How do I manage conflict in a positive way?

Conflict is a healthy and normal part of relationships and interactions. It is important to understand how to manage the conflicts in a healthy and positive way so there is no harm to the relationship. When conflict is handled well, it can provide opportunities for growth and can sometimes strengthen a relationship.

Conflict Management Styles

There are different styles when approaching conflict. To most effectively resolve a conflict, it is important to use the style and strategy that is most appropriate for that situation.

**Accommodating**
- An individual focuses on the human relationships and neglects their own concerns to meet the needs of the other person.
- Advantage: Accommodating helps maintain relationships.
- Disadvantage: Giving in may not be the best solution or productive.

**Avoiding**
- An individual prefers to ignore the conflict than resolve it. Tends to give up on personal goals.
- Advantage: May help maintain relationships that could be hurt by conflict resolution.
- Disadvantage: Conflict stays unsolved, can lead to others walking over the individual.

**Collaborating**
- Attempt to work with others on finding a solution that works for both parties involved.
- Advantage: Both sides have a solution they are happy with and there are no negative feelings.
- Disadvantage: Collaborating is very time consuming and takes a lot of effort.

**Competing**
- An individual focuses on their own concerns over the others.
- Advantage: If it is the best decision the competing style will lead to a better decision.
- Disadvantage: May lead to hostility and resentment toward the person using the competing style.

**Compromising**
- An individual is willing to sacrifice some of their goals while convincing others to give up some of their goals as well.
- Advantage: Relationships are maintained and conflicts are removed.
- Disadvantage: Compromise may create less than ideal outcomes.

Reflection: What conflict management style do you typically use and how does it work?

**Style:**

**Advantages:**

**Disadvantages:**
Next time there is a conflict answer the following questions to help you decide which style is the best to approach the issue.

What is the issue? ____________________________________________

What is the relationship with the person that you are having the conflict? ________________________________

Which is more important, the relationship, the issue or both? ________________________________

How much time do you have to resolve the conflict? ________________________________________

Is this an issue that I can “let go” or is it something I need focus on? ________________________________________

Once you have answered these questions, look at the other side and decide which conflict management style you think would be best used for your current situation.

I am going to use _________________________________ conflict management style for this situation.

Finally, please recall a recent conflict you have experienced. When you have an example, please complete the previous prompts again for your own personal experience. How would you use the skills you have learned to handle the situation better? ________________________________________

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**RESOURCES**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Counseling Service</th>
<th>Academic Support &amp; Retention</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3223 Westlawn South</td>
<td>310 Calvin Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>319-335-7294</td>
<td>319-353-2747</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:ucs@uiowa.edu">ucs@uiowa.edu</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:tutoriowa@uiowa.edu">tutoriowa@uiowa.edu</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://counseling.studentlife.uiowa.edu/">http://counseling.studentlife.uiowa.edu/</a></td>
<td><a href="http://tutor.iowa.edu">http://tutor.iowa.edu</a></td>
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**Works Cited:**

www.edcc.edu/counseling/documents/conflict.pdf
Leadership.uoregon.edu/resources/exercises_tips/skills/managing_conflict