

# Activity

**Understanding your own approach to conflict is an important first step in being able to read and manage the dynamics of conflict as a leader in your school or district.**

1. Think about recent experiences you have had with conflict or situations that had the potential for conflict. Consider your approach to that situation using the information in the left column below.

Type of Person	View of Self	View of Others	Description of the Type	Approach to Conflict
Secure	Positive	Positive	High self-worth, comfortable in close relationships.	Integrating- Uses creative problem solving to satisfy all the individuals involved.
Preoccupied	Negative	Positive	Emotionally needy. Search for affirmation	Obliging- Smooths over conflict by appeasing the other party.
Fearful	Negative	Negative	Avoid close relationships for fear of getting hurt	Avoiding- Stays out of a situation that provokes controversy and remains neutral.
Dismissing	Positive	Negative	Maintain independence and self-reliance	Dominating- Controls conflict by overpowering it and suppressing opponents.

\*Rahim and Bonoma added a fifth approach to conflict called *compromising*. This approach is adopted by participants who possess intermediate views of themselves and others.

2. Look at the information in the columns to the right and answer the questions below.
  - a. How do you perceive the information applying to you across the row (i.e., do you agree with the views of self and others that may be indicated by your approach to the identified conflict?)?
  - b. How does your approach change with different conflicts involving different people?
  - c. How can understanding this information help to manage conflict in ways that will result in more productive and less destructive conflict?
3. Discuss your answers to questions a-c with your table group.

4. Review the information in the table below.

When people engage in conflict, the ultimate goal is to influence others to adopt a particular perspective. People tacitly apply different strategies to influence others. The selection of these strategies likely depends on the party one is trying to influence, the type of conflict, and a person's dominant approach to conflict.	
Influence Strategy	Description of the Strategy
Reason	Use of data, rational discussion, and logic as the basis for influence.
Friendliness	Use of interest in others, good will, and esteem to create a favorable impression for subsequent leverage in influence.
Bargaining	Use of negotiation and the exchange of benefits and favors to achieve a desired agreement or perspective.
Assertiveness	Application of direct and forceful communication to sway opinions or decisions.
Coalition	Mobilization of the support of others for a position or decision.
Appeal to Higher Authority	Invoking the positions, influences, and authority of higher levels to support a perspective.
Sanctions	Use of rewards or punishments to sway support for a position.

*This information was adapted from Kipnis and Schmidt (1982) cited in Papa and Pood (1988), p. 11.*

5. Discuss the questions that follow with your group.

- a. Which influence strategies are likely to lead to creative problem solving and productive conflict?
  - b. How can your leadership team promote greater use of these strategies in your school?
  - c. Which strategies are likely to lead to more affective, destructive conflict?
  - d. How can your leadership team work to minimize use of those strategies in your school?
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