

# Collaborating

*by Sophia Tutorial*



## WHAT'S COVERED

As you learned in a previous lesson, there are five different conflict styles:

- Accommodating
- Avoiding
- Competing
- Compromising
- Collaborating

This lesson will discuss the collaborating style and how it presents itself in various situations. The areas of focus include:

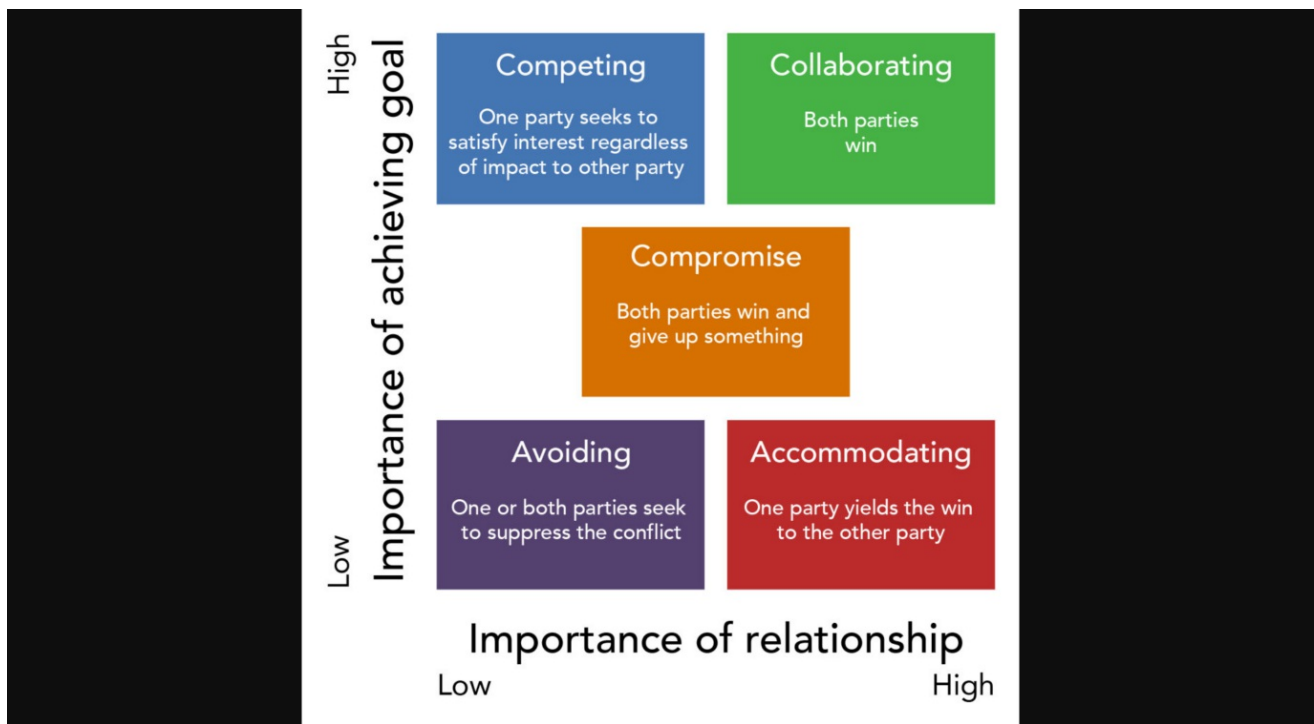
1. Collaborating as a Conflict Style
2. Positive/Negative Outcomes of Collaborating

## 1. Collaborating as a Conflict Style

**Collaborating** is a conflict resolution style in which parties work jointly to try to meet all of each other's needs. Collaborating really focuses on finding a win-win solution. A conflict might resolve via collaboration when all parties are highly invested in working together to achieve everyone's goals.

As a style, collaborating is:

- High in cooperativeness
- High in assertiveness



➦ **EXAMPLE** Two restaurants are next door to each other. They serve different styles of food, but both offer a popular brunch menu, and on weekends there can be extremely long lines of people waiting for a table at either restaurant. Neighboring businesses have begun to complain about the long lines blocking their entrances, and patrons get confused about which line is for which restaurant.

In a collaborative conflict resolution, the owners of the two restaurants could work together to establish a single waiting area for both restaurants, equally sharing costs and responsibilities for providing coffee to the patrons waiting for tables and keeping the area tidy and comfortable.

➦ **EXAMPLE** You love your brother and want to spend time with him, but you can never agree on what to do. He always wants to spend time actively, by going on hikes and bike rides, and you'd rather catch up at home while watching a movie.

A compromising solution might have been to alternate activities when you hang out. But if you choose to approach the conflict collaboratively, you might decide to explore some activities that are new to both of you until you find something that you enjoy equally.

#### TERMS TO KNOW

##### **Collaborating**

A conflict resolution style in which parties work jointly to try to meet all of each other's needs.

---

## 2. Positive/Negative Outcomes of Collaborating

Most conflict-resolution processes and techniques work toward bringing parties together in a collaborative style, as this style is really focused on creating positive outcomes and preventing negative outcomes.

### IN CONTEXT

Collaboration creates positive outcomes and prevents negative outcomes, so it is often the goal of conflict resolution (along with compromising). Let's take a look at a single scenario and how it could be approached through each of the different conflict styles.

Three roommates are trying to establish a system for housekeeping, but they all have different needs. Veronica wants a really clean kitchen and a tidy house with no clutter; she works late hours and finds it stressful to come home to a mess. Chelsea finds a little bit of clutter to be comforting and desirable; she loves to cook and wants to have things in easy reach, and she feels at home in a place where she isn't constantly thinking about tidying up. Maddie spends most of her free time at her girlfriend's apartment so she doesn't have a strong opinion about how the house is kept, and she hates having constant discussions about it.

*Accommodating:* If one or more of the housemates chose an accommodating approach, the conflict might be resolved by Chelsea agreeing to follow Veronica's standards for cleanliness, even though it isn't what feels comfortable to her. Chelsea might begin resenting Veronica, or might not do as good a job cleaning as Veronica would like, but the conflict would be resolved at least temporarily.

*Avoiding:* Maddie might opt for an avoiding strategy by spending more and more time at her girlfriend's apartment so that she doesn't have to take a side in the conflict between Chelsea and Veronica.

*Competing:* A competing strategy might result in one roommate issuing an ultimatum: everyone must agree to her approach or she'll move out.

*Compromising:* In a compromise, the household might agree to have the kitchen be kept to a super clean standard to please Veronica, while allowing for more comfy clutter in the living room to please Chelsea. Maddie's compromise would be in her willingness to keep track of the different standards for the different rooms.

*Collaborating:* If the roommates approached the conflict with a collaborative approach, they might come up with a different solution altogether. Perhaps Veronica and Maddie are happy to pay for a professional cleaner twice per month, which would give Veronica the level of cleanliness she desires and allow Maddie to ignore the situation altogether, while giving Chelsea the opportunity to make big cooking messes when she knows the cleaner will be coming soon.



#### BIG IDEA

Collaboration and/or compromise are the goal of most conflict resolution processes because these are the strategies that result in strong ongoing relationships and general satisfaction with the outcomes.

While the specifics of a conflict might make it impossible to find a collaborative outcome that satisfies every party's goals, resulting in at least some compromise, the process of collaboration will likely result in the best possible outcome overall.



#### TERM TO KNOW

### Positive/Negative Outcomes

Resolutions to a conflict that a party perceives as meeting his/her needs and/or reducing likelihood of further conflict (positive) or not meeting his/her needs and/or increasing likelihood of further conflict (negative).



## BIG IDEA

It's important to remember that while collaborating might be the style that you tend towards and feel most comfortable with (your preferred style), that doesn't mean it's the only way that you can respond in a conflict.

There are other conflict styles, and you, as well as anyone, can respond in any number of ways to a particular conflict.



## SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about **collaborating as a style of conflict**, and how this style focuses on creating **positive outcomes** while preventing **negative outcomes**.

Source: Adapted from Sophia tutorial by Marlene Johnson.



## TERMS TO KNOW

### Assertiveness

Behavior in which a person confidently makes a statement without need of proof, affirming his/her rights without attacking another's.

### Collaborating

A conflict resolution style in which parties work jointly to try to meet all of each other's needs.

### Cooperativeness

Behavior in which two parties work in concert to achieve their mutual and respective individual goals.

### Positive/Negative Outcomes

Resolutions to a conflict that a party perceives as meeting his/her needs and/or reducing likelihood of further conflict (positive) or not meeting his/her needs and/or increasing likelihood of further conflict(negative).