

PRODUCTIVE CONFLICT PROFILE



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INTRODUCTION

What is conflict?

Sarah, when you think of workplace conflict, what comes to mind? Arguing? Compromise? Finding solutions? Do you think of gossiping and hurt feelings? Or colleagues taking ownership for mistakes?

Whatever you think of, conflict comes down to **a difference of opinions involving strong emotions**. It can range from brief, explosive disputes to subtle, long-lasting issues. Either way, conflict triggers different behaviors in each of us, from destructive to productive responses. And while conflict can be very uncomfortable, it is a natural and inevitable part of relationships.

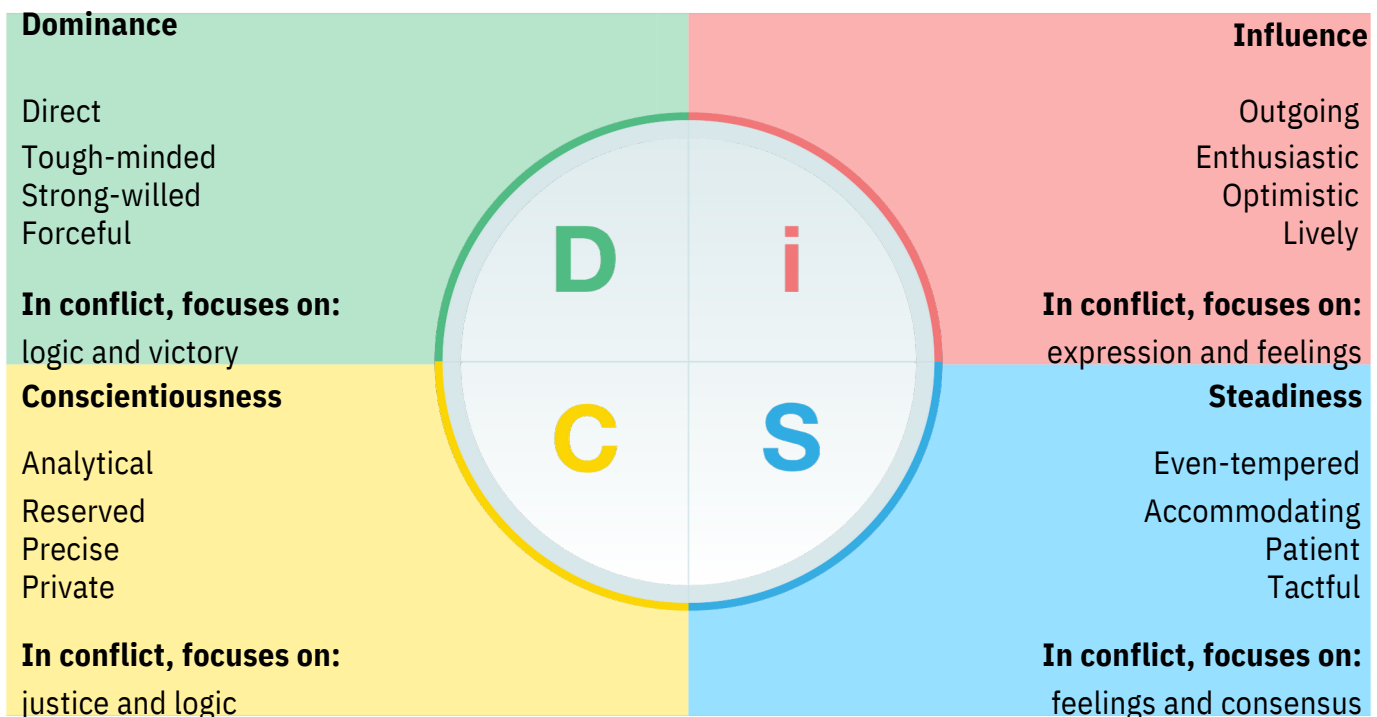
Because conflict will look different depending on the people and situations involved, there is no one-size-fits-all answer to making it productive. Instead the solution starts with you.

Everything DiSC® Productive Conflict is designed to improve self-awareness around conflict behaviors. It isn't about conflict resolution; rather, it's focused on helping you curb destructive thoughts and behaviors so that conflict can become more productive, improving your workplace results and relationships.

Cornerstone Principles

- ▶ Conflict is an **inevitable** part of workplace relationships, and it can also be **productive**.
- ▶ Your conflict interactions may be influenced by **other factors**: hierarchy, culture (organizational or social), business atmosphere, personal experiences, etc.
- ▶ Your response to conflict situations is **in your own control**. You cannot control how others respond to conflict.
- ▶ Learning about other people's DiSC® styles can help you **understand their conflict behaviors** and how they may differ from your own.
You can have **productive conflict** by using DiSC to more effectively engage with others.

The DiSC® model



Your DiSC® style: CD

Sarah, your dot and shading say a lot about how you respond in conflict. Because your dot is located in the C region, but near the D region, you have a CD style. Your shading indicates your priorities and where you focus your energy. During conflict, you prioritize justification, control, and objectivity.

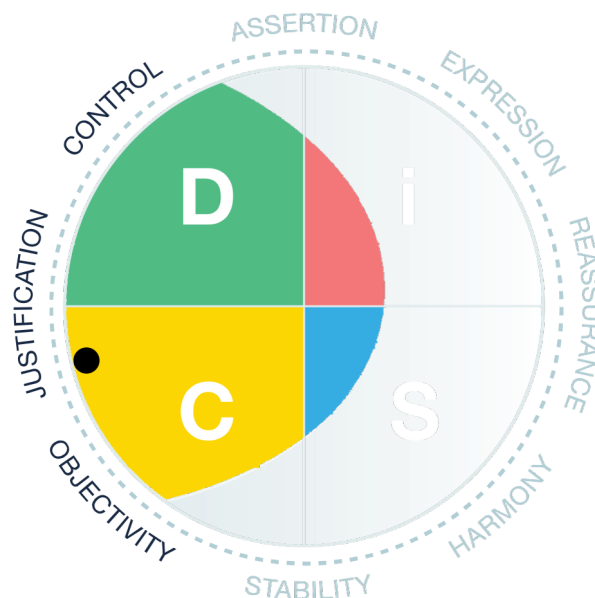
As someone with the CD style, you probably place value on **justifying** your stance in conflict. In fact, because you take such pride in your critical-thinking abilities, you may be convinced that your viewpoint is the only valid one. Given that you have such high standards, you probably have very strong opinions about how things should be. Because of this, you may unintentionally give off a strong disapproving vibe when people are not acting according to those standards. And, as you might expect, this can sometimes make people a little defensive.

Most likely, being efficient and in **control** is a strong driver for you, pushing you to get things done quickly and correctly. Therefore, you're likely unwilling to gloss over problems. To you, confronting something head-on is more efficient than dancing around the issue just to spare someone's feelings. You want to ensure that the real issues get targeted. However, it may become counterproductive and less efficient in the long run if your blunt approach leaves others defensive and questioning whether you're even considering their opinions.

Similar to others with the CD style, one of your most predictable responses to a conflict situation may often be heavy, **objective** analysis. That is, you dive into finding all of the points that will be needed to counter the other person's arguments. You may play out all of the various ways that a disagreement could go, making sure you'll come out on top at each and every turn. Unfortunately, this process can sometimes build up such an emotional wall that any openness toward compromise disappears. With that said, your focus on evidence and proof can serve you well in conflict as it helps you and others separate emotions from facts and zero in on the main issues.

In most circumstances, you probably value proficiency, and you tend to hold high standards for yourself, which you push yourself to meet. Because you put so much effort into mastering your work, you may become defensive when challenged. In response, people may react to you with intense emotions or, on the opposite end, completely withdraw from you. Either way, these responses can be counterproductive in conflict as they tend to draw situations out and delay finding a resolution. However, your drive to fully understand things may prompt you to step back, reflect, and revisit the issue to seek resolution.

While conflict can be uncomfortable and unwanted, it can help solve problems, as long as everyone feels heard and issues are resolved in a healthy way. When used constructively, being efficient and in control of your work as well as focusing on objective information to help justify your points of view can be great assets in resolving conflict.



Your dot location is near the edge of the circle, characteristics associated with the CD style.

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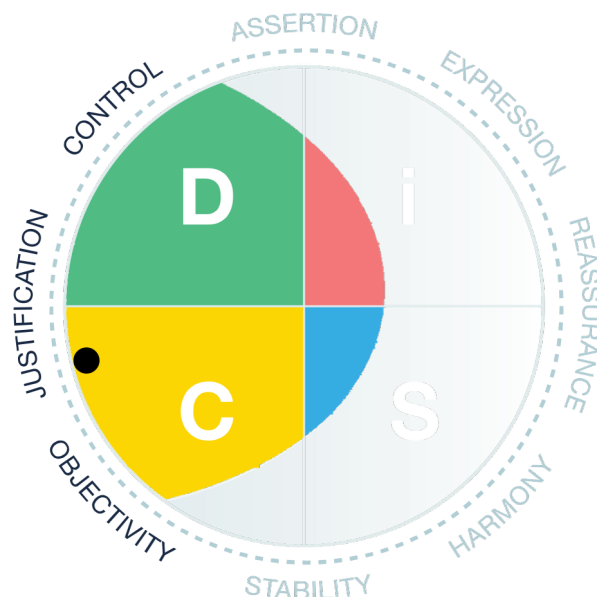
YOUR DiSC® STYLE IN CONFLICT

What is important to you during conflict?

Different people find different aspects of conflict to be most significant. For instance, it's probably important to you, like other people with the CD style, that disagreements be solved objectively and that everyone can reasonably justify where they stand. It's counterproductive to have discussions go spiraling out of control, so you'll often take charge of the situation instead.

You may **value** many of the following approaches during conflict:

- Catching errors or flaws in arguments
- Providing in-depth analysis
- Justifying your point of view
- Dealing with people who are straightforward
- Using sharp, critical-thinking skills
- Being right
- Staying objective
- Looking at issues rationally
- Guiding the conversation



What drains your energy during conflict?

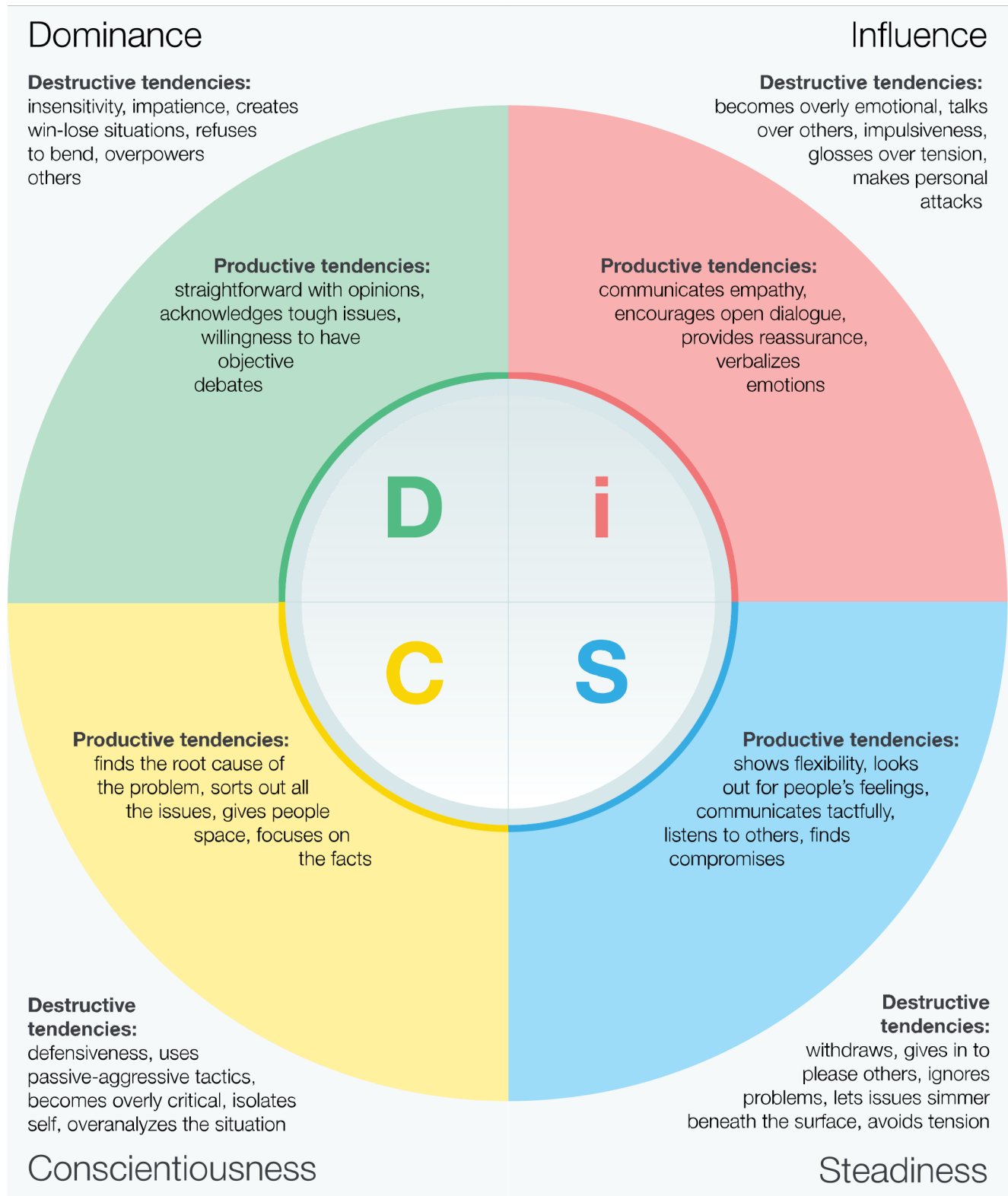
Then there are also those aspects of conflict that are particularly stressful for you. Because you tend to focus on logic and objectivity, you may find it frustrating when people can't back up their claims with substantial reasoning. Similarly, when you ask critical questions or probe for answers, it may irritate you that some people lash out or just shut down. Finally, if the discussion gets off track, you may become quite impatient.

Many of the following approaches or behaviors may be **stressful** for you during conflict:

- Having little time and space to reflect
- Being faced with emotional or erratic people
- Having people dismiss the logic behind your perspective
- Having your competence challenged
- Being forced to accept inferior ideas or compromises
- Missing the details or facts of a situation
- Dealing with people who beat around the bush
- Having to display empathy or emotional support
- Giving feedback without appearing overly critical

OVERVIEW OF DiSC® IN CONFLICT

Just like DiSC can help you understand how you handle conflict, it can also help you understand others. The overview below shows the destructive and productive conflict tendencies that are typical for each DiSC style.



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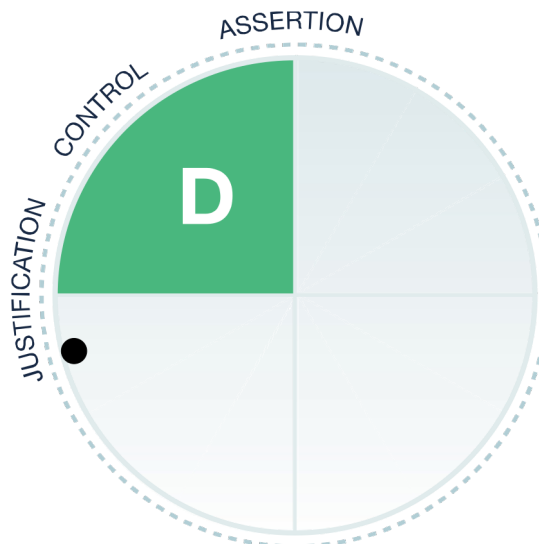
CONFLICT WITH THE D STYLE

What drives the D style in conflict?

Imagine you're entangled in a conflict with someone who has the D style and shares your priority of having **control**. Like you, she cuts right to the chase and pushes really strongly for her opinions. You probably appreciate her straightforward approach. However, you both want to take charge of the discussion and may wind up in a power struggle.

This individual tends to **assert** herself during conflict. When she sees a problem, she's not afraid to tackle it head-on. She doesn't spend a lot of time hemming and hawing over what should be said or done—she just takes care of it. Since she tends to confront and resolve issues with immediacy, she may grow impatient with your desire to sort through all the details.

Furthermore, you may appreciate that she doesn't take things at face value. Her tendency to come up with airtight **justification** for her side of the story matches your own tendency to offer a rationale for your argument. Similarly, she will often dissect and counter your position, and since you're usually up for a fair debate, you'll likely reciprocate.



Compared to you

Compared to you, people with the D style tend to be:

- More likely to address problems quickly
- Just as likely to question others' conclusions
- Equally likely to be skeptical
- Just as put off by illogical arguments
- Equally likely to be forceful and direct
- Less concerned with analyzing the situation

How can you have productive conflict with the D style?

Your "D" coworkers tend to be quite blunt, saying exactly what's on their minds. At times, your relentless questioning may lead them to believe that you're being overly critical. And if they become impassioned or aggressive, you'll likely withdraw. Therefore, to have productive conflict with the D style, consider the following:

- Reflect on the situation and be willing to compromise.
- Be open and frank about where you stand.
- Don't prolong the conflict by withdrawing.

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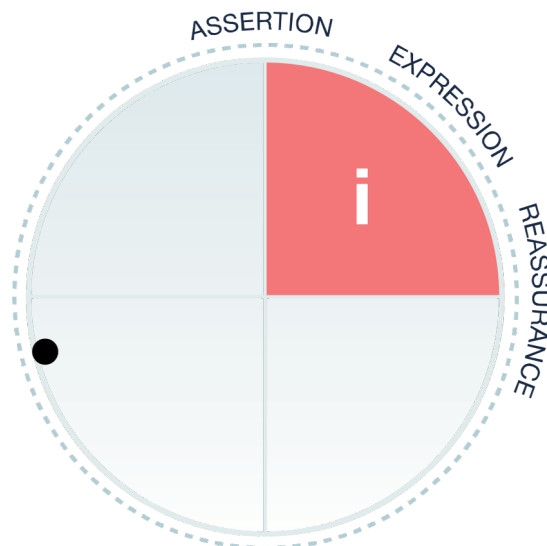
CONFLICT WITH THE i STYLE

What drives the i style in conflict?

Now, imagine you are in a conflict with someone who has an i style. He does his best to keep things friendly and upbeat. However, he's so focused on **expressing** himself that he may become emotional and lash out when he feels threatened. In contrast, you dislike emotional outbursts, but you may escalate the conflict by trying to overwhelm him with your logical arguments.

Furthermore, he may come across as somewhat more accepting and warm than you usually are. Because being well-liked and on good terms is important to him, he'll want **reassurance** during or after the conflict that your relationship is still okay. You're more reserved and interested in focusing on the task at hand, so his need for this level of warmth may seem irrelevant or unprofessional to you.

This individual tends to easily **assert** his opinions during disagreements. He is usually confident and optimistic about his perspectives and willing to share what's on his mind. However, he doesn't tend to back up his arguments with logic like you do, and you may find this particularly frustrating when you're in a disagreement with him.



Compared to you

Compared to you, people with the i style tend to be:

- More likely to assert personal views
- More worried about interpersonal turmoil
- More animated and expressive
- Less logic-focused and objective
- Less focused on being in control
- Less blunt or challenging

How can you have productive conflict with the i style?

Unlike you, people with the i style tend to openly express their feelings and opinions. On the other hand, you're probably very deliberate in conveying your message and may view their emotional displays as misleading or distracting. Therefore, to have productive conflict with the i style, consider the following:

- Share your feelings when it is appropriate to do so.
- Let them express themselves, even if it's uncomfortable for you.
- Realize that they may need emotional reassurance.

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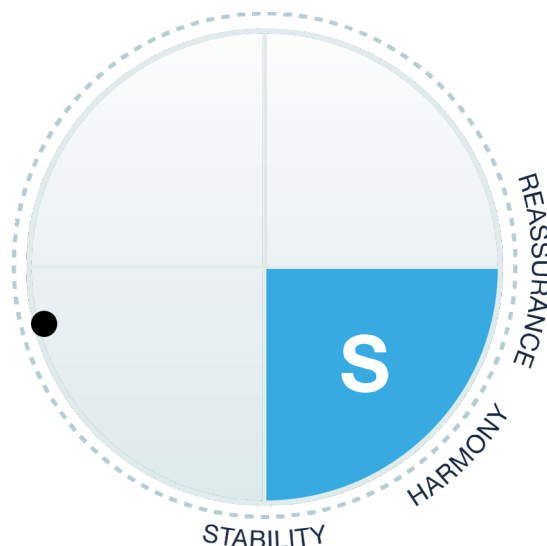
CONFLICT WITH THE S STYLE

What drives the S style in conflict?

Now, imagine you're in conflict with someone who has the S style. He prioritizes **harmony** and wants everyone to get along. However, you're usually willing to bring up issues and push for your opinions. When you do, he will likely cave in quickly, even if he doesn't really agree with what you say.

You probably notice that he makes attempts to smooth things over with you during and after conflict. This is because providing and receiving **reassurance** is important to him. While you're unlikely to take things personally, he tends to hang on to hurt feelings and may worry about whether your relationship is still okay.

Furthermore, he prioritizes **stability**, so when tension arises, he may want to return things to normal as soon as possible. He isn't comfortable with the unknowns inherent in conflict—both in the altercation itself and the outcomes it brings. On the other hand, a tense exchange does little to unnerve you, and you're likely to point out inconsistencies and problems if you see them.



Compared to you

Compared to you, people with the S style tend to be:

- More worried about injuring relationships
- More forgiving of others
- More intent on keeping things calm
- Less analytical and logic-focused
- Less interested in steering the conversation
- Less skeptical of people

How can you have productive conflict with the S style?

People with the S style want to be agreeable and cooperative. Interpersonal harmony is a huge priority for them, and, at times, you may not explain your opinions as tactfully as they would like. Therefore, to have productive conflict with the S style, consider the following:

- Remember that they may feel personally challenged if you challenge their ideas.
- Encourage them to fully express their side of the story.
- Don't immediately dismiss ideas that seem illogical.

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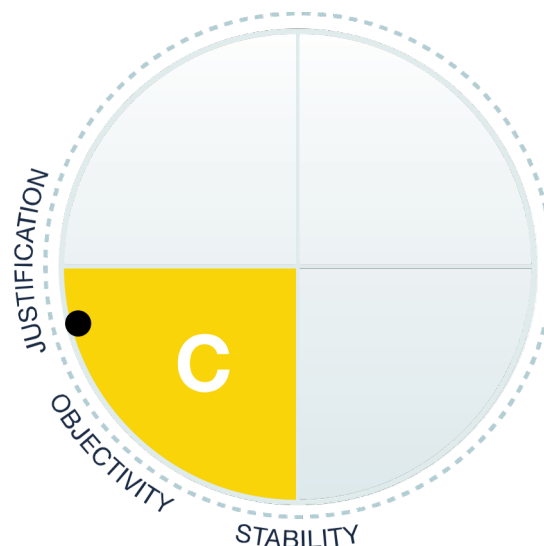
CONFLICT WITH THE C STYLE

What drives the C style in conflict?

Finally, imagine you're in conflict with someone who has the C style and shares your priority of staying **objective**. You may appreciate that she keeps emotions out of the discussion and tends to stick to the facts instead. You both tend to step back and analyze the situation calmly and logically, without letting subjective feelings muddy the waters.

At the same time, like you, this individual tends to **justify** her claims and dig for answers rather than just accept other people's opinions at face value. You both probably pride yourselves on your critical-thinking skills, and she will appreciate your tendency to answer her questions in a logical, straightforward manner.

This individual also prizes **stability**, so she does her best to avoid the unpredictability of conflict. During a disagreement, she may concede, even if she doesn't think she's wrong in her way of thinking, simply to calm the waters. This is especially likely to happen if you dig in your heels and push for your views.



Compared to you

Compared to you, people with the C style tend to be:

- More likely to shrink from volatile situations
- Similarly dismissive of emotions
- Equally adept at countering irrational arguments
- Just as likely to question others' conclusions
- Similarly interested in getting to the root of the problem
- Less focused on controlling outcomes

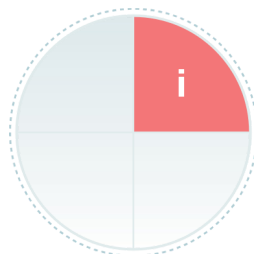
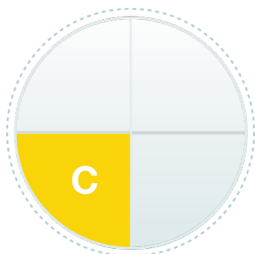
How can you have productive conflict with the C style?

Like you, people with the C style prefer to stick to the facts and tell their side of the story in a controlled and logical way. At times, you may wind up in logic wars, and you are especially at risk of digging in your heels. Therefore, to have productive conflict with the C style, consider the following:

- Keep an open mind and allow the process to move forward.
- Don't brush past objections to push through your ideas.
- Be willing to compromise, even if you reach different logical conclusions.

Part
1

SUMMARY OF DiSC® IN CONFLICT

D Style in conflict	i Style in conflict	S Style in conflict	C Style in conflict
			
Goals: Victory, results, personal accomplishment	Goals: Approval, understanding, openness	Goals: Agreement, acceptance, peace	Goals: Fairness, rational decisions, accuracy
Overuses: The need to win, impatience, bluntness	Overuses: Passion, impulsivity, outspokenness	Overuses: Passive resistance, compromise	Overuses: Restraint, analysis, rigidity
Fears: Being taken advantage of, appearing weak	Fears: Rejection, not being heard, disapproval	Fears: Letting people down, facing aggression	Fears: Being wrong, strong displays of emotion
  	  	  	  

Reflection

Think of a conflict situation you were in that you wish you would have handled better. Briefly describe it below.

What impact do you think your DiSC® style had on the situation?

Part
2

DESTRUCTIVE RESPONSES

Now that you know more about DiSC and conflict, let's look at why we sometimes respond destructively instead of productively to conflict. For most of us, conflict situations are threatening, and it's our instinct to protect ourselves. We may react so quickly that we don't even think about what we're doing. But beneath the surface, there's a process playing out: a conflict event triggers an automatic thought, which in turn triggers a destructive response.



What are some common destructive responses?

To change our responses in conflict, we need to recognize both the automatic thoughts that lead to the behaviors and the responses themselves. Let's start by looking at typical destructive behaviors.

- First, put a **checkmark in the circle** next to the three behaviors **others** do that bother you the most in conflict.
- Then, put a **star** next to the three behaviors that **you do most often** in conflict.

Note: You can learn more about these destructive responses on pages 12–17.

Arguing ☐	☐ Gossiping/ complaining about someone
Belittling ☐	☐ Becoming hypercritical
Caving in ☐	☐ Overpowering
Defensiveness ☐	☐ Passive-aggression
Dismissing others' opinions ☐	☐ Revenge/looking to even the score
Becoming overly dramatic ☐	☐ Sabotage/ introducing obstacles
Exaggerating the problem ☐	☐ Sarcasm
Exclusion/ leaving people out ☐	☐ Stonewalling/ becoming non-receptive
Finger-pointing/ blaming/scapegoating ☐	☐ Withdrawing

WHY DO I DO THIS?

Destructive responses can range from immediate reactions in the heat of the moment to delayed or drawn-out responses that prolong the conflict. The following descriptions provide information about what's behind the behaviors listed on page 11, as well as some common automatic thoughts that might lead to each response.



Arguing

Exchanging differing points of view in a heated or tense way

Arguing is unhealthy when it becomes about winning and losing, when the emphasis is no longer on getting at the best solution. It becomes about protecting egos, putting others in their place, and giving up as little ground as possible. Given your CD style, you may be drawn into arguments when you feel the need to defend your competency. If it feels like someone is challenging you or questioning your reasoning ability, it may be tempting to frame the debate as a kind of competition in which you need to make sure your logic wins. And you may keep pushing if the other person can't see the soundness in your position. The longer this goes on, the less likely it may be that you can step back and consider the possible value in the other person's ideas.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- There's no way I'm backing down
- I don't get it/you; I'm obviously right



Belittling

Making someone or something feel unimportant

Similar to others with the CD style, you may occasionally be tempted to belittle others during conflict as an easy way to convey that another person's opinions are illogical or ridiculous. By belittling someone, we create a demeaning, one-dimensional caricature of them. Not only does this make it easier to dismiss their opinions, but it can feel extremely satisfying. The power of belittling often comes from putting a label on someone that sums up all of the negative attributes we want to call out. It channels all of the frustrations we have into a single powerful word. And once that succinct label is out there, we can use it to easily dismiss anything else the person has to say.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I'm going to make you look like a fool
- I'm going to show you that your idea doesn't matter



Caving in

Giving in to something after originally opposing it

Caving in can be particularly tempting because it often feels like the absolute quickest way to end a disagreement. Even though it typically means sacrificing our legitimate rights, the pain of being in a conflict can be so excruciating that we take immediate shelter in this option. Of course, this short-term gain is often at the expense of long-term satisfaction and can eventually create very unbalanced, unhealthy power dynamics within a relationship. Like others with the CD style, you may be particularly tempted to cave in during conflict when another person's emotions are so extreme or erratic that you believe there is no hope of resolving a problem logically.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I don't want to upset anyone
- Putting up a fight just isn't worth it

WHY DO I DO THIS?



Defensiveness

Becoming anxious or protective in the face of criticism

When we trust that things will be okay no matter what the outcome of the conflict, there's no reason to be defensive. We can be open to different opinions. On the other hand, at the heart of defensiveness is insecurity. We don't want to admit failure or shortcomings. When our brain is telling us that the stakes are incredibly high, we cover up any vulnerabilities or weaknesses. As someone with the CD style, you pride yourself on being a rational, reasonable person and, so, may find yourself getting defensive during conflict when others are trying to poke holes in your logic. Even when you do recognize your defensiveness, it can still be difficult to ask yourself what, beneath it all, you're really afraid of.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I shouldn't be blamed for this
- This isn't my fault



Dismissing opinions

Treating other people's views as unworthy or unimportant

Dismissing opinions is a blocking strategy to win an argument, but is also a common way to protect our ego. Given your CD style, you may sometimes be tempted by this behavior when you get locked into thinking that your logic is the only logic in a situation. Beneath the surface, though, dismissing opinions can also happen when we're scared of the thoughts or views expressed by another person. We are afraid to give them space to paint a picture that we don't like. And because we feel challenged, insecure, or fearful, we adopt the strategy of overriding the other person. We exude absolute certainty in our position and effectively relieve ourselves of any obligation to hear the other side of the story. And by making the conversation as one-sided as possible, we feel empowered and righteous.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- Nothing that anyone says will change my mind
- There's really no other way to think about this



Drama

Displaying an over-the-top reaction to a situation

On the surface, melodrama may seem like a simple inability to rein in one's emotions, but this behavior is not always about yelling or acting out. Of course, given your CD style, drama probably isn't a go-to response for you. In fact, it may really only be tempting when your attempts to use logic and reason are repeatedly blocked. In essence, when we create drama, we are drawing attention to a situation that is troubling for us. This attention validates that the dilemma is, in fact, extremely important and that the injustice that's been done to us is, in fact, extremely unjust. Creating drama can also produce a feeling of control in a situation where we otherwise feel powerless.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- Everyone hates me!
- This situation is awful/hopeless

WHY DO I DO THIS?



Exaggerating

Representing something as being worse than it really is

Sometimes a minor offense can still make us extremely upset. In fact, sometimes it's tough to justify the intensity of our emotions given the actual situation. Exaggeration is a way of making a situation sound as bad as it feels. Exaggeration is also empowering. It makes our case seem that much more powerful and defensible because it makes the other person's behavior seem that much more awful. Like others with the CD style, you may sometimes be tempted to exaggerate a point to support your logic and help you win the debate.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I need to get your attention
- This needs to sound as bad as it feels



Exclusion

Deliberately leaving someone out

During a conflict, it's not uncommon to exclude someone because we simply don't want to spend time with them. But even if we don't want to admit it, exclusion is also a means to emotionally hurt the other person and an attempt to damage their connection to other people in the group. Given your CD style, you may exclude others during conflict as a way to indirectly express and deal with challenging emotions that another person has created in you. By quietly disrupting their standing in the group, you gain support for your side of the story by shaping how people perceive the conflict. We're most likely to use this strategy if we have greater social status than the other person.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- Maybe you'll get the message if I don't invite you
- Leaving you out will prove that everyone's on my side



Finger-pointing

Blaming someone for a particular situation or issue

Finger-pointing may seem like a very aggressive behavior, but it usually stems from defensiveness. We're diverting attention away from our own shortcoming or failure by pointing it out in someone else. Like others with the CD style, you probably take pride in setting and meeting high standards and may be tempted to point fingers when it feels like someone is challenging your competence or blaming you. Your instinct may be to shift the fault away from yourself by homing in on one particular action of the other person that contributed to the problem. Your ability to focus on objective facts comes in handy here, because it lets you identify exactly where someone else is wrong. If you can call out this person's action as the heart of the problem, the blame is less likely to land on you.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I shouldn't get in trouble for this...it's all their fault
- This is because of you, not me

WHY DO I DO THIS?



Gossiping

Engaging in idle talk about someone else's private affairs Gossiping can feel good for a lot of reasons. First of all, venting our frustrations can be cathartic. And because we tend to gossip with people we trust, they usually validate our opinion. Not to mention, it can be deeply satisfying to tear down someone who has hurt us. Since you have the CD style, you may gossip during conflict as a way to process and objectively make sense of the situation while also seeking support to justify your position. But gossip can also be about power. It helps rally people to our side. We get our perspective out into the world first and most convincingly. And, for people who are insecure about their status in the organization, gossiping can create a perceived sense of authority as coworkers turn to them for inside knowledge.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I'm going to tell everyone what so-and-so did to me
- I probably shouldn't say anything, but they deserve it



Hypercriticism

Becoming overly judgmental about someone else's work or actions

Hypercriticism is an attempt to get back at someone by objecting to as much as possible about them: shooting down their suggestions, finding holes in their logic, scrutinizing their output for mistakes. With your CD style, you may resort to this behavior when you want to express frustration with someone, but for one reason or another don't want to be direct about it. Since you likely take great satisfaction in your critical-thinking skills, it may be tempting to use them to identify fault in everything the other person does. You get to act on your frustration, but on the surface, it looks like you're just focusing on objective facts and logic.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I need to knock you down a peg or two
- I need to look like the smartest one here



Overpowering

Overwhelming others with superior force

Overpowering draws on all the sources of power at our disposal to defeat someone during conflict. This might involve using the force of a strong, vocal personality, but for those with the CD style, it can also mean using critical-thinking skills to overwhelm others with logic. With this behavior, you might fire off a rapid succession of points to undermine someone. You may even carefully craft these points ahead of time to throw others off balance and start off with the upper hand. This strategy may be particularly tempting when you're overcome by a strong, almost primal, urge to win. And once you start down this path, it may be difficult to back down because the logic you take so much pride in is on the line.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I won't quit until I win; I don't care what it takes
- I'll use intimidation to get my way

WHY DO I DO THIS?



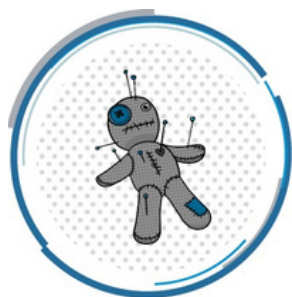
Passive-aggression

Expressing negative feelings in a subtle or indirect way

We can all think of occasions when we desperately wanted to express anger at someone, but didn't want a full-scale conflict. Passive-aggression can feel like the perfect solution. We get to subtly punish someone—enough that they notice, but not so much that they can call us on it. It's likely easier for someone with your CD style to express facts than feelings, so you may become passive-aggressive in conflict as a way to indirectly communicate any difficult emotions. Its many forms (e.g., ignoring, eye-rolling, nit-picking) make it endlessly flexible. Sometimes the goal is to bother someone enough that they initiate the confrontation, at which point we have invitation to let loose on them. But whatever the end goal, we may take more satisfaction from it than we care to admit.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I'm going to make my point without looking like the bad guy
- I don't want to talk about it, but I can't act like nothing happened



Revenge

Looking to even the score or get retribution for a wrongdoing

Revenge in the workplace is usually fairly subtle, but we do it to restore justice and/or reassert ourselves. And even though taking revenge is technically an external action, it's usually the end result of some pretty deep internal rumination. We stew over being hurt or mistreated, and fantasizing about getting even can feel good—even if we don't like to admit it. Of course, acting on those fantasies takes things to a whole different level. Most of us recognize that overt revenge won't be tolerated, but this still leaves plenty of creative, backhanded, and petty ways to inflict damage on someone. Given your CD style, there may be rare times when your sense of righteous indignation and the urge to "right a wrong" are so strong that you are able to rationalize small acts of revenge.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I need to get even
- You're going to regret what you did to me



Sabotage

Deliberately obstructing or destroying someone's work

Sabotage is about making sure someone else fails. It can be social in nature (e.g., lying, spreading rumors) or can actually involve physical tampering. Sometimes we choose this extreme path when we lack the power to truly confront the other person, and sometimes it's simply because we want to express our anger without a direct clash. Either way, there is usually satisfaction in seeing the other person fail. Ultimately, sabotage usually requires us to suspend our normal understanding of right and wrong so that we can rationalize a behavior that, under normal circumstances, we would find reprehensible. For you and others with CD style, this rationalization can involve a heightened need for justice: to balance the scales or to make sure someone gets what they truly deserve.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- You should be punished for what you did to me
- I have to regain the upper hand

WHY DO I DO THIS?



Sarcasm

Ridiculing someone using mockery or derision

In conflict, sarcasm is a close cousin to passive-aggression. It allows us to take a shot at someone or express our hostility without being too obvious about our real motivations. Sarcasm may appeal to you when you're not quite committed enough to yell at someone, but still want to take them down a peg or two. Like others with the CD style, you may be adept at identifying inconsistencies or a lack of common sense. In fact, people with your style tend to get particularly irritated by irrational thinking. Sarcasm allows you to slyly express any disdain you feel. What's more, sarcasm can be a tempting tool because if someone calls you on it, you can always shift fault back onto them with an "I'm just joking...lighten up" excuse.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- That idea is obviously ridiculous
- Why would anyone say something so stupid?



Stonewalling

Refusing to answer, show emotion, or respond to someone

When we stonewall, we make it clear to the other person that communication is completely shut down. We deliberately let them know that their behavior is so unacceptable that we are unwilling to compromise or even discuss a resolution. For example, it's not uncommon for people with the CD style, like you, to think, "I'm not even going to give this person the satisfaction of getting a response out of me." And although we may hate to admit it, stonewalling can be gratifying. We get to punish the other person while telling ourselves that our behavior is strong and dignified. And, as a bonus, we don't have to wade through the untidiness of conflict. Therefore, this can become a self-preservation strategy when we feel overwhelmed by a swirl of uncomfortable emotions.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- You don't get to know what I'm feeling
- I'm not responding to this



Withdrawing

Drawing back or removing oneself from a situation

Not many people actually enjoy conflict, but it is much more painful to some of us than others. We may not even know why conflict is so uncomfortable; we just know that it feels like a whirling jumble of anxiety, anger, insecurity, and danger. Every instinct is urging us to return to stability and safety. Withdrawing or clamming up can provide immediate relief by simply shutting out the emotional messiness. Given your CD style, you may withdraw from conflict as a way to avoid dealing with heightened emotions that you experience in the situation. Of course, this means you don't get to assert your own side of things, but in the moment, deliberately engaging in a conflict can feel overwhelming.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- This needs to end as soon as possible
- I'm just going to stay quiet until this thing is over

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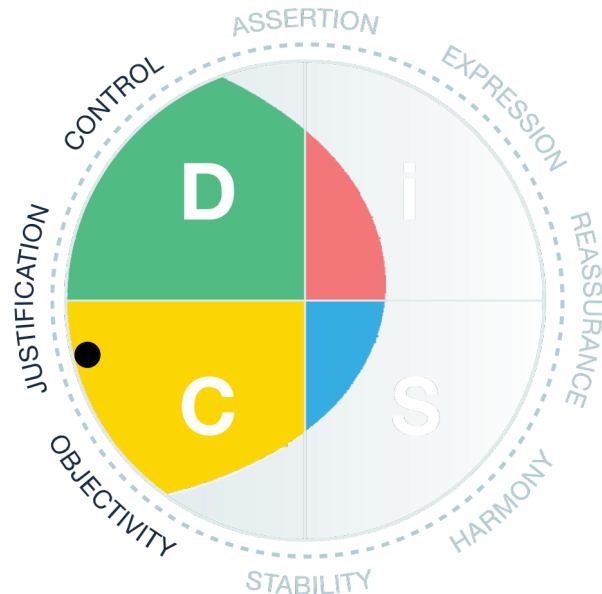
Part
2

RECOGNIZING AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

Your CD style and automatic thoughts

Sarah, like others with the CD style, you may find some common themes shaping your automatic thoughts, such as focusing on logic, being right, and having control. Take a look at the list below. When you find yourself tempted toward a destructive reaction, which (if any) of the following automatic thoughts do you sometimes find going through your head?

- My opinion is the only logical one.
- I hope you don't think this means you won.
- You are obviously never going to get it.
- I won't give you the satisfaction of getting a reaction out of me.
- You have no idea what you're talking about.
- You're trying to control me.
- You're trying to blame me.
- If I admit a mistake, I'll lose my credibility.
- You're not hearing a word I'm saying.
- Showing feelings is undignified.
- You obviously have no interest in understanding my point of view.



Reflection

Think back to the conflict situation you described on page 10. What were some automatic thoughts you had?

What was your response to the situation? How did your automatic thoughts influence that response?

Part
3

CHANGING YOUR RESPONSE

If automatic thoughts can lead to knee-jerk responses, how do we change our behaviors? As shown in the diagram below, the trick is to disrupt this process—to stop our automatic thoughts before they push us toward a destructive response. If we can **step back** from the automatic thought and the emotions around it, we can then **reframe** it. Doing so will put us back in control, so we can choose a more productive path forward.



Stepping back from your emotions

It's tough to step back in the midst of a conflict, but it becomes easier if we first acknowledge our emotions and how they might influence our judgment. During conflict, our emotions can sometimes cloud our perspective and hinder our ability to make choices that are healthy and in our long-term best interests. Many of the emotions at play during conflict fall into two broad categories: **anger** and **anxiety**. Sarah, your CD style can give some key insights into how these two emotions may affect you.

Anger and your CD style

Anger: frustration, resentment, outrage, aggression

Anger is a normal emotion that compels us to stick up for ourselves. But in its unhealthy form, it tempts us to vilify or strike back at the person who we believe is in the wrong. As someone with the CD style, you may become particularly irritated by anything illogical or lacking in common sense. In conflict situations, you may become so wrapped up in your point of view that any other way of thinking seems implausible. "That's ridiculous! I'm not even going to entertain that thought." So, stepping back may be about thinking evenhandedly. As long as you don't want to see things from the other person's perspective, you won't be able to.

Anxiety and your CD style

Anxiety: fear, panic, worry, upheaval, disorientation

For you and others with the CD style, anxiety in conflict may stem from a fear that you'll be made to look wrong or unreasonable. This may make you feel the need to vigorously defend your choices and prove your competency and fairness. And because you dislike feeling vulnerable, you would probably rather revel in anger (which can be empowering) and suppress any anxiousness that arises. You may need to step back from feelings of frustration or disgust so you can be honest with yourself about the real motivations that are driving such a strong response.

 Part
3

CHANGING YOUR RESPONSE

Are you sure?

Once we're able to step back from any anger or anxiety that may be driving our automatic thoughts, the next step is to **reframe**—to change the way we think about the situation. The following questions can help us in this process.

1. Is this thought actually valid/true?
2. Am I overreacting or exaggerating the problem?
3. Is there another way I could look at the situation?

Reframing your automatic thoughts

Sarah, because you have the CD style, reframing may come naturally to you since you often think through situations objectively. On the other hand, you may have such specific standards about how people should behave that it's easy to be dismissive. So, once you've stepped back, challenge yourself to re-evaluate the situation, keeping other people's possible perspectives in mind. Below are two **examples** of automatic thoughts that are common for your CD style and ways to reframe them.

Automatic thought: They are obviously never going to get it.

Reframed thought: It usually takes some time for people to get on the same page.

Automatic thought: I won't give them the satisfaction of getting a reaction out of me.

Reframed thought: They probably don't realize how mad I am.

Thinking about your own experiences, **choose two automatic thoughts** that resonate with you. (For reference, you may want to look back at the "Why Do I Do This?" section on pages 12–17 or the list of automatic thoughts and the Reflection activity on page 18.) Like in the examples above, come up with a way to reframe each automatic thought. Is there another way you could think about it?

Automatic thought:

Reframed thought:

Automatic thought:

Reframed thought:

Part
3

CHOOSING PRODUCTIVE RESPONSES

Once you have reframed your automatic thought, you can choose to respond in a more productive way. There are many different ways to respond productively to conflict, and some behaviors are probably easier for you than others. Given your CD style, you may find, for example, that determining the root of the problem comes more naturally to you than giving reassurance. Take a moment to rate how easy each behavior listed below is for you. This can help you identify behaviors you'd like to work on as well as productive responses you can call on during future conflicts.

On each continuum, plot how easy or difficult each productive response is for you.

	Easy	Difficult		Easy	Difficult
Apologizing	←	→	Finding compromises	←	→
Determining the root of the problem	←	→	Communicating openly and honestly	←	→
Stepping back to reflect	←	→	Separating emotions from facts	←	→
Taking ownership of your part in the situation	←	→	Showing flexibility	←	→
Giving people time and space	←	→	Revisiting unresolved issues	←	→
Acknowledging others' feelings	←	→	Communicating respectfully	←	→
Seeking active resolution	←	→	Introspecting/being aware of your feelings	←	→
Giving reassurance	←	→	Listening	←	→

Reflection

Think back again to your conflict situation from page 10 and the automatic response you described on page 18. How could you reframe your automatic thought(s)?

With your new way of thinking, what productive response might you have chosen? (Refer to the list above or choose a different productive response.) How would that response have changed the conflict?

HEY! YOU'RE NOT DONE YET.

It may be tempting to ignore this page, but getting better at productive conflict takes time and continuous practice. Use this page to log and reflect on the next conflicts you have. Learning to step back and reframe your thoughts will ultimately help you have more productive conflict in the workplace.

 Briefly describe your conflict situation.	
 What were your automatic thoughts? What was your response?	 How did you reframe your automatic thoughts? Could you have done better?

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