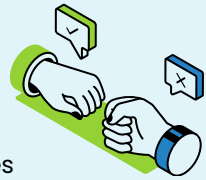
media power youth

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

What if Conflict Could Make Relationships Stronger?

Conflict is a normal part of school, work, and online life. There's no single "best" way to handle it. The right approach depends on the situation. One widely used method is the Thomas–Kilmann Model, which describes five conflict styles. Learning these different strategies can help you build strong, enriching relationships.



The 5 Conflict-Resolution Strategies

ASSERTIVENESS

Competing

Pushing your position

- Works when urgent decisions are needed, such as a safety issue
- Explain your reasoning so others understand your stance
- **Watch out:** Can strain relationships if overused

Collaborating

Working together to meet everyone's needs

- Works when issue is complex and the relationship is very important
- Ask: "What could be our shared goal?"
- **Watch out:** Takes time and energy

Compromising

Both sides give and get something

- Works when a practical solution is needed and both parties are on equal footing.
- Focus on the bigger picture, agree to check in
- **Watch out:** No one may feel fully satisfied

Avoiding

Ignore issue or stall

- Works when issue is small or when people need to "cool off"
- Provides time to gather information
- Ask: "Will this matter to me in in a week?"
- **Watch out**: Problems pile up. Approach can signal to others you don't care.

Accomodating

Maintain harmony by giving in

- Works when the relationship matters more than the issue
- Set expectations: "I can see this is really important to you, so we can go with your idea this time."
- **Watch out:** Others may resent giving in later

COOPERATIVENESS

Source: Adapted from the University of North Florida Dean of Students Resolution Resource and the Thomas–Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (1974).

REAL SKILLS TO PRACTICE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Active Listening

Really hear the other person and repeat back what they said before responding. Share your own emotions too, like "I'm feeling frustrated," to reduce tension and help everyone understand each other.

Have a Cool-Down Plan

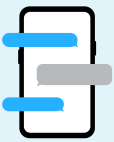
If you're heated, take a timed break (10–20 minutes) and come back.

Ask Thoughtful Questions

Avoid assuming and ask open-ended questions to better understand the other person. Choose a tone that shows genuine interest in their answers.

Follow Up

After a fix, check in later: "Is this still working for you?" Use these moments to get comfortable being uncomfortable and practicing honest communication.



Tolerance

Practice generosity and patience by giving people the space to understand and work through why they are feeling angry.

Dealing With Conflict in the Digital World?

Texts don't have a tone of voice. Without facial expressions, a joke can feel like a jab. Meeting face-to-face lets you show you're not looking for a fight and helps clear the air.

- Stay calm and neutral (avoid caps and sarcasm)
- Use kind humor, support others, or change the subject when appropriate
- Clarify by asking open-ended questions to understand the other person's perspective
- Use "I" statements instead of blaming: "I feel frustrated."
- Take it offline or block: Disengaging often prevents escalation and preserves energy

Why Are We Sharing This?

Strong communities start with strong communication. At Media Power Youth, we believe handling conflict with respect online and in-person is a superpower for building healthy relationships. We're here to empower students and their mentors with the tools to create supportive spaces where everyone can thrive. Join us at mediapoweryouth.org.