

Compromising

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 compromising style and how it presents itself in various situations. The areas of focus include:

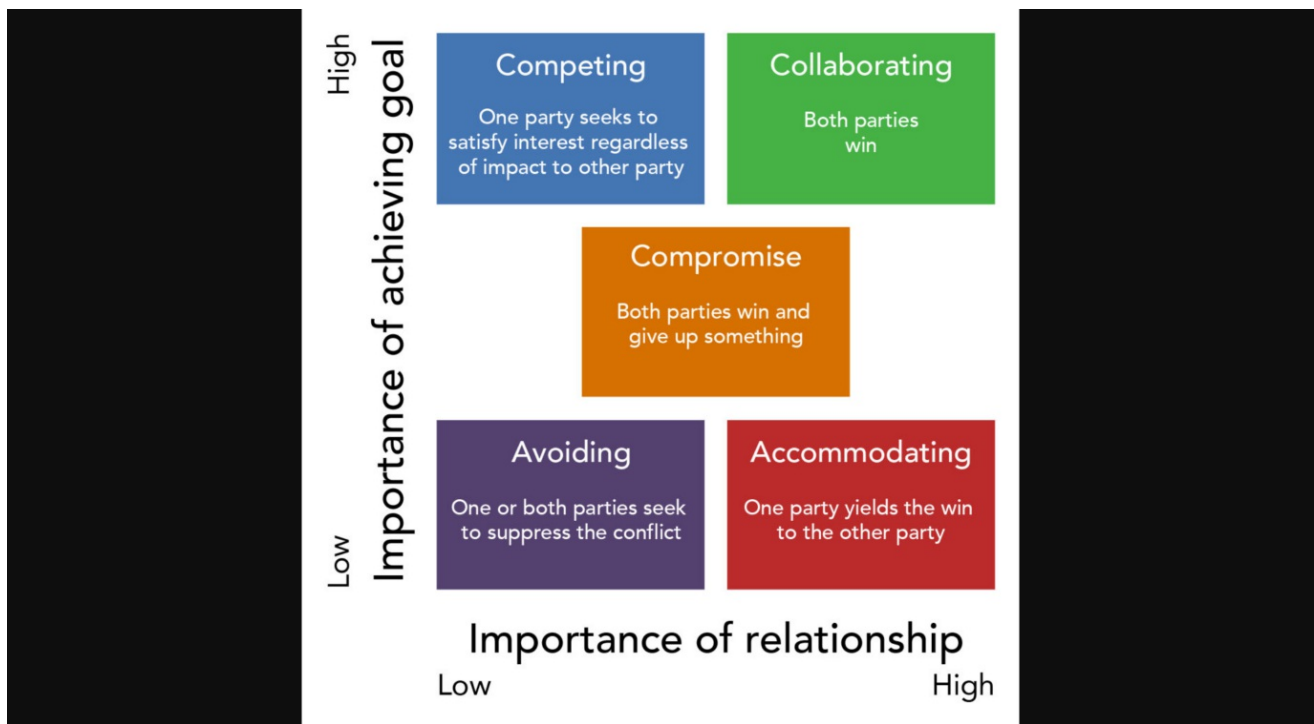
1. Compromising as a Conflict Style
2. Positive/Negative Outcomes of Compromising

1. Compromising as a Conflict Style

Compromising is a conflict resolution style in which parties agree to sacrifice some of their needs in exchange for having others met. It can occur in a conflict when all parties care about the relationship and also care about the goals of the conflict, but they also hold some flexibility in their positions.

As a style, compromising is:

- Moderate in cooperativeness
- Moderate in assertiveness



Thus, the nature of compromising positions it at the middle level of both these behaviors. No party gets everything that they want, but everyone gets something that they want and the relationship is maintained.

➡ **EXAMPLE** A new metro stop is opening in a city, and there are many different ideas for how the neighborhood around the new metro stop should develop. Current residents are worried about getting priced out by increasing rents. Developers want to build new luxury high-rises near the metro stop. The city planner wants more housing built in the city, of any type, to support the tax base. The neighborhood's city councilor just wants everyone to be happy, so that they vote for the councilor for reelection.

Any solution is going to have some good parts and some bad parts for all parties, and everyone is invested in making this neighborhood a nice place to live. The developers might compromise by agreeing to offer a percentage of units at lower rents. The city planner might compromise by restricting the height of the new high-rises. The current residents might compromise by accepting new amenities as the trade-off for higher rents. The city councilor receives some angry phone calls but not as many as she might have.

➡ **EXAMPLE** You and your spouse are having a disagreement about whether to spend Thanksgiving with your spouse's family or whether to host your own Thanksgiving and invite your own family and friends. Your spouse enjoys their family tradition, while you'd more enjoy hosting and not having to travel.

Because you both care about the holiday and about each other, you work to reach a compromise. You decide that you will alternate years; on odd years you'll travel to your spouse's family, and on even years you'll host your own dinner, and your spouse's family will be invited to travel to you if they wish.

➡ **EXAMPLE** You have worked at your company for five years, and you have always received positive evaluations. You recently found out that you make less money than several of your colleagues, who have the same role and responsibilities and have a shorter tenure than you. You approach your manager and ask for a raise to match your colleagues' salary.

Your manager does not have room in the budget to raise your salary this year. He offers an extra week of vacation and a promise to reevaluate your salary next year, as a compromise. You are faced with choosing to either accept the compromise, which is still better than you had before but feels unfair, or look for a new



Compromising

A conflict resolution style in which parties agree to sacrifice some of their needs in exchange for having others met.

2. Positive/Negative Outcomes of Compromising

This particular style of conflict has, as all styles do, both positive and negative outcomes.

A positive outcome is a resolution to a conflict that a party perceives as meeting their needs and/or reducing the likelihood of further conflict.

A negative outcome is a resolution that the party perceives as not meeting their needs and/or increasing the likelihood of further conflict.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Let's go back to the new metro stop scenario.

- *Positive outcome:* All parties to the conflict reduce their expectations and celebrate their victories while organizing for future progress on the elements that didn't turn out in their favor.
- *Negative outcome:* Compromise is distributed unevenly, with parties who hold more power (like the developers) getting more of what they want than the parties who hold less power (like the current residents). Or, a party pushed a compromise in bad faith by stating an extreme goal and then claiming that they have compromised when they step back from the extreme goal.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Return to the Thanksgiving travel and hosting plan.

- *Positive outcome:* You are satisfied with getting to host half the time and willing to travel to your spouse's family half the time, since it makes them happy. Your spouse is satisfied with getting to spend half the time with their family and willing to stay home half the time, since it makes you happy.
- *Negative outcome:* The terms of the compromise might be shifted by outside parties; your spouse's family might be angry that you won't be visiting every year like they expect. Or your own family might be hurt that you chose to stay home on alternate years rather than visit them. There could also be a negative outcome if your spouse actually hated hosting and you hated Thanksgiving travel, such that your compromise meant that every year one person was miserable.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Think of the example of being turned down for a raise.

- *Positive outcome:* You accept the compromise offer and you figure that an extra week's vacation is more than you had before you initiated the conversation. You make a plan for documenting all your work successes before the salary conversation next year.
- *Negative outcome:* You feel as though your concerns about pay equity were ignored and that your manager pressured you into a compromise because the only alternative you had was to look for a new job.



BIG IDEA

Many tricky conflicts can be resolved through compromise, and it is often good to approach a conflict with an understanding that you might not get everything you want, but that everyone should get something they want. However, be careful of compromises that result in no one being happy or compromises that are forced by unequal power between parties.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about **compromising as a style of conflict**, and what the **positive and negative outcomes** of using this style can be.

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.

Compromising

A conflict resolution style in which parties agree to sacrifice some of their needs in exchange for having others met.

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).