

UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

BY WENDY BETANCOURT, ASSISTANT OMBUDSPERSON

The Office of the Ombudsman is a confidential, informal, and neutral resource where probation staff, clients and their families, and the community at large can seek assistance with their concerns related to service delivery, policies, and procedures. You can contact the Ombudspersons by emailing us at Ombudsman@probation.lacounty.gov or calling the toll-free telephone number (877) 822-3222.

Thank you!

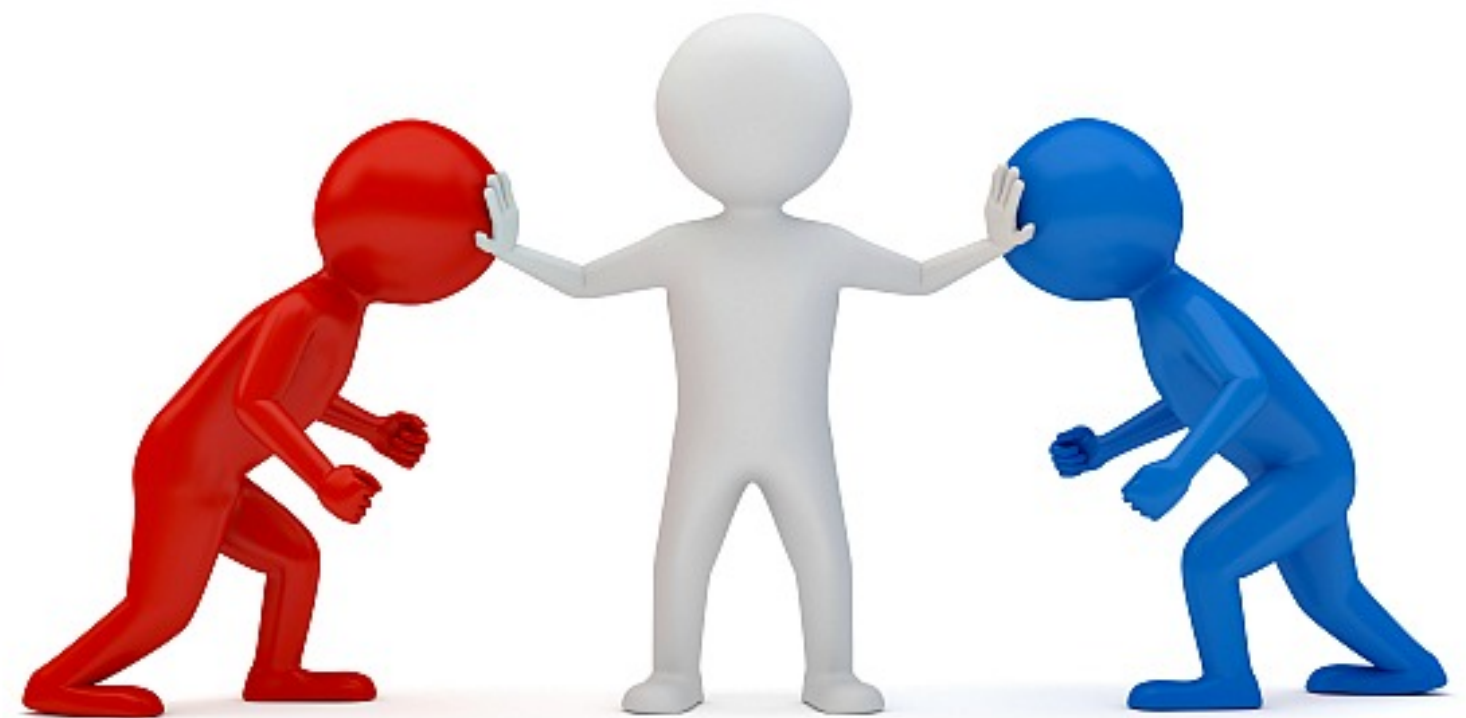


L.A. COUNTY
PROBATION DEPT.
(877) 822-3222

Conflict is defined as a clash between individuals arising out of a difference in thought process, attitudes, understanding, interests, requirements and even sometimes perceptions. Often, we can describe how others react in conflict and may have trouble evaluating our own approach with conflict. When conflict does surface between parties, which is the best approach? What is your conflict handling style? According to the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), there are five major styles of conflict management:

Competing · Avoiding · Collaborative · Accommodating · Compromising

These conflict styles are similar with tools in a toolbox. You must use the conflict style when it is appropriate in the discussion. For example, the **competition conflict style** is best used by individuals who are standing up for their rights and or defending a position they believe is correct. The **avoiding conflict style** is used when a person does not want to engage in conflict and may need time to process their thoughts about the situation. Therefore, is used by individuals who feel the problem/issue will just go away on its own and want to avoid conflict. The **collaborating conflict style** allows the parties in conflict to listen to each other and work together to find an amicable solution. The **accommodation conflict style** is used when preservation of the relationship is important. Meaning, one side is self-sacrificing and makes a concession to assure the other parties needs are met. It is important to note, by utilizing this conflict style the person doing the accommodating does not have their needs met, and therefore may result in resentment. The **compromising conflict style** usually means one side surrenders to the situation but not necessarily pleased about surrendering. Most of the time, this is done to avoid the conflict and the energy behind the situation. However, this strategy is successful when each party makes a concession that is equitable and fair to each party involved. When is it appropriate to use each of these?



UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

BY WENDY BETANCOURT, ASSISTANT OMBUDSPERSON

The Office of the Ombudsman is a confidential, informal, and neutral resource where probation staff, clients and their families, and the community at large can seek assistance with their concerns related to service delivery, policies, and procedures. You can contact the Ombudspersons by emailing us at Ombudsman@probation.lacounty.gov or calling the toll-free telephone number (877) 822-3222.

Thank you!



L.A. COUNTY
PROBATION DEPT.
(877) 822-3222

WHEN IS IT APPROPRIATE TO USE EACH OF THESE?

**USE THE COMPETING STYLE IF...
PRINCIPLES ARE AT STAKE AND
CANNOT BE COMPROMISED, AND THE
ISSUE IS TRIVIAL, AND YOU ARE
CONFIDENT YOU ARE CORRECT.**

**USE THE AVOIDING STYLE IF...
THE ISSUE AND THE RELATIONSHIP ARE
BOTH UNIMPORTANT, AND THE
CONFLICT IS TOO HIGH, AND PARTIES
NEED TO COOL OFF.**

**USE THE COLLABORATIVE STYLE IF...
TIME AND ENERGY ARE AVAILABLE TO
DEAL WITH THE CONFLICT, AND THE
ISSUE AND THE PEOPLE ARE BOTH
IMPORTANT.**

**USE THE ACCOMMODATING STYLE IF...
KEEPING OTHERS HAPPY IS THE MOST
IMPORTANT GOAL, AND YOU DO NOT
HAVE A VESTED INTERESTED IN THE
MATTER.**

**USE THE COMPROMISING STYLE IF...
THE PARTIES HAVE EQUAL POWER, A
QUICK SOLUTION IS NEEDED AND
WORKING TOGETHER IS IMPORTANT.**

**EVALUATE YOUR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT/HANDLING STYLE
[CLICK HERE](#) TO TAKE THE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT QUIZ!**

References:

K. Thomas and R. Kilmann, An Overview of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), Kilmann Diagnostics, on the internet at KilmannDiagnostics.com