SUE HASLEHURST

Handling Conflict

I am the Training and Mediation Support Officer for Bridge Builders Ministries, a small Christian charity which offers courses and workshops, and provides consultancy, facilitation and mediation services.

I came to faith as a university student and have since worked in a wide range of roles and settings (mostly without any obvious logical connection!): with a church in Austria, as a computer analyst/programmer, in two human rights charities and several educational settings: a college for students with physical disabilities, two university libraries and a student advice team.

I've also worked as a mediator in neighbour disputes and as a restorative justice facilitator in probation and prisons, and have delivered training in restorative practice. Most relevantly for Arrow, for ten years I was the primary leader of a Mennonite church in London and while there I eagerly attended all the training offered by Bridge Builders, which had grown out of the Mennonite community.

I now live near the Thames in Oxford, with my husband and two canoes, and belong to a Baptist church. We recently completed a project to walk (in stages) a very wiggly but unbroken line joining Land's End to John O'Groats.

I'm excited to be working for Bridge Builders with its Mennonite link and its commitment to the gospel of reconciliation.

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HANDLING CONFLICT
1. Patterns of Behaviour

Our Experience of Conflict

ASSOCIATED FEELINGS AND TYPES OF BEHAVIOUR

My Basic Assumptions as a Bridge Builder

- Conflict is normal: it's simply there.
- Conflict brings danger and opportunity.
- Conflict may be a sign that people care.

Swimming Against the Tide

- Our culture does not prepare us to deal well with conflict.
- To lead like Jesus means being counter-cultural:
  - ⇒ **Attitude**: open-hearted (Mt 5:44), honouring those who are different.
  - ⇒ **Actions**: taking initiatives to restore strained relationships (Mt 5:10, 5:23, 18:15).

Conflict Patterns

Each person or group of persons has a way of 'doing conflict' that is culturally determined. Earliest influences in our lives are often the strongest because the patterns we learn first are hardest to unlearn.

'Conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals.'

Interpersonal Conflict, Hocker & Wilmot

'Conflict is the tension we experience when a difference is discovered.'

Making Peace With Conflict, Carolyn Schrock-Shenk

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Matthew 5:9

God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body.

1 Corinthians 12:24

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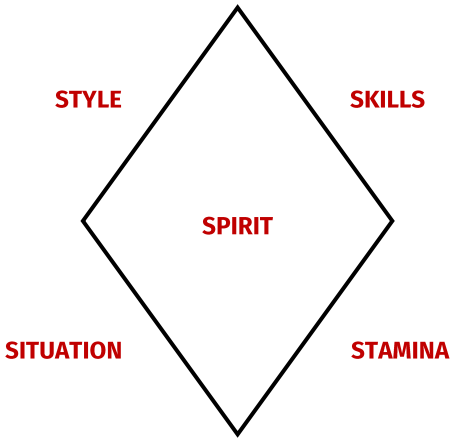
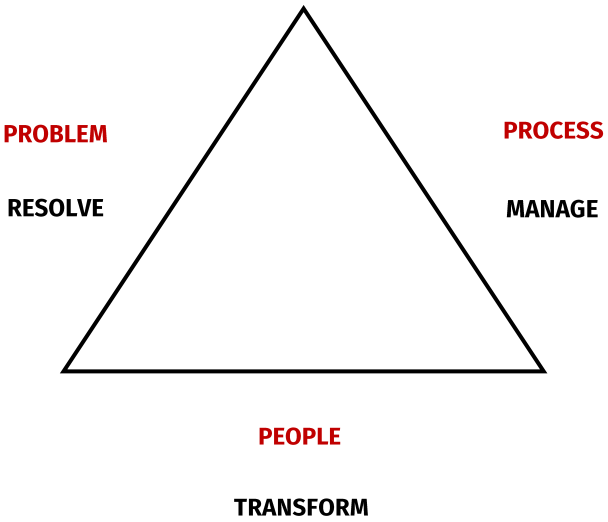
HANDLING CONFLICT
2. Different Ways of Doing Conflict

Who You Are in the Midst of Conflict



KEY Go on learning:
how I can give of my best,
how I can help others give of their best.

DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT



KEY INSIGHTS

Although he [Jesus] was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.

Hebrews 5:8

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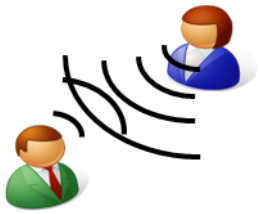
HANDLING CONFLICT
2. Different Ways of Doing Conflict

Accommodating/ Harmonising	**Analysing/ Preserving**
Achieving/ Directing	**Affiliating/ Perfecting**

ACCOMMODATING/ HARMONISING 	**ANALYSING/ PRESERVING**
ACHIEVING/ DIRECTING	**AFFILIATING/ PERFECTING**

Every style can lead.

Every style has strengths and excesses.

Understanding style can help us understand and manage ourselves and understand others.

KEY INSIGHTS

As in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

Romans 12:4-5

'By learning about your style, you will better understand that some things seem natural and are easy for you to learn and some things seem foreign and are difficult for you to learn...

[Understanding style] helps you accept basic differences between yourself and others; it makes you more tolerant. It helps you plan how best to approach another person...'

The Friendly Style Profile, Susan K. Gilmore, Patrick W. Fraleigh

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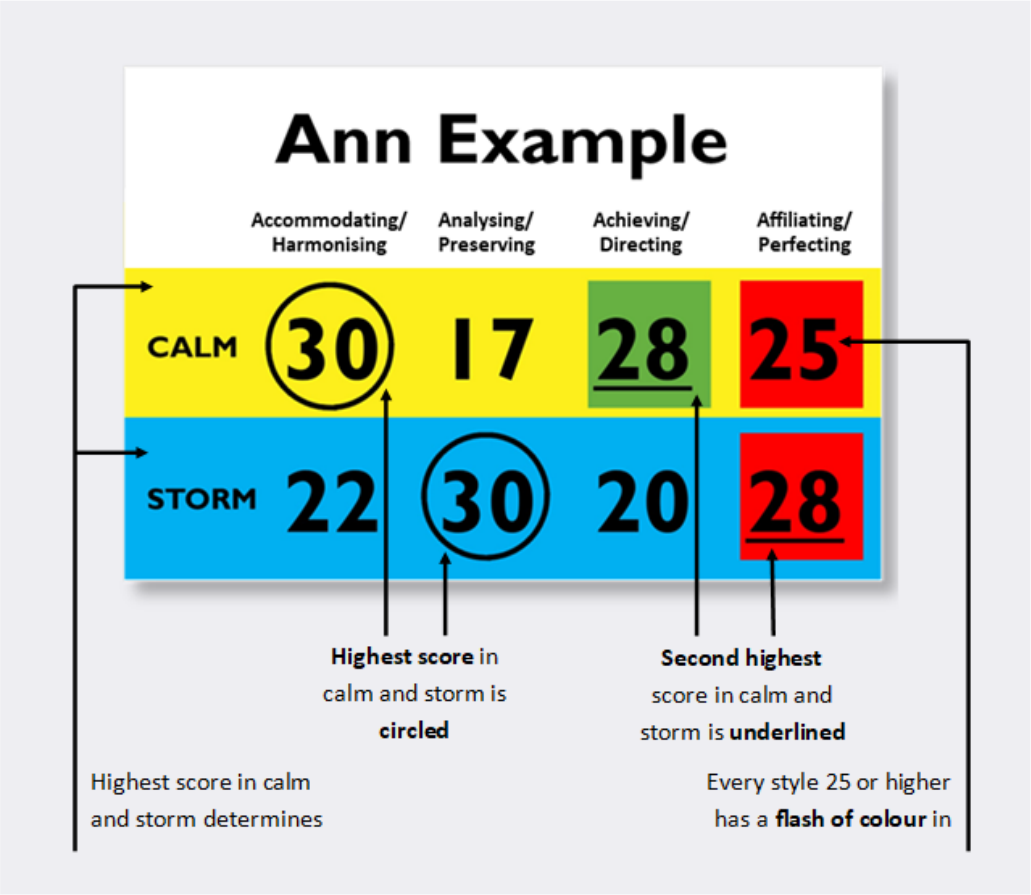
HANDLING CONFLICT
2. Different Ways of Doing Conflict – Understanding Your Card

Each style is summarised as a pair of words and colour-coded.

Everyone draws on all four styles. The numbers give an idea of the ease with which you draw on each style:

- Maximum for any style = 40; minimum = 10; mid-range = 25.
- For a style in 30s: you draw on that style automatically.
- For a style in 20s (esp above 25): you can draw on it readily.
- For a style 10 -19: you have to work at drawing on it.



- Highest score in calm and storm is circled: indicates most preferred style; used to determine background colour of card.
- Second highest score in calm and storm is underlined: indicates back-up style.
- Every style 25 or higher has a flash of colour if not in the background.
- Some people experience a storm shift: the most preferred style changes from calm to storm, indicated by different background colour.
- Even if the preferred style remains the same, any style changing by 5 points or more is a significant shift.

SKILL
Practise noticing style differences and the strengths and excesses of my own style profile.

TOOL
A three-dimensional perspective on conflict (see p2).

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HANDLING CONFLICT
Gilmore Fraleigh Style Profile

An Overview of the Four Styles

Accommodating-Harmonising	
PERSONAL PURPOSE	To help others and to see them happy; to have fun; to avoid disapproval or censure.
PACE AND INTENSITY	Quick and responsive, low intensity.
STRENGTHS	• Sees others' point of view. • Can subordinate own preferences to resolve conflict. • Will spend time to find win/win solution to problems. • Very flexible and adaptable. • Light touch and sense of humour; avoids situation getting overly serious. • Puts people before task. • Genuinely pleased when others are happy. • Quick to forgive and forget.
EXCESSES	• Loses track of personal goals in deference to others. • Avoids conflict at all costs. • Says 'Yes' when means 'No' to get pressure off. • Is wishy-washy, unreliable and inconsistent. • Can be silly or inappropriate. • Can lose track of the task and fail to meet deadlines.

Analysing-Preserving	
PERSONAL PURPOSE	To be safe and certain; to avoid foolishness and failure on the road to success.
PACE AND INTENSITY	Slow and steady, low intensity.
STRENGTHS	• Willing to pore over the detail before taking action. • Knows value of tried and tested methods. • Won't get caught up in impractical scheme. • Completes on time and keeps track of time. • Will forego expression of own feelings for sake of progress. • Rarely confrontational. • Enjoys sorting data.
EXCESSES	• Analysis-paralysis: inflexible and indecisive. • Unwilling to try new things. • Pessimistic and suspicious. • Preoccupied with time. • Overwhelmed by emotionality in others. • Can be cold or aloof. • Can overwhelm others with details.

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HANDLING CONFLICT
Gilmore Fraleigh Style Profile

An Overview of the Four Styles

Achieving-Directing	
PERSONAL PURPOSE	To demonstrate competence; to address challenges, have impact and get things done.
PACE AND INTENSITY	Fast and forceful, high intensity.
STRENGTHS	• Accepts challenges and takes risks. • Source of ideas, options and new possibilities. • Optimistic and forward looking. • Takes the initiative. • High energy and endurance. • Appears capable and wins confidence of others. • Inspires others to perform to a high level. • Expects accountability for results.
EXCESSES	• Tackles non-feasible tasks. • Innovates to avoid boredom. • Unrealistic about limitations of time and resources. • Gets over-extended and over-committed; overworks. • Intimidates others. • Unwilling to delegate. • Manipulates others' loyalty. • Sees end justifying the means.

Affiliating-Perfecting	
PERSONAL PURPOSE	To work hard in the service of a noble cause or respected leader; to improve self, others, the world.
PACE AND INTENSITY	Urgent, high intensity.
STRENGTHS	• Willing to put in extra effort to produce excellence. • Wants to learn from past and to do better next time. • Can challenge if principle or process are not right. • Cooperative and compliant with respected authority. • Empathises, compassionate and understanding of others. • Committed and loyal team player. • Service-minded and selfless.
EXCESSES	• Fault-finding, never satisfied. • Ruminates on flaws / failures. • Can be stubborn, inflexible, and unable to compromise. • Defensive or reactive to negative feedback. • Preoccupied by others' pain. • Disabled by doubts about own skills and experience. • Over-serious, martyred.

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HANDLING CONFLICT
Gilmore Fraleigh Style Profile

Compatible and Contradictory Elements of the Styles

Each style shares aspects which are in common with the other three styles, and other aspects which are at odds with them. It's helpful to understand:

- Within you, how aspects from different styles may be interacting; and
- Between you and someone with a different style, how your styles may be interacting.

Accommodating-Harmonising AND **Analysing-Preserving**

COMPATIBLE ELEMENTS

- Avoid confrontation and conflict.
- Avoid lengthy discussion of deep personal feelings.
- Avoid hostile discussion of strong negative issues.

CONTRADICTORY ELEMENTS

- Warm, friendly, open **vs.**
  Cool, private, reserved.
- Fun-loving, playful, sociable **vs.**
  Serious, quiet, solitary.
- Don't like getting locked into a rigid plan **vs.**
  Have a plan and stick to it.
- Process more important than outcome **vs.**
  Outcome more important than process.

Accommodating-Harmonising AND **Achieving-Directing**

COMPATIBLE ELEMENTS

- Full of ideas and ready to act.
- Optimistic, positive, hopeful.
- Routine and follow-through are boring and unpleasant.

CONTRADICTORY ELEMENTS

- Want to please everyone **vs.**
  Want to get the job done.
- Acquiescent **vs.**
  Assertive.
- Easily distracted **vs.**
  Doggedly determined.

Accommodating-Harmonising AND **Affiliating-Perfecting**

COMPATIBLE ELEMENTS

- Seek affirmation and approval of others.
- Sensitive to feelings of others.
- Prefer not to work in isolation.
- Process more important than outcome.

CONTRADICTORY ELEMENTS

- Minimise problems vs.
  Emphasise problems.
- 'It's not so bad' vs.
  'It's worse than you think'.
- Expedient vs.
  Perfectionist.
- Loyalty to the team vs.
  Loyalty to the leader.

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HANDLING CONFLICT
Gilmore Fraleigh Style Profile

Compatible and Contradictory Elements of the Styles

Analysing-Preserving	AND	Achieving-Directing
COMPATIBLE ELEMENTS		**CONTRADICTORY ELEMENTS**
• Task focussed and results oriented. • Rational-thinking and problem-solving. • Seek concrete evidence of progress towards goals.		• Slow paced **vs.** Fast paced. • Want to limit **vs.** Want to expand. • Cautious and pessimistic **vs.** Risk-taking and optimistic. • One-dimensional **vs.**

Analysing-Preserving	AND	Affiliating-Perfecting
COMPATIBLE ELEMENTS		**CONTRADICTORY ELEMENTS**
• Lengthy data-gathering and analysis prior to decision-making: both are question-askers. • Appreciation of history, context, principles, ideals, expectations attending any issue. • Focus on the weakness, vulnerability and uncertainty of any idea or system.		• Emotional sameness and stability **vs.** Emotional intensity and volatility. • Unaware of personal needs **vs.** Preoccupied with personal needs. • Detached, and keeps own counsel **vs.** Attached, and consults with trusted authority.

Achieving-Directing	AND	Affiliating-Perfecting
COMPATIBLE ELEMENTS		**CONTRADICTORY ELEMENTS**
• Prefer intense, complex stimuli • Often provoke conflict; often lack a mechanism for avoiding confrontation. • Passionate commitment to people, ideas and projects. • Energy and enthusiasm.		• Prefer to lead and monitor **vs.** Prefer to be led and monitored. • Hard and unfeeling **vs.** Wear heart on one's sleeve. • Task and outcome focussed **vs.** People and process focussed.

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HANDLING CONFLICT
Gilmore Fraleigh Style Profile

Bringing out the best in others' styles

Accommodating-Harmonising

For getting the best out of someone with an **Accommodating-Harmonising** style, here is advice that person might give you:

- Be personable and friendly with me before focussing on tasks to be done or problems to resolve.
- Affirm my strengths, especially if sharing criticism – sandwich concerns with praise or positive acknowledgement of what I do and who I am.
- Send a clear message that you value my perspective (especially if different from yours), and enquire about my preferences.
- If you're skilled, use a light touch of humour to draw me back from excess.
- Offer help in areas that I may find difficult, or my potential excess, such as:
  - ⇒ Timing, deadlines, and focus.
  - ⇒ Conflict and confrontation.
  - ⇒ Inappropriate humour.
- Provide reassurance and state clearly if you want to hear a different view from your own, or 'bad' news.

Analysing-Preserving

For getting the best out of someone with an **Analysing-Preserving** style, here is advice that person might give you:

- Avoid surprising or pressuring me, and use a two-step process:
  1. Provide the context and background information.
  2. Give me time before seeking a decision.
- Aim to have lots of information available to answer my questions if you want me to accept your proposal.
- Be prepared to let me explore "worst-case scenarios" and fall-back options, and to want to consider what will be done to avoid problems occurring.
- Receive my questioning as information-gathering, rather than indicating any disapproval or distrust.
- Respect my emotional reserve as a basis for my stability and reliability; don't see it as any lack of concern on my part.
- Focus on tasks to complete; avoid pressing me for information on my emotions or personal matters.

Achieving-Directing

For getting the best out of someone with an **Achieving-Directing** style, here is advice that person might give you:

- Be clear in explaining your own purposes, and check my readiness to receive feedback.
- Respond promptly and clearly, even forcefully. If you feel rushed, be direct and let me know that you think the matter merits more time to process, or that you need me to slow down.
- Affirm what you value about my position, then clarify where you differ. Don't be worried about disagreeing with me.
- If you sense that you're not being listened to, try to:
  1. Summarise my position to show that you understand it.
  2. Explain that you would like to be heard as well, when I am ready to listen.
- Continue to stand firm in confronting me and see the matter through. Redirect me by stating your purpose and paraphrasing my view.

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HANDLING CONFLICT
Gilmore Fraleigh Style Profile

Bringing out the best in others' styles

Affiliating-Perfecting	
For getting the best out of someone with an **Affiliating-Perfecting** style, here is advice that person might give you:	• Try to cope with, and accept , expressions of my intense negative feelings and my confusion and anxiety. • Understand that as a strong ethical person I can feel overwhelmed and inadequate at times. • Be prepared to listen to me for as long as it takes, but gently set clear boundaries if needed, particularly if I seem stuck in ruminating/obsessing. • Recognise that I may take time to process and understand my own strong feelings, and don't press for information too quickly. • Own up to your own shortcomings or flaws, which will help me get mine in perspective. Laugh at yourself, but not at me! • Affirm the significance and value of my concerns. Reassure and listen – but avoid arguing and debating, otherwise I'll think you're trying to minimise my concerns.

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HANDLING CONFLICT
2. Different Ways of Doing Conflict

If **Accommodating-Harmonising** is Your Predominant Style...

You are **vulnerable to excess when**:
You sense tension or disapproval, especially in an important relationship.

- You feel a relationship is under threat.
- Conversation is intense or confrontational, especially if others jumped straight into it without first allowing time for informal conversation.
- You are held accountable or asked to work to schedules and deadlines.
- Your attempts to hint at your preferences go unnoticed/are ignored.
- You're enjoying being in the limelight.

Some possible **signs that you are 'going into excess'** might include:
- You're being overly smiley, sociable and chatty.
- You're agreeing too readily with others, especially to reduce conflict or pain.
- You want to address a problem in a relationship but are paralysed by a fear of making things worse.
- You're losing track of yourself and your own feelings and preferences.
- You're losing track of time/money/other constraints.
- You're acting inappropriately silly or trying too hard to entertain.

Some **things you could do to avoid excess** might include:

Internally:
- Notice your own feelings and work out your own preferences. Practise making preference statements.
- Be willing to take responsibility for your own position even if others may disagree.

With others:
- Ask for reassurances that the relationship is still intact and the other is willing to work with you to resolve problems.
- State your preferences, and what you are willing to contribute to addressing any problems.
- If conflict escalates, ask for some time to clarify your own thoughts and preferences.
- If you prefer to have time for informal conversation before/after getting down to business, arrive a little early/plan to have time for social chat afterwards.
- Ask a trusted friend to notice clues that you're operating in your style's excess and to help you clarify your goals and preferences and what steps you could take to address your concerns.

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HANDLING CONFLICT
2. Different Ways of Doing Conflict

If **Analysing-Preserving** is Your Predominant Style...

You are **vulnerable to excess when**:

- You are asked for a response without clear parameters or sufficient information/time to think it through.
- You are not taken seriously.
- You are asked to move quickly towards change or away from agreed process.
- You are concerned that something of historical or personal value could be lost.
- Conversation is intense, fast-paced or confrontational.
- You are concerned that the situation could result in you looking silly.

Some possible **signs that you are 'going into excess'** might include:

- You're withdrawing, verbally, emotionally or physically.
- You're moving, thinking, deciding much more slowly than others.
- You're getting glum and eeyore-ish.
- You are increasingly inflexible e.g. insisting on policy, schedule or procedure.
- You feel put on the spot and can't think at all. You tune out of discussions and decisions.
- You have difficulty making decisions as you are stuck in "gathering data" mode ("analysis paralysis") or fear the possibility of conflict.

Some **things you could do to avoid excess** might include:

Internally:

- Acknowledge that you need time, information and calm in order to think clearly. Work out how to find the space you need.
- Practise trying to see the positive aspects of new ideas.

With others:

- If pace, conflict or volume of information start to escalate ask for time to think about it.
- If you ask for more time, re-schedule for a definite time and stick to it. (This style has a tendency to avoid conflict but repeated delays are likely to provoke an excess response in others.)
- Inform others of your schedule and how and when you prefer to be contacted.
- Explain your style to others and teach them the two-step approach: ask them to make their request, provide the information you need, then leave you to think it over before they return for your answer.
- This style tends not to focus on itself so ask a trusted friend to notice when you are low or fatigued.

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HANDLING CONFLICT
2. Different Ways of Doing Conflict

If **Achieving-Directing** is Your Predominant Style...

You are **vulnerable to excess when**:
- Your plans are delayed or stopped by circumstances beyond your control.
- Your plans are blocked for reasons you see as trivial or lacking in courage and vision.
- You are slowed down because others are slower to decide, do not agree or are slow to do their part.
- You have too little responsibility, challenge, accountability and novelty.
- There are too many challenges at once for you to be able to succeed at them all.
- You perceive yourself as being mocked or not respected.

Some possible **signs that you are 'going into excess'** might include:
- You're moving, thinking, deciding, speaking much more quickly than others and speaking in a loud voice.
- You're interrupting other people and ignoring difference in order to move the conversation along quickly.
- You're ignoring non-verbal signals from others.
- You're ignoring others' concerns as you urge action and risk-taking.
- You're feeling impatient and exasperated at the perceived slowness or incompetence of others.
- You're pushing through your own agenda for the sake of speed.

Some **things you could do to avoid excess** might include:

Internally:
- Notice your pace, volume and body language and their impact on others – e.g. defensiveness, hurt feelings, withdrawal – and how these affect your work together.
- Practise seeing the best in others' contributions.
- Learn and practise breathing exercises to help you slow down.

With Others:
- Invite others to tell you honestly if you are becoming pushy or moving too fast and learn to notice and respond to this feedback and requests for you to slow down.
- Paraphrase and summarise – this slows things down and builds your understanding and empathy.
- Ask others to summarise the purpose and progress of projects you are working on together – this confirms shared goals (even amidst style differences) and highlights achievements.
- Familiarise yourself with the style material so that you can make work constructively with people with different style profiles.
- Review your commitments with a trusted friend to help you keep focus and decide whether to accept another project.

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HANDLING CONFLICT
2. Different Ways of Doing Conflict

If **Affiliating-Perfecting** is Your Predominant Style...

You are **vulnerable to excess** when:
- You're asked to work alone/independently.
- Others aren't trying as hard as you or don't seem to care as much as you or are taking unfair advantage.
- The situation – e.g. deadlines, workload – prevents you doing your best.
- Others' lack of effort or co-operation leaves you afraid that you will be seen as incompetent.
- You are criticised in ways which seem unfair e.g. not acknowledging what you've done well.
- Others minimise the seriousness of problems you are highlighting.

Some possible **signs that you are 'going into excess'** might include:
- An increase in self-critical language e.g. 'I'm useless ... It's all my fault.'
- Increasing use of 'Should', 'Ought'.
- You're criticising others.
- A sense of doom and negativity, catastrophic language ('Everything is awful').
- Feelings of martyrdom and self-righteousness e.g. 'Only I am left', 'Only I am
- standing up for...'
- You've lost any sense of humour or joy.

Some **things you could do to avoid excess** might include:

Internally:
- Notice your self-critical and catastrophic language and your "rabbit hole" rumination; practise setting limits to this.
- Practise seeing the positives in the situation or in others' contributions and perspectives; question your assumptions that there is only one "right" way to look at particular issue.
- Practise balancing perfectionism with pragmatism and acknowledge to yourself that you are doing a good job.
- Build relaxation and exercise into your routine.

With Others:
- Ask someone – ideally outside the situation - to "just sit and listen" while you go over what is bothering you.
- Ask others to refocus on purpose and the big picture.
- Explain you do best when you can make a contribution and ask how you can contribute to the purpose.
- Tell others what you need in order to remain centred or focussed and to do your best job.

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HANDLING CONFLICT
3. Gilmore-Fraleigh Style Profile – More on Excess

Going into excess in a style means that the behaviours that are strengths in moderation become liabilities when those style behaviours are too frequent and/or too intense. You can go into excess whether or not you are experiencing storm. It is true, however, that people are more likely to experience the storm shift and go into excess at the same time.

For each style, there are **recognisable patterns of behaviour** as they move towards excess:

If **Accommodating-Harmonising** is your predominant style...

Clever	➡	Tricky	➡	Deceptive
Sympathetic	➡	Fickle	➡	Wishy-washy
Flexible	➡	Inconsistent	➡	Unreliable
Affectionate	➡	Fawning	➡	Grovelling
Innovative	➡	Changeable	➡	Erratic

If **Analysing-Preserving** is your predominant style...

Reserved	➡	Guarded	➡	Unresponsive
Careful	➡	Wary	➡	Obsessive
Cool	➡	Unfriendly	➡	Rejecting
Cautious	➡	Pessimistic	➡	Defeated
Systematic	➡	Ritualistic	➡	Compulsive

If **Achieving-Directing** is your predominant style...

Lead	➡	Dominate	➡	Oppress
Challenge	➡	Argue	➡	Fight
Stimulate	➡	Jar	➡	Overwhelm
Self-assured	➡	Overbearing	➡	Ruthless
Eager	➡	Impatient	➡	Driven

If **Affiliating-Perfecting** is your predominant style...

Responsive	➡	Critical	➡	Righteous
Concerned	➡	Fussy	➡	Furious
Innocent	➡	Gullible	➡	Victimised
Hopeful	➡	Disillusioned	➡	Despairing
Contemplative	➡	Defensive	➡	Martyred

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HANDLING CONFLICT
4. Developing Resilient Leadership – Thinking in Systems

KEY CONCEPTS OF FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY

A family acts as a dynamic emotional system.

Patterns of emotional reactivity learned in the family are replicated in other groups.

Whatever role you played in the emotional system of your family, you will tend to adopt a similar role in other systems.

ANXIETY
Anxiety is an **automatic response** that we experience as emotional discomfort or, when it is intense, as pain. Anxiety can be **acute** or **chronic**.

- **Chronic** – some level of chronic background anxiety is present in everyone; we all have worries. In some individuals this level of chronic anxiety can be high.
- **Acute** – we all face times of acute anxiety, at times of crisis or emergency, at different levels.

High anxiety provokes self-preservation – When we get highly anxious, we want safety; we don't respond well to insight, reason, or love. **Instincts take over**. Being nice or reasonable is not going to cut it.

BRAIN STRUCTURE
In a simplified view, the brain has three principal parts, each with a different function:

- Reacting (reptilian brain) – survival centre, driven by instinct.
- Feeling (mammalian brain) – emotional centre, builds connection with others.
- Thinking (neocortical brain) – reflective centre, allows to imagine, problem-solve and make complex decisions.

The **thinking brain has the potential to regulate the lower parts of the brain**. Under high anxiety, we may find the reactive part of the brain overriding the thinking part, overwhelming our reflective capabilities.

In relationship systems, **the primary power generally belongs to the intensity of the emotional forces, not to the 'issues'** or subject matter.

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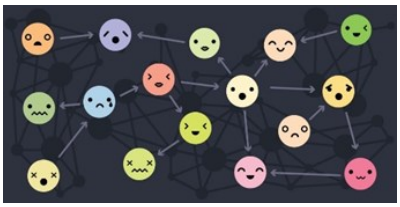
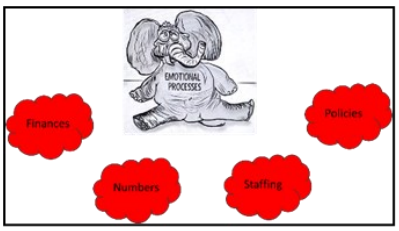
HANDLING CONFLICT
4. Developing Resilient Leadership – Thinking in Systems

KEY IDEAS IN A SYSTEMS APPROACH

Focus on emotional system, not symptom – Instead of focussing on the symptoms (often difficult behaviours), be curious about what is going on in the system.



Look for emotional processes, not content – Instead of trying to fix the content of people's issues, think about the emotional process that lies beneath them.



Work on self, not others – Focus on managing your own reactivity, rather than trying to change others.

Think Systems - Watch Process - Work on Self

Patterns of Reactivity

REACTIVE BEHAVIOUR
In relationship systems, the primary power generally belongs to the intensity of the emotional forces, not to the 'issues' or subject matter. This is because a lot of human behaviour is essentially reactive. Typical reactive responses are:

- Defend.
- Attack.
- Withdraw.

Emotional maturity is a journey of learning to make more intentional responses.

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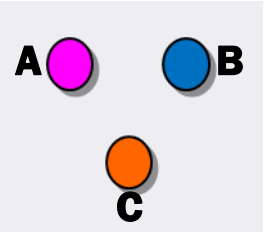
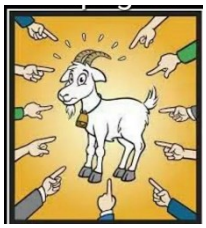
HANDLING CONFLICT
4. Developing Resilient Leadership – Patters of Reactivity

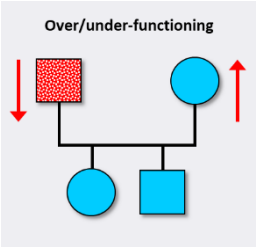
Triangles – As a means of reducing anxiety, a pair of people will draw in a third person.



Scapegoat (also called the "burden bearer" or "identified patient") - There is often an individual in whom the system's stress or anxiety has surfaced.



Over-/under-functioning A reciprocal way of holding anxiety, where one party takes on disproportionate responsibility and the other relies disproportionately on the other.



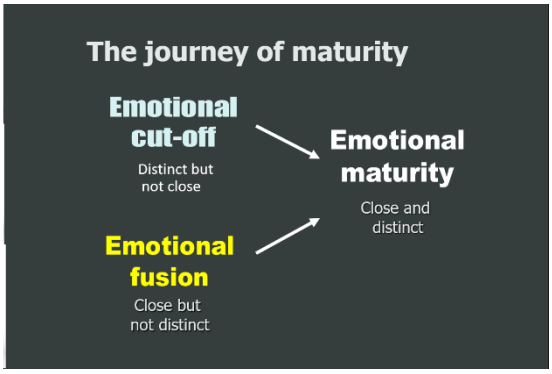
Differentiation – Differentiation is the capacity to resist being infected by others' anxiety and infecting others with our own anxiety. A highly differentiated person has the consistent capacity to act out of his/her own beliefs and principles while staying in important relationships.

Differentiation

Family systems theory assumes the existence of two life-forces:

- **Individuality** – the need to be a separate person.
- **Togetherness** – the need to remain emotionally connected with others.

Differentiation is the process by which individuality and togetherness are managed, so that the individual becomes distinct from the family, yet remains part of it.



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HANDLING CONFLICT
4. Developing Resilient Leadership – Differentiation

DIFFERENTIATION OF SELF
A well differentiated person has the capacity to be in good emotional contact with others and act according to principles, values and beliefs.

A poorly differentiated person allows thinking to be governed by emotional reactivity.

Highly Differentiated

IN RELATION TO OTHER PEOPLE	BASIS FOR THINKING AND ACTING
Rarely anxious about others' reactions	Grounded in clear beliefs and goals
At ease with difference	Makes principled choices
Feels free to act on own initiative	Takes responsibility for self
Makes few demands	

Poorly Differentiated

IN RELATION TO OTHER PEOPLE	BASIS FOR THINKING AND ACTING
Anxiously focussed on or about others	Reacting to anxiety
Wants to keep things 'comfortable'	Goes with gut feeling or group opinion
Over-responsive to others' opinions	Locates problems in others
Makes great demands on the other	

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HANDLING CONFLICT
4. Developing Resilient Leadership – Leadership in the Church

The emotional system in any congregation is powerful, and leaders are part of that emotional system yet need to be able to take a more objective view of it.

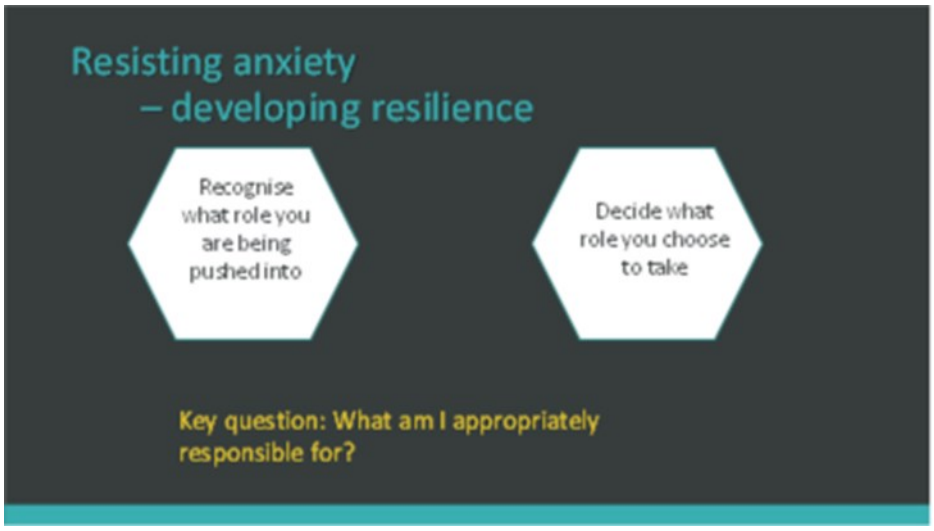
Anxiety in a system is highly contagious. A leader can have a significant role in passing on the contagion or, alternately, being part of the 'immune system' that contributes to the resilience of the system and the individuals who are part of it. Focussing on self and on recognising and managing our own anxious responses can significantly impact the anxiety levels within a system.

Mature leadership, a balanced, self-differentiated approach, is marked by:

- Clear self-definition, convictions, purpose and identity.
- Knowing what I am responsible for – and what I am not responsible for.
- Focus on self, rather than attempting to fix or change others.
- Knowing where I end and the other begins.
- The capacity to stay relatively calm in the face of different views, anxiety or unhelpful words and behaviour from others.
- The ability to model both intimacy and clear boundaries – to maintain the paradoxical tension between the two.
- The ability to stay connected with those with whom one disagrees and dislikes.
- Teamworking, sharing the load and drawing on the wisdom of others who are treated as peers.
- Resilience, the capacity to stay on course in the face of opposition and disappointment.
- Humility, the willingness to recognise one's limitations, mistakes and need for others.
- Courage, a willingness to rock the boat at the right time, and disrupt the status quo, especially when faced by injustice, wrong doing or the need to change.

RESISTING ANXIETY

Leaders can develop greater resilience in facing the consequent challenges if they see reactive behaviour as a natural response to heightened anxiety, and seek to understand the systemic dimension of group behaviour. Being aware of what we are appropriately responsible for enables us to resist the anxiety projected onto us by others.



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