

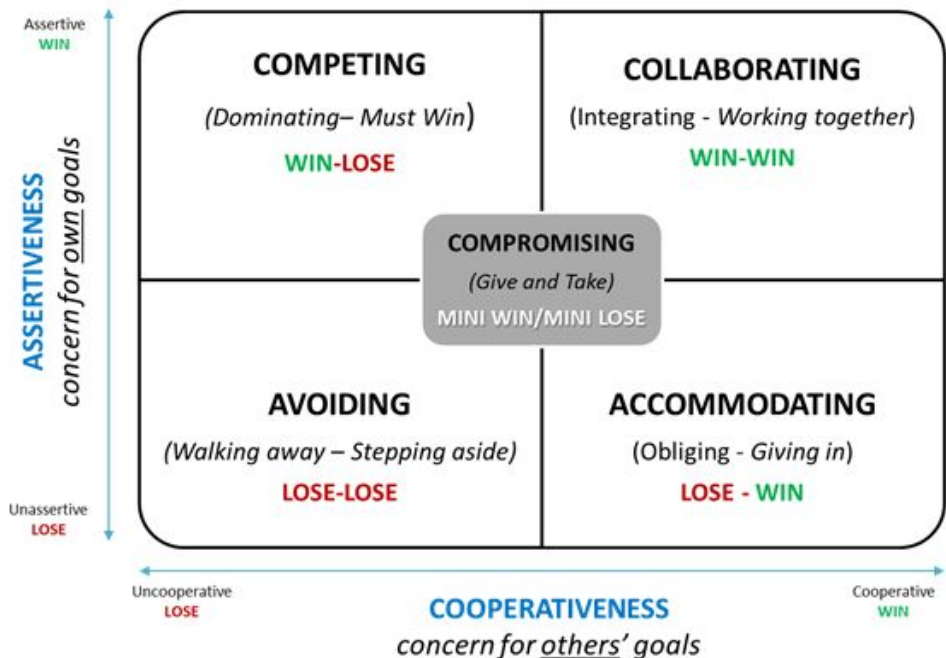
UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT - HANDOUT 1

THOMAS KILMANN CONFLICT MODEL

The Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument is a model for handling conflict that describes an individual's behavior in conflict situations along two dimensions:

- **assertiveness** (the degree to which the person tries to meet his own concerns and needs - claiming value) and
- **cooperativeness** (the degree to which the person tries to satisfy the other person's concerns - providing value).

These two basic dimensions of behaviour outline five different modes of responses to conflict situations summarized in the below graph and highlighted in details on the next pages. **Note:** Before you start reading, think on a conflict you currently have and try to determine what behaviour you have been expressing until now and reflect on what this concrete situation needs. Do you need to continue doing what you are doing? Or do you need to change your ways?



Modes of responses to conflict situations:
according to the Thomas-Killman Model

1. Competing		
Characteristics	Best used	Questions for reflection
<p>Assertive and uncooperative</p> <p>Pursuing one's concerns and interests at the others' expenses.</p> <p>Power-oriented mode using ability to argue, rank, or economic sanctions.</p> <p>Focusing on personal win</p> <p>Also includes standing up for one's rights," defending a position</p>	<p>In emergencies</p> <p>When quick and decisive actions are needed</p> <p>For critical issues that call for the implementation of difficult or unpopular decisions</p> <p>When in need to protect yourself against abuse</p>	<p>How does a competing mode of response make others feel?</p> <p>What are some potential harmful consequences associated to the overuse of this mode (on yourself, on others, on the organization) ?</p> <p>Which beliefs and attitudes in yourself and others might have reinforced this mode of managing conflict?</p> <p>What skills and capacities are each parties called to develop to expand their repertoire?</p>
2. Accommodating		
Characteristics	Best used	Questions for reflection
<p>Unassertive and cooperative</p> <p>At the opposite side of competing.</p> <p>Neglecting one's own concerns to satisfy the concerns of others</p> <p>Includes elements of self-sacrifice</p> <p>Involves obeying and yielding to another's point of view against one's own will.</p> <p>Might involve selfless generosity or charity</p>	<p>To promote a better solution and a more cooperative relationship</p> <p>To avoid unnecessary disruption and keep peace</p> <p>To allow others to experiment and open a space for them to learn from experience</p> <p>When one is wrong and wants to show good will</p> <p>When one is outmatched and more insistence would only hurt their position</p> <p>For issues of low importance (that are more critical for the other party)</p> <p>As a strategy to build social credits for later</p>	<p>How does an accommodating mode of response make others feel? How might people who frequently resort to this mode be viewed?</p> <p>When does deferring too much to the needs of others can become detrimental? How?</p> <p>What are potential risks of the overuse of this mode (on yourself, others, and the organization?)</p> <p>Which beliefs and attitudes in yourself and others may have reinforced this response?</p> <p>What skills and capacities are each parties called to develop to expand their repertoire?</p>

3. Avoiding

Characteristics	Best used	Questions for reflection
<p>Unassertive and uncooperative</p> <p>Choosing not to deal with the conflict.</p> <p>Might take the form of diplomatically stepping aside, postponing the issue until later, or simply withdrawing</p>	<p>When issues are of low importance</p> <p>When chances of change are very low</p> <p>To help things cool off to a productive level</p> <p>To buy some needed time</p> <p>When one has low power or sees no opportunities to meet his needs</p> <p>When the cost of confrontation is very high</p> <p>When other people can address the issue more effectively</p> <p>When the conflict is just a symptom and the real issue is somewhere else</p>	<p>What beliefs, payoffs and predispositions might have made this mode a preferred way of dealing with conflict?</p> <p>How might overusing this mode of response be harmful to you, to others and to the overall system?</p> <p>What skills and capacities are you called to develop to handle conflict in a more productive way?</p>

4. Collaborating

Characteristics	Best used	Questions for reflection
<p>Both assertive and cooperative</p> <p>At the complete opposite end of avoiding.</p> <p>Involves attempting to explore the disagreement and work with others to learn and identify their needs, and find a solution that fully satisfies both concerns.</p> <p>Requires developed conflict resolution skills as well as attitudes of mutuality, respect, active listening, and creativity</p>	<p>When concerns are too critical to be compromised</p> <p>When looking for integrative and consensual solutions</p> <p>When learning together and understanding mutual viewpoints is more important than immediate resolution</p> <p>To gain commitment and improve trust and relationships</p> <p>To process and work through loaded emotions that have been affecting a relationship for some time</p> <p>When seeking to involve as many people and perspective in the creation of a solution</p>	<p>What are potential gains from collaborative approaches to conflict?</p> <p>Can you think of possible risks associated to the overuse of this mode?</p> <p>What skills, attitudes and values underlie the effective use of this response?</p> <p>What might make others resist this approach? How can you ease their concerns?</p>

5. Compromising

Characteristics	Best used	Questions for reflection
<p>Moderate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness.</p> <p>Attempting to reach some expedient, mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties.</p> <p>Falls in the middle between competing and accommodating.</p> <p>It involves giving up more than competing but less than accommodating. It also addresses the issue more directly than avoiding, but not deeply as collaborating.</p> <p>Might mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground solution.</p>	<p>For issues and goals that are moderately important but not worth the effort of collaboration or the disruption of more assertive ways of dealing with conflict</p> <p>Under time constraints</p> <p>When temporary solutions are needed</p> <p>When both parties hold equal power and both show a strong commitment to mutually exclusive goals</p> <p>When other attempts to solve the conflict have failed</p>	<p>What beliefs, payoffs and predispositions might have made concession seeking and compromising a preferred mode of dealing with conflict?</p> <p>When might overusing this mode be detrimental to parties involved and the overall system? How?</p> <p>In conflict situations, what issues are better left out of compromise?</p>

Problems of Compromise

As highlighted in the below graphic, the effectiveness of conflict-management responses depends on finding the right ratio of “Claiming Value” versus “Creating Value”.

Competitive modes (and compromising moves to some extent) focus more on dividing /distributing value between the parties involved, whereas avoiding and accommodating responses are about yielding to others’ concerns while dismissing one’s own needs. A more cooperative approach to conflict strives to find creative ways to expand the range of value and ensure higher mutual gains.

