

Style Inventory for Dealing with Difficult People

Using the number scale below, indicate how these statements reflect your actions and feelings when dealing with a difficult person.

5 = Very often 4 = Often 3 = Sometimes 2 = Occasionally 1 = Seldom

- ___ 01 | I prefer to stay away from conversations that are really heated.
- ___ 02 | I try to get the other person to see the world as I see it.
- ___ 03 | I'm careful not to step on anybody's toes.
- ___ 04 | If I do something for the other person, I can ask them to do something for me too.
- ___ 05 | Rather than work things out using technology, I prefer to discuss face-to-face.
- ___ 06 | When someone comes on really strong, I tend to shut down.
- ___ 07 | I leverage my knowledge, connections, or position in order to get things moving.
- ___ 08 | I find that if I tell the person what they want to hear, it all goes more smoothly.
- ___ 09 | It's better to compromise than have no deal at all.
- ___ 10 | When there's disagreement, I make sure everyone has time to speak, no matter how long it takes.
- ___ 11 | If I keep quiet and wait, I survive when others don't.
- ___ 12 | I've discovered that if I simply outwork the other person, they will eventually give up.
- ___ 13 | I can't stand it when I know someone is angry at me.
- ___ 14 | When there's a disagreement, I try to find a way for there to be give and take.
- ___ 15 | I've found it's best to listen to all sides before making a decision.
- ___ 16 | I've discovered that we can't all get along. Sometimes it's best to part ways.
- ___ 17 | I've found that if I have a disagreement and lose, people don't respect me as much.
- ___ 18 | It's easiest to make everybody happy by ignoring some of some of the things that I would prefer.
- ___ 19 | I've noticed that if I say that my conversation partner is right about some points, they are more likely to do the same for me.

- ___ 20 | When we disagree, I'll tell the person what I think, but I usually ask them what they think first.
- ___ 21 | I don't invest energy in worrying about other people's problems.
- ___ 22 | When people aren't getting it, I raise my voice.
- ___ 23 | I agree with the philosophy, "Live and let live."
- ___ 24 | I'm good at coming up with a middle ground.
- ___ 25 | When we're upset with each other, I clear my schedule so we can discuss the tension openly.
- ___ 26 | I've found that it's smarter to not rock the boat.
- ___ 27 | The thing is, if I'm right, I shouldn't have to budge.
- ___ 28 | I've found that I'm good at calming upset people.
- ___ 29 | On principle, I don't like to have agreements where one person gets everything and the other person doesn't get enough.
- ___ 30 | I work on creating mutual understanding first, before trying to solve a problem.

Scoring

Write the number you wrote for each question onto the blank below and total the columns. Your highest score is your preferred method of dealing with people you find difficult.

Avoid	Compete	Accommodate	Compromise	Collaborate
___ 01	___ 02	___ 03	___ 04	___ 05
___ 06	___ 07	___ 08	___ 09	___ 10
___ 11	___ 12	___ 13	___ 14	___ 15
___ 16	___ 17	___ 18	___ 19	___ 20
___ 21	___ 22	___ 23	___ 24	___ 25
___ 26	___ 27	___ 28	___ 29	___ 30
___ TOTAL	___ TOTAL	___ TOTAL	___ TOTAL	___ TOTAL

Adapted from Thomas, K. W., & Kilmann, R. H., (1974), "The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument," XICOM, Inc.

Styles Defined

Avoiding Characteristics

- Avoiding can mean staying away from issues and people you find difficult.
- When you choose this style, you may feel helpless or hopeless, feeling like this is the best you can do.
- Choosing this style sometimes involves pretending the difficulty doesn't exist.

Use when: People need to cool down, you don't have time to deal with it, or you have more important issues to deal with.

Accommodating Characteristics

- This style allows you to build relationships, sometimes at the cost of your other goals.
- You might choose this style because you want to keep everyone happy (including the difficult person).
- If you act on this style a lot, you might be doing so out of a need to be accepted by others. You may ignore your own needs in order to take care of others.

Use when: You are wrong, when the issue is not very important to you, or when the relationship needs strengthening.

Collaborating Characteristics

- When you choose this style, you aim to fully achieve both parties' goals.
- This style likes to gather all information before making decisions.
- A person with this style is more concerned that everyone is heard than about the outcome.

Use when: Parties can recognize that relationships and goals are important, or when future trust and cooperation are needed.

Competing Characteristics

- When you choose this style, you focus on your goal and usually push at a fast pace to achieve it.
- Competing can mean using whatever power you have (relationships, position, education, etc.) to resolve the problem.
- The focus is on getting results quickly, and to your satisfaction.

Use when: The relationship is not important, in emergencies, when needing to set boundaries, or when dealing with less important issues.

Compromising Characteristics

- When you choose this style, you seek the middle ground.
- This style aims at resolving tension as quickly as possible, but without giving in too much.
- People who use this style can handle losing something, so long as they gain something in return.

Use when: You need to reach a resolution quickly or your goals are of moderate importance.

*Ultimately, we only control one element of our interaction with a difficult person: **ourselves**. Examining and changing our own actions is where we can change the cycle of escalating difficult behaviour.*