Conflict management: what is important to learn, and how to improve?

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Summary: 1. Introduction – 2. Conflict styles as a frame for conflict management skills improvement. – 3. Integrated individual factors of effective conflict management and model for conflict management competences. – 4. Building more collaborative approach towards conflict resolution by moving the conflict resolution from position to the interests of the people. – 6. Conclusions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Conflicts are necessary element of human interaction and unavoidable part of social relationships. Unmanaged or unsuccessfully managed conflicts can destroy relationship, produce the experience of more stress and reduced well-being, increase dissatisfaction, turnover and absenteeism.[1] Contrary, effective conflict resolution skills and the successful interpersonal relationships are related to psychologically safe environment, innovative top management decisions, and effective organizational leadership.[2] Conflicts have an important role for university students in many ways. It can be harmful as the destructive consequences of interpersonal conflicts may include internal loss such as self-worth, control, and confidence, as well as external loss such as funding, mentoring support, research opportunities, or even missed career.[3] Conversely, constructive conflict management can help to clarify values, social status, individual and group identity, promote personal growth, and generate interpersonal insights.[4] In many cases, conflict management is more productive to compare with attempts to eliminate conflict. Constant dynamics of interpersonal relations, experience of multiple and intense pressures, growing complexity of relations and organizations nowadays create great challenges to conflict management practice. In a university, constructive conflict is necessary for intellectual debate, new ideas, creative solutions. The academic community should be encouraged to engage

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[1] De Wit, F. R. C., Greer, L. L., Jehn, K. A. (2012), *The paradox of intragroup conflict: a meta-analysis*. Journal of Applied Psychology, .97(2), pp. 360-390; O'Neill, T. A., Allen, N. J. Hastings, S. E. (2013), *Examining the "Pros" and "Cons" of Team Conflict: A Team-Level Meta-Analysis of Task, Relationship, and Process Conflict*. Human Performance, 26(3), pp. 236-260, DOI: 10.1080/08959285.2013.795573; De Dreu, C.K.W., Beersma, B. (2005), *Conflict in organizations: Beyond effectiveness and performance*. European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 14 (2), pp. 105 - 117. DOI: 10.1080/13594320444000227.

[2] Seitchik, M. (2019), *The goldilocks approach to team conflict: how leaders can maximize innovation and revenue growth*. The Psychologist-Manager Journal, 22(1), pp. 37-45. DOI 10.1037/mgr0000082; Vollmer, A. (2015), *Conflicts in innovation and how to approach the "last mile' on conflict management research - a literature review*. The International Journal of Conflict Management, 26 (2), pp. 192-213. doi 10.1108/IJCMA-09-2012-0062.

[3] Brockman, J.L., Nunez, A.A. & Basu, A. (2010), *Effectiveness of a Conflict Resolution Training Program in Changing Graduate Students Style of Managing Conflict with their Faculty Advisors*. Innovation in Higher Education, 35, p. 278. DOI 10.1007/s10755-010-9142-z

[4] Brockman, J.L., Nunez, A.A. & Basu, A. (2010), *Effectiveness of a Conflict Resolution Training Program in Changing Graduate Students Style of Managing Conflict with their Faculty Advisors*. Innovation in Higher Education, 35, pp. 277–293. DOI: 10.1007/s10755-010-9142-z; Waithaka, A.G. (2014). *Conflict handling styles among college students: the influence of conflict training, personality, and family conflict resolution*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Liberty University, UMI 3632486 Published by ProQuest LLC.

in conflict at an appropriate level.[5] Managing conflicts in a constructive manner is one of the most important competencies that university students need to develop. However, the current curricula of many Universities do not reflect student's need for effective conflict management skills.[6] Conflicts need to be managed for changing their process and consequences from destructive to constructive and encourage a peaceful coexistence of people sharing different views and values. The aim of this chapter is to reveal the main conflict management variables and skills, which are necessary for students. Thus, it is so important to identify individual factors that influence success in conflict management, to define the most effective ways to improve them, to apply appropriate model for conflict management competences. Chapter focuses on the encouragements of students to adopt the most suitable approach towards complicated conflicts and serves for their communication skills improvement using ability to move from the position towards the interests and real needs of the people. Chapter starts with an introduction to main conflicts styles, continues with discussion on individual factors of effective conflict management and ends with suggestions for more collaborative approach towards conflict resolutions and concrete techniques to achieve it. This small volume study was carried on using the scientific literature analyses and profesional experience of the authors.

2. CONFLICT STYLES AS A FRAME FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SKILLS IMPROVEMENT

For many years, the dominant approach to studying how people response to conflict has been conflict styles approach, or "dual-concerns" model.[7] This approach defines that five styles responding to conflict (cooperative (also problem solving, integrating), competitive (also dominating, contending, confronting or forcing), avoiding, accommodating (also yielding or obliging) and compromising) are based on two main dimensions: concern for one's own goals, and concern for the other person's goals. Accommodating style reflects a high concern for others with low concern for self, whereas competing styles can be illustrated by a high concern for self with low concern for others; avoidance means a low concern for both self and others, whereas collaboration style reflects a high concern for both self and others.

People use different behaviors to manage various conflicts. Which style is most effective in specific situation for particular participants? Specifically, effectiveness can be defined in two approaches. Relational outcomes are bound up in relationship quality (e.g., interpersonal trust in parties), value of relationship, likelihood of future relationships. Substantive outcomes are more based upon specific goals and acceptable solutions being reached or not reached. Various factors of the conflict context have a big impact on the selection and usage of conflict style. It can be listed: complexity of the conflict issue, time, which party are able to allocated for the resolution, importance of conflict issue to parties involved, power of parties, their relationship value, and resources, which are available for parties.[8] Person will reach higher levels of conflict management effectiveness if she/he is more aware of contextual features and possess an ability

[5] Jacobson, R. A. (2012), *Managing conflicts and resolving disputes involving students on university campuses: the present and the future. Unpublished doctoral dissertation.* York University, Toronto, Ontario, p.86.

[6] Lang, M. (2009), *Conflict Management: A Gap in Business Education Curricula.* Journal of Education for Business. March/April, pp.240-245

[7] Thomas, K. W., Kilmann, R. H. (2010), *Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument.* http://www.mrema.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/THOMAS-KILMANN-CONFLICT-MODE-INSTRUMENT5.6.16.pdf

[8] Rahim, M. A. (2002), *Toward theory of managing organizational conflict.* The International Journal of Conflict Management, 13, 206-235

to use diverse styles of conflict management. It is proved, that using a diversity of conflict handling styles results in enhanced conflict handling effectiveness only when both the contextual factors inherent in conflict are considered and the individual differences profile necessary to navigate conflict is possessed.[9] This means that conflict management process needs a good preparation, gained knowledge and skills, which let a person to identify important contextual factors and choose the most appropriate strategy for the resolution of the conflict.

The results of many studies provide a strong support for a conceptual fit between personality traits and conflict management styles, and more specifically, establish agreeableness as a key predictor of various conflict management styles.[10] Even different facets of agreeableness can explain significant variance in each of the five conflict management styles. For example, low scores on straightforwardness, compliance and modesty predict dominant style, implying that more Machiavellian or deceitful individuals preferred to dominate those with whom they disagreed. Compliant individuals tend to be obliging and sacrifice their needs for others, they also may be less trusting of others and choose to be passive and to avoid conflict. Altruistic individuals are most likely to be self-sacrificing and willing to compromise in finding an integrative solution.[11] Extraverts are more likely than introverts to use integrating, obliging, compromising and avoiding styles. Emotional stability predicts integrating style, while neuroticism predicts dominating style.[12] The personality traits should, therefore, be understood and considered for conflict experience, conflict management and performance. Every person should first know himself and be able to identify his /her style and personal traits, which may have influence conflict management strategy choses.

Conflict researchers find other important individual variables. For example, cooperating was clearly named as the highest preferred conflict style for participants who were assessed with a high level of Emotional Intelligence (EQ), and directing was a preferred conflict style for participants who were assessed with a lower level of EQ.[13] Forcing related positively and problem solving related negatively to being a perpetrator at bullying.[14] Achievement motivation is positively related to an integrative approach. Thus, creating conditions that motivates people to succeed may enhance the use of an integrative approach. The results indicate that individual characteristics can be a potent cause to integration. Regardless of situation, integrative approach was associated with high quality outcomes in terms of decision quality, fairness, satisfaction, and trust.[15] Empathy and knowledge of context are related to number of conflict styles used to

[9] Lamia, J. F. (2011), *A theory of conflict handling: integration of individual differences and contextual factors.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Saint Louis University. P.52. UMI 3440158 Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Thesis database.

[10] Komarraju, M., Dollinger, S. J., Lovell, J. (2012), *Agreeableness and Conflict Management Styles: A Cross-Validated Extension.* Journal of Organizational Psychology, 12(1), pp.19-31.

[11] Komarraju, M., Dollinger, S. J., Lovell, J. (2012), *Agreeableness and Conflict Management Styles: A Cross-Validated Extension.* Journal of Organizational Psychology, 12(1), pp.19-31.

[12] Ayub, N., AlQurashi, S. M., Al-Yafi, W. A., Jehn, K. (2017), *Personality traits and conflict management styles in predicting job performance and conflict.* International Journal of Conflict Management, 28 (5), p.685, https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCMA-12-2016-0105.

[13] Ellis, A. C. (2010), *Exploring the Relationship of Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Management Styles.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. UMI 3434138 Copyright 2011 by ProQuest LLC

[14] Baillien, E., Bollen, K., Euwema, M. & De Witte, H. (2013), *Conflicts and conflict management styles as precursors of workplace bullying: A two-wave longitudinal study.* European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, DOI: 10.1080/1359432X.2012.752899

[15] Rognes, J. K., Schei, V. (2010), *Understanding the integrative approach to conflict management.* Journal of Managerial Psychology, 25 (1), pp. 82-97. DOI 10.1108/02683941011013885

conflict handling effectiveness.[16] Individual characteristics (empathy, political skill, and need for cognition) together with situational (contextual factors) mediate the effect of number of conflict styles used on effective conflict handling.[17] One of important findings of such studies is that the direct and indirect effects of individual differences on conflict handling effectiveness are unstable when viewed as individual components. However, when these individual differences are aggregated and viewed as a system through which individuals channel their efforts during conflict direct and indirect effects on conflict handling effectiveness become apparent.[18] Therefore, conflict is a complex process that requires a mastery of both individual and contextual factors.

Practitioners suggest various forms for group training or individual learning: exercises, reflections, case studies to improve conflict style awareness and effectiveness. For example, case studies in form of vignettes are useful to comprehend and consider a variety of possible process designs based on the situation presented in a case. Reflecting on personal conflict management styles and adopting a positive attitude to personal and professional development is also one of the tools that are most helpful in managing conflict.[19] One of very important tools is simulation that can be based on real life cases or using pseudo-reality approach. The core principles to be included in training through simulations are: focus on preparation with stakeholder analysis to deepen understanding of self, other party, and context or situation; apply and model a collaborative process throughout the simulation.[20] Conflict coaching also seems to be one of useful tools to increase constructive behavior skills and to improve conflict style.[21] The variety of possible tasks for improvement of conflict management skills proves, that these skills may be developed by trainings and self-education.

It may be concluded that all five conflict styles serves well in different situations, as there is no "one fits all" style. Still in academic community interpersonal relationship conflicts are complex and require finding a balance between different interests, in many cases what can be most effectively done by collaboration of the parties to a conflict.

3. INTEGRATED INDIVIDUAL FACTORS OF EFFECTIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND MODEL FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT COMPETENCES

Every person enjoys a set of individual characteristics, which make him unique. This diversity in society is a big value because it enables us to reach the synergy effect by combining different traits in fulfilling certain tasks or finding solutions for some problems. The scientific research literature describes different individual and organizational factors of effective conflict management. Oore, Leiter, LeBlanc (2015)[22] integrated psychological research literature across

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[16] Lamia, J. F. (2011), *A theory of conflict handling: integration of individual differences and contextual factors.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Saint Louis University. p.44. UMI 3440158 Copyright 2011 by ProQuest LLC

[17] Ibid, p.50.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Siew, N. M., Jones, S. (2018), *Training approaches for improving school managers' conflict resolution skills: A case study.* Problems of Education in the 21st Century, 76(5), pp. 720-735.

[20] Fisher, J., Fisher-Yoshida, B. (2017), *Educating Negotiators: Using Theory, Practice, Case Studies, and Simulations in an Integrated Learning Experience.* Negotiation and Conflict Management Research. 10 (4), p.298. doi: 10.1111/ncmr.12104

[21] Bubbers, T. A. (2015), *Intensive conflict management training for managers in a health care facility.* University of Phoenix. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. ProQuest LLC (2016).

[22] Oore, D. G., Leiter, M. P., LeBlanc, D. E. (2015), *Individual and organizational factors promoting successful responses to workplace conflict.* Canadian Psychology, 56(3), pp.301-310. DOI 10.1037/cap0000032

social, personality, family and negotiation fields and identified four broad individual factors that allow to be successful in conflict:

Cognitive flexibility. Cognitive ability to move flexibly through various perspectives on the conflict situation, cognitive perspective taking, thinking of a conflict in increasingly abstract or distant terms facilitates generation out-of-the-box solutions. Perspective-takers use more collaborative and problem-solving approaches and seem to reduce the dyadic level of retaliation in the interpersonal interaction.

A balance of self and other focus. Jointly high self-interest and other-interest motivates a collaborative or integrative approach and lets do not miss joint opportunities for mutual benefit with other party. Satisfying self-interests and meeting one's own needs with concern for one's partner's needs let to maintain positive relationships.

Emotional regulation. Emotion regulation means exercising cognitive control to manage or redirect the impact of distractive emotions (such as escalated anger, aggression), and includes such tactics as attention deployment (distracting oneself away from emotions), reappraisal (reinterpretation or modification of emotion), suppression (inhibiting or tamping down feelings.

A fit of person and their conflict approach to the context (person-conflict compatibility). The ability to either choose to react in situations that have a good fit between one's habitual conflict handling tendencies and the environment, or to flexibly adapt one's behavioral approach to best match the other person or specific conflict situation, to make wise choices about when to apply which conflict management strategy.

These factors (perspective-taking, focusing on both one's own and other party's interests and needs, mastery to choose appropriate conflict style that fit to the conflict situation, and emotion regulation) can be improved through conflict management training. This can be reached through special training course, workshops, and individual learning.

One of recent models for conflict management competences and skills is proposed by Peter T. Coleman.[23] This framework describes Conflict Intelligence and Systemic Wisdom as meta-competences for engaging conflict. Conflict intelligence is the set of competences and skills used to manage different types of normative conflicts in diverse or changing situations effectively and constructively. The author states that "…the meta-competency of conflict intelligence can be particularly useful for addressing the vast majority of more straightforward, negotiable, or manageable interpersonal and intergroup conflict dynamics we face in our normal daily lives".[24]

According to Coleman, core competences of conflict intelligence are:

Self-knowledge and regulation. Knowing and managing your-self in conflict. This can include awareness of cognitive, motivational, moral and action orientations to conflict situations that guide one's conflict behaviors and responses. Conflict intelligence requires adequate self-regulation in conflict, or the ability to inhibit impulsive, automatic, or "hot" emotional responses to conflict.

Constructive conflict resolution. Understanding the constructive and destructive potential of conflict and developing the knowledge, attitudes, and skills for constructive resolution. Constructive conflict resolution requires understanding the constructive and

[23] Coleman, P. T. (2018), *Conflict Intelligence and Systemic Wisdom: Meta-Competences for Engaging Conflict in a Complex, Dynamic World*. Negotiation Journal, 34 (1), pp. 7-35. doi 10.1111/nejo.12211
[24] Ibid.

destructive potential of conflict, its dynamic nature, and one's own preferences and tendencies for conflict resolution. The basic skills include effective listening, perspective taking, probing for needs and interests, establishing rapport, focusing on similarities and common ground, reframing issues at a needs level, and generating creative and integrative solutions.

Conflict optimality. The capacity to navigate between different or competing motives, and emotions, and combine different approaches to conflict to achieve desired outcomes.

Conflict adaptivity. The capacity to employ distinct strategies in different types of conflict situations in a manner that achieves goals and is fitting with demands of the situation.

To sum up, individual traits of a person are inevitably important for the effective conflict management. Every individual should now well himself and in the process of self-knowledge he or she need to evaluate his / her cognitive ability, balance of self and others focus, emotional regulation and ability to adapt to the context of the conflict. In fact, these factors are reflected in one of the latest model of conflict management competences, widely known as conflict intelligence, which might serve well for students, willing to improve.

4. BUILDING MORE COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TOWARDS CONFLICT RESOLUTION BY MOVING THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION FROM POSITION TO THE INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE

Collaborative style of conflict management presents a win-win perspective, which means the highest satisfaction of interests of both parties. This style, as it was mentioned before, reflects best a high concern for both self and others. One of the most effective tools, which may be adopted for the collaborative conflict management style, is finding out he interests of the parties to a conflict instead of dealing with their positions. This is a classical idea leads students to understanding that certain positions often reflect only one of the possible ways to satisfy the interests of the parties. On contrary, managing the conflict in the level of position, means minimum the necessity to compromise, which in some situations may not satisfy parties, as they are not allowed to full satisfaction of their interests.

Positions a widely understood as a proposal or point of view that is adapted, or a demand, what is brought by one party to the other in a conflict. It might be, for example, demand to change a supervisor, as previously he or she did not provide sufficient help in preparing final thesis. Interest is something for which one feels concern or in which one has a stake. In conflicts, interests are those real or perceived personal or corporate requirements from which goals and objectives are derived.[25] Interests may be described as a goal of a person, which he is willing to achieve in a conflict. Interests are the most easily accessible or observable type of need and lie to the heart of most negotiations.[26] Interest reflects the answer to the question why party to a conflict needs such an outcome as it was stated. In case of our example, the answer may vary from the poor communication with a supervisor to the insufficient competence or knowledge of the supervisor. Every answer predicts new different possible solutions to this problem.

According Roger Fisher and William Ury, reconciling interests rather than positions works for several reasons. For every interest there usually exist several possible positions that could satisfy it.[27] Going back to the example of the necessity to change the scientific supervisor, it is

[25] Yarn, D. H. (1999), *Dictionary of Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco:Jossey Bass Publishers, p. 228.
[26] Mayer, B. (2012), *The Dynamics of Conflict: A Guide to Engagement and Intervention*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, p.22.
[27] Fisher, R. and Ury, W. (1981) *Getting to Yes*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, p. 24.

predictable, that the interest of the student is to get help in writing his thesis. It might be achieved not only by changing supervisor, but as well as changing the communication with current supervisor or appointing an additional consultant in the process. All these three solutions are oriented towards the satisfying the interest of students, but enjoying such variety instead of one primary position opens widely the gates for solution which would serve best for student, supervisor and the university management. It should be agreed, that reconciling interests rather than compromising between positions also works because behind opposed positions lie many more interests than conflicting ones.[28] As positions presents a narrow and one person's interests-oriented solution it takes the parties to an impasse, which is often is difficult to overcome. Looking behind the positions broader our perspective and empower people to see other options, which may be better solutions taking into consideration the need to find a balance between the interests of both parties to a conflict. It should be denied that opposite position always means opposite interests. Members of certain society, or in our case of university community, often share the same interests and values, especially in universities as it come to the quality and environment of the studies.

Conflict parties often experience conflict at different levels. A challenge practitioners face in the particular conflict is to determine what level of interests and needs best explains a conflict. It is worth to remind that not necessarily people are ready to talk about their interests in the concrete situation. As positions reflects the most common means of fixing the problems in certain environment, bringing people to their interest may require additional efforts and their motivation. Roger Fisher and William Ury admit that as position is likely to be concrete and explicit; the interests underlying it may well be unexpressed, intangible, and perhaps inconsistent. These legendary negotiations experts suggest using questions "why" and "why not" for the clarification of the interests.[29] The question "Why" is helpful for getting information on the desired result of both of the parties. The answers to the question "Why not" may lead us to the better understanding, why our suggested decision is not suitable for other. If we fail to look at the deeper level of interests, we are likely to end up working on the wrong issues and overlooking some important areas of mutual concern.[30] Knowing this information and being able to see the underlying interests of the parties is a key to the setting up the criterions of the win-win solution, which may be achieved in the further process of conflict management. While interplay of cooperation and competition is always present in interpersonal interactions, how we engage in this process and the strategies we use to respond to them are more complex, varied, and inconsistent than choosing a cooperative or competitive response.[31] People face in addressing the cooperative and competitive elements of all contextual interactions, and it is so important to be aware of it, and be nuanced, realistic and effective in various interpersonal communication during conflict management.

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[28] Fisher, R. and Ury, W. (1981) *Getting to Yes*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, p. 24.

[29] Ibid, p. 25.

[30] Mayer, B. (2012). *The Dynamics of Conflict: A Guide to Engagement and Intervention*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, p.23.

[31] Mayer, B. (2015). *The Conflict Paradox: Seven dilemmas at the core of disputes*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, p.48.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Classical model of conflict management styles (competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating) remains a suitable tool for the better self-knowledge and improvement in conflict management. All these styles serve well in different situations, as there is no "one fits all" style. Still in academic community interpersonal relationship conflicts are complex and require finding a balance between different interests, what in many cases can be most effectively done by collaboration of the parties to a conflict.

It should be admitted that individual characteristics of a person are inevitably important for the effective conflict management. Every individual should now well himself and be able to evaluate its conflict intelligence and main directions for improving it.

One of the popular tools for improving the conflict management skills and building more collaboration-oriented style of conflict management is a classical interests-based approach. Positions as a clear demand statement should be changed to interests, which reflect the aim of a person in a conflict. Managing conflict in interest level opens broader perspective for collaboration as not all interests of opposite parties are competing.

Development and integration of conflict management approaches that involve understanding and employing conflict resolution skills in context, contextualizing conflict management decisions can help to reach the goal of expanding and enhancing capacities to manage and transform conflicts more effectively. People are sensitive about engaging in conflict and managing conflict differently because of situational constraints and personality characteristics of conflict parties. Educators can encourage students to manage conflicts differently depending on whether interpersonal relationships or other outcomes matter more in any given situation. Similarly, university staff and conflict resolution practitioners who engage in conflict management trainings can also empower others to more effectively handle conflicts with the insights by sharing the different effects of distinct motives and frames.

EXAMPLES FOR TRAINING ABOUT CONFLICT STYLES (CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES)

1. Recognition of different conflict styles (Beatty, Barker Scott, 2004).

It's Friday afternoon at 3:15, and your team meeting was supposed to start at 3:00. Everyone is present, except for Brenda, who is late again. The team has agreed that being on time for meetings is an important norm. At 3:25 p.m., she rushes in, apologizing for her tardiness and explaining that the computer ate her document.

Which of the following are members most likely to do?
 1. Ignore the problem and continue discussion.
 2. Acknowledge the problem but do nothing to correct the situation.
 3. Acknowledge the problem and attempt to solve it.
 4. Acknowledge the problem, solve it, and discuss and agree on a procedure for dealing with similar problems in the future.

Explanation:
 Avoiding. Members choose not to confront or be involved. In the previous case, members would choose to ignore Brenda's tardiness, even though they are bothered by it.
Accommodating. Members adapt or agree to satisfy the needs of others above their own needs. Here, members might choose to sympathize with Brenda and not raise the issue. As a result, Brenda will probably be late for the next meeting as well.
Competing. Members choose to satisfy their own needs by asserting, controlling, or resisting. Here, members would likely confront Brenda by telling her in no uncertain terms that her tardiness is unacceptable and dictate their expectations for the future: Be on time, or else.
Collaborating. Members attempt to create mutually satisfying solutions through win-win strategies. Here, members would likely acknowledge the problem, explore the causes, and work with Brenda to create a protocol that will meet the team's needs and Brenda's as well.

2. The Five Styles in Action (McCorkle, Reese, 2018, p.121)

Julia and Layla are assigned as roommates their freshman year. From different backgrounds, they have little in common. Soon their differences begin to surface, and conflict is inevitable. Julia asks if she can borrow a scarf from Layla, who agrees. Soon Julia is borrowing shirts, coats, and whatever else she wants without asking.

Explanation:
If Layla is an *avoider,* she will suffer silently, think bad thoughts about Julia, and probably complain to friends. If Julia asks what is wrong, Layla will say she has to go study in the library and leave the room.
If Layla is an *accommodator*, she will say she doesn't mind that Julia borrows things. If Layla has a competitive style, she will confront Julia and demand that all her clothes be washed and never borrowed again.

If Layla uses a *compromiser* style, she will raise the issue of borrowing clothes with Julia. Then some middle ground will be sought. For example, the clothes can be borrowed if Julia asks every time in advance and washes and irons the clothes when returning them.

If Layla is a *collaborator*, she will ask Julia to sit down with her to discuss the roommate situation. She will frame the issue in a comprehensive way, asking what it means to be roommates and discussing each of their expectations. At some point, borrowing clothes will be discussed as part of the bigger picture.

3. Conflict behavior preferences (CB-Pref) (Johnson, Hall, 2018, p. 560-561)

Task:

Please read the following scenarios. For each situation, read all of the potential responses you might have to the person described, and rank order each option from 1 (I would be most likely to behave this way) to 5 (I would be least likely to behave this way). The most preferred item should be given the rank of 1. Remember, this is what YOU WOULD do, not what you think is best to do. Try to honestly depict how you would behave in each situation. There are many ways to handle conflicts, and several ways may be equally good or bad for a given situation. In general, there is no one correct way to handle a conflict. Some ways may be good in some situations and not good in others. If the situation is one you have not experienced or are unlikely to experience, you should still imagine being in that situation or one very much like it.

(1) You have gotten into a heated political debate with your friend. As you voice your opinion, you feel that your friend is not open to what you have to say about the subject because they continue repeating their same argument over and over. Alternatively, your friend feels that they are open to your opinion but they have not been persuaded so their position has not changed:

✓ You continue to restate your beliefs until it seems like your friend is beginning to yield to your opinions. You really want to persuade them to adopt your viewpoint (*force*).

✓ You tell them you understand their position and suggest your opinions really are not so different. You would rather not continue arguing (*avoid*).

✓ You give up arguing and tell the other person you understand their viewpoint. You may even decide to give up and simply agree with them (*yield*).

✓ You emphasize that there is some common ground between the two of you, and you point it out. You try to persuade the other person to accept that you have some points you agree on and accept that there are some points which you cannot agree on (*compromise*).

✓ You acknowledge that your friend's opinions are legitimate, but you tell them you would appreciate it if they would take some time to think about and really consider your position. You tell them you will also do the same (honestly consider their points) before you continue your discussion (*problem solve*).

(2) Your parents feel they do not see you often enough so they have asked you to visit this weekend. However, you are particularly busy this week and would prefer to relax during the weekend rather than travel to visit your parents. Your parents are upset because they are eager to see you, but you know you will be exhausted and visiting them would require a lot of effort on your part:

✓ You tell them you would not be able to see them this weekend. You want to relax and spend time doing your own thing (*force*).

✓ You decide to go see them. You do not want to hurt their feelings (yield).

✓ You avoid responding to your parents and set this issue aside. You focus on your daily routine, and make a decision last minute (*avoid*).

✓ You tell them you would love to see them but suggest that next week will be better, and you ask if this would work just as well. You know you are going to need your down time this weekend (*problem solve*).

✓ You agree to visit them this weekend as long as they are aware of, and considerate of, your desire to relax (*compromise*).