

interpersonal conflict styles

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The Johnmark Extension
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Personal Styles of Dealing with Interpersonal Conflict

- Reflect on your own natural tendency and which of these operational styles you may need to acquire.

They all have their place.....

Bull

- Forcing / Compelling:
The use of power to prevail
- *My way*
- I win - You lose approach
- This is the way! Why waste time on discussion and collaboration – lets just get in and do it.



Koala



- Accommodating / Supporting / Giving in
- *Your way*
- I lose - You win approach
- Staying connected to you is more important to me than being in conflict. Its not worth it. I will not assert my ideas – I'll back down.

Tortoise



- Avoiding: Leaving the conflicted environment, refusing to engage.
- *No way*
- I lose - You lose approach
- I'm out of here... maybe physically, certainly psychologically.
- Ignoring the conflict.

Owl

- Collaborating: Working together for a mutual solution
- *Our way*
- I win - You win approach
- We need to take time to work this out so that we find a creative solution where we both get what we need.



Fox

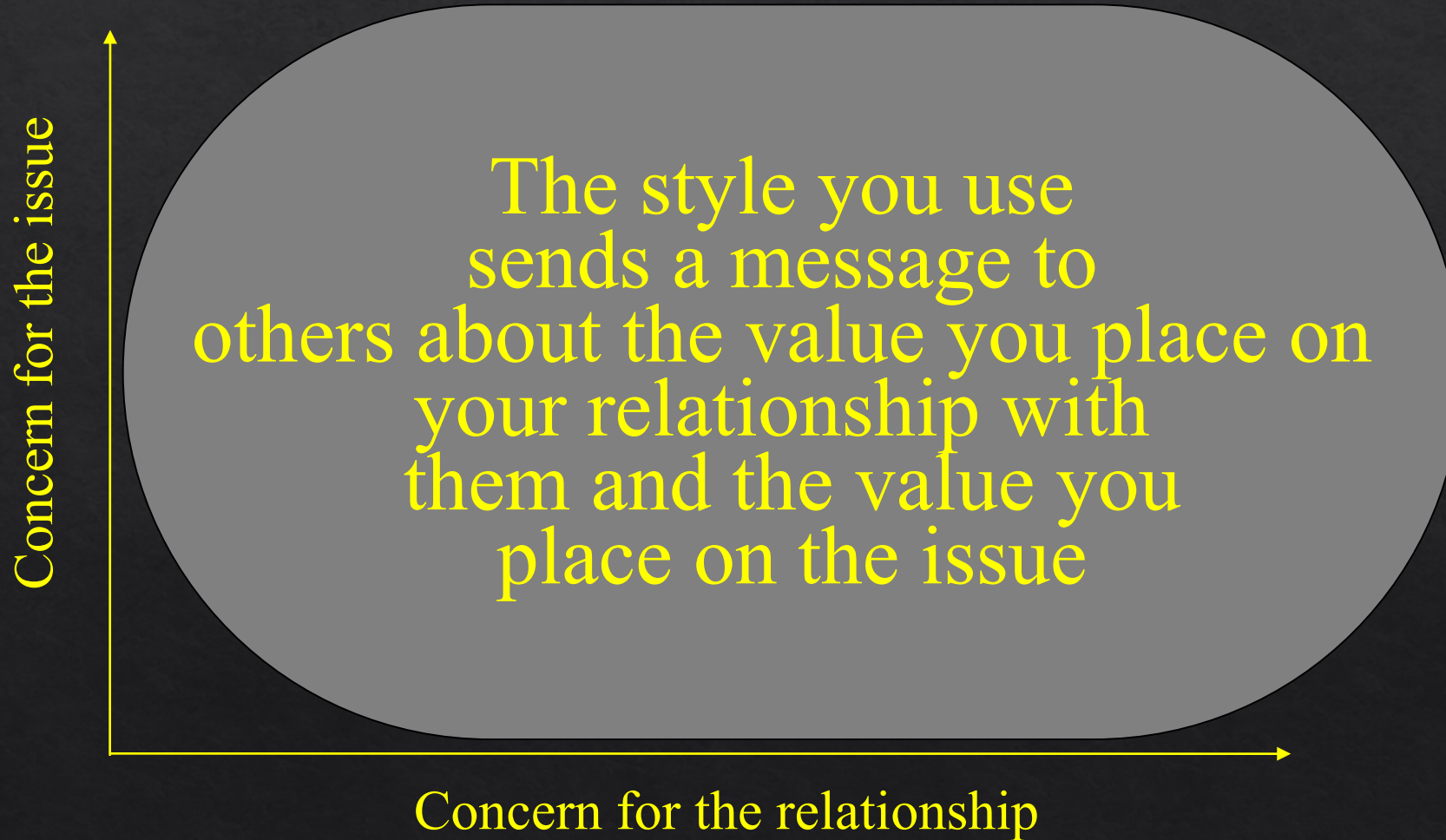
- Compromise: Lets all give a little and find a quick solution
- *Half Way*
- Win some – Lose some approach
- Maybe if we all go $\frac{1}{2}$ way to each other's position we can find a way forward here...



Personal Conflict Styles



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Personal Conflict Styles



Questions

- ◆ What are the advantages of your personal style of conflict?
- ◆ How do you feel when you encounter each of the other styles in a conflict?

When to use the Bull approach

- Infrequently
- In emergencies
- To protect rights
- To exercise justice
- When compliance can be monitored
- When all other means have failed and action must be taken
- When an unpopular but necessary course of action must be followed.



Costs of using the Bull approach where it may not be appropriate

- Relationships deteriorate
- People feel devalued
- Spontaneity / creativity is lost
- Manipulative behaviour develops
- Rebellion simmers
- Morale decreases



How to use the Bull approach appropriately if it is required

- Understand and exercise appropriate authority
- Access authority if needed
- Be clear and decisive
- Be careful not to portray this as another style (e.g. by giving the impression the decision is open to negotiation if it isn't)



When to use the tortoise approach



- When the issue is unimportant or the cost of working it through is higher than the value gained.
- When the situation is volatile and people need to cool down before dealing with a conflict.
- When people are highly fragile
- When space is needed
- Conflict areas might need to be avoided or ignored when you need to be together with others but are unable to resolve the conflict.

Costs of overusing the tortoise approach



- High frustration levels because the issues are not addressed and nothing changes
- People feel devalued
- Build up of tension in relationships
- Energy drain and depression
- Because conflicts are not solved they compound over time

How to use the tortoise approach appropriately if it is required



- Politely leave or withdraw from the conflicted situation
- Use respectful stalling processes if proceeding into conflict is likely to result in people being hurt.
- Choose to ignore or overlook the conflict if it is unimportant
- Consider communicating your reasons for withdrawing especially if this is intentional and temporary



When to use the Fox approach

- When time is short and an outcome is required
- When trust is not high
- Where a compromise outcome is workable and each party has something to give and something to gain
- Where parties are able to respond to reasoned and rational discussion



Costs of using the Fox approach when it may not be appropriate

- Outcomes are usually less than parties have hoped for
- There is often a sense of dissatisfaction in the result and the process
- Compromise potentially leads to low levels of commitment to the course of action agreed to
- Compromise can lead to a focus on dealing with symptoms rather than causes



How to use the Fox approach appropriately if it is required

- Negotiation skills should be employed.
- Have moderate expectations
- Identifying each party's interests, values, needs and desired outcomes
- Working out how much each party can give to gain a way out of an impasse
- Start with 50% - 50%, split the difference.....
- Bargain – I will give on this..., will you give on that.....

When to use the Koala approach

- When the issue is not really yours or is not high on your personal agenda
- When the relationship is important and long-term e.g. Family, close friendship, church
- When the tension is not a direct result of the conflict and is related to other factors in a person's life
- Where listening to and supporting the person will allow later movement to a collaborative style



Costs of using the Koala approach where it may not be appropriate

- By supportive behaviour the koala approach sends the message that the issue is not important to them or that they agree with the other.
- It may lead to resentment and depression if important ideas, values and issues are never addressed.
- This may be frustrating to others who are looking for a collaborative approach.
- It may lead to stunted growth of personal gifts and abilities.
- It can create dependence on others
- It denies others the benefit of healthy confrontation



How to use the Koala approach appropriately if it is required

- Listen, reflect the feelings of the other, offer pastoral support and care.
- Give in, placate or acknowledge error if appropriate.
- Sublimate your own ideas and interests for the sake of the relationship.





When to use the Owl approach

- When the stakes are high and the issue is complex
- When there is time, energy and willingness available to work together constructively
- When relationships are important.
- When parties have well developed interpersonal skills
- When there is openness to creative 'third-way' possibilities



Costs of using the Owl approach when it may not be appropriate

- The owl approach indicates high concern for relationships and high concern for the issue.
- It consumes significant time and energy and may be tiring, overwhelming and time-wasting if applied to every conflict or issue.
- It may distract from everyday operational effectiveness.
- Microanalysis may be paralysing for an organisation or relationship.



How to use the Owl approach appropriately if it is required

- Agree to a collaborative process
- Identify, explore and analyse issues, needs, interests, perspectives and desired outcomes.
- Assert your own ideas while welcoming other views and perspectives
- Jointly examine the strengths and weaknesses of all views
- Add value through applying creative strategies (e.g. Thinking hats)
- Agree on criteria and apply this to making a collective decision

Interpersonal Conflict Styles



- Each style has its benefit and value
- Each has drawbacks
- Know your natural tendency but also acquire the skills to employ the other styles when needed
- Your choice depends on the circumstances
- Ask:
 - How important is this relationship?
 - How important is this issue?