

Pondering Point

Ready...think...aim...fire! For many of us, conflict translates into battle. Since the idea of going into battle can be very intimidating, it's no wonder we approach conflict with our defenses already up, and our decisions already made. Conflict doesn't have to be war; it can be a learning experience. Many times our personalities dictate how we instinctually address conflict. This is only effective when the situation calls for that type of communication. If we were to address conflict based on the situation and what we'd like to see as an outcome, we'd reach our goals AND keep our relationships intact more often. Taking a detailed look at the factors around the conflict and our role in it may open the door to differing styles that can give us different (and more beneficial) results.

How do you approach CONFLICT?

Conflict isn't always war.

According to author Robert Maddux in The 5 Styles of Conflict Resolution, we can use one of these styles (or a combination of) to decide the most appropriate approach for each particular situation, as each style is beneficial at different times.

Avoidance: People tending towards this style seek to evade the conflict entirely.

Accommodating: This style indicates a willingness to meet the needs of others at the expense of the person's own needs. (As long as you're happy, it doesn't matter what I want.)

Compromising: People who prefer a compromising style try to find a solution that will at least partially satisfy everyone. (Majority rules!)

Collaborative: People tending towards a collaborative style try to meet all the needs of all people involved. (Rubik's Cube the vote until all people are satisfied and all the colors align.)

Competitive: People who tend towards a competitive style take a firm stand, and know what they want. (It's all or nothing = win/lose.)

Imagine... conflict being less a war of words and more a world of resolutions.

— From Pondering to Practice —

Activity

Create a conflict scenario; then ask a group to discuss how utilizing each conflict resolution style could produce different outcomes. As a follow up question ask, "Which style would leave you feeling the best about yourself and your relationship to the other person?"

Self Reflection Activity

Next time you have a disagreement with someone, run down this list of questions and then determine which of Maddux's styles may work best this time.

Try this → Conflict Checklist:

How important is this situation to you?

How much time do you have to devote to it?

Where is your head (what emotions/feelings are you experiencing right now)?

What is your desired outcome?

Where are you willing to compromise?

Is there a possibility that you can use more than one style above to get the outcome that you want?

Ponder this → Think about the last time you were in a conflict.

Was your solution ethical?

Were you happy with how it was resolved?

- What would you have done differently?

How did the outcome affect your relationship(s) with the others involved (both short & long term)?

"Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional."

- Max Lucade

