



## Constructive Conflict Engagement

### Purpose:

Increase the staff's confidence to engage conflict constructively.

### Materials:

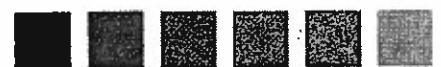
Copies of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Survey (*See page 7.13.*)

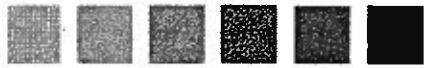
### Facilitator Tips:

- The copy of the Thomas-Kilmann survey instrument included in this tool kit is provided for background information. The survey is copyrighted. Order copies of the survey before using this instrument with your staff.
- Note that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions, and there is no best or worst way to act in a conflict. However, there are behaviors that are more likely or less likely to help you get your needs met. Each of the five conflict behavior categories – avoid, accommodate, compromise, compete, collaborate – has appropriate and inappropriate uses. The goal is to be fluent in all five ways to respond to conflict. Most of us habitually use one or two responses, and we are not comfortable with the others. By first identifying what you tend to do, you can then take steps to increase your confidence in the other areas.

### Procedure:

- Introduce the survey. Explain that it is just a theory, but it is a tool to help each person make sense of his or her experience with conflict.
- Give staff members about 15 minutes to complete the survey and to score themselves.
- Call out the five categories, and ask staff members to raise their hands for the category in which they have their highest score. If a person has two behaviors with high scores, he or she should raise his or her hand for both categories. This gives you a chance to see how the group naturally divides itself.

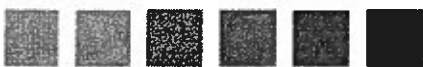




# Collaboration

## Constructive Conflict Engagement continued

- Divide the group into five smaller groups based on each person's highest score. You will need at least two people in each behavior category. Ask each group to discuss and list the pros and cons of their preferred style. Allow about 15 minutes for this discussion.
- Have groups stay together, and ask one person from each group to report his or her group's list of pros and cons.
- Ask groups to have a cross-group dialogue about what they need from each other to engage constructively in conflict. For example, ask the avoiders what they need from competitors in order to constructively deal with conflict. Remember, the point is not to make members of one group change their behavior. The point is to establish a neutral territory where everyone can engage constructively.
- Continue this cross-dialogue until each of the groups has talked to the others.
- Ask each staff member, during the coming week, to practice using behaviors from the category in which he or she scored the weakest. Have each staff member say one word that captures what he or she learned from the activity.

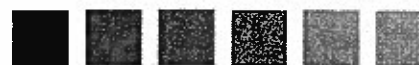




## Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument

**Directions:** Consider situations in which you find your wishes differing from those of another person. How do you usually respond? The following statements describe possible behavioral responses. Circle the letter (A or B) for the choice which best characterizes your own behavior.

- 
- 1.** A. There are times when I let others take responsibility for solving the problem.  
B. Rather than negotiate the things on which we disagree, I try to stress those things on which we both agree.
- 
- 2.** A. I try to find a compromise solution.  
B. I attempt to deal with all of his/her concerns.
- 
- 3.** A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.  
B. I might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve our relationship.
- 
- 4.** A. I try to find a compromise solution.  
B. I sometimes sacrifice my own wishes for the wishes of the other person.
- 
- 5.** A. I consistently seek the other's help in working out a solution.  
B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.
- 
- 6.** A. I try to avoid creating unpleasantness for myself.  
B. I try to win my position.
- 
- 7.** A. I attempt to get all issues and concerns immediately out in the open.  
B. I give up some points in exchange for others.
- 
- 8.** A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.  
B. I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.
- 
- 9.** A. I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.  
B. I make some effort to get my way.
- 
- 10.** A. I am firm in pursuing my goals.  
B. I try to find a compromise solution.
- 
- 11.** A. I attempt to get all issues and concerns immediately out in the open.  
B. I might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve our relationship.
- 
- 12.** A. I sometimes avoid taking positions which would create controversy.  
B. I will let the other person have some of his/her positions if he/she lets me have some of mine.
- 
- 13.** A. I propose a middle ground.  
B. I press to get my points made.
- 
- 14.** A. I tell the other person my ideas and ask for his/hers.  
B. I try to show the other person the logic and benefits of my position.





# Collaboration

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- 15.** A. I might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve our relationship.  
B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.
- 
- 16.** A. I try not to hurt the other's feelings.  
B. I try to convince the other person of the merits of my position.
- 
- 17.** A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.  
B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.
- 
- 18.** A. If it makes other people happy, I might let them maintain their views.  
B. I will let the other person have some of his/her positions if he/she lets me have some of mine.
- 
- 19.** A. I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.  
B. I try to postpone the issue until I have had some time to think it over.
- 
- 20.** A. I attempt to immediately work through our differences.  
B. I try to find a fair combination of gains and losses for both of us.
- 
- 21.** A. In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person's wishes.  
B. I always lean toward a direct discussion of the problem.
- 
- 22.** A. I try to find a position that is intermediate between the other person and mine.  
B. I assert my wishes.
- 
- 23.** A. I am very concerned with satisfying all our wishes.  
B. There are times when I let others take responsibility for solving the problem.
- 
- 24.** A. If the other's position seems very important to him/her, I would try to meet his/her wishes.  
B. I try to get the other to settle for a compromise.
- 
- 25.** A. I try to show the other person the logic and benefits of my position.  
B. In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person's wishes.
- 
- 26.** A. I propose a middle ground.  
B. I am nearly always concerned with satisfying all our wishes.
- 
- 27.** A. I sometimes avoid taking positions that would create controversy.  
B. If it makes the other person happy, I might let him/her maintain his/her views.
- 
- 28.** A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.  
B. I usually seek the other's help in working out a solution.
- 
- 29.** A. I propose middle ground.  
B. I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.
- 
- 30.** A. I try not to hurt the other's feelings.  
B. I always share the problem with the other person so that we can work it out.
-

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## Scoring the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument

Circle the letters below which you circled on each item of the questionnaire.

	Competing (forcing)	Collaborating (problem solving)	Compromising (sharing)	Avoiding (withdrawal)	Accommodating (smoothing)
1.				A	B
2.		B	A		
3.	A				B
4.			A		B
5.		A		B	
6.	B			A	
7.			B	A	
8.	A	B			
9.	B			A	
10.	A		B		
11.		A			B
12.			B	A	
13.	B		A		
14.	B	A			
15.				B	A
16.	B				A
17.	A			B	
18.			B		A
19.		A		B	
20.		A	B		
21.		B			A
22.	B		A		
23.		A		B	
24.			B		A
25.	A				B
26.		B	A		
27.				A	B
28.	A	B			
29.			A	B	
30.		B			A

Total number of items circled in each column:

Competing

Collaborating

Compromising

Avoiding

Accommodating

