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## Dual Concern Model

The Dual Concern Model assumes that parties' preferred method of handling conflict is based on two underlying dimensions: assertiveness and empathy. The assertiveness dimension focuses on the degree to which one is concerned with satisfying one's own interests, and the empathy (or cooperativeness) dimension focuses on the extent to which one is concerned with satisfying the needs of the other. The intersection points of these dimensions land us in different conflict styles. It's always helpful not only to realize your own style but also to appreciate the style that your opposite number is using.

A "competitive" conflict style maximizes assertiveness and minimizes empathy. Competitive types enjoy negotiation interaction, and tend to look at it as a game or a sport with a winner and a loser; they pay less attention to the relationship. They are focused on winning and claiming the biggest piece of the pie. Competitive types approach conflict saying: "I want to win, and I want to win."

An "accommodating" conflict style, in contrast, maximizes empathy and minimizes assertiveness. Accommodating types seek to meet the needs of others, are perceptive and intuitive about emotional states, detect subtle verbal and nonverbal cues, and use relationship building skills; they tend to deflect or give up in the face of conflict out of concern for the relationship, or to avoid conflict with competitive types. Accommodating types tend to believe that "[b]eing agreeable may be more important than winning."

An "avoiding" conflict style is both low in assertiveness and low in empathy. Avoiders can be adept at sidestepping conflict, can exercise tact and diplomacy in high-conflict situations, and can artfully increase their own leverage by waiting for others to make a move. At the same time, however, they may "leave money on the table" and miss the opportunities for mutual gain that come from addressing underlying relationships, and allow problems to fester by ignoring them. Avoiding types worry that: "I don't want to get involved in this, and I don't want to get involved in this about it either."

"Collaborative" types are highly assertive and highly empathetic at the same time, therefore they are concerned about their own needs and are sensitive to the other person's needs while simultaneously being committed to having their own needs met. Collaborative types seek creative opportunity and do not mind investing the time to dig deep and find a win-win solution, but may be inclined to avoid conflict when they are called for under the circumstances. Collaborative types approach conflict saying: "Let's find a solution that satisfies everyone."

Finally, a "compromising" conflict style is intermediate on both the assertiveness and empathy dimensions. Compromisers engage in some give and take when bargaining. A compromise approach allows those in conflict to reach an efficient resolution to the conflict. However, compromisers sometimes miss opportunities by moving away from their own interests.



trades and joint gains, and may neglect the relational aspects of the dispute. Compromisers approach conflict saying issue.”

Jeffery H. Goldfien & Jennifer K. Robbennolt, What if the Lawyers Have Their Way? An Empirical Assessment of Cor Toward Mediation Styles, 22 Ohio St. J. on Disp. Resol. 277 (2006-2007) (citations omitted).

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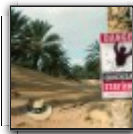
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