STYLES OF RESPONDING TO CONFLICT

Suggestions for When to use Each Style

HIGH ASSERTIVENESS

FORCING ('My Way')

OFTEN APPROPRIATE WHEN

- An emergency looms.
- You are convinced you are right, and being right matters more than preserving the relationship.
- The issue is trivial and others do not care what happens.

OFTEN INAPPROPRIATE WHEN

- Collaboration has not yet been attempted.
- Co-operation from others is important.
- Used routinely for most issues.
- Self-respect for others is diminished needlessly.

COLLABORATING ('Our Way')

OFTEN APPROPRIATE WHEN

- The issues and relationship are both significant.
- Co-operation is important.
- A creative outcome is important.
- Time and energy are available for discussion.
- Reasonable hope exists to meet all concerns.

OFTEN INAPPROPRIATE WHEN

- The time is very short.
- You are overloaded with 'processing'.
- The goals of the other person are wrong beyond doubt.
- The issues are unimportant.

COMPROMISING ('Half Way')

OFTEN APPROPRIATE WHEN

- Co-operation is important but time or resources are limited.
- Finding some solution, even less than the best, is better than a complete stalemate.
- Efforts to collaborate will be misunderstood as forcing.

OFTEN INAPPROPRIATE WHEN

- Finding the most creative solution possible is essential.
- You cannot live with the consequences.

LOW AFFIRMATION ← → HIGH AFFIRMATION

LOW ASSERTIVENESS

AVOIDING ('No Way')

OFTEN APPROPRIATE WHEN

- The issue is trivial.
- The relationship is insignificant.
- Time is short and a decision is not needed now.
- You have little power but still wish to block the other person.

OFTEN INAPPROPRIATE WHEN

- You care about both the issues involved and the relationship.
- Used habitually for most issues (leads to explosions or freezing).
- A residue of negative feelings is likely to linger.
- Others would benefit from caring confrontation.

ACCOMMODATING ('Your Way')

OFTEN APPROPRIATE WHEN

- You really do not care about the issue.
- You are powerless but have no wish to block the other person.

OFTEN INAPPROPRIATE WHEN

- You are likely to harbour resentment.
- Used habitually in order to gain acceptance (likely outcome: depression and lack of self respect).
- Others wish to collaborate and will feel like forcers if you accommodate.