

## One Minute Skill Building Series

### Center for Student Involvement Resource Center

#### Problem Solving

- ☞ **ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS**  
Be specific—don't bring up other conflicts or past hostilities. Confront the issue—not the person. Describe your feelings and your views objectively, while defining the problem and analyzing how it developed.
- ☞ **GENERATE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**  
Sit down together and try to list as many possible solutions as you can. Don't be afraid to include some silly ones; they'll break the tension. The more ideas you come up with, the more you'll have to choose from and the better the choice you'll be able to make.
- ☞ **EVALUATE THE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**  
Try to find one that meets each person's needs, goals and views, given the time and resources available.
- ☞ **DECIDE ON A SOLUTION**  
It will involve some compromise for all parties, but realize that compromise doesn't mean you lose!
- ☞ **PUT THE SOLUTION INTO ACTION**  
Make a plan for using your solution, and follow up to see how it's working. Establish short-range goals to help check your progress.

Adapted from Suffolk County Community College, from *About Improving Your Interpersonal Skills*

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#### The Five Conflict Handling Modes

1. **COMPETITION**—Pursuing your concerns at the other persons expense
  - ☞ When quick, decisive action is needed—emergencies.
  - ☞ On important issues where unpopular courses of action need implementing—cost cutting, discipline.
  - ☞ On issues vital to the group's welfare when you know you are right.
  - ☞ To protect yourself against people who take advantage of non-competitive behavior.
2. **ACCOMODATING**—Neglecting your concerns to satisfy the concerns of others
  - ☞ When you realize that you are wrong, to allow a better position to be heard, to learn from others, and to show that you are reasonable.
  - ☞ When the issue is more important to others than to yourself.
  - ☞ To build up credits for later issues.
  - ☞ When preserving harmony is especially important.
3. **AVOIDING**—Not pursuing your own concerns or those of the other person
  - ☞ When an issue is trivial.
  - ☞ When there is no chance of satisfying your own concerns.
  - ☞ To let people cool down.
  - ☞ When gathering more information outweighs the advantage of an immediate decision.
4. **COMPROMISING**—Finding a mutually acceptable solution which partially satisfies both parties
  - ☞ When goals are moderately important.
  - ☞ When opponents with equal power are strongly committed to mutually exclusive goals.
  - ☞ To arrive at expedient solutions under time pressure.
5. **COLLABORATING**—Working with the other person to find a solution that fully satisfies the concerns of both people
  - ☞ When both sets of concerns are too important to be compromised.
  - ☞ To gain commitment and work through hard feelings
  - ☞ When time allows.

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