

Conflict resolution: how to deal with tricky situations

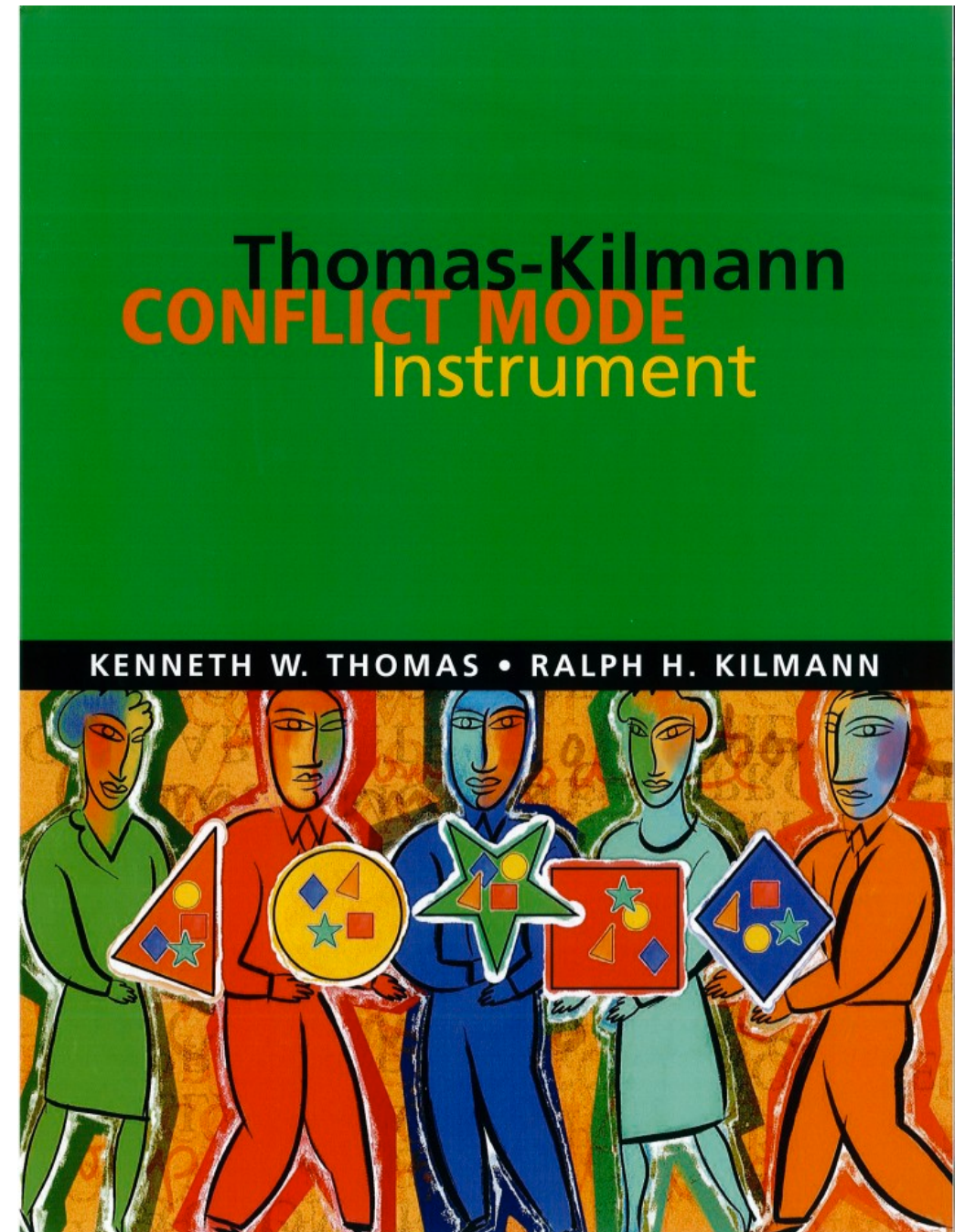
Women in Life sciences at Davis

Nancy Chen

13 June 2017

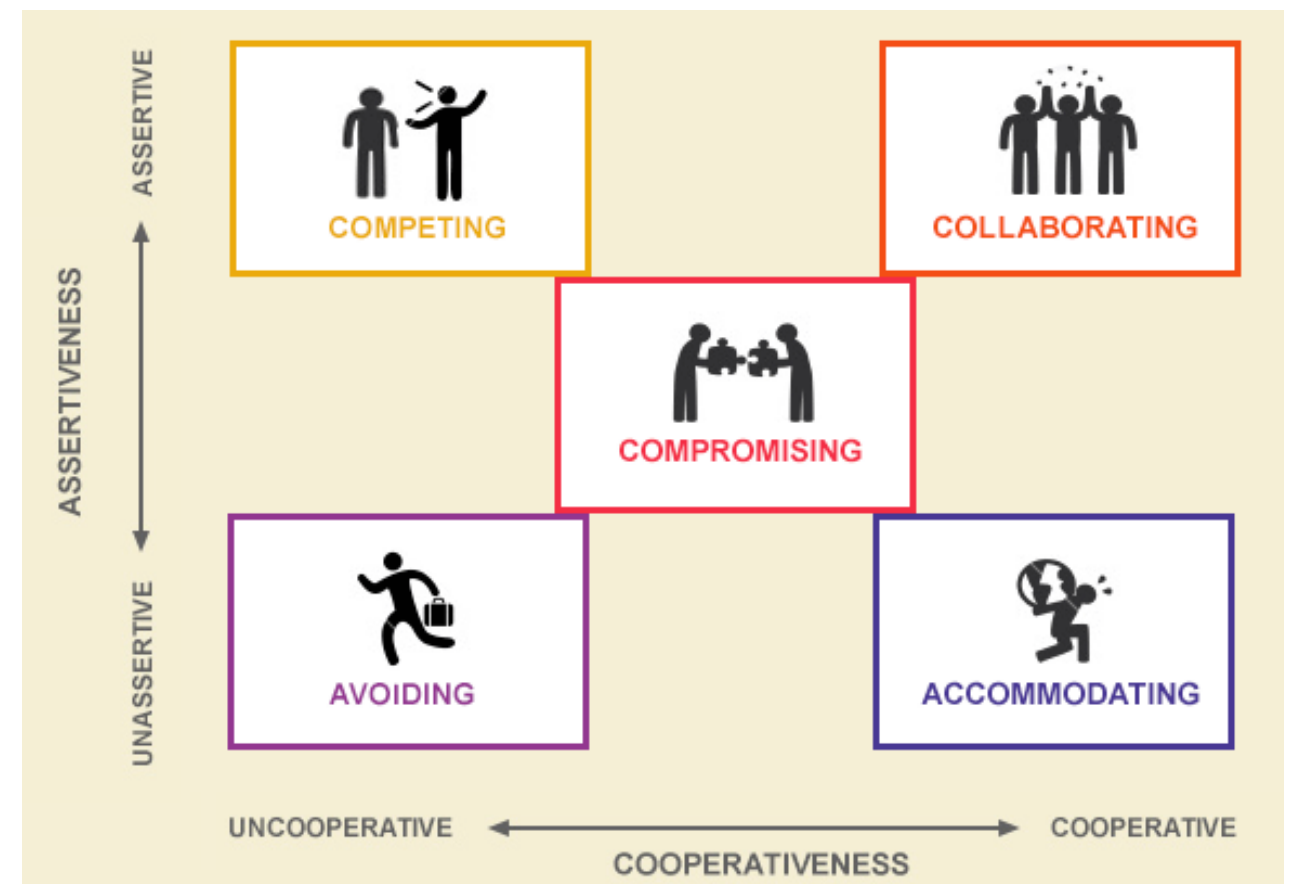
Conflict management styles

- Understanding different conflict-handling styles can help with conflict resolution
- An individual's typical behavior can be described along two dimensions: assertiveness and cooperativeness



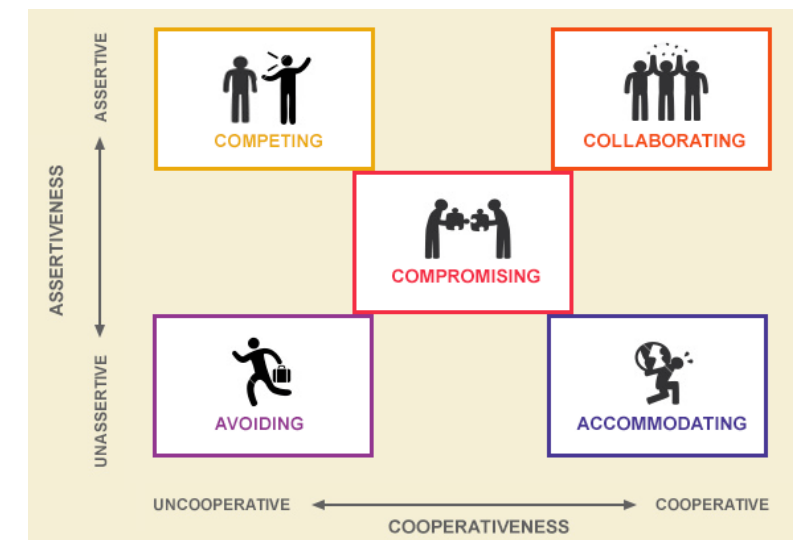
The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument

- **Competing:** goal is to win
- **Accommodating:** goal is to yield
- **Avoiding:** goal is to delay
- **Collaborating:** goal is to ensure parity of goals
- **Compromising:** goal is to find middle ground



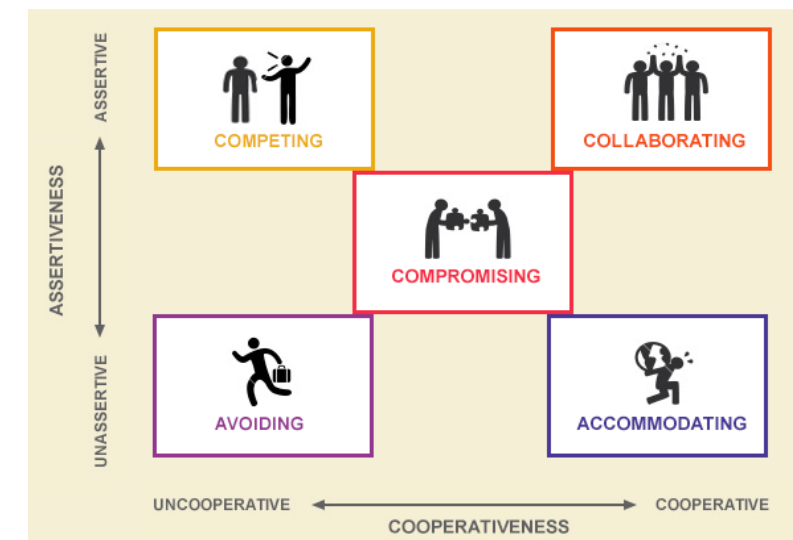
Competing

- **Competing** is effective:
 - When quick action is needed
 - When unpopular action must be taken on important issues
 - When the issue is vital and the right course is clear
 - To protect yourself against people who take advantage of you
- **Competing** skills:
 - Arguing or debating
 - Using rank, position, or influence
 - Asserting your opinions and feelings
 - Standing your ground
 - Stating your position clearly



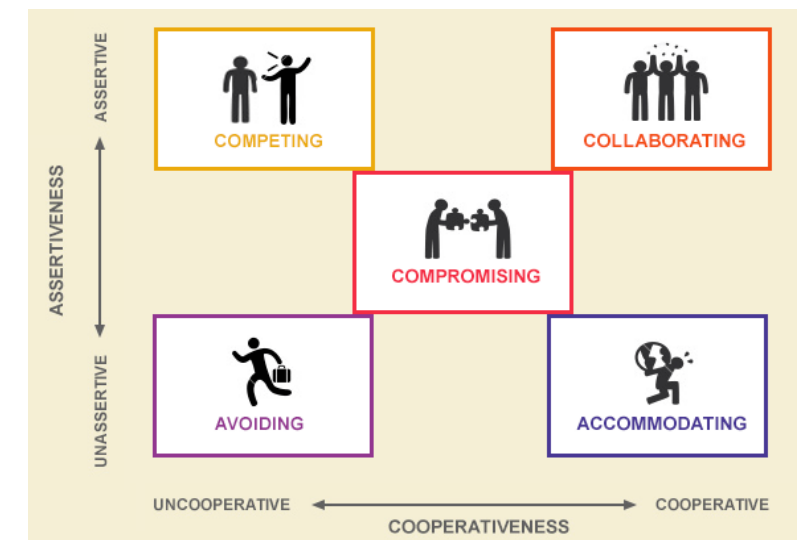
Accommodating

- **Accommodating** is effective:
 - When you are wrong or learning is important
 - When creating goodwill or harmony is paramount
 - To build social credits for later use
 - To stop unproductive or damaging competition
 - To maintain perspective
- **Accommodating** skills:
 - Forgoing your desires
 - Selflessness
 - Obedience
 - Ability to yield



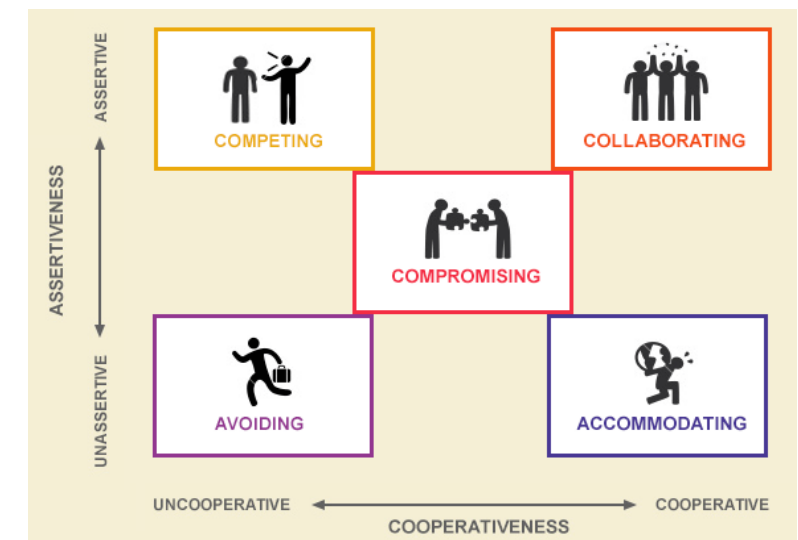
Avoiding

- **Avoiding** is effective:
 - When the issue is relatively trivial
 - When you need to buy time to reduce tensions, get more info, etc.
 - When the costs of conflict outweigh the benefits of resolution
 - When others can resolve the issue more effectively
 - When the conflict is tangential to something more important
- **Avoiding** skills:
 - Withdrawing
 - Sidestepping
 - Sense of timing
 - Ability to leave things unresolved



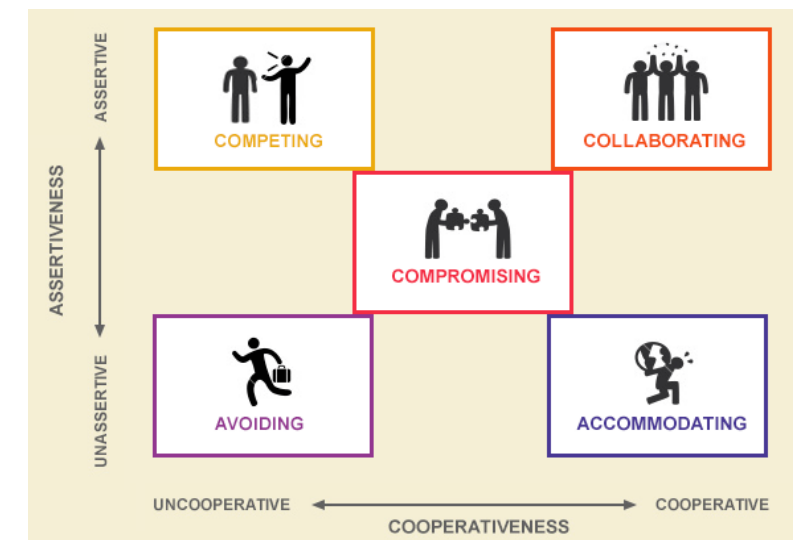
Collaborating

- **Collaborating** is effective:
 - When it's important that both sides be integrated
 - When you want to learn and fully understand others' views
 - To merge different perspectives and insights
 - To gain commitment through consensual decisions
 - To improve interpersonal relationships
- **Collaborating** skills:
 - Ability to listen, understand, and empathize
 - Nonthreatening confrontation
 - Input analysis
 - Identifying underlying concerns



Compromising

- **Compromising** is effective:
 - When goals are less important than avoiding disruption
 - When opponents have equal power and strong commitment
 - To temporarily settle complex issues
 - To quickly achieve an expedient solution
 - As a backup style when collaboration or competition fails
- **Compromising** skills:
 - Negotiating
 - Finding a “middle ground”
 - Making concessions
 - Assessing value



Which mode is the best?

- Most people use all at various times
- Most people naturally prefer one style
- The best style at a given time depends on the situation, culture, and personalities involved
- All styles can be useful

General conflict resolution skills

- Manage anger
- Listen actively
- Avoid assumptions
- Find something on which to agree
- Be cautious with criticism
- Have empathy
- Negotiate

The LARA method for constructive conflict resolution

- Listen
 - Listen actively, with an intent to understand. Pay attention to body language.
- Affirm
 - Express that you value someone's contribution to the dialogue. Acknowledge and paraphrase what was said.
- Respond
 - Respond honestly to issues that were raised, but avoid debate. Use "I" statements.
- Add
 - Add information to the conversation to aid in understanding.

“I” statements

“I feel _____ when (you) _____ because _____. What I’m hoping we might try is _____.”

Four key elements to include in your communication:

1. Identify and share your *feelings* and *emotions* about the situation
2. Identify and articulate the *cause* of those feelings
3. Provide context and explanation for *why* those feelings are caused
4. Identify and articulate your needs and desires, framed in a productive way

Problem-solving steps

- Identify and define the issue
- Analyze the situation and gather information
- Generate possible action steps
- Evaluate possible actions
- Selection the best action(s)
- Develop an action plan and identify next steps
- Implement the action
- Analyze and assess action effectiveness
- Repeat process if necessary

Some more negotiation tips

- Separate the person from the problem
- Focus on interests (needs) not positions (wants)
- Use open-ended questions to identify interests
- Engage in relationship-building dialogue
- Appeal to common or shared values
- Confront value differences directly
- Generate a variety of options before deciding what to do
- Work for a result based on objective standards, or criteria