

## The Cultural Map

### SUCCESS

One of the major differences between individualistic and collectivist cultures is the way in which success is defined. In individualistic cultures, success is winning, beating the others, and coming out on top. In collectivist cultures, success is contributing to the group's goals, and being an effective member of a team.



- These countries are among the most strongly affiliated with individualism. In high individualist cultures, the individual's goals are given the highest priority, and success is measured by the extent to which you surpass other members of your group.
- These countries are among the most strongly affiliated with collectivism. In high collectivist cultures, the group's goals are given the highest priority, and success is measured by your contributions to the group as a whole.

What is success to you right now? What qualities or achievements would contribute most to your definition of success? In visualizing your successful self, are you more likely to behave as would an individualist or as a collectivist?

as your needs are met, the conflict has been dealt with successfully (for you). In conflict motivated by competitiveness, you'd be likely to be verbally aggressive and to blame the other person.

This style represents an *I win, you lose* philosophy. As you can tell, this style might be appropriate in a courtroom or at a used-car lot, two settings where one person benefits from the other person's losses. But in interpersonal situations, this philosophy can easily lead to resentment on the part of the person who loses, which can easily cause additional conflicts. Further, the fact that you win and the other person loses probably means that the conflict hasn't really been resolved but only concluded (for now).

**AVOIDING: I LOSE, YOU LOSE** The individuals with an avoidance conflict style are relatively unconcerned with their own or with their opponents' needs or desires. They avoid any real communication about the problem, change topics when the problem is brought up, and generally withdraw from the scene both psychologically and physically.



**VIEWPOINTS: Conflict Style Changes**

What changes would you like to see your relational partners (friends, family members, romantic partners, work colleagues) make in their own conflict management strategies? What might you do to more effectively regulate your own ways of dealing with conflict?

As you can appreciate, the avoiding style does little to resolve any conflicts and may be viewed as an *I lose, you lose* philosophy. Interpersonal problems rarely go away of their own accord; rather, if they exist, they need to be faced and dealt with effectively. Avoidance merely allows the conflict to fester and probably grow, only to resurface in another guise.

**ACCOMMODATING: I LOSE, YOU WIN** In the accommodating conflict style, you sacrifice your own needs for the needs of the other person(s). Your major purpose is to maintain harmony and peace in the relationship or group. This style may help maintain peace and may satisfy the opposition, but it does not meet your own specific needs, which are unlikely to go away.

Accommodation often represents an *I lose, you win* philosophy. And although this conflict style may make your partner happy (at least on this occasion), it's not likely to prove a lasting resolution to an interpersonal conflict. You'll eventually sense unfairness and inequality and may easily come to resent your partner and perhaps even yourself.

However, since your immediate goal may be simply to preserve harmony in the relationship, this style may at times be viewed as win-win—you get to preserve relationship peace and the other person gets his or her specific needs met.

**COLLABORATING: I WIN, YOU WIN** In the collaborating conflict style, you address both your own and the other person's needs. This conflict style, often considered the ideal, takes time and a willingness to communicate—and especially to listen to the perspectives and needs of the other person.

Ideally, collaboration enables each person's needs to be met, an *I win, you win* situation. This is obviously the style that, in an ideal world, most people would choose when engaging in interpersonal conflict.

**COMPROMISING: I WIN AND LOSE, YOU WIN AND LOSE** The compromising conflict style is in the middle: There's some concern for your own needs and some concern for the other's needs. Compromise is the kind of strategy you might refer to as "meeting each other halfway," "horse trading," or "give and take." This strategy is likely to result in maintaining peace, but there will be a residue of dissatisfaction over the inevitable losses that each side has to endure.

Compromise represents an *I win and lose, you win and lose* philosophy. There are lots of times when you can't both get exactly what you want. You can't both get a new car if the available funds allow for only one. And yet you might each get a better used car than the one you now have. So, each of you might win something, though not everything.

Table 11.1 provides a nutshell summary of these six conflict principles.

**Table 11.1 In a Nutshell Principles of Interpersonal Conflict**

Principle	Nutshell
Conflict Is Inevitable	All interpersonal relationships experience conflict at some time and to some degree.
Conflict Can Center on a Variety of Issues	Conflicts can center on just about anything and involve content issues, relationship issues, and social allergens.
Conflict Can Occur in All Communication Forms	Whenever and wherever messages are exchanged, conflict may occur.
Conflict Can Have Negative and Positive Effects	Conflict can be good and it can be bad; it depends largely on how the conflict is managed.
Conflict Is Influenced by Culture and Gender	Cultures vary widely in what they fight about and in how they engage in conflict as do men and women.
Conflict Styles Have Consequences	Your conflict style will influence not only the management of the conflict but the relationship as well.