation/relationship
- Can damage relationships
- Can foster competition over “niceness”

Conflict Styles and Strategies

Competition

Conflict Styles and Strategies

Competition

Strategies:

- Hostile remarks or jokes
- Threats and/or coercion
- Denial of own responsibility
- Verbal arguments
- Physical altercations
- Covert actions



Conflict Styles and Strategies

Competition

When to Practice:

- When immediate and decisive action is necessary
- When the style will be rewarded
- When there is no relationship of value
- When the issue is more important than the relationship
- Where a party needs to prove commitment/strength
- When total victory is desired
- When competing can bring parties together/make both better

Conflict Styles and Strategies

Competition

Disadvantages:

- Strains/damages relationships
- Requires that one/both/all be “losers” in conflict
- Conflict may escalate
- Less likely to use constructive approaches later
- May encourage covert actions
- Can lead to stalemates
- Creates resentment and/or desire for revenge

Conflict Styles and Strategies

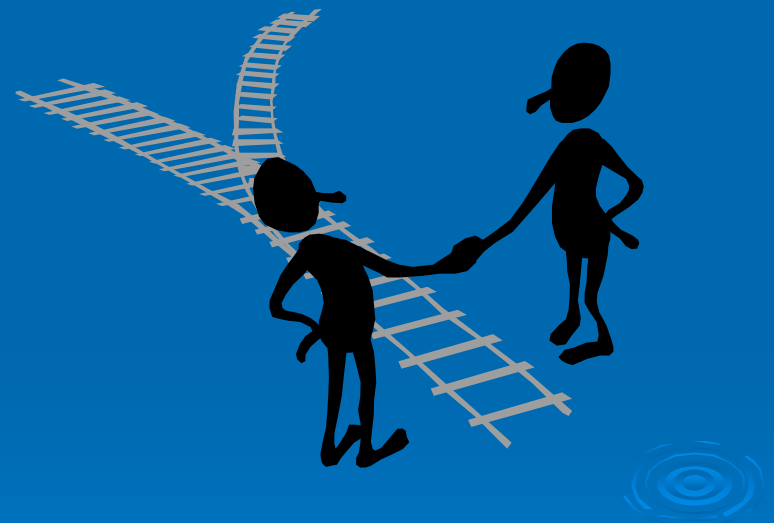
Compromise

Conflict Styles and Strategies

Compromise

Strategies:

- Both parties give and take to find a “middle ground”
- Offer a short-term resolution for “peace-keeping”
- Appeals to fair play/fairness



Conflict Styles and Strategies

Compromise

When to Practice:

- When a temporary solution is needed
- When parties are of equal power
- When parties wish to save time and energy
- When doing so “seems fair” to all parties

Conflict Styles and Strategies

Compromise

Disadvantages:

- Often leaves underlying issues unresolved
- Issue may become a recurring problem
- Parties required to give something up
- One/both/all parties may not be completely satisfied
- Becomes an easy way out of creative conflict resolution
- Leads to “position padding”

Conflict Styles and Strategies

Collaboration

Conflict Styles and Strategies

Collaboration

Strategies:



- Open and honest dialogue that is positive and constructive
- Willingness to listen to another view
- Emotions dealt with properly
- Seeking input from other party
- Willingness to accept responsibility for one's actions
- Giving ground without “giving in” (reason v. compromise)

Conflict Styles and Strategies

Collaboration

When to Practice:

- When the relationship is important
- When a mutually satisfying outcome is sought
- When both views/sides are too important to compromise
- When underlying issues need to be addressed
- When one wants to avoid destructive means for handling conflict
- When new and creative solutions are desired

Conflict Styles and Strategies

Collaboration

Disadvantages:

- Takes more time and energy
- Requires both parties to be committed to the process
- Makes a party appear unreasonable if he/she later decides against collaboration
- A collaborative party may appear weak to an aggressive party

Conflict Styles and Strategies

“Rick’s Conflict” House versus Hawaii

Let’s try:



- Avoidance
- Accommodation
- Competition
- Compromise
- Collaboration



TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

- Managing Conflict is a Choice
- Listen, Listen, Listen
- Show you are listening (Restate)
- Avoid Poisons (name calling, exaggerations, comparisons, etc.)
- Deal with strong emotions in a constructive way
- Know when each method will be beneficial
- Avoid Passive/Aggressive Behaviors
- Trust in yourself and the other person to resolve the conflict
- Know when it is appropriate to seek third party intervention

FINAL REFLECTION

- In general, I would say I have chosen a conflict style that could be described as...
- I am best at handling conflicts that concern...
- I am least effective at handling conflicts that concern...
- The most helpful skills I bring to conflict resolution are...
- My responses to conflict would be more effective if I...