



## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

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### INTRODUCTION

Unfortunately, no society can exist without conflicts between individuals and organizations. Conflicts are an inevitable part of social interaction and no one is able to be free from it. However, conflicts not obligatory lead us to the negative consequences. On the contrary, conflicts can educate, encourage to reveal the interests of the parties and strive to improve their relationships.

In this section, we will present a set of simple and easy to follow materials dedicated to obtain the basic knowledge and skills of conflict management. The main aim of these readings is to show how we can reach the positive outcomes of the conflicts. As well it focuses on teachers' perspective and strives to disclose the teachers' role in helping students to develop their knowledge and skills in conflict management.

#### a. Social and practical relevance of the specific topic addressed

The development of conflict management is crucial important for the future professionals. As the other soft skills, conflict management helps students to be ready for the successful social interaction in organizations. Moreover, such skills will help them in their personal life, as conflicts lead us in all fields of social interaction.

Destructive conflicts in professional and personal activities strongly affects people, worsens their emotional state of mind, causes tension and stress. Conflict management is one of the most important skills, which each individual should learn in order to create a positive atmosphere for further achievements. In organizations such a soft skill as conflict management is always is of big value. On contrary lack of conflict management skills often leads to failures and difficulties in pursuing a professional career as conflicting people are often avoided, eliminated and not encouraged.

Conflict management skills should be developed from the early childhood in family, later improved in schools and universities. Naturally, every individual, who is studying in university, already has personal approach towards conflict situations and its own level of conflict intelligence. Thus contemporary labour market requires more than self-education based knowledge and skills. Following a generally recognized mission of universities to develop all covering education it is obvious that students should have a guided access to the scientifically based sources of conflict management.

Conflict management is a skill which may be trained. These materials are design to guide teachers and to facilitate the process of education. Still, it is really useful to adapt the suggested tasks and exercises with the content of the topics connected to the subjects of the students, which they are studying according to their syllabus. In this way, conflict management skills may be developed together with a specialized knowledge in different fields (for example, conflicts are always close to the subjects of legal studies, social work, communication, political sciences and etc.).

## **b. Main goals and learning outcomes**

The main goal of conflict management topic is to develop conflict intelligence. According to Coleman (2018, 14), *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 main learning outcomes may be connected with the acquiring of the core competences of conflict intelligence (Coleman, 2018, 14):

- *Self-knowledge*: Knowing and managing your-self in conflict. This includes awareness of cognitive, motivational, moral and action orientations to conflict situations that guide one’s conflict behaviours and responses.
- *Constructive conflict resolution*: understanding the constructive and destructive potential of conflict and developing the knowledge, attitudes and skills for constructive resolution.
- *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.

## **1. PERSONAL RESPONSES TO CONFLICT**

The first step in a process of developing personal conflict intelligence is raising the self-knowledge. Students should be encouraged to analyse their own approaches towards conflict situations and be guided in raising their awareness of cognitive, motivational, moral and action orientations to conflict situations that affects his or her conflict behaviours and responses. Moreover, conflict intelligence requires adequate self-regulation in conflict, or the ability to inhibit impulsive, automatic, or “hot” emotional responses to conflict. Such kind of managed responses are possible to gain only knowing yourself and your common natural reaction to the conflicts in advance.

# EXERCISE 1

## SELF-REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION ON THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Teachers may induce their students for the reflection based on streaming to answer these questions (based on Wilmott, Hocker, 2011):

### **What is your usual response to conflicts?**

- Do you generally like to get everything out in the open, even if such an effort creates tension and strong feelings?
- Or do you usually seek peace, harmony, and reduction of strong emotions? How would you describe yourself?

### **What emotions are most common for you when you experience conflict?**

- Think of three areas of conflict: family, romantic, and work (or studies). In each area, list your most common emotions.
- If there doesn't seem to be a set of common emotions, think of one conflict as an example in each area. How did/do you feel? Be sure to use words of feeling, not judgment or description.
- Think of the most disturbing conflict you have experienced in the past half-year or so. What was your emotional response to this conflict?

### **Influences**

- List the 10 most important influences on your personal response to conflict, in order of importance.

### **What influence, if any, does violence have on your conflict responses?**

- You may answer this question in your own notebook, or with a small group. What experiences have you had with violence, whether verbal, physical, or sexual?
- Of course, you may keep your privacy in this discussion. The important issue is to begin to think about the influence of violence on your life. If you did not experience violence directly, what experiences that others had have influenced you?

It should be taken into account that some students may suffer of painful and difficult to disclose conflicts situations. Teachers should be not demanding and strict on the active involvement of all students to this kind of discussions. As well such a task may be done in written form and provided only for the teacher.



## EXERCISE 2

### MY CRITICISM LOG

Every individual has specific attitudes towards others and their personal characteristics, behaviour and etc. When we talk about the issues, which may raise the conflicts and involve an individual person in it, it should be admitted that this is also personal. For example, one individual cannot stand the unfair behaviour and always involves in conflicts in regards of it. On contrary, other individual may feel really neutral in regard of such issues and being able to ignore the same unfair behaviour. Some people hate being late and do not respect other, who is always late. On contrary, some of them are neutral for it and do not sees the reason to conflict if their friends or colleagues are late. Knowing yourself well helps to identify the issues, which drives one angry and ready to struggle, helps in managing those situations.

Wilmott and Hocker (2011) suggested a great task for a group work, helping to identify the main issues of social interaction, which drives individual towards conflicts. This task consists of two parts: individual preparation and small groups' discussions. In case it is not possible to organize the small groups' discussions, students may proceed by individual self-evaluation.

#### • Individual preparation for the task

Students should be instructed to keep track of all their negative thoughts they have about people in their environment over a few days. Students do not need to specify the type of relationship, who the other is, or anything else, just list the negative thoughts he or she had or comments made. For examples, "he is so stupid," "I can't believe how incompetent she is," "he is so mean to everyone," and "she is just power hungry."

#### • Small groups' discussion

In groups of 3-4 people, students should be encouraged to present their triggers to others. It is crucially important to ask students just to read them aloud to others and don't worry about how it will sound (even though they are sometimes difficult to share).

Members of the group should help identify to the individual his two or three main "themes" for the criticisms of others. Most of people have two or three main identity dimensions that arise in criticisms of others. Group members should be taught to put these "themes" in non-judgmental or positive terms. For example, medical doctors often say things about their colleagues such as "he isn't the sharpest knife in the drawer," "she didn't do very well in medical school," "I just don't know how he became a doctor given his inability to process all the details," and "he isn't very bright." These examples clearly identify the theme of "lack of intelligence".

Group should discuss not only the identity "themes" of every individual, but as well how they predict with whom that individual will have conflict or struggles.

## EXERCISE 3

### MOVING FROM COMPLAINTS TO REQUESTS

No one likes people, who are constantly complaining. Naturally, it is very difficult to avoid conflicts during the situation, when individual is facing a set of complaints. Usual reaction to the complaints is defensiveness and counterattacks by blaming others and searching their personal guilt and responsibility. This lead to the serious conflicts. There is one simple to get accounted and use in practice techniques, which is very helpful in preventing conflicts. Having in mind that every person should self-regulate his language and behaviour it is important to adopt an ability to transpose one's complaints to the requests. This effective conflict management technique is striving to help people to achieve the goals, what they have without taking a risk to be involved in conflicts.

Students should be instructed to keep track of all their personal complains they have about people in their environment over a few days. They should write down the list and after it transpose them into requests, and voice the requests to the other person. The object of this task is to clarify for both speaker and listener what they need from each other, rather than staying stuck in the complaint cycle.

Examples of transposing complaints to the requests:

<b>Complaint</b>	<b>Request</b>
You are too aloof.	I need more attention.
I need you to look at me during our conversation.	I would like it if you would answer my questions.
You are truant.	I want you to answer all my e-mail messages.
I am disappointed, as you don't keep your appointments.	When you don't give me information I request, I can't do my job well.

## EXERCISE 4

### ANGER-FEAR SEQUENCE

Feeling of anger is quite common during the conflicts. Still, good conflict manager knows that anger is a side effects of fear, threats or unjust treatment. Knowing the reason for anger one is able to focus on the healing the illness rather that dealing calming down the symptoms. Self-knowledge and self-regulation of the individual of high conflict intelligence should include the ability to identify the reasons of anger and encourage him or her to face it and cope with it.

Fear alert person to potential danger or to potential benefit. Fear does not necessarily lead to an avoidance of conflict. Fear also can lead to a desire to reach an agreement, or aggressive response. Fear often related to anxiety. Fear can provoke 'tunnel vision' as person perceive and focus on the threat to one's integrity,



sense of well-being, or painful threat of loss of an important person or other valuable object. Anger is also can be one of emotional reactions to loss. Fear and hurt underlie most emotions of anger. One easily gets angry when perceived threat leads to fear and one feels hurt. Intensity of emotions varies through the conflict process. Person gets even angrier when believes that the other person, either though neglect or intentionally, treats him/her with disrespect, and that person has sufficient control over the situation to avoid harming him/her. Such anger can lead to fighting. Thoughts, emotions and behaviour are closely connected.

### 1 picture. Anger-fear sequence



Wilmot and Hocker (2011) suggest an exercise suitable for development of the ability to determine how fear or anxiety might be mixed in with one's anger and can lead to fighting.

The following are examples of fear, threats to self-esteem or well-being, or unjust treatment that might lead to feelings of anger are presented below:

- Student is angry at his mother for giving him a scarf in front of his group mates (He is afraid that they will see him as a clinging vine).
- A newly promoted employee is angry because his secretary didn't get the final report to him on time. (He is afraid that his own supervisor will think he is not working hard enough, and he really needs this job.)
- A husband is furious that his wife has disclosed their private life to others in a hurtful way. (He is frightened that their bond is no longer strong and that their relationship is ending.)
- An intimate partner casually indicates that she might change her plans and not visit when she had planned. Her partner says, "Well, if you have better things to do than honour your commitments, go ahead." (He has asked an old friend to visit to meet his significant other and fears looking foolish after

speaking in glowing terms about the wonderful woman he wants his friend to meet. He is afraid he is unimportant to her.)

In each of the above examples of anger, analyse what the fear or hurt or point of vulnerability might be by drawing the anger-fear sequence and labelling the drawing.

Following the above listed examples teacher should encourage students to list some of their angry moments and see if they can "back up" through the anger-fear cycle to assess the threat. Students should be invited to discuss:

- what the fear or hurt or point of vulnerability might be by drawing the anger-fear sequence and labelling the drawing.
- once students have identified the underlying threat, original communication should be clarified.

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## 2. EMOTIONAL PARAPHRASING AND REFRAMING

### a. Emotional paraphrasing

Emotions can escalate, as well as prevent, moderate, and control conflict. Conflict may provide a chance to engage with the emotions that are otherwise suppressed or ignored. Emotions are an external reflection of our inner world. During the communication process emotional side of the interaction plays crucial role. As well in conflict situations. Either in personal life, either in professional activities emotion leads people every day and no one can avoid it. Conflict intelligence requires to have understanding the constructive and destructive potential of the conflict. In order to lead the conflict towards constructive solutions it is necessary to show respect for the other party and be empathetic. In conflict management, dealing with intense emotions often requires finding some opportunity to express and release emotions and to experience someone else's understanding and empathy. Empathy has intellectual and emotional aspects, it includes attempt to share a specific person's emotional and mental state. Empathy has three elements: affective matching (one can feel distressed by others' distress, or share joy when others are happy); cognitive empathy as other oriented perspective taking ("putting yourself in the other person shoes"), and self-other differentiation or accepting healthy psychological boundaries. Thus, empathy enhances possibility of constructive conflict response and more compassionate behavior.

## EXERCISE 5

### WHEEL OF EMOTIONS

Dealing with emotions it is very important to develop the ability to recognize emotion and show respect for it. In the picture below the wheel of emotions is presented. It might be helpful for students to get acquainted with the variety of emotions and have a discussion on the each of emotion covering the psychological and physical symptoms of every emotion, possible reasons of it and special need, which have to be met in order to help the individual to heal if it causes him or her harm.







reframe positional statements. One of the most suitable techniques to manage emotions during the conflict situations is emotional paraphrase.

According to the McCorkle and Reese (2018, p. 102), emotional paraphrase has few ground rules:

- In order to understand the emotions of the other individual, we need to give our momentary full attention towards the communication with him or her.
- While the other is speaking, listener must overlap his or her speech with this technique.
- The two to six word emotional paraphrase should be stated and after it the listener should stop speaking.
- Emotional paraphrase should be used only when the person is exhibiting strong emotions.

How it should be done? The emotional paraphrase equation is quite simple. One should listen to the speaker, identify the strong emotion, recognize it (use wheel of emotion if necessary) and follow with the acknowledgement of the emotion.

Examples:

- You look . . . angry/mad/sad/upset
- You sound . . . concerned/troubled/worried
- That must be . . . difficult/disturbing/troubling
- That sounds . . . maddening/upsetting
- You seem . . . frustrated/ignored/angry

Teacher may invite students to simulate conflict situations and listen to the person providing his or her position in the conflict followed by the strong emotions. Ask students to simulate different emotions while there are speaking and invite other members of the group to recognize and name the emotions.

### **Emotional paraphrasing in provided examples**

This task is useful for the further development of the emotional paraphrasing skills. It can be done orally in class or individually in writing. Students should be encouraged to use emotional paraphrasing skills to defuse the emotion in the following examples:

- A client says, “Your staff is so incompetent. They couldn’t even get a simple order right even when I held their hand through the whole process!”
- A co-worker says, “I hate these new policies. How am I supposed to get my work done with all this paperwork I have to process?”
- A student in your project group says, “I’m really worried about the project. Everybody else is fooling around, and I’m stuck here trying to find the information before the deadline.”
- Your best friend has been acting oddly lately. She calls and says, “I hate it when you treat me the way you do. You don’t really like me at all. I don’t know if I want to hang out with you anymore.”

Teachers are encouraged as well to provide their own examples directly connected with the specific subjects of students’ syllabus.

## **b. Reframing**

People see the world, issues of everyday life and conflict situations through “different colour and shape glasses”, which can also be called individual perspectives. People use frames to make sense of conflict. According to McCorkle and Reese (2018, p. 105), in conflict management terms, a frame is how one or more people formally or informally define an issue. Framing refers to the way conflict is perceived and possible outcomes are formulated. It is common for conflict to emerge because people frame a situation differently. One person may mentally frame getting together Friday afternoon as just something to do and the other may frame it as a date. It drives those two individuals towards developing different needs, concerns and expectations in the same situation and may lead towards a failure of their interaction. Constructive conflict management includes consciously seeking to understand one’s frames and a commitment to transparently sharing them with other participants. Anyway, rigid and antagonistic conflict frames can be an obstacle to efficient conflict management. In such case, for the best outcomes, participants need to reframe conflict - redefine the dispute, to change the emphasis, or to think of conflict situation in a brand new context. Conflict reframing is the process of changing inefficient frames to more constructive ones for effective communication and conflict management.

Conflict frames as concentrated views of conflict can be expressed through metaphors people use when describing conflict. Such metaphors provide imaginative descriptions of conflict perceptions and emotional experiences. Negative metaphors (for example, conflict as a war, a struggle, an explosion, a mess, or natural disaster) limit creative problem solving. Conflict metaphors also can be emotionally neutral (for example, conflict as a game or adventure). Some conflict metaphors are potentially more productive and can be used to transform conflict. Examples of potentially positive images can be conflict as a garden, a way, a tide, a dance, a musical improvisation. When people change negative metaphors to transformative images, they can move out of the negative perspective of conflict into understanding conflict as an opportunity to change interactions.

People like to frame the topic and scope of a conflict to their personal advantage - it is easier to “win” if the playing field is slanted to one side. Reframing is an intentional redefinition, emphasis, re-contextualization or retelling of some part or parts of the conflict story without changing the story elements. Mayer (2012, p. 210) states that "The art of reframing is to maintain the conflict in all its richness but to help people look at it in a more open-minded and hopeful way."

Reframing moves an issue from a self-interest frame or a self-justifying frame offered by one person into a different frame that still encompasses the original topic, and helps to stop ignoring viable solutions that don’t fit a person’s previous preconceptions. When conflicts are framed in terms of outcomes, disagreements often are interpreted in terms of parties’ positions, and expressed as preferred solutions. Participants seem to be locked into positions and often have problems moving toward alternate solutions. A successfully reframed statement moves the focus from positions to more general interests, and enhances mutual understanding. For example, John may threaten his roommate by saying, “You have to pick up half of my part of the rent this month, or I’ll move out on Sunday.” The frame is set to pressure compliance, and uncertain choices are presented in terms of gains or losses. Before the most important underlying issues can be discovered and the conflict discussed, such a frame must be changed. A reframed

response doesn't focus on the threat or positional statement, or the attempt to gain an advantage, and makes the issue broader to seek a common ground where problem solving might occur. The roommate might respond, "So there's some challenge with the rent payment? Let's talk about that." Reframing can help to understand and accept individual's deeper needs for meaning, for connection to others, recognition from important people, reciprocity, as well as independence, freedom, individuality. Successful reframing forces conflict parties to look at their conflict differently, enhances their ability to understand the problem from different perspectives, and helps them to find more creative and workable solutions.

Orme-Johnson and Cason-Snow (2002) emphasize reframing strategies, which are helpful for every high conflict intelligence person.

### **1. De-escalate and calm.**

- Let the speaker feel heard, by reflecting back facts and emotions.
- Use neutral language.
- Describe the speaker's feelings, not the other person's character.

### **2. Move from positions to interests**

- Ask, gently what the critical elements are in the speaker's position.
- Explore what the speaker wants to avoid.
- Consider alternatives through "What if..." questions.

### **3. Turn concerns into solvable problems.**

- Change an attack on a person to a description of a problematic behaviour.
- Change a list of past wrongs into future goals.
- Divide broad / global demands into components, which can be, approached one at a time.

### **4. Develop shared goals or trade-offs.**

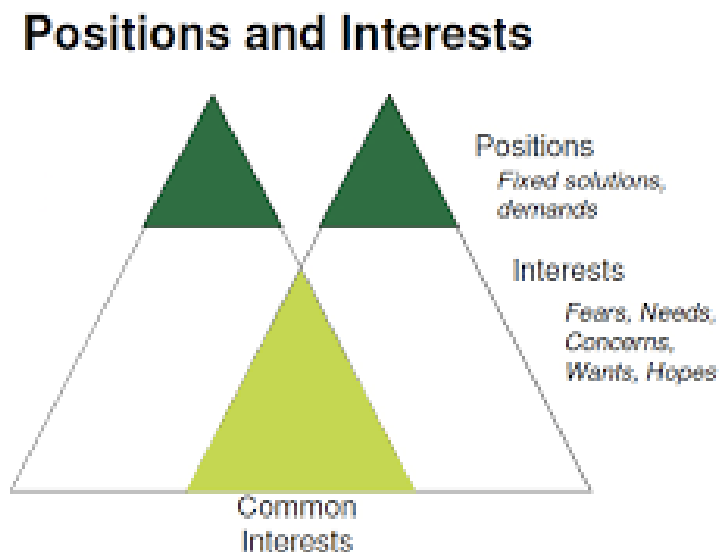
- Point out common or joint interests.
- Explore relative priorities of issues, to locate willingness to trade something one considers minor and the other considers important.

By using reframing it is possible not only to avoid escalation of the conflicts but as well drive the conflict resolution process towards peaceful agreements by focusing more on future than in past. Changing the conflict perspective from the past to future is a powerful tool for the great conflict manager.

Above mentioned strategies involve a technique of moving from positions to interests. In general it is always worth to find out the interests of the parties to a conflict instead of dealing with their positions. 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. According to Yarn (1999), in conflicts, interests are those real or perceived personal or corporate requirements from which goals and objectives are derived. Interests may be described as goal of a person, which he is willing to achieve in a conflict. Mayer (2012) describes interests as the most easily accessible or observable type of need and lie to the heart of most negotiations. 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.

<https://www.mediationserviceswpg.ca/blog/2019/2/26/positions-in-conflict>



In the picture above one can see how the positions (fixed solutions and demands) differs to compare with interests (fears, needs, concerns, wants, hopes). The interests always present broader perspective and bigger chance to the emerging the common interests ground in conflict management.

## EXERCISE 7

### REFRAMING THE POSITIONAL STATEMENTS

Students should be invited in oral or written form to reframe the following positional statements.

- “The only way we’re ever going to finish the project and get a good grade is if we get the teacher to throw Erika out of the group.”
- “This is the way it’s going to be. I’m going fishing so I can finally get some peace and quiet.”

- “Dr. Reyes, you have to let me retake the test or I’ll get a C in your class and won’t be able to get into graduate school.”

## EXERCISE 8

### REFLECTING ON THE PAST CONFLICT EXPERIENCE

Teachers should invite students to think of a conflict they have observed or experienced individually. After it individually or in groups such exercise should be fulfilled.

- First of all students are asked to determine whether any negative conflict metaphor applies to this conflict. They are encouraged to think of a negative metaphor of their own, or use one of others have presented.
- If one stays in the negative framework, what options are available to him or her for resolving the conflict? List at least three.
- Second, students are encouraged to choose a transformative or neutral metaphor for “framing” the same conflict. They should be asked to list at least three options that might be available to them if they envision the conflict in this new way.
- Discuss the results.

## EXERCISE 8

### "THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT!"

Students should be invited to remember a difficult issue that was made more difficult by perceptions that coloured the experience. Teacher should ask students to remember a time when they were certain that the other person's motivation was harmful to them. Students should be encouraged to answer following questions individually and later small group discussions may be provided:

- How did you react as a result of this assumption? What was the outcome? Was the other ever able to say, "That's not what I meant at all. I was trying to tell you . . .?" What happened to the relationship as a result of these different perceptions?





### 3. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

#### Objectives

After study of this part of the topic, you should be able to explain how conflict style differences cause or escalate interpersonal conflict and recognize their impact on conflict. Conflict styles are patterned responses, or clusters of behaviour, that people use in conflict (Wilmot, Hocker, 2011). Style preferences develop over person's lifetime based on a cumulative blend of genetics, life experiences, family background, and personal beliefs and values. Developing a repertoire of diverse styles and tactics may require some stretching of one's comfort zone. However, having expanded choice of styles person can use will enhance his/her chances for effective conflict management.

#### Five conflict styles

McCorkle and Reese (2018, p.121) provided a really helpful example of the five conflict styles in action. They presented a short story:

*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.*

After it McCorkle and Reese (2018) provided explanations of every style and it's specific:

- 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.

Beatty and Barker Scott (2004) suggest such description of well-known conflict styles for the situation in Exercise 9 (see below):

- **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.

Conflict style explains how different people can see the same thing in opposite ways, and choose different ways of responding to conflict. Actually, we can't change somebody else's basic style. Still, we can recognize it and understand that person better. Styles can mesh together if we are aware of our strengths and weaknesses. Relationships are stronger if people recognize style differences, it brings when to mutual understanding quicker. Strong teams lean into each other's strengths and prop up each other's weaknesses. The most important thing, that with time and effort, new styles can be learned.

## EXERCISE 9

### WHICH CONFLICT STYLE THE PARTIES TO THE BELOW DESCRIBED CONFLICT HAVE CHOSEN?

For getting acquainted with different conflicts styles it is advised to discuss with students a specific case with several different models of behaviour. Beatty and Barker Scott (2004) presented such case for conflict styles studies:

*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.*

Teacher in class should ask the students, 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.

According to the answers it is easy to explain what style was selected by the concrete individual (see explanation of this case above this task).

## EXERCISE 10

### SELF-SCORE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE TEST

This is an individual task for students, which is design to help them in identifying their own conflict style. Students are provided with test to fill in. Teacher should firstly encourage them to think about their conflict experience, about how they engage in conflict in one specific relationship that is important to them. Secondly teachers should ask students to take the same test for a second time thinking about a different context - perhaps how they engage in conflict at university with their supervisors, at home with a significant other, or with a dormitory roommate. After the second attempt to fill the test, students should have a group discussion for the comparison and analysing the scores. Teacher should focus on whether students were surprised by the outcome? Did they see their score change depending on the different conflicts? It is advised to discuss with your group why styles might be different in these two contexts. What are the advantages and disadvantages of every conflict style during interpersonal conflict? (Suggested sources: McCorkle, Reese (2018, 129); Budjac Corvete, B., *Conflict Management: A Practical Guide to Developing Negotiation Strategies*. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, p. 57-59 (Conflict management assessment instrument adopted in part from M. A. Rahim and N. R. Magner, 1995)).

\* Find the test in section “Conflict management Exercises for students individual work.

## EXERCISE 11

### “THE DOGGIE DISCONTENT”

**McCorkle and Reese (2018, p.130) suggest such an exercise for developing students skills to identify the most evident styles in concrete situation. The case is presented below:**

*Before Tess and Molly became roommates, Tess made sure that Molly would be fine with her lovable little dog Gretel, a five-year-old schnauzer. After about two months, Molly met Tess at the door, obviously upset:*

*Molly: “We need to talk. I hate living here! I can’t stand your dog anymore. She jumps on me and the house smells like a dog. I like some animals, but I hate your dog!” Tess: (Shocked). “You knew about Gretel when we moved in. She’s a schnauzer for God’s sake—they love everybody. It’s not like she’s a pit bull and going to attack you. What did you expect?” Molly: “I was hoping the apartment wouldn’t allow dogs.” Tess: “I wouldn’t have moved in with you then. I could never live without Gretel.” Molly:*



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*“I think you should get rid of her.” Tess: “That is not going to happen! You knew I had a dog. And I don’t have the money to move. You got yourself into this situation, so you figure a way out of it.”*

*Molly left the apartment and slammed the door. Gretel, sensing something was wrong, walked over to comfort Tess.*

## EXERCISE 12

### CONFLICT STYLE

According to Raines (2010) it is crucial important to study from own student’s experience. It is advised to the teacher encourage students to think about a current or previous problem or conflict in their environment. Every story may be discussed using these leading questions:

- Which of the five conflict styles best describes student’s approach to that conflict?
- Which style best describes the style(s) used by others in the conflict?
- Was the conflict or problem successfully resolved? Why or why not?
- What might have happened if you used one of the other conflict styles?

These questions may be discussed collectively in oral form or provides for students as an individual task in writing.

## EXERCISE 13

### INTERVIEW

In order to gain for knowledge how such conflict management skills as ability to identify the conflict style may be used in practice students may be engaged in the fulfilment of this task oriented towards job interview experience.

It is suggested either individually or in small groups, develop a list of interview questions that students will use in simulation of potential new hires. These questions should give them a sense of how concrete person responds to conflict and how well he or she will fit into the existing team’s environment. After the preparation of such lists, teachers may question students about other sources of information which may provide clues as to how this person deals with problem solving and teamwork.

## EXERCISE 14

### CURRENT PROBLEM



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Students should be asked to think of a current problem or pending decision at studies, at home, or in their civic life. Teacher should use the questions to determine which style is the most likely to achieve a successful resolution to the problem.

#### 4. SUPERVISOR CONFLICT-RELATED ROLES

One of possible ways to explore how people accept conflict is to consider the roles that they most ready to take on during conflict. The roles that people as individuals are ordinarily most comfortable with are related to their professional or formal roles they may choose to assume as conflict interveners, but these formal roles are not identical to the roles that conflict may demand of them, which they usually assume formally. Although people play many de facto roles in conflict, the following six are key roles in the structure of most conflicts (Mayer, 2012):

*Advocate (negotiator):* Arguing or pushing for a particular outcome or set of needs.

*Decision maker (arbitrator):* deciding among competing positions or claims.

*Facilitator (mediator):* helping others communicate and negotiate.

*Conciliator (empathizer):* tuning into and addressing the emotional elements of a conflict.

*Information provider (expert):* providing information or opinions to decision makers or negotiators.

*Observer (witness, audience):* watching, reporting, and reacting to others in conflict.

Each role can be played in many different ways, and each can influence conflict process, conflict escalation or de-escalation. Elements of several roles are often present in how people participate in any given conflict. Often disputants enter a conflict primarily in one role but then change roles, sometimes repeatedly and rapidly. Conflict can easily escalate when people present themselves as playing one role (for example, facilitator or information provider) but actually take on a different role (decision maker), and such misapprehension can be done consciously or can be mistakenly perceived by role player. Maintaining clarity about the role person is playing and how it might be altered as circumstances change is a significant challenge and everybody face when participates in conflicts as disputants or interveners (Mayer, 2012). Ability to be aware and choose appropriate role is one of important skills for person who is competent in conflict management.

**Table 1. Supervisor conflict – related roles (based on Chavez Rudolph)**

CONFLICT RELATED ROLES	How this role may be defined?	(This is someone who...)	For what purpose is this role intended?  (Intended Outcome)
Rule Enforcer	One who knows and informs others about applicable rules, policies, procedures, laws, etc.	A violation or potential violation is seen and a duty is felt to prevent or correct	To inform in an effort to gain compliance with applicable rules, policies, procedures, laws, etc.



	and gives people clear expectations about how to comply with them.	violations to the extent possible.	and/or to prevent or correct violations. (Note: This may require the administration of consequences.)
Mediator	Neutral party who assists others in the resolution of their conflicts by providing a structured process to help them reach agreements.	Chair/Director does not have a vested interest in the outcome other than to see agreements reached between conflicting parties. This could be chosen because the Chair/Director wants the process by which disputing parties interact to be effective (i.e., manageable, productive, respectful).	To help others reach agreements to resolve their disputes  The best decision will come from the disputing parties making the decision themselves.
Arbitrator	Decision-maker who determines how a conflict will be resolved	Chair/Director has delegated decision making authority and/or content area knowledge and utilizes authority to resolve a conflict, especially when time is limited.	To make a decision to resolve a conflict
Facilitator	Chair/Director helps groups identify issues and make decisions by providing a process for discussion.	A group needs assistance in identifying issues and making decisions but doesn't need the kind of tightly controlled process provided by mediation.	To allow group members to have input and to help a group make decisions about how they will be resolved. Participation and buy-in are important.
Negotiator	Chair/Director by helping all parties (including	Chair/Director cares about both the content	To gain the cooperation of others to resolve



	her/himself) to identify interests and options to achieve a "win-win" outcome.	and the relationship(s) involved in the dispute.	disputes in a mutually satisfactory manner
Coach	Chair/Director educates or advises disputing parties about options and strategies for negotiating effectively.	The Chair/Director sees the need for a disputing party to be more effective in negotiating with others or when the disputing party wants to be more effective in negotiating with others.	To assist and advise a disputing party to negotiate more effectively when conflicts arise.
Referral Agent	Chair/Director listens to disputing party and then with the disputing party determines the appropriate individual, department, agency, etc. most able to assist with his/her particular need.	Chair/Director does not have expertise in the content area and/or additional information is needed by the disputing party to resolve his/her conflict. This role may be especially called for when a disputing party needs emotional support and a counsellor is called for -- which in regards to conflict, in most cases, is not an appropriate role for Chair/Director.	Assist the disputing party to obtain the needed services necessary to resolve the conflict or to obtain support while working through the conflict.
Investigator	Chair/Director makes inquiries, conducts research, etc. in order to obtain additional information necessary to resolve a conflict.	Chair/Director or disputing parties require additional information, or additional information would be helpful, in order to resolve a conflict.	Obtain additional information. (Note: Often times the Chair/Director will serve in an investigator role and then move into one of the other roles listed above.)

Shuttle diplomat	Serves as a “go between” in an attempt to resolve conflicts between two parties.	Parties in conflict do not wish to occupy the same physical space simultaneously or you determine that for safety reasons it is best for the two parties not to occupy the same physical space simultaneously.	To help others reach agreements to resolve their disputes

## EXERCISE 15

### SUPERVISOR CONFLICT-RELATED ROLES QUIZ

Students should be provided with an 8 stories and asked to choose the most appropriate supervisor role(s) for each situation. Every decision should be explained and grounded. This task is based on materials published by Chavez Rudolph (p.142-143)

**Choices:**

- Enforcer
- Mediator
- Arbitrator
- Facilitator
- Negotiator
- Coach
- Referral Agent
- Investigator

**Situations:**

1. Janet approaches you to say she and Fred keep getting locked in disputes over how to divide their workload. They want you to decide it for them. You trust both of them and want them to decide this on their own. You are willing to help them decide but you do not want to decide for them.
2. Alice and David work in the same office. Alice came to see you and said, “David isn’t listening to me and, frankly, I’ve been offended several times at how he has been talking to me. I stood right up to

him but things between us are still tense. I think we need someone to help us communicate better.” David was a close friend of yours for many years before you became his (and Alice’s) supervisor. Although you have tried to keep some distance between you since becoming his supervisor, everyone in your department –including Alice- is aware of your long friendship with David.

3. You supervise a department which includes Arnie and Andy, and seven others. Andy came in to see you to say that Arnie just called him a very offensive racist name. He also said three of your other supervisees were present and heard him say it.

4. The staff of another department (not your own) is trying to determine how to best spend \$1000 before the June 30 deadline (or they will lose the money). You have been approached by the Director of that department (who cannot be at the meeting where it will be discussed due to her vacation) and asked to help them decide. She says whatever the group decides is fine with her but everyone has his or her own ideas about how to spend the money and, although she doesn’t want to lose the money, she is tired of hearing all the lobbying for various purchases. She tells you privately that she is glad she won’t be there.

5. You supervise both Nancy and Bess, who work side-by-side in computer related jobs. Nancy is shy and tells you privately that, although it really irritates her, she has not yet told Bess how much she dislikes Bess listening to the radio in the office. “It’s not that it’s too loud,” Nancy said. “I just can’t stand that elevator music she listens to. It puts me to sleep!” You do not object to these employees listening to the radio at work.

6. According to one of your supervisees, Sally, Sharon (another of your staff members) gave confidential information about an upcoming organizational change to a member of another department who had no need to know that information. Sharon was in the meeting where the change was discussed and where you clearly stated that this information needed to remain confidential until it was released by the Public Relations department. You decide to speak to Sharon and she admits to having given Sharon confidential information.

7. Marilyn and Joe have come in to talk to you. They cannot seem to agree about how to divide the work on an important project you assigned to them. It looks to you like both of them are both being stubborn. Your boss is expecting the results of this project by Friday. It is now Tuesday at 11:30 AM. You estimate that if they don’t start actually doing the work by this afternoon at the latest, they cannot get the work done.

8. You and Josh have been discussing the staff meeting schedule for the next year. The most likely times for the meetings are early in the morning or late in the afternoon. Josh has a strong preference for afternoon meetings and you have an equally strong one for morning meetings. Josh has to take his kids to day care in the morning and would probably be late for most of the meetings. As his supervisor you could “pull rank” on him and simply set the meetings for mornings but you would like Josh to be at the meetings. Also, he is so valuable to your operation, you don’t want him to feel disregarded or unappreciated.