

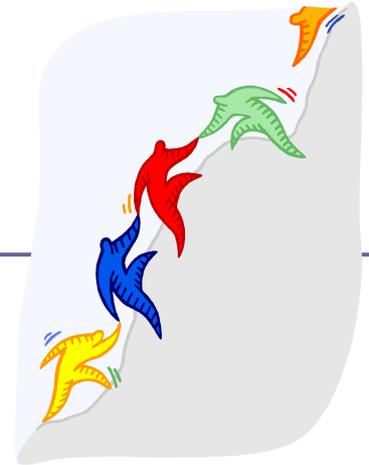
Navigating Conflict at Work



A Toolkit for NYSACHO Leaders

May 12, 2022

Our Learning Alliance



1. Presence and Participation
2. **Make Space - "Volley the Ball"**
3. Judgement-Free Zone - every voice valid
4. **Bottom Line**
5. Confidentiality – The Vegas Rule

FIRST...

RESILIENCE

Check In



What have you done to replenish? What has helped? How have you modeled the way for others to restore themselves?

Leader Action Example

My schedule may not be your schedule.
Please don't feel obligated to respond if
you receive this email outside your
regular working hours.

Navigating Conflict Objectives

1. Recognizing your central role, as leader, in helping to navigate conflict
2. Identifying your own conflict style and avoidance tactics
3. Understanding the nature of conflict and the predictors of positive work relationships
4. Building trust and creating alignment by identifying the shared, common interest
5. Crafting proactive Team Agreements as a way to circumvent conflict

Conflict – Merriam-Webster

- **N:** competitive or opposing action of incompatibles: antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons)
- **N:** mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands
- **V:** to be different, opposed, or contradictory : to fail to be in agreement or accord

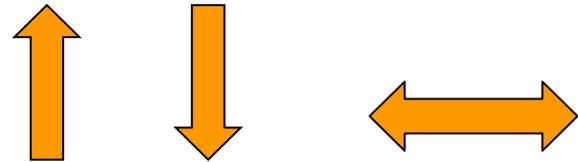
The Nature of Conflict

- ❑ Conflict is a natural occurrence and can be expected to arise within work relationships
- ❑ Conflict may be needed to give rise to change.



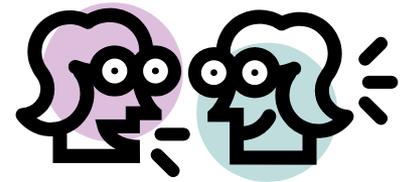
Kinds of Conflict

□ With self



□ Between you and another (up , down, lateral)

□ Between co-workers who report to you



□ Within teams

DEBATE: Why Address Conflict?

□ Pros

□ Cons



Primal Leadership (Daniel Goleman)

In organizations one of the foremost jobs of a leader is to:

- Drive the collective emotions in a positive direction
- Clear any smog created by toxic emotions



Why Bother?



When emotions are...

- ❑ swayed positively they bring out everyone's best, and raise team performance.
- ❑ handled poorly conflict can fester and contaminate work relationships, making it hard or even impossible to work together productively towards organizational goals.

Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team

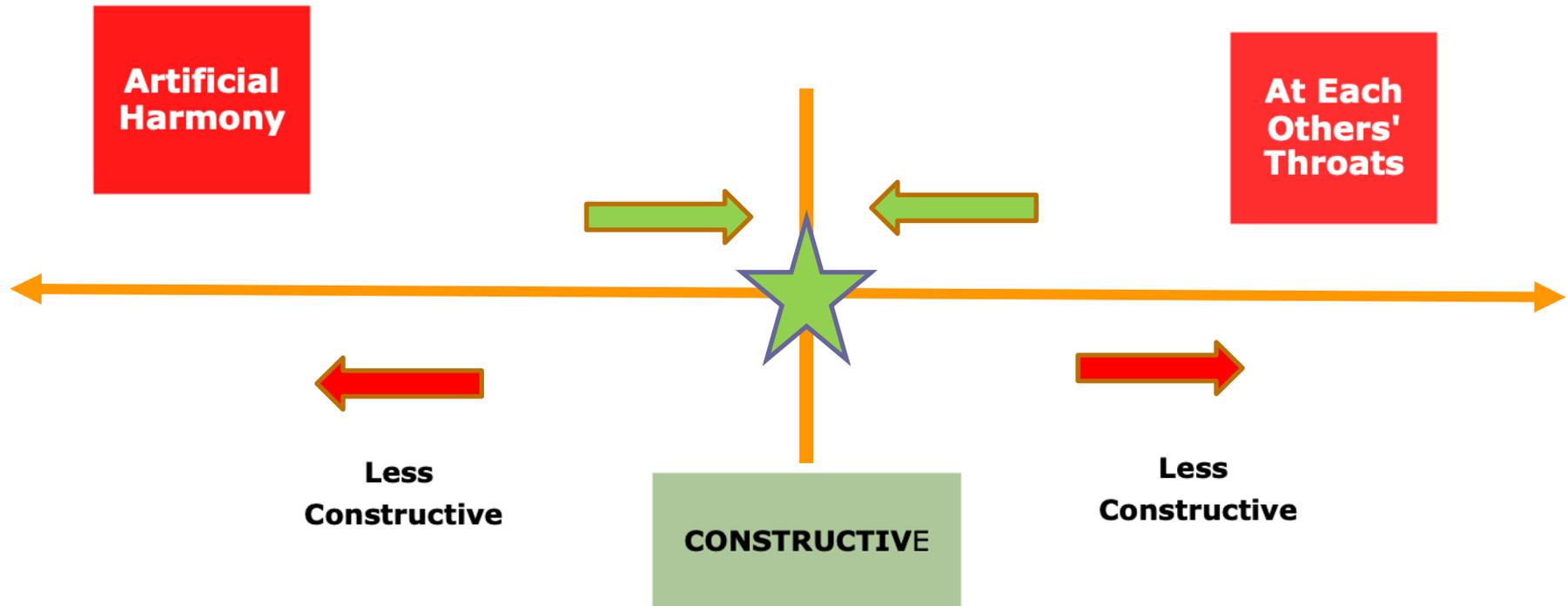


Source: Patrick Lencioni

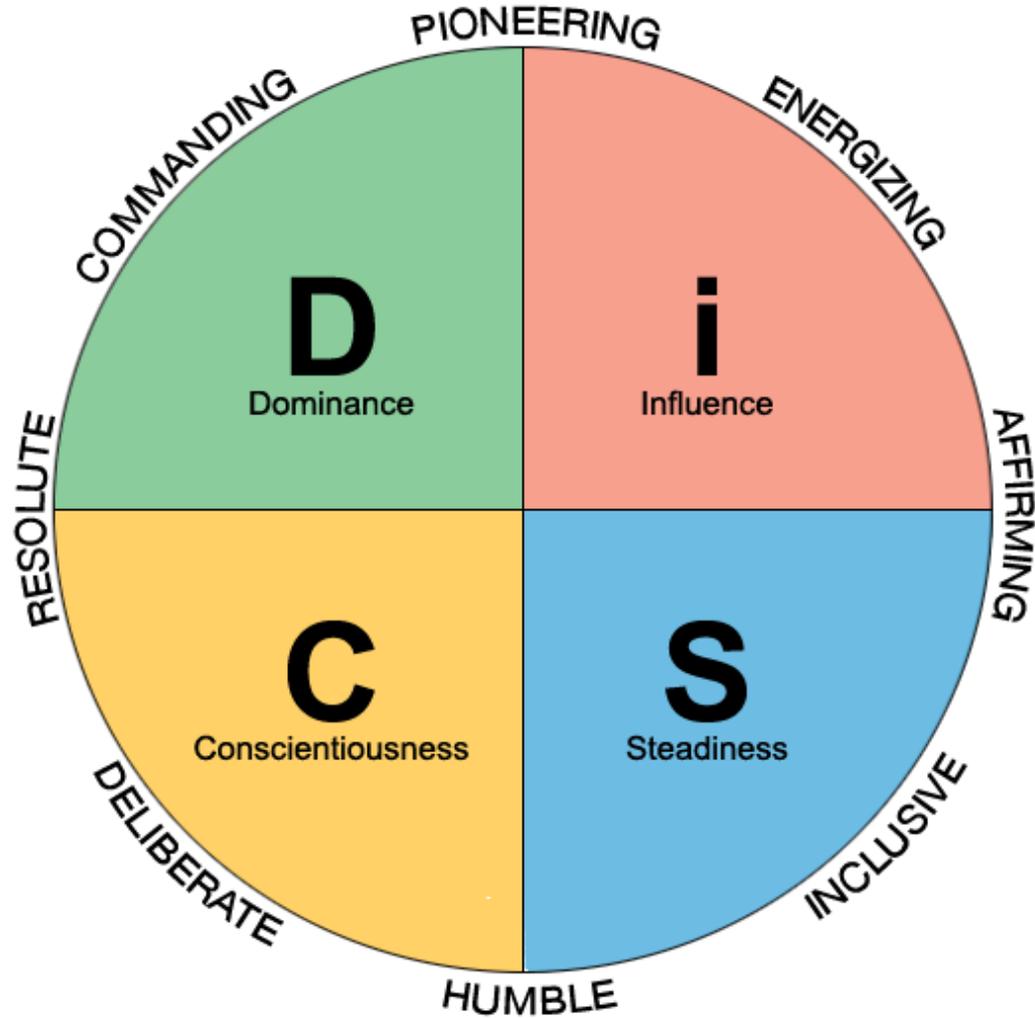
Step 1: How Do I Approach Conflict?



The Conflict Continuum

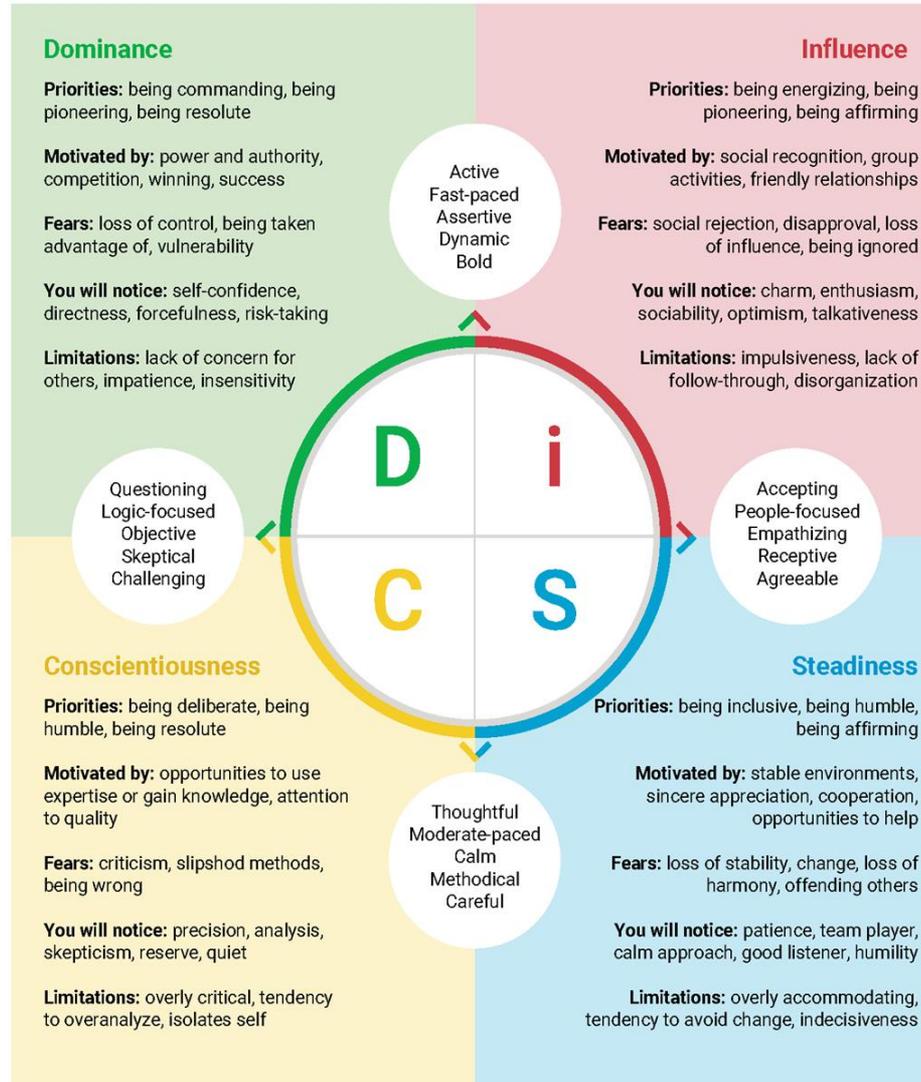


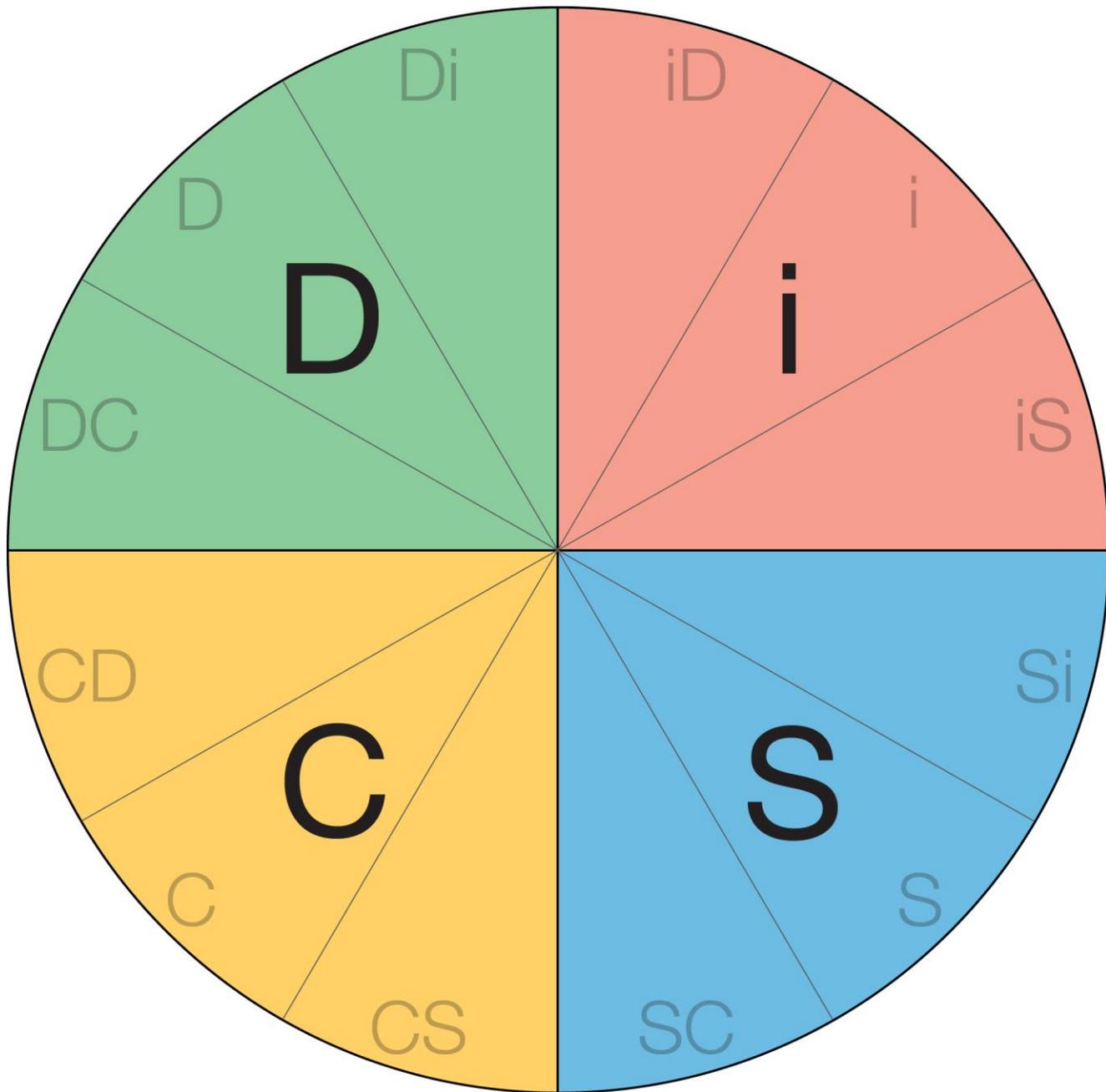
DiSC[®] and Leadership



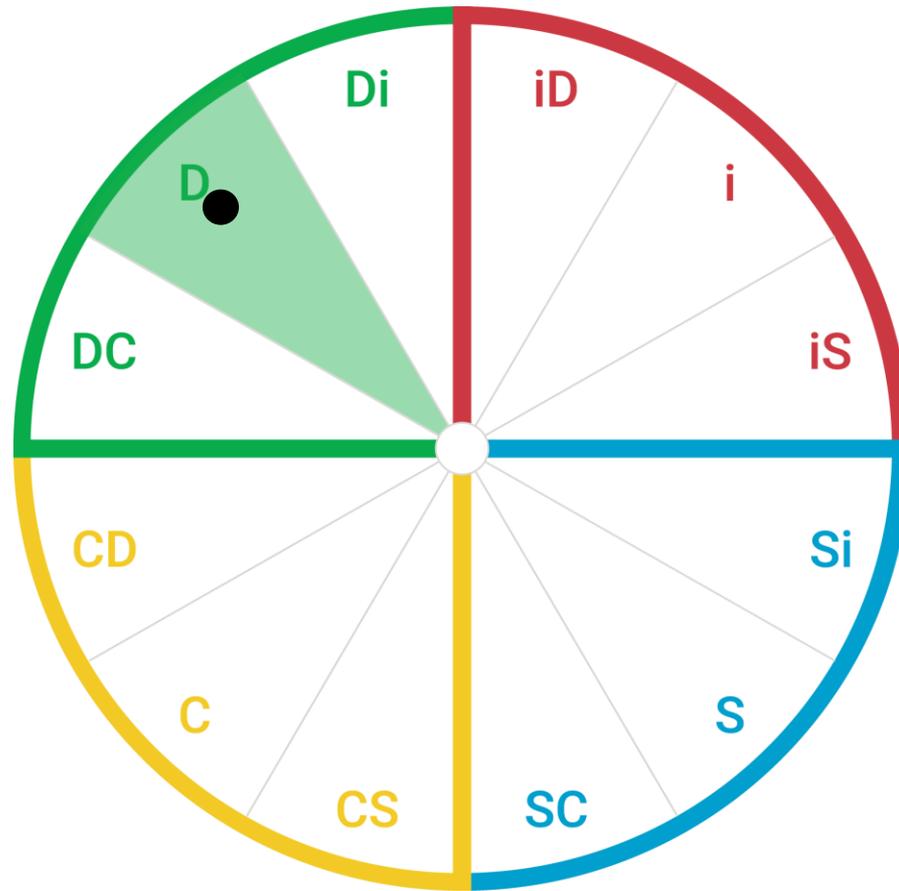
Overview of DiSC®

The graphic below provides a snapshot of the four basic DiSC® styles.



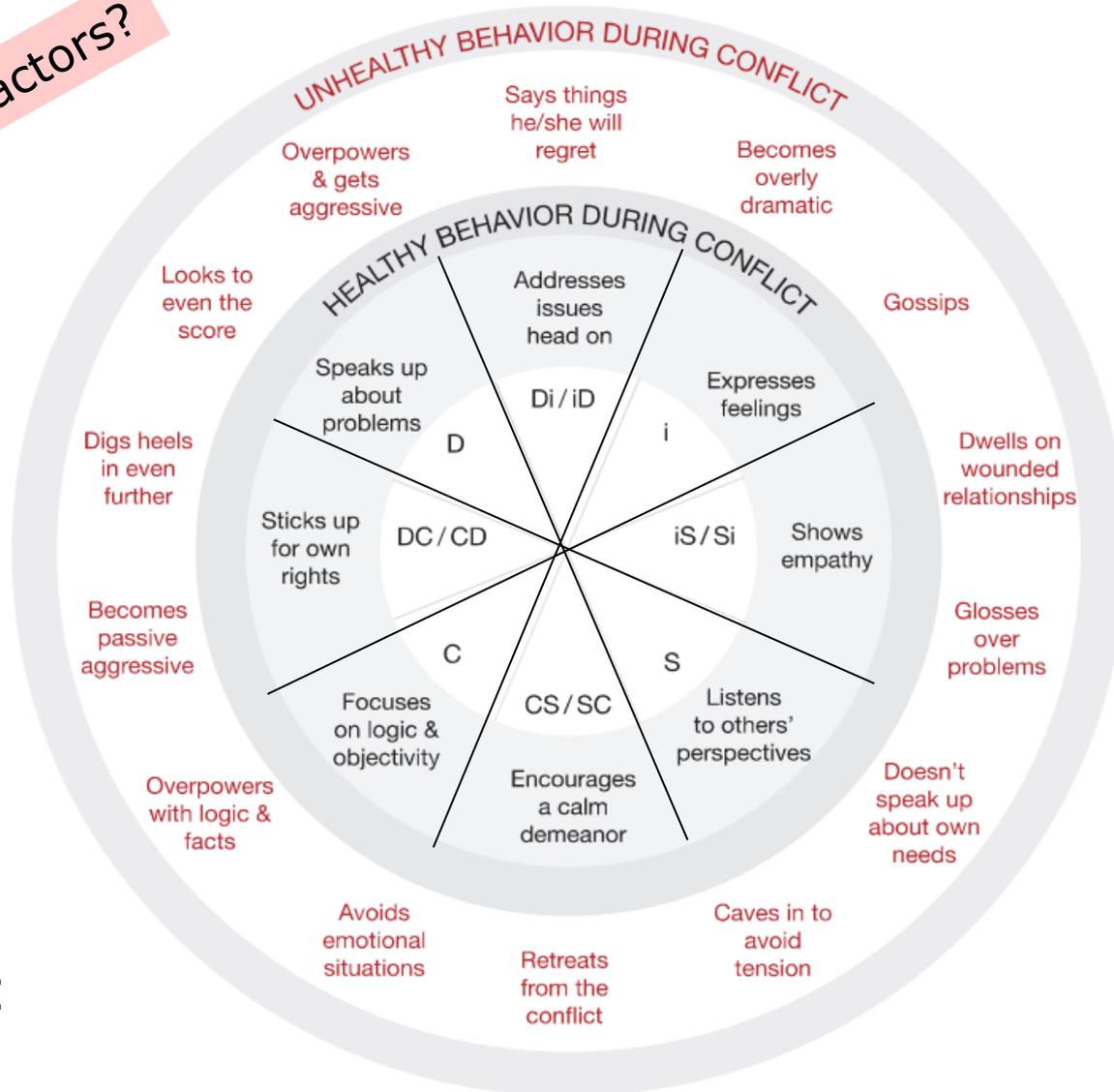


Your DiSC® Style



Your Behavior During Conflict

Influencing factors?



Source: DiSC

Dominance

UNDERSTANDING THE "D" STYLE IN CONFLICT

Goals	Overuses	Fears
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victory • Results • Personal accomplishment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to win • Impatience • Bluntness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being taken advantage of • Appearing weak

HAVING PRODUCTIVE CONFLICT WITH THE "D" STYLE

- Address issues quickly and directly
- Don't take their bluntness personally
- Take a step back and reevaluate if both parties dig in
- Resist the urge to give in merely for the sake of harmony

HAVING PRODUCTIVE CONFLICT WITH THE "C" STYLE

- Look for the root cause of problems
- Focus on facts
- Give them space to consider their position
- Keep volatility to a minimum

UNDERSTANDING THE "C" STYLE IN CONFLICT

Goals	Overuses	Fears
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairness • Accuracy • Rational decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restraint • Analysis • Rigidity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being wrong • Strong displays of emotion

Conscientiousness

Influence

UNDERSTANDING THE "I" STYLE IN CONFLICT

Goals	Overuses	Fears
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval • Understanding • Openness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passion • Impulsivity • Outspokenness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rejection • Not being heard

HAVING PRODUCTIVE CONFLICT WITH THE "I" STYLE

- Let them express their feelings
- Take a break if things get too heated
- Provide reassurance that your relationship is unharmed
- Don't disregard their perspective even if their delivery is highly emotional

HAVING PRODUCTIVE CONFLICT WITH THE "S" STYLE

- Avoid an unnecessarily confrontational approach
- Give them time to reflect
- Don't gloss over tough issues
- Encourage them to share their opinions

UNDERSTANDING THE "S" STYLE IN CONFLICT

Goals	Overuses	Fears
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement • Acceptance • Peace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passive resistance • Compromise • Caving in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letting people down • Facing aggression

Steadiness



Predictors for Successful Relationships

1. **A 5-to-1 ratio** of positive to negative interactions
2. **Increasing positive interactions** during conflict
3. **Reduce negative affect** during conflict

~~FAILURE~~
SUCCESS



1. 5-to-1 ratio of Pos to Neg Interactions

For every negative feeling or interaction between partners, there must be five positive feelings or interactions.

John Gottman

5-to-1 ratio TIPS

- a. Assume the best intentions of others
- b. Find something “right” in other’s view
- c. Question your own assumptions
- d. Don’t make up stories
- e. Know when you are triggered
- f. Set up proactive Team Agreements

When YOU get triggered!



- ❑ What triggers you?
- ❑ What tells you that you are triggered? Inwards signs? Outward signs?
- ❑ How do you deal with it?
- ❑ **Awareness is key to being able to control/influence it.**

Viktor Frankl Quote

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

When Triggered – TIPS

- ❑ Recognize when you are on emotional overload (“fight, flight or freeze”)
- ❑ Take a break
- ❑ Resume conversation only when both parties have time to cool off

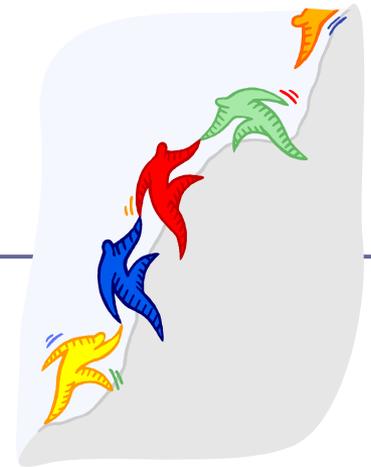


Team Agreements



- ❑ A proactive set of guidelines that define how you want to operate together
- ❑ Hold each other accountable to the team agreements
- ❑ Set up conflict management procedures before a conflict arises
- ❑ Intervene early when issues erupt between team members

Our Learning Alliance



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6. Chat and Mute

EXAMPLE

□ Other requests?

2. Increase Positive Interactions

During and after conflict:

- A. Softened start up
- B. Offer effective repair bids
- C. Increase ability to dialogue

A. Softened Start Up

Opening the conversation in a way that is:

- ❑ The opposite of hard, head-on, or cutting
- ❑ A lead-in that will not evoke defensiveness
- ❑ An approach that is inviting, will not feel like an attack
- ❑ Yet not indirect, nor spineless

B. Effective Repair Bids



A sincere apology
has three parts:

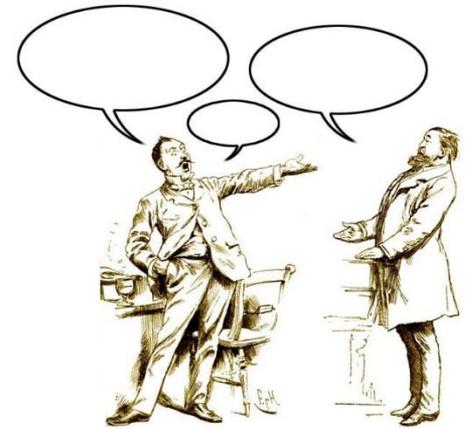
I am sorry

It is my fault

What can I do to
make it right?

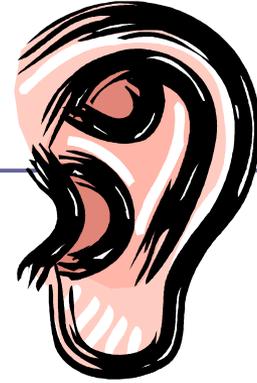
WWW.LIVELIFEHAPPY.COM

C. Ability to Dialogue



- ❑ Build upon what the other person says
“Yes AND...” (not BUT or HOWEVER)
- ❑ Paraphrasing – “What I hear you saying is... Is that correct?”
- ❑ Effective listening is a **BIG** part

Effective Listening



Level 1: Internal Listening

- ❑ Focus is on self, own opinions, judgments, emotions, reactions and needs

Level 2: External Listening

- ❑ Focus is on other person or people
- ❑ Attention is on curiosity, inquiry, discovery

Active Listening Exercise

Paraphrasing Exercise

- One person is “Pro”, Other is “Con”
- Before you can make a point or express an opinion, you must restate aloud the previous point or position of the other person in your own words.
- The restatement must be accurate enough to satisfy the person who said it before you can give your point of view.

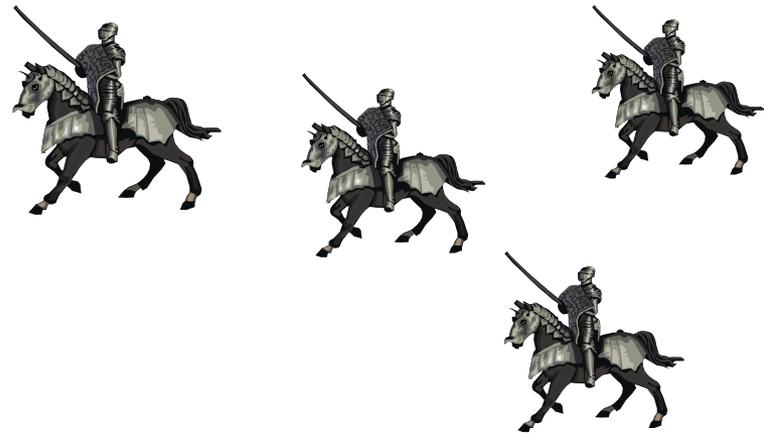
Example: Mountains Vs. Ocean



3. Reduce Negative Affect during Conflict

Reduce/eliminate “Toxins” from interactions

- A. Blame
- B. Defensiveness
- C. Contempt
- D. Stonewalling



4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Guiding Principle

*People may forget what you said;
They may even forget what you did;
But rarely, if ever, will they forget
How you made them feel.*

Source: Maya Angelou

A. Blame



Attack of personality or character, usually with the intent of making someone right and someone wrong

- Winners and losers
- Finger pointing
- May include generalizations like:
 - You always...
 - You never...
 - You're the type of person who...
 - Why are you so...?

A. Blame Antidotes



IF YOU ARE BEING CRITICAL:

1. Comment on the behavior rather than the person.
2. Turn complaints into requests.
 - Change “You didn’t...” comments into - “I would like to ask you to ... would you be willing to...?” requests.
3. Apologize for any negative, unintended impact. Take responsibility and clean up any messes.

A. Blame Antidotes



IF SOMEONE ELSE IS BEING CRITICAL OF YOU:

1. Listen for the reasonable request embedded inside the complaint.
2. Shift the focus from “Who is doing what to whom to” to “What is needed in this relationship/team now?” – “What needs to change to move forward?”
3. Take a hard look at your contribution to the problem even if the other person had a bigger contribution.
4. Hold the attitude that this is an unskillful attempt to give you useful feedback.

B. Defensiveness



Sees self as victim, warding off perceived attack - may escalate conflict

- Making excuses - "It's not my fault... I didn't"
- Disagreement - "That's not true - it's not me, it's you"
- Cross-complaining - meeting their complaint with your own or ignoring what they said
- Agreeing, then disagreeing - "Yes-butting"
- Whining - "It's not fair... not right...not true"
- Repeating oneself without listening to other side

B. Defensiveness Antidotes



IF YOU ARE BEING DEFENSIVE:

1. Repeat what you heard and ask for clarification.

“I heard you say that I am not putting in effort. Can you clarify that? Can you give me an example?”

2. Search for the small 2% truth in what you are hearing.

“It is true that I sometimes come into meetings late, so I can see how that might make me seem untrustworthy.”

B. Defensiveness Antidotes



IF SOMEONE ELSE IS BEING DEFENSIVE:

1. Ask them to clarify what they heard you say. It might be that they misunderstood you. Take responsibility for your impact and rephrase what you wanted to say.
2. State and show that you trust and respect the person or group. A more productive conversation will follow when defenses are lowered.
3. Listen actively. Let others know you understand what they are saying. This does not imply agreement.

C. Stonewalling



Reaction to blame especially over a long period of time -withdrawing as a way to avoid conflict

- Silent treatment, icy distance
- Disconnection, avoidance
- Smugness
- Monosyllabic mutterings
- Removing yourself physically
- Changing the subject
- Not delivering, getting things in late

C. Stonewalling Antidotes



IF YOU ARE STONEWALLING:

1. Ask yourself what are you avoiding talking about?
2. If you are tuning out the whole thing on overload, find a way to soothe yourself.
3. If you are fearful of speaking up, differentiate between fear and true danger. It may be useful to explain your reason for withholding information.

C. Stonewalling Antidotes



IF SOMEONE ELSE IS STONEWALLING YOU:

1. Take a look at what you could be doing that makes the other not safe in expressing themselves.
 - a) Might there be judgment or subtle contempt?
 - b) Have you not valued their comments in the past?

D. Contempt



Attack on character with intent to insult or psychologically abuse – can even have a physiological impact

- Insults and name-calling
- Hostile humor, sarcasm and mockery
- Body language – Lip curling, eye-rolling
- Tone of voice – sneering, etc.

D. Contempt Antidotes

IF YOU ARE FEELING CONTEMPTUOUS:

1. Respect must be given and is foundational for constructive conflict to occur.

2. Use “I feel” & “I want” statements

“I am feeling so frustrated with you and I want to be able to understand and work together towards a solution...”

3. Stop any name-calling, mockery, sarcasm, cynicism as they may be causing more harm than you are aware of. Find other ways to engage.

D. Contempt Antidotes

IF SOMEONE ELSE IS ACTING CONTEMPTUOUSLY:

1. Express your feelings, specifically identify the unwanted behavior and express your willingness to resolve the situation. Avoid using “you” statements or claiming that you know what the solution is.
2. Ask *“What is your intention in saying that?”* ...as they may not be aware of the impact. This will help you get at what the purpose, to get under what is being said.
3. Ask *“Are you aware of your impact right now?”* If someone is using a horseman unknowingly, this will wake them up.

Put the Problem Out in Front

The issue separates the parties.

Put the problem “out in front” rather than between you.

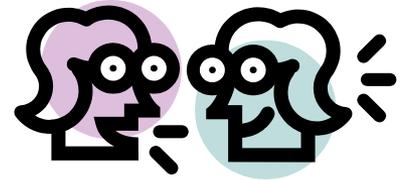


Ask:

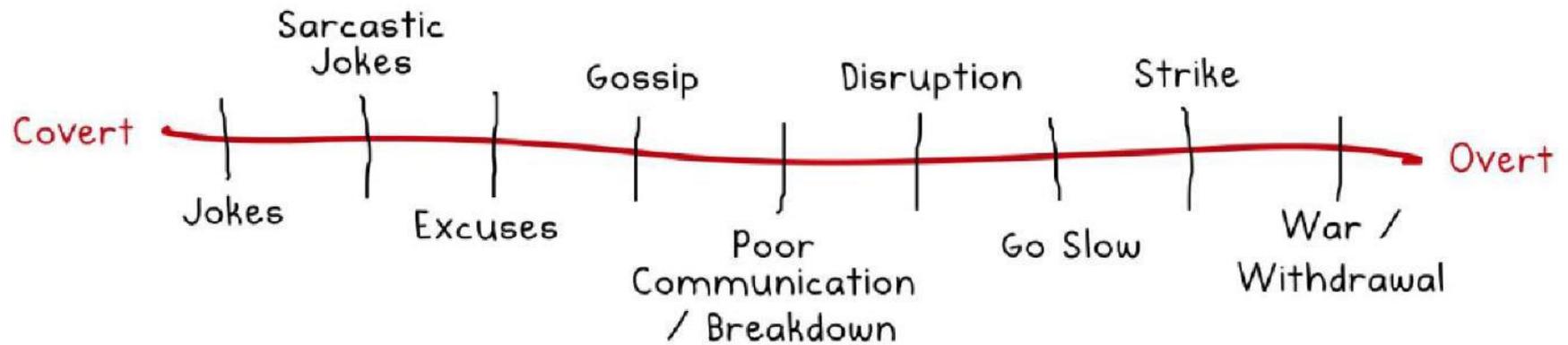
1. What is our common interest?
2. Why is this important to resolve?
3. THEN place the problem (literally) out in front to solve together as a unified team.
4. Find higher ground together.

Find the Request Behind the Complaint

- ❑ Understand the purpose of venting
- ❑ Listen for the complaint within
- ❑ **Find the request behind the complaint**
- ❑ Muster the courage (or help others) to make the direct request
- ❑ Hear and navigate the response received to their request (yes, no, or counter-offer)
- ❑ Support others to stay in positive relationship



The Line of Resistance



Conflict “done well” yields positive results...

Summary

Increase ratio of positive to negative interactions

Increase positive interactions during/after conflict:

1. Use softened start up
2. Extend effective repair bids
3. Dialogue effectively through active listening

Decrease negative interactions during conflict

1. Reducing/eliminating “Toxins” by using antidotes
2. Put the problem out in front
3. Find the request behind the complaint

Closing

- Conflict Learning Take-away?
- What conflict (old, current or brewing) needs your attention now?

Thank you!