

Conflict Style Questionnaire

This questionnaire will help you identify your predominant conflict-handling style. For each statement, indicate how often you use the described behaviour when dealing with conflict by assigning a score from **1 (Never)** to **5 (Always)**. (**1 - Never / 2 - Rarely / 3 - Sometimes / 4 - Often / 5 - Always**)

Section 1: Competing (Authoritative/Forcing)						
01	I defend my position with strong arguments, even if it upsets others.	1	2	3	4	5
02	I push for my own solution when I know I am right.	1	2	3	4	5
03	When it comes to important decisions, I insist on having my way.	1	2	3	4	5
04	I am willing to challenge others to ensure the best outcome.	1	2	3	4	5
Section 2: Avoiding (Withdrawing)						
05	I avoid conflict, hoping it will resolve itself over time.	1	2	3	4	5
06	I prefer not to bring up controversial issues.	1	2	3	4	5
07	I delay addressing problems to prevent making things worse.	1	2	3	4	5
08	I walk away from conflict rather than confront the issue.	1	2	3	4	5
Section 3: Accommodating (Smoothing)						
09	I am willing to give up my opinion to maintain harmony.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I try to accommodate the needs of others, even if it means I don't get what I want.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I prefer to let others have their way if it will keep the peace.	1	2	3	4	5
12	I often yield to others' preferences in a conflict situation.	1	2	3	4	5
Section 4: Compromising (Give-and-Take)						
13	I try to find a middle ground to resolve disagreements.	1	2	3	4	5
14	I am willing to give up something to reach a solution that works for everyone.	1	2	3	4	5
15	I look for a fair balance where both sides give and take.	1	2	3	4	5
16	I negotiate compromises to satisfy both parties.	1	2	3	4	5
Section 5: Collaborating (Problem Solving)						
17	I actively seek solutions that meet everyone's needs.	1	2	3	4	5
18	I work together with others to find the best possible solution for everyone involved.	1	2	3	4	5
19	I try to address the underlying concerns of everyone in the conflict.	1	2	3	4	5
20	I believe in discussing conflicts thoroughly to come up with a win-win solution.	1	2	3	4	5
Scoring Instructions: 1. Competing: Add the scores for questions 1-4. 2. Avoiding: Add the scores for questions 5-8. 3. Accommodating: Add the scores for questions 9-12. 4. Compromising: Add the scores for questions 13-16. 5. Collaborating: Add the scores for questions 17-20.						
Interpretation: • High Score (16-20) in any section: This conflict style is dominant for you. You frequently use this approach in dealing with conflicts. • Medium Score (11-15): You sometimes use this style, depending on the situation. • Low Score (4-10): You rarely use this style and may need to explore its benefits in some situations.						

Reflection Questions:

1. Which conflict style had your **highest score**? Do you think this reflects your typical approach to conflict?
2. Which style had your **lowest score**? How might incorporating some elements of this style help you in future conflicts?

3. Consider a recent conflict—how could a more **flexible approach** (e.g., combining collaboration with compromise) have changed the outcome?
4. How can your conflict style impact **community life**? Does it promote harmony, or does it sometimes create tension?

Conflict Totem: Understanding Conflict Styles Using Animal Metaphors

The **Conflict Totem** is a creative and light-hearted way to explore personal conflict-handling styles by using animal metaphors. Each animal represents a particular approach to conflict, helping individuals recognize how they typically respond to tension and disagreements. This exercise can help you understand your own tendencies and how these affect group dynamics. It also opens up discussions on how to adapt your style to improve relationships within a community.

The metaphorical animals represent **negative responses** to conflict, but understanding these styles can help in reflecting on both the drawbacks and potential benefits of each approach. Occasionally, some styles can be useful in short bursts, but consistently using a single style may hinder conflict resolution.

Animal Conflict Styles	
Donkey Style – Stubbornness	❖ Characteristics: The Donkey refuses to change its point of view or adapt to the situation. This style is marked by an inflexible stance, where one digs in and resists new perspectives. ❖ Impact: The Donkey often prolongs conflict, as refusal to budge can escalate tension, causing frustration among others. ❖ Reflection: ▪ When is it appropriate to stand firm, and when is it more productive to adapt? ▪ How does stubbornness prevent open dialogue in your community?
Elephant Style – Blocking Progress	❖ Characteristics: The Elephant blocks the way, preventing others from moving forward. This style represents an unwillingness to allow resolution, often rooted in fear or hesitation. ❖ Impact: The Elephant stalls the group's ability to resolve conflicts by not participating fully or actively resisting solutions. ❖ Reflection: ▪ What underlying emotions (fear, anxiety) are causing the block? ▪ How can openness to solutions improve progress?
Lion Style – Aggression	❖ Characteristics: The Lion fights when others disagree with its ideas or actions. This style is forceful and combative, often creating tension through confrontation. ❖ Impact: Aggressive responses can make others feel threatened or afraid to voice opinions, leading to a breakdown in communication. ❖ Reflection: ▪ When do you feel the need to assert control in conflicts? ▪ How can you transform assertiveness into respectful dialogue?
Rabbit Style – Avoidance	❖ Characteristics: The Rabbit is timid and flees from tension, avoiding the conflict altogether. It changes the subject or distracts others to avoid dealing with the issue at hand. ❖ Impact: By avoiding conflict, the Rabbit leaves problems unresolved, allowing them to fester and potentially grow worse. ❖ Reflection: ▪ What fears or discomforts cause you to avoid conflict? ▪ How can you approach difficult conversations with more courage?
Ostrich Style – Denial	❖ Characteristics: The Ostrich buries its head in the sand, refusing to acknowledge conflict exists. This style is marked by denial, pretending that no problem exists. ❖ Impact: Denial prevents any meaningful dialogue from taking place, leading to unaddressed issues within the community. ❖ Reflection: ▪ What makes it difficult to face conflict directly? ▪ How can acknowledging problems be the first step to resolving them?
Turtle Style – Withdrawal	❖ Characteristics: The Turtle retreats into its shell, completely withdrawing from any attempt to resolve conflict. It shuts down and refuses to communicate or engage. ❖ Impact: Withdrawal leads to alienation from the group, as others are left to deal with the conflict without input or participation. ❖ Reflection:

	▪ When do you feel the need to withdraw from conflict? ▪ How can you engage in conflict without feeling overwhelmed?
Chameleon Style – Inconsistency	❖ Characteristics: The Chameleon changes its stance depending on the people and situation. It lacks a consistent position, adapting its opinion to suit the environment. ❖ Impact: Chameleons are seen as unreliable, often leading to distrust in the group, as others may question their sincerity. ❖ Reflection: ▪ Do you find yourself switching positions to avoid conflict? ▪ How can you remain authentic in your opinions while being open to change?
Owl Style – Pretentiousness	❖ Characteristics: The Owl pretends to be wise and all-knowing, often using complex language or over-explaining to show superiority. However, the focus is more on talking than on resolving the conflict. ❖ Impact: The Owl's approach often leads to frustration from others, as the conversation becomes about intellectual dominance rather than finding a solution. ❖ Reflection: ▪ When do you feel the need to appear overly knowledgeable in conflict? ▪ How can active listening replace the need to dominate the discussion?
Mouse Style – Timidity	❖ Characteristics: The Mouse has a poor self-image and is too timid to speak up. It quietly endures the conflict without contributing ideas or opinions. ❖ Impact: The Mouse's silence means that important perspectives are not heard, leading to one-sided solutions or unresolved tensions. ❖ Reflection: ▪ What holds you back from expressing your thoughts during conflict? ▪ How can you develop confidence to voice your perspective?
Monkey Style – Distraction	❖ Characteristics: The Monkey distracts from the seriousness of the conflict by being playful or bringing up unrelated points. This style deflects attention away from resolution. ❖ Impact: While humour can sometimes ease tension, it can also derail serious discussions, preventing meaningful progress. ❖ Reflection: ▪ When does humour or distraction become a defense mechanism for you? ▪ How can you balance light-heartedness with focused problem-solving?

Individual Reflection:

- Think of specific situations where you exhibited one of the animal styles.
- Write down the situation, the style used, and how it influenced the outcome of the conflict.

Group Discussion:

- Share examples of each style with the group.
- Reflect together on how these styles are present in the community.
- Discuss the **positive uses** of each style in small doses (e.g., sometimes avoidance is necessary for cooling off) and the **negative impacts** when overused.

Adapting Styles:

- Talk about how you can **shift** from less constructive styles (e.g., Rabbit's avoidance) to more helpful approaches (e.g., Turtle's reflective withdrawal but returning for discussion).
- Practice adapting a more flexible conflict style, such as moving towards collaboration or compromise.

Learning from the Totem

- The Conflict Totem is not about labelling, but about self-awareness. Recognizing these traits allows individuals to **modify their behaviour** in conflict situations.
- By identifying these styles in ourselves and others, we can engage in **more compassionate communication** and foster a healthier community environment.
- Discuss how the group can use this self-awareness to create a plan for **constructive conflict transformation**, ensuring all voices are heard, and all members feel respected.

GROUP CONFLICT ANALYSIS

The *People-Process-Problem (3Ps)* framework, introduced by conflict resolution expert John Paul Lederach, is a powerful model for analysing and addressing conflicts within a community, particularly useful in religious or communal settings. Each element of the 3Ps framework—People, Process, and Problem—offers a distinct perspective for understanding the dynamics and developing constructive solutions for conflicts. Here’s a breakdown of each component:

People	
This component emphasizes the human aspect of conflict, focusing on the emotional, relational, and psychological dynamics between the parties involved. It’s not just about who is involved but also about understanding the underlying emotional states, needs, and perceptions of each individual or group.	
Key Questions: - Who are the individuals directly involved in the conflict? Are there primary and secondary parties (e.g., people indirectly affected)? - How do each of the involved parties perceive the conflict? - What emotions are at play for each person, and how might these emotions influence their views and responses? - Are there cultural, familial, or social factors that contribute to the way each party experiences the conflict?	Application: By analysing the “People” aspect, we can gain empathy for each party’s perspective. This might involve addressing misunderstandings or assumptions, which often lie at the heart of the conflict.
Process	
The process examines how decisions are made in the conflict and how each party feels about the way these decisions are reached. This element highlights the role of procedural fairness and the importance of inclusive decision-making, ensuring that each individual feels heard and respected.	
Key Questions: - What decision-making processes are currently in place for addressing this conflict? - Do all involved parties feel included and respected in this process? - Are there habitual ways of handling conflicts within this group or community that impact how people feel about participating? - How do the current processes affect the level of cooperation or resistance among the parties involved?	Application: Focusing on the process encourages transparency, inclusiveness, and respect. For example, a leader in a religious community might choose to mediate a conflict by inviting open discussion rather than imposing decisions. This helps avoid alienation and encourages all members to contribute to the solution.
Problem	
This component tackles the core issues of the conflict, including each party’s needs, fears, and values. It requires a deep examination of both visible and hidden aspects of the conflict, such as unmet needs, misaligned expectations, or threats to personal values.	
Key Questions: - What are the main issues at the centre of the conflict? - Are there hidden issues or unmet needs that are fuelling the conflict? - What values, goals, or interests are the parties defending, and how do these relate to the community’s collective mission? - Are there common interests or shared needs that might bring the conflicting parties together?	Application: By clarifying the core problems, the community can identify areas where compromise or mutual support is possible. For instance, in a conflict over the community’s direction, exploring each party’s fears and hopes might reveal that all members want stability and growth, even if they have different ideas on how to achieve it.

Example Scenario Using the 3Ps Model

Consider a religious community experiencing tension over how to allocate resources between different ministries.

- **People:** Some members feel strongly attached to a ministry they've long been involved with, while others feel their needs aren't being considered, leading to frustration. Analysing the "People" component would mean identifying these emotions, uncovering personal attachments, and understanding each member's motivations and concerns.
- **Process:** If past resource decisions were made without input from all members, some might feel disenfranchised. Addressing the "Process" could involve instituting a more inclusive discussion format, where each person has a chance to express their views on resource allocation.
- **Problem:** The community needs to clarify the core issue—balancing support for long-established ministries with emerging needs. By identifying the key values and goals behind the conflict, members can explore whether resources might be allocated differently or whether adjustments could be made to honour both established and new ministries.

Benefits of the 3Ps Model

- **Comprehensive Understanding:** The 3Ps framework provides a holistic view of the conflict, allowing communities to see beyond superficial disagreements.
- **Structured Engagement:** By systematically addressing each element, the model fosters a more organized and less reactive approach to conflict resolution.
- **Focus on Transformation:** Each component emphasizes growth and collaboration, transforming conflicts from divisive issues into opportunities for unity and development.

The *People-Process-Problem (3Ps)* model thus serves as a valuable tool for cultivating understanding and building a constructive path forward in any community setting, particularly within religious or communal organizations where values and relationships play a pivotal role.

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION SKILLS

Conflict transformation skills are essential tools that enable individuals and communities to handle conflict constructively, turning potential discord into growth opportunities. These skills help transform conflicts from mere issues to opportunities for understanding, collaboration, and personal and communal development. Here's a closer look at some key skills in conflict transformation:

1. Reframing the Conflict

- **What It Is:** Reframing involves changing one's perception of the conflict to see it from new, more constructive angles. It's about viewing the conflict as a challenge rather than a threat.
- **Why It's Important:** This shift in perspective helps individuals and groups see the conflict not as a zero-sum game but as an opportunity for dialogue and mutual understanding.
- **How to Apply It:** Reflect on the conflict from different perspectives, focusing on shared goals and values rather than the immediate problem. Using questions like, "What can we learn from this situation?" or "How can we address this together?" can open doors to new approaches and reduce defensiveness.

2. Practicing Compassionate Communication

- **What It Is:** Compassionate communication, also known as nonviolent communication (NVC), involves communicating in a way that respects all parties' emotions and needs. It emphasizes empathy, active listening, and the avoidance of blame or judgment.
- **Why It's Important:** Clear, respectful communication reduces misunderstandings and creates a safe space for individuals to express their feelings, which is essential for transforming conflict.
- **How to Apply It:** Break communication into four parts:
 - **Observation:** Describe the situation without judgment (e.g., "I noticed we haven't reached a decision yet...").
 - **Feelings:** Express your emotions (e.g., "I feel concerned...").
 - **Needs:** Identify what is important (e.g., "It's important for me to feel heard...").

- **Requests:** Make a clear, actionable request (e.g., “Could we explore options together?”).

3. Emotional Regulation and Patience

- **What It Is:** Emotional regulation is the ability to manage emotions calmly and effectively, even during tense moments. Patience involves staying composed and giving the situation time to unfold constructively.
- **Why It’s Important:** Emotions, when unregulated, can escalate conflicts. Emotional regulation and patience help keep discussions focused, allowing individuals to respond rather than react.
- **How to Apply It:** Practice techniques such as deep breathing, mindfulness, or pausing before responding. In heated moments, taking a “time-out” to cool down and returning to the conversation with a calmer perspective can prevent conflicts from worsening.

4. Engaging in Active Listening

- **What It Is:** Active listening is fully concentrating, understanding, and responding to what the other person is saying. It involves listening without interrupting, asking clarifying questions, and repeating back what the other person said to ensure understanding.
- **Why It’s Important:** It helps individuals feel valued and respected, reducing defensiveness and fostering a spirit of openness and trust.
- **How to Apply It:** Use phrases like “What I’m hearing is...” or “It sounds like you’re feeling...” to validate the speaker’s experience. Avoid interrupting, and ask questions to clarify points if needed, ensuring that you genuinely understand their perspective.

5. Seeking Common Ground

- **What It Is:** Finding common ground involves identifying shared goals, values, or interests within the conflict. This mutual foundation becomes the basis for building collaborative solutions.
- **Why It’s Important:** Recognizing commonalities can shift the focus from what divides to what unites, creating a collaborative atmosphere where all parties feel more willing to compromise.
- **How to Apply It:** Frame questions around shared values, such as, “What do we both hope to achieve here?” or “What outcome would benefit both of us?” This approach helps redirect the conversation from individual grievances to collective goals.

6. Encouraging Creative Problem-Solving

- **What It Is:** Creative problem-solving means thinking outside conventional solutions to address the underlying needs and values of all parties involved.
- **Why It’s Important:** Traditional solutions may not always satisfy everyone’s needs. Creative approaches can open new possibilities and foster solutions that are more satisfying and sustainable for everyone involved.
- **How to Apply It:** Encourage brainstorming sessions where all ideas are considered without criticism. Techniques like “What if...” questions can encourage imaginative solutions. For example, “What if we tried a completely new approach to this problem?” can yield innovative solutions that align with everyone’s needs.

7. Embracing Flexibility and Adaptability

- **What It Is:** Flexibility involves being open to change and willing to adjust one’s position or approach in response to new information or understanding.
- **Why It’s Important:** Conflicts are often dynamic, and rigid approaches can exacerbate issues. Flexibility allows individuals to adapt to the evolving needs of the situation, making it easier to find a mutually beneficial outcome.
- **How to Apply It:** Use a “both/and” mindset, where you seek solutions that respect multiple perspectives. For example, if there’s a disagreement over a community project, remain open to exploring alternative ways to balance diverse priorities rather than adhering strictly to a single approach.

8. Practicing Forgiveness and Letting Go

- **What It Is:** Forgiveness involves releasing feelings of resentment, anger, or blame. It doesn't mean condoning harmful behaviour but letting go of grudges that can harm relationships and community cohesion.
- **Why It's Important:** Holding on to negative feelings can hinder the healing process. Forgiveness opens the door to reconciliation and fosters a compassionate, resilient community.
- **How to Apply It:** Engage in self-reflection to understand the reasons behind your emotions, and work to release them. If possible, communicate forgiveness directly, focusing on moving forward rather than rehashing past issues.

9. Using Mediation and Seeking Support

- **What It Is:** Mediation is involving a neutral third party to facilitate dialogue, especially when the conflict is complex or deeply rooted. This could be a community leader, counsellor, or someone trained in conflict resolution.
- **Why It's Important:** Sometimes, conflicts require an unbiased mediator to help parties see issues from an impartial perspective, manage emotions, and keep discussions productive.
- **How to Apply It:** Seek out a mediator when conversations become too charged to handle independently. Establish guidelines for respectful dialogue and let the mediator lead the discussion to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to share their perspective.

Conclusion: Integrating Conflict Transformation Skills

These conflict transformation skills empower individuals to handle disputes with sensitivity, creativity, and compassion. By combining these techniques, communities can turn conflict into a process that strengthens relationships, enriches understanding, and fosters personal and communal growth. In religious and communal contexts, these skills embody values of humility, respect, and service, transforming conflict into an opportunity for unity and spiritual development.